

Jamali survives confidence vote

Islamabad, December 30

PRIME MINISTER Zafarullah Khan Jamali comfortably won a vote of confidence in Parliament on Monday that assured the survival of his coalition Government.

Jamali won 188 votes in Pakistan's 342-seat National Assembly, the lawmaking Lower House of Parliament. He needed only 172 to survive the vote.

According to the country's Constitution, the Prime Minister was required to hold a vote of confidence within 60 days of his election to the post. Legislators voted Jamali in as Prime Minister on November 23. At that time he won 172 of 309 votes cast in the National Assembly.

General elections on October 10 failed to give any single party a clear majority.

Jamali's pro-military faction of the Pakistan Muslim League won the greatest number of seats with 103 members. The Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians, led by former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, won 80 seats, followed by the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal, group of Islamic parties, with 59.

Jamali cobbled together a coalition Government of Independents and Parliamentarians who broke ranks with their party.

The most significant force in Pakistan since the elections are the religious Right, which won

outright control of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and is a partner in the Baluchistan provincial Government, two provinces that border Afghanistan and are key in the coalition hunting al-Qaida and Taliban fugitives.

New Year bashes banned

The NWFP has banned "unethical" New Year celebrations and vowed to crack down on un-Islamic behaviour during the holiday, local media reported on Monday.

"The Government is determined to ensure that no unacceptable activity takes place on the eve of the New Year," a senior official was quoted as saying. "Any violation would be dealt with severely," the unidentified official told the *Statesman* newspaper, adding that cocktail and dance parties as well as music shows popular on previous holidays would be forbidden.

Areas of the provincial capital Peshawar where the holiday has been observed with vigour in recent years would be under particular scrutiny, it said.

Since coming to power, the province's leader Akram Khan Durrani has launched an anti-obscenity drive which includes a campaign against gambling, pornographic and unlicensed movie theatres.

Agencies

Jaish link to Pak church attack

MOHSIN RAZA

Daska, Dec. 26 (Reuters): Police detained three suspected members of the Jaish-e-Mohammad in central Pakistan today over the Christmas Day church attack that killed three girls.

Shahid Iqbal, a senior police officer in the area of the attack, said the suspects came from the village where the attack took place.

Last night's explosion at a church in a remote village 20 km from the small industrial town of

Daska was the latest in a string of attacks on Christians.

President Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali condemned the attack in separate messages, calling it an attempt to disrupt and divide the mainly Muslim country of 140 million people.

"Such reprehensible acts are committed by those anti-Pakistan elements who wish to disrupt peace and tranquillity and create dissension among different communities in the country," the government APP news agency quoted Musharraf as saying.

Iqbal said three men had been caught. "They had received armed training... at a Jaish centre in Pakistan," he said. "I cannot release their names but they are being questioned right now."

Police said the arrested men included a Muslim preacher and his son.

Musharraf banned Jaish and several other Islamic groups early this year as part of a campaign to stem Islamic militancy in Pakistan. Suspected Islamic militants, angered by Musharraf's support for the US-led war on terror, have been blamed for a spate of attacks on Christians and foreigners in Pakistan.

Yesterday's blast, which police initially blamed on a grenade, killed two of the girls instantly, decapitating one of them. It wounded 14 people.

About 300 Christians gathered in the central city of Multan to protest against the attack, accusing the government of failing to provide adequate security despite several attacks this year.

"What is the fault of the innocent children who were just praying peacefully?" asked Bishop Andrew Francis at the protest. "Where should we go? Should Christians quit Pakistan?"

About 50 people, most of them children and women, were attending special prayers in the church at the time. One witness said flying glass from smashed windows flew into people's eyes.



A woman, injured in the church attack, in a hospital. (Reuters)

"We were offering prayers and my eyes were shut when something fell inside," Babur Pervaiz, one of the wounded, told reporters. "When I turned back to see what it was, there was a loud explosion."

Television footage showed a bloodsoaked rug and human remains scattered around the church.

Police initially said the attackers had thrown a hand grenade, but Iqbal said no metal pieces or shrapnel had been found. "It was some kind of an explosive device," he said.

Another witness, Nazeer, said worshippers saw two men, whose faces were covered, throwing a "ball-like" object that exploded immediately. "There was smoke and a strange smell, like that of chemicals," said Nazeer, who uses only one name.

Police officials said Jaish was active in the area and all three detained men were residents of the village.

'Pak scientist had offered nuclear technology to Iraq'

By Rashmee Z. Ahmed
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

London: In the newest damaging cycle of events linking Pakistan to so-called rogue states keen to acquire nuclear weapons technology by hook or by crook, Britain said on Friday that it had made its "concerns on weapons of mass destruction known to the Pakistani authorities at the highest level".

Articulating the renewed concern in some Western capitals over Pakistan's alleged role in nuclear technology proliferation, a British foreign office spokesman told this paper: "We take a serious view of WMD proliferation from any country. We are aware of media reports linking Pakistan with other WMD programmes. We are looking at this."

He confirmed that the matter had been raised at "the highest level" in Islamabad, but declined to comment on what, if anything, Britain and the other permanent members of the UN Security Council would do.

The official response comes after the five permanent members were briefed by UN weapons inspectors on a Pakistani scientist's offer to Baghdad of nuclear technology, according to *The Times*.

The scientist is said to have made the unsolicited and ultimately-rejected offer to Iraq after the 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

He is said to have offered nuclear weapons designs and help in procuring bomb components.

Islamabad has reportedly said it could not identify the man, but UN diplomats are reported to doubt this. However, the UN inspectors are said to believe Baghdad's claim that it never took up the Pakistani scientist's offer.

According to a document claimed to have been obtained by *The Times*, contact between the Pakistani scientist and Iraqi officials forms part of a hand-written record. The paper says the document is referred to twice in Iraq's declaration of weapons capability to the UNSC on December 7.

It was considered a serious enough matter for the UN weapons inspectors to launch an inconclusive inquiry and to brief the P5—Britain, China, France, Russia and the US, the paper said.

Navdeep Suri, spokesman of the Indian High Commission said, "We don't have the details on this specific report but we are not surprised." He said there had long been substantive allegations that Pakistan had engaged in violating the proliferation regime—both of missile and nuclear material. They have certainly been recipients of material, again both missile and nuclear, he added.

The alleged Islamabad-Baghdad WMD link comes in the wake of allegations that Pakistan helped North Korea go nuclear. Before that, Pakistani nuclear scientists were alleged to have met and offered help to Afghanistan's Taliban regime and Osama bin Laden.

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51-8 Double shuffle

How about "regime change" in Pakistan?

Islamabad's double shuffle continues. While police in Karachi claim to have busted a plot for a suicide attack on US diplomats, Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar is released from the rather comfortable detention he was enjoying, under house arrest with money to his family from state coffers, while Lashkar-e-Toiba supremo Hafiz Mohammed Saeed was released last month. In addition 13 activists from terror groups have walked free in Quetta since the election of a fundamentalist-supported provincial government in Baluchistan. That segregation of the anti-Indian and anti-Western terror campaigns is not possible is proved by international media reports that suicide squads are being trained by Al Qaeda in Pakistan to attack government targets and Westerners in Afghanistan. If reports are correct, the techniques imparted to the *fedayeen* will have been honed in the killing fields of Kashmir. Leaving aside terror, in Kashmir, the vast majority of terror attacks globally have some kind of Pakistani connection.

Clearly the kid glove approach to the Musharraf regime, whose chief patron in Washington is said to be secretary of state Colin Powell, isn't working. The occasion for the release of the extremists has been the victory of the fundamentalist Mutta-hida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) in two provinces and its emergence as a key player in the National Assembly. The increase in their representation is, however, manipulated. They had freedom to campaign, a luxury denied to secular parties. Musharraf brought in a draconian education requirement whereby candidates had to have a college degree, but with exemption give-aways for the social constituencies he favours — armymen and clerics. Armymen, because the training they undergo is supposed to be a substitute for a college degree, and clerics, because theological seminaries are held to be equivalent to colleges. These are the same seminaries, incidentally, which launched the Taliban. It just shows that Musharraf's January 12 promises about reforming them are just that, promises. If Pakistan is to turn away from terror Musharraf and his clique will need to have their feet held to the fire. How about "regime change" in Pakistan, which will be easier to attain than Iraq since Pakistan has had a democratic tradition?

Pro-Musharraf parties' man elected Sindh CM

By B. Muralidhar Reddy H9.
ISLAMABAD, DEC. 16. A nominee of the pro-Musharraf parties, Ali Mohammad Mahar, was elected the Chief Minister of the Sindh province on Monday, defeating his rival from the Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians (PPP) by a margin of 20 votes in a 170-Assembly seats.

Sindh is the last among the four provinces in Pakistan, to which Assembly elections were held on October 10 along with the polls to the National Assembly, to have an elected Government.

The formation of a government in Sindh paves the way for holding of elections to the Senate without which

the constitution of Parliament will not be complete.

Though it was supposed to be a permanent House, the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, had dissolved it along with the Assemblies.

Originally elections to the Senate were scheduled a few days after the October 10 elections, but the process was delayed inordinately as it took more than two months to form governments at the National and provincial level.

The PPP, led by the former Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, had emerged as the single largest party in the Sindh Assembly with 67 members, but it failed to form a

government despite support from the nine-member Murtahida Majlis-e-

Amal (MMA) as it could not win over smaller groups. Dissension within the party over the choice of its chief ministerial candidate contributed to the inability of the party to form a Government in the only province where it had a chance. It appears at least half-a-dozen of its members broke ranks and voted for Mr. Mahar. The election of Mr. Mahar as the Chief Minister no doubts marks a victory for the pro-Musharraf groups, but it is likely to be a difficult arrangement.

The new chief minister would have a tough task in accommodating the conflicting interests of the smaller

groups in the government.

More important he would be at the mercy of the mercurial Murtahida Quami Movement (MQM) the largest group in the ruling coalition with 45 members. The MQM had demonstrated its power at the national and provincial level by withdrawing support to the Mir Zafrullah Khan Jamali Government just days after the Prime Minister was elected.

Jolted by the MQM pullout, Mr. Jamali and his supporters rushed into negotiations with the alliance of religious parties and the Benazir party.

Even as they were in the midst of dialogue with the Opposition parties,

the MQM returned to the treasury benches but after extracting its price for the support.

The MQM wants its nominee as the Governor of Sindh. What has complicated matters to the Jamali regime was the decision of the MQM to announce the name of adviser to Altaf Hussain, party chief on exile in London. Like Mr. Hussain it was believed that his adviser had also fled Karachi to London following police charges against him.

A section of the Pakistan media has reported that the MQM might not have its way in appointment of the Sindh Governor, as some of the retired Generals close to Gen. Musharraf are eyeing the post.

Benazir's party loses out in Sindh

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By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, DEC. 14. The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) led by the former Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, has lost all chances of forming a government in the Sindh province as the pro-Musharraf groups succeeded in getting their candidate elected as the Speaker of the State Assembly.

The Muslim League-Functional (one of the pro-military parties) candidate, Syed Muzaffar Hussain Shah, was elected as the Speaker by securing 90 votes in a House of 180 members. The development cleared the way for the election of the pro-Musharraf group's man as the Chief Minister next week.

Among the national and four provincial Assemblies, PPP had a chance of forming the government only in Sindh as it had emerged as the single largest group in the House. With 67 members in a House of 180 and support of seven representatives of the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), PPP could have made it if only it had succeeded in teaming up with one or two other small groups.

the PPP leaders is, contrary to apprehensions, the legislative party remained in tact. Barring one member, who had already announced support to the 'King's party', its nominee secured the votes of all other party members in the Assembly.

Dissension within the PPP ranks over the choice of its Chief Ministerial candidate is partly responsible for the inability of the party to mobilise support from other groups. The PPP chairperson, Benazir Bhutto, seemed to have made the task of second rung leaders complicated by not taking a clear decision on the strategy the party should follow in Sindh.

The Prime Minister, Mir Zafrullah Khan Jamali, had given reasons for hope to the PPP in Sindh, when he said earlier this week that he would like the single largest party to form the Government in Sindh. However he had also said that if the party failed, his group would make an attempt to form a government.

Pro-Musharraf groups, with little representation in the Assembly, had managed to strike a deal with the Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM), the second

largest group. The MQM agreed to support the pro-Musharraf nominee after a hard bargain. The party had succeeded in driving out its rival faction, Mohajir Quami Movement, from the so-called no-go-areas in the port city of Karachi and the Jamali government had also agreed to have its nominee as the Governor of the province. The deal could not have been possible without the nod from Gen. Musharraf, as under the amended Constitution it is he, who has the powers to appoint the provincial Governors.

There was a lot of drama in the Sindh Assembly today as the PPP and MMA vehemently protested over the election to the post of Deputy Speaker. Both the parties had announced on Friday that their joint candidate, Abdul Rehman Rajput of MMA was elected Deputy Speaker of Sindh Assembly unopposed.

As the Sindh Governor extended the time for filing of nominations, the pro-Musharraf group fielded its own candidate. The polling for the election of Speaker was delayed amid protests over the decision of the Governor.



Benazir Bhutto

The Pakistan Muslim League-Qauid-e-Azam, National Alliance and Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM) supported the pro-Musharraf Speaker nominee.

His rival contender, Saifullah Dharejo, who had the support of the PPP and MMA, secured 73 votes.

However the biggest consolation for

Anees deported to Pakistan

Pak court frees Masood

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Dec. 14. — There was more bad news for India today. A day after Dawood Ibrahim's brother, Anees Ibrahim, was quietly freed by the authorities in Dubai, a Bench of the Lahore High Court ordered the release of Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar from house arrest.

He is New Delhi's most wanted terrorist involved in last year's Parliament attack and the man India was forced to hand over to the hijackers in Kandahar.

There were also reports that the Dubai authorities had deported Anees Ibrahim to Pakistan. This was another blow to CBI efforts to get him extradited to India to stand trial in several cases, including the 1993 Mumbai serial bomb blasts.

India launched a blistering attack on Pakistan for freeing JeM supremo, saying the release was a "mockery of the judicial process."

New Delhi also reminded the international community, which it accuses of looking the other way when it comes to Pakistan sheltering terrorists active in India, that the strategy to ignore Pakistan's sponsoring of terrorism — even if short-term — while it searches for a few of the hardcore Al-Qaida ultras who may have escaped from Afghanistan, will not succeed.

The same High Court Bench had last month released the founder of the banned Lashkar-e-Taiyaba, Hafeez Saeed. Incidentally, Masood's release comes hours before the US assistant secretary of state, Ms

Christina Rocca's three-day visit to Islamabad.

The external affairs ministry spokesman, Mr Navtej Sarna, said the move to put Masood Azhar back into circulation was evidence that Pakistan's mindset and policies have not changed.

Islamabad had detained Masood Azhar, mastermind in the Parliament attack, under pressure from the international community following New Delhi's raising the ante in the aftermath of the attack.

New Delhi said it was evident that the authorities did not pursue the investigation and charges against Masood with seriousness. "Even when he was put in prison, he was allowed to contact his men and to continue with his activities. Later, he was placed under detention in his own home and the Pakistani authorities even paid money to the family," Mr Sarna said.

In the recent elections in Pakistan, he added, even as established democratic leaders were not allowed to contest, many who are linked to banned terrorist organisations were allowed to contest the polls and charges against several of them withdrawn at the last moment.

Mr Sarna referred to reports of Anees Ibrahim having been spirited away to Pakistan. Dubai police has reportedly said his deportation to Pakistan was in view of the fact that it was the last country from where he entered the UAE. Anees also had a Pakistani passport.

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13 Pak rebels walk free

Quetta, Dec. 4 (Reuters): Pakistan today released 13 activists from outlawed Islamic groups, including members of two groups engaged in insurgent activities in Kashmir.

Officials said the men were freed on the orders of Jam Yousaf, the new chief minister of Baluchistan province in the southwest of the country. "All prisoners from defunct religious parties detained in different prisons should be released immediately," Yousaf said in a directive issued late last night.

Of the 13 men released, two are from banned Kashmir-linked groups Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad and the rest from a Sunni and a rival Shiite Muslim group involved in sectarian killings in Pakistan in recent years.

Early this year, President Pervez Musharraf had banned five extremist Islamic groups as part of a campaign to stem rising religious militancy and defuse the confrontation with India.

The releases came after Yousaf, who comes from the pro-military Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-e-Azam, joined hands with hardline Islamic

groups to form a coalition government in Baluchistan.

The religious right, which had fared poorly in previous Pakistani elections, made huge gains in the October poll by tapping anti-US sentiment, particularly in regions bordering Afghanistan.

The Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal coalition of six hardline Islamic groups took power last week in the North-West Frontier Province that also borders Afghanistan. The success of the coalition raised concerns in the West that it could undermine the US-led war on terror.

But government officials have said its impact would be limited because provincial governments had no jurisdiction over a key tribal belt where hundreds of al Qaida and Taliban members were believed to have fled from Afghanistan.

Pakistani authorities last month released Hafiz Mohammad Saeed, founder of the outlawed Lashkar group, and in October freed Mohammad Azam Tariq, head of a banned sectarian Sunni Muslim group, who was elected to Parliament in the October election.

CONFIDENCE VOTE AFTER ID

Jamali govt regains majority

Dawn/ ANN

KARACHI, Dec. 3. — Pakistan's beleaguered new government headed by Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali today regained its one vote majority in the National Assembly when the Mutta-hida Qaumi Movement announced its "unconditional" support to the government "to save the democratic dispensation".

Earlier, a Pakistani minister said the Jamali government will take a vote of confidence in parliament after Id, as soon as a government is formed in Sindh.

Though support to the government was unconditional, yet the MQM at the same time demanded of the Prime Minister to ensure that in Sindh the MQM gets the chief ministership, to redress the "injustices" to the party by the previous governments.

A senior MQM leader, Dr Farooq Sattar, told reporters tonight: "After due consideration and to prevent the imposition of Governor's rule in the province (Sindh) and frustrate conspiracies of anti-democratic forces, the MQM coordination committee has decided to recall its decision of sitting on the

Opposition Benches and has supported Mr Jamali's government in the Centre, while exercising its democratic right to form government in the province."

An analyst said the MQM decision was in fact a reflection of the "feeling of being left out after PML-Q initiated coalition talks with the MMA and also succeeded in cooperative alliance in Baluchistan and were very near to a similar deal in the centre." In Mecca, the Pakistani federal

information minister, Mr Sheikh Rashid Ahmad, said the Jamali government would seek the vote of confidence after Id.

"We (the new government) are in no hurry," he said. "The Constitution provides us with a two months to take the vote of confidence in parliament.

We will take it as soon as the government in Sindh is formed."

Asked about the government formation in Sindh, Mr Ahmad said the process should be completed soon after Id. It was not clear as yet who would form the government in Sindh. But, he said, whichever party could muster support in the Sindh Assembly, would be allowed to form the government.

Sharif for London?



Mr Nawaz Sharif

ISLAMABAD, Dec. 3. — Mr Nawaz Sharif, living under strict restrictions in his Jeddah exile, is planning to move to London next month from where he could make a concerted effort to return home, media reports said today quoting a leader of his party. — PTI

Islamists to share power with PML-Q

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

QUETTA, Nov. 30. — Islamists in one of Pakistan's key western border provinces announced a surprise agreement today to form a governing coalition with the army-backed Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q), which it opposed at the federal level.

The Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal alliance of six Islamic parties decided to govern in southwest Baluchistan province with the PML-Q, which rules the fragile federal coalition government, in exchange for the release from jail of two of its members convicted of graft.

Both former provincial ministers, they were

jailed in 2000, one on a forgery conviction and the other for misuse of power. The PML-Q and MMA are the largest seat-holders in the 65-seat Baluchistan legislature with 21 and 18 seats respectively. On Wednesday, the MMA announced they had the support of minor parties opposed to President Gen. Pervez Musharraf and would be able to form government.

"All the parties have agreed to give us the right to lead the coalition government," MMA parliamentary leader Maulvi Abdul Wasay told reporters then. Now, however, the PML-Q will hold the post of chief minister, while MMA will hold the speakership under a deal announced early today following a visit to the provincial

capital Quetta by Prime Minister Mr Zafarullah Jamali, a PML-Q leader from Baluchistan.

■ **Gaddafi's son meets Musharraf:** Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi's son Saif-ul-Islam Gaddafi called on Gen. Musharraf today and delivered a goodwill message from his father, a foreign ministry statement said.

Saif-ul-Islam Gaddafi, who heads the charity Gaddafi International Foundation, was on a five-day visit here. Gen. Musharraf said he hoped Libya could play a constructive role in urging India to enter into a dialogue with Pakistan, the statement said, adds AFP from Islamabad.

PPP suspends 3 dissidents

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, NOV. 29. Faced with one of the gravest crisis on its 35th foundation day, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) today suspended three dissidents who are part of the Cabinet of the Government headed by Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali.

It was the ten-member 'forward block' of the PPP that helped Mr. Jamali get elected as the Prime Minister on the floor of the National Assembly on November 21. Since the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, has suspended the provisions relating to defection, the PPP cannot move for their disqualification.

However, there is a growing view among independent observers that it is the attitude of the PPP chairperson and former Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, that has landed the party in its present predicament. There were contradictory and conflicting signals from her on the strategy the party leaders

should adopt in government-formation after the October 10 election.

This was evident from the fact that the leaders were engaged in dialogues with both the rebel Muslim League and the alliance of religious parties. As a result, there was total confusion in the party rank and file and this led the Jamaat-e-Islami chief, Qazi Hussain Ahmed, to accuse her of double-dealing.

Even after the formation of the Government by the 'king's party', Ms. Bhutto allowed the dissidents to get away with the campaign that they switched loyalties with her blessings.

This impression gained ground as the party failed to act against the ten members of the National Assembly who openly voted for Mr. Jamali, six of whom later became part of his government.

The Central Executive Committee of the PPP said here today that the membership of three dissidents, Makhdoom Faisal Saleh, Rao Sikandar Iqbal

and Nurez Shakoor, had been suspended with immediate effect for their failure to respond to the notices issued last week. Curiously, the Committee was silent about the other seven dissidents who voted for Mr. Jamali.

The acting secretary-general of the PPP, Raza Rabbani, said the dissidents, who spearheaded the formation of a forward block in the party, were issued notices last week asking them to clarify their position to Ms. Bhutto. However, none of them contacted Ms. Bhutto.

New CM for NWFP

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, NOV. 29. Akram Durrani today became the first Chief Minister of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) to be elected solely on the strength of religious parties.

Mr. Durrani, a close confidant of Maulana Fazlur Rehman, leader of the Muttahida Majalis-e-Amal (MMA), who lost the Prime Ministerial race, defeated the combined Opposition candidate, Qalandar Lodhi, by a margin of 37 votes.

Mr. Lodhi — jointly fielded by the pro-military Pakistan Muslim League (PML-Q), the former Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party and the Awami National Party — bagged only 41 votes against Mr. Durrani's 78 in the 124-member Provincial Assembly.

Among the elections to the National and the four Provincial Assemblies, it was only in the NWFP where any group secured a clear majority. But thanks to the confusion at the national level over government formation, Mr. Durrani had to wait for one-and-a-half months to take charge.

The United States has reason to be concerned over the emergence of the MMA as the group campaigned on an anti-American platform and vowed to expel the U.S. personnel engaged in the hunt for the remnants of the Al-Qaeda and the Taliban.

However, Mr. Durrani has chosen to be careful about implementation of the promises made by the MMA to end "outside interference" in Pakistan. He was quoted, two days ago, as saying that the MMA would not allow Americans to continue their anti-Taliban and the Al-Qaeda operations, but Mr. Durrani came out with a strong denial.

Mr. Durrani sought to distinguish between the tribal areas in the Frontier, under the jurisdiction of the Federal Government, and the other areas and maintained that it was not his

business to question the policies of the Federal Government in the tribal areas.

Meanwhile, indications of a possible understanding between the pro-Musharraf and religious parties for government formation in Baluchistan came from the Prime Minister, Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali, when he made a brief visit to the capital, Quetta, during the day.

He told presspersons that an agreement would be signed between the two sides later in the night.

Hours after the Muttahida Quami Movement announced on Tuesday that it had withdrawn support to the Jamali Government, the Muslim League (PML-QA), on Thursday, re-opened dialogue with the MMA to bring the religious alliance into the fold. a

There were efforts by both sides for an understanding, days before Mr. Jamali was elected Prime Minister in the National Assembly on November 21.

The talks broke down on the question of continuation of the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, as President and some of the controversial amendments to the Constitution made by him.

It appears managers of Gen. Musharraf had indicated that he was prepared to quit as Chief of Army Staff after two-and-a-half years. However, the MMA was not prepared to give him more than five months.

NOV 2002

Rise of religious parties in Pak.

29/11 Pak 10 By Suba Chandran

THE RISE OF the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), an alliance of six religious parties, in Pakistan is generally attributed to anti-American feelings following the U.S. war on terrorism and the military regime's support to it. No doubt anti-Americanism played a vital role in the political ascendancy of the MMA, but to ignore other pertinent factors projects a wrong picture.

For, despite the hype, the MMA's strong showing is limited to the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Baluchistan and not spread over all of Pakistan. Of the 45 National Assembly it won, 35 are from the NWFP and Baluchistan. Of the 3.19 million votes in favour of the MMA, 2.8 million were from these two provinces. Though the MMA won six seats in Sindh and three in Punjab, the margin was very narrow — in two seats in Karachi and one in Hyderabad it was only around 500 votes.

Even in the Provincial Assemblies, the MMA got enough seats to form the provincial government only in the NWFP (52 out of 99). In Baluchistan, it won only 14 seats out of 51, whereas the PML-Q, in fact, won 15. In Sindh, the MMA won only 8 seats out of 130 and in Punjab a mere 9 out of the 297.

Certainly, the electoral performance of the religious parties has improved when compared to previous elections. Though they never contested under a joint banner in previous elections, in 1993 all the religious parties put together won 1.4 million votes. Since the Jammāt-e-Islami did not take part in 1997, a comparison is possible only with the election 10 years ago.

What has led to the political growth of Islamic parties in the last ten years, especially in the NWFP and Baluchistan? Linking their growth only to anti-Americanism is simplis-

tic. If there is an anti-American feeling all over Pakistan, then why did the MMA fail to win many seats in Punjab and Sindh?

How did the MMA manage to gain support only in the NWFP and Baluchistan? From the time of the Afghan war against the Soviets, these two provinces have been steadily coming under the influence of radical Islam. The political use of religion in terms of jihad to fight the Soviets was a primary factor in mil-

The deciding factor in the October elections, no doubt, was the American war on terrorism and the support rendered by the Pakistani military regime. Though the above-mentioned factors had been present through the 1990s, it was this factor, which swung the voters towards the MMA. The war affected the daily lives of people, especially the pashtuns living along the border. First and foremost was the loss of life. Many pashtuns from Pakistan fought along with the Taliban against the U.S. and

world is not an independent phenomenon; rather, they are to a great extent a response to the failure of successive Governments to govern effectively and also due to the U.S. policies in West Asia.

Factionalism within the liberal parties in Baluchistan and the NWFP further divided the liberal vote bank. The Sherpao faction of the PPP affected the latter's votes, while the National Awami Party of Ajmal Khat-tak affected the ANP vote bank and the PML-Q affected the PML-N vote bank. Besides, personality clashes also resulted in the liberal parties supporting the MMA candidate jointly, with the sole objective of defeating a particular candidate especially belonging to the ANP. This while the different religious parties mobilised under a single banner.

The MMA simply seized the window of opportunity. The Westminster system of first-past-the-post also was a factor in its electoral success. While it has been able to get 45 seats from 3.19 million votes, the PML-N has been able to win only 15 seats to the National Assembly despite getting 3.30 million votes.

Reduction of the voter age also helped the MMA. With invariably all the religious parties having their own madrassas, they were able to get the students to vote for the alliance. And, the low turnout in these provinces only helped the MMA to win more seats. In the NWFP, where the MMA received maximum number of seats for both the Provincial and National Assemblies, it obtained only around 11 per cent of the total registered votes, in Baluchistan, it was around 13.5 per cent.

While the MMA succeeded in mobilising its vote bank, the liberal voters simply did not vote. Thus, it is evident that the electoral success of the MMA is not conclusive proof that religious parties are increasing their influence in Pakistan as a whole.

The electoral success of the MMA is not conclusive proof that religious parties are increasing their influence in Pakistan as a whole.

itarising the society. Jihad became a household term in these two provinces with the steady inflow and outflow of mujahideen.

The failure of the federal government to adequately govern these provinces also led to the shift. Parts of the NWFP were never under the total control of the federal administration and were always administered by local customs. In the 1990s, the growth of Taliban culture provided less expensive, easy but swift justice instead of the expensive, bureaucratic and much delayed justice from the federal administration.

Even after the military regime took over, welfare activities were never really taken care of. When the regime announced the construction of schools, hospitals and roads, just before elections through last-minute visits by Syed Iftikhar Hussain Shah, Governor of the NWFP, favouring the PML-Q candidate, Syed Iftikhar Gilani, it was too late.

The alienation, especially at the political and cultural levels, from the rest of Pakistan has made people in these provinces look to and identify with the Taliban.

were killed or injured. Most of the pashtuns in Pakistan also have family ties across the border, and the U.S. military efforts did kill many innocent victims. The more the collateral damage, the more the animosity towards the U.S. The "Punjabi" support to the U.S. war efforts further alienated the pashtuns from the rest of the country. Worse, the Pakistani security forces along with the U.S. undertook search operations in the tribal areas. All these factors played a crucial role in shifting their support away from moderate parties the ANP, the PML (N) and the PPP. With the religious parties openly advocating resistance to American influence, it was but natural for the locals to vote for them.

The military regime in its efforts to sideline the PPP and the PML (N) also sidelined the moderate and ethnic parties such as the Awami National Party (ANP). The supporters of these parties in Baluchistan and the NWFP simply did not come out to vote, which is reflected by the low poll turnout in these two provinces. Policymakers fail to realise that the rise in fundamentalism in this part of the

29 NOV 2002

THE HINDU

Jolted Jamali woos hawks for survival

ZEESHAN HAIDER

Islamabad, Nov. 28 (Reuters): Pakistan's main pro-military party scrambled to save its fragile government today as a coalition partner withdrew its support from Prime Minister Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali just days after he was sworn in.

The government set out to woo conservative Islamic parties to fill the hole left when 16 lawmakers withdrew their support yesterday.

The defection robbed the government, appointed after elections last month, of its razor-thin one-seat majority in the 342-seat National Assembly.

The prospect of the fiercely anti-US Islamists joining a coalition government alarmed financial markets, sending the Karachi Stock Exchange benchmark index down more than two per cent.

A powerbroker of the Pakistan Prime Minister's party, the Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-e-Azam, met Fazal-ur-Rehman, the secretary-general of the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) alliance of Islamic groups — which has 60 seats in parliament.

"We don't want the government to collapse... we don't want the country to plunge into crisis. That's why we have created flexibility in our attitudes," Rehman said after the talks.

The MMA alliance tapped popular opposition to the US military presence in Afghanistan and Pakistan, to boost its vote from the last election when religious groups won just two seats.

The alliance opposes the presence of US troops in Pakistan and demands military President Pervez Musharraf quit the army and reverse sweeping constitutional changes made before the election.

Its rise has caused concern in the West that it could undermine the US-led hunt for al Qaida and Taliban operatives in Pakistan and neighbouring Afghanistan.

"We will try to create consensus on all issues on which MMA had reservations. I am very sure we will do it," said government negotiator Chaudhry Shujaat Hussein. The meeting with Rehman came a day after the Muttahida Qaumi Movement



Members of the Baluchistan provincial Assembly pray during the inaugural session in Quetta on Thursday. (Reuters)

(MQM) party quit the government, accusing Jamali's government of failing to back it in a row with a rival faction in the MQM stronghold of Karachi.

The defection undermines Jamali's bid to win a mandatory confidence vote in the National Assembly within two months, unless he can win the backing of the MMA alliance.

Musharraf changed the constitution to give himself the power to sack governments and to appoint a military-dominated National Security Council to oversee civilian rule.

Political analysts said Jamali was not facing imminent danger of defeat in parliament, although the withdrawal of MQM support had dealt him and his government a blow.

They said MQM's decision could be a ploy to extract maximum concessions from Jamali as the Prime Minister seeks to forge a coalition in Sindh province, of which Karachi is the capital.

"I don't see any danger because no party wants to pull down the government. It seems to be a bargaining tactic by MQM," analyst Shafqat Mehmood said.

However, Mehmood said Jamali would be haunted by instability unless his government mustered a comfortable majority.

To seal the premiership, Jamali had to win the support of myriad smaller parties and of 10 defectors from one of his main rivals, the Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians (PPP) led by exiled former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.

The PPP called for an immediate confidence vote.

"The government has lost the majority in the National Assembly after the withdrawal of support by MQM. It has turned it into a minority government," Raza Rabbai, PPP's acting secretary-general, told Reuters.

THE TELEGRAPH

29 NOV 2002

MQM decides to sit in Opposition

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, NOV. 27. The four-day-old Jamali Government in Pakistan suffered its first setback today, when the Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM) decided to sit in the 'Opposition' in the National Assembly and reduce the new Government to a minority. The MQM chose to reverse its earlier decision of sitting on the Treasury benches, without being part of the Government, on the plea that the Government has failed to implement its promise of abolition of 'no go areas' in Karachi.

Among others, it was the support of the 17-member strong MQM in the Assembly, that helped Mir Zafrullah Khan Jamali to scrape through by a one vote majority in the House. This, of course, does not immediately pose a threat to the Jamali Government, as under the

Pakistan Law, Mr. Jamali is required to demonstrate his majority on the floor of the House within 60 days from the date of his election — November 21.

The MQM's decision has not surprised political observers. It is essentially seen as 'bargaining tactics' of the MQM to oust its rival faction from the metro city, and more importantly force the pro-Musharraf parties to allow it head the Provincial Government in Sindh.

Significantly, while announcing its decision to sit in the Opposition, the senior MQM leader, Farooq Sattar, made it a point to appeal to the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, to ensure that his promise on abolition of the 'no go areas' in Karachi was implemented in letter and spirit.

The abolition of the 'no go areas' has been the long-standing demand of the MQM. These are areas in the city under the occu-

pation of the rival faction of the MQM, Mohajir Quami Movement (Haqiqi), since 1992. It is believed that the rival faction was created by the Pakistani intelligence agencies to counter the MQM, when its cadres went 'berserk'.

Hours before the election to the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly on November 19, the MQM announced its decision to support the nominee of the pro-Musharraf alliance. It was preceded by an announcement by the Musharraf Government that the authorities in the Sindh Province had been directed to take steps for abolition of 'no go areas'.

The next day, the leaders of the MQM visited some of the so-called 'no go areas' with great fanfare, as personnel of the Sindh Rangers and police evicted supporters of its rival faction. The leadership of the ri-

val faction went underground and appealed to the Opposition parties to take up the issue on all available fora. Ironically, the lone member of the rival MQM in the National Assembly voted in favour of Mr. Jamali.

Mr. Sattar told a news conference in Karachi that the Government had failed to deliver on its promise to 'liberate' the 'no go areas' and demanded imposition of the writ of the law in these areas.

The immediate implication of the decision of the MQM would be on the formation of the government in the Sindh Province.

While the Benazir party is the single largest party in the 160-member State Assembly with 61 members, the MQM has over 45 members. The pro-Musharraf parties are hoping to form a government with the help of the MQM and dissidents of the Benazir party.

THE HINDU

28 NOV 2002

Pak (1)

Pak. Governors take oath

HD-12
26/11

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, NOV. 25. After the fresh oath by Pervez Musharraf as Pakistan President for five years on November 15, today, the four provincial Governors took oath under the partially revived 1973 Constitution.

The Governors of Punjab, North West Frontier Province (NWFP), Sindh and Baluchistan were administered the oath of office and secrecy by the Chief Justices of the respective High Courts. Under the amended Constitution, appointment of

Governors is the prerogative of the President.

However, the intriguing aspect of the fresh oath by the President and Governors was that while they were taking oath, the Chief Justices of Pakistan Supreme Court and High Courts, who administered them the oath, continue to function under the Provisional Constitutional Order (PCO).

The PCO was promulgated by Gen. Musharraf after the October 12, 1999 military take over and suspension of the 1973 Constitution. Three months af-

ter the promulgation of the PCO, all judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts were asked to take oath under PCO and it became a major issue as some of the judges including the then Chief Justice of the apex court refused to obey and preferred to resign.

Now the question being asked in political and legal circles is whether the judges sworn under the PCO could administer oath under the partially revived Constitution. The question assumes added importance as the revived Constitu-

tion consists of controversial amendments made by Gen. Musharraf.

This is not the only controversy surrounding the judges. Just a day before the general election on October 10, Gen. Musharraf, had promulgated an Ordinance extending the tenure of all judges by three years.

In Karachi, the Governor of Sindh, Mohammadmian Soomro, was administered the oath under 1973 constitution by the Chief Justice of Sindh High Court, Justice Syed Saeed Ashad.

THE HINDU

26 NOV 2002

Jamali hangs by a thin thread in Pak

MIKE COLLETT-WHITE

Islamabad, Nov. 24 (Reuters): Pakistan's new Prime Minister looks precariously placed, with a fragile coalition to protect, a formidable Opposition to appease and a powerful President watching his every move, commentators said today.

A day after being sworn into office, 58-year-old Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali must juggle the demands of myriad smaller parties and defectors who helped him muster a narrow majority in Thursday's vote for the premiership.

The stout, bearded man from the tribal southwestern province of Baluchistan put political arithmetic to one side today, urging officials to get more supplies

to victims of Thursday's earthquake which killed 23 people in remote northern Pakistan. He told state-run PTV that he was prepared to ask other countries for aid, if the need arose.

Jamali, from the pro-military Pakistan Muslim League (PML), has voiced support for President Pervez Musharraf's decision to back the US hunt for Taliban and al Qaeda operatives in Pakistan and neighbouring Afghanistan.

Economic policies popular in the West are also likely to survive, with the appointment of the respected outgoing finance minister, Shaukat Aziz, as special adviser to Jamali.

But many have predicted that the new government, which ended three years of military dictatorship under Musharraf after a

bloodless coup in 1999, would not last its full five-year term.

"Jamali has... formed the government, but is still hanging precariously by the ledge, from which he could fall should as few as eight members from his coalition move over to the Opposition," the *Nation* newspaper said in an editorial.

Jamali only won the minimum necessary 172 votes in the 342-seat National Assembly with the help of smaller parties and the defection of 10 members of the main Opposition party.

There was a heavy price to pay. Three of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) "turncoats" were handed key ministries in

the new Cabinet — defence, interior and petroleum.

Jamali faces an opposition made up of two main elements — the anti-military PPP led by exiled former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and a coalition of six hardline Islamic groups opposed to the presence of US troops in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Leaders in the West will have breathed a sigh of relief to see the religious right sidelined, and its leader, pro-Taliban Fazal-ur-Rehman, failing in his bid to become Prime Minister.

But political analysts argue that the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) bloc would have been less of a force in government th-

an in Opposition. In control of the North West Frontier Province and a dominant factor in Baluchistan, the MMA's fierce anti-US and conservative Islamic agenda will be harder for the government to control, they say.

Musharraf promises to revive constitution fully by December 31

Islamabad: Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf has promised to revive the constitution fully by December 31 this year, which would activate the



Gen Musharraf

anti-defection law that he had kept in abeyance to enable Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali win the election for the post of the prime minister with the help of defectors from the opposition.

Gen Musharraf has proclaimed through a back-dated order before the swearing-in of Mr Jamali on Saturday that the rest of the constitutional provisions, including the anti-defection law, would come into operation after the polls of the senate, likely to be held by December 25.

The entire constitution, including the clauses that guaranteed the fundamental rights of the people would be restored by Dec 31, local daily the *Nation* said.

On Nov 15, Gen Musharraf partly revived the constitution which incorporated his controversial amendments empowering himself and the army.

The complete revival of the constitution could pose a threat to the longevity of Mr Jamali's ministry as it survived by a slender margin of 172, which was one vote more

than the required majority in the 342-member house.

As of now, Mr Jamali is comfortable as the house has an operational strength of only 334 members. The by-elections for the rest were expected to be held within the next two months.

Given the importance of the 10 dissidents of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) headed by former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, Mr Jamali has accommodated six of them in his 21-member ministry that took oath on Saturday, giving cabinet portfolios to three, which included the powerful defence and the interior ministries.

Three other defectors have been given minister of state portfolios. Of the rest, 14 of the ministries have been allotted to the pro-Musharraf Pakistan Muslim League-Q (PML-Q), two to its ally the National Alliance and one to rebel PPP leader, Afthab Sherpao.

The important foreign ministry has been given to PML-Q member Khurish Mehmood Kasuri who was also previously a contender to the speaker's post.

The Muthahida Quami Movement (MQM), which has emerged as an important component of Mr Jamali's power base with all its 17 elected members voting for him in the national assembly had declined to join the ministry. PTI

Pakistan's back to normal

The army has just secured its own future through some careful manoeuvres

IF there were any expectations that a change in Pakistan for the better would take place under global pressure to restore democracy, this must now be laid to rest after the sad sight of floor crossings and horse-trading which could ensure the election of the leader of the house, and the new prime minister, only by a margin of one vote in a house of 342. As many as ten members of the National Assembly reportedly crossed the floor to make it possible for the king's party to win the crucial vote. A coalition government was very much on the cards after the process of election started and the two earlier prime ministers were debarred from fighting the elections in a process unambiguously designated inside Pakistan as 'pre-poll rigging'. But what Pakistan has got is even less than that.

Some would say that this is nothing new. Pakistan's democratic government, when it holds power, does so under the shadow of the army's unquestioned power, and its cynical persistence to hold on to that power. Nawaz Sharif committed many mistakes in governance. But his real crime was that he tried to break out

of the iron hold of the army, and was not wise enough to manage the fall out. The army has just ensured that such things will not happen in the future, and it will not become a 'normal' army. A series of steps by General Pervez Musharraf have ensured the continuation of the army as the institution decides all key policies even while an elected government faces responsibility without authority.

Whatever else happens, it is clear that the new government in Islamabad would at best be a fragile one, lacking in legitimacy even for a country like Pakistan. The world would have no option but to deal with this reality where the US war on terrorism had fizzled out in the badlands of Pakistan's frontier regions and cities. The Islamic parties, who now have an influential presence in the National Assembly, besides their street power in a society that has been drifting toward right wing jihadi extremism, would now appear to be poised to possess greater legitimacy in pursuing their agenda. The developments, therefore, could have far reaching consequences for the future.

25 NOV 2002

Talk to new Govt.: Musharraf

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, NOV. 23. The Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, today hoped that with a civilian government in place in Islamabad, the Indian Government would resume the stalled dialogue with Pakistan for resolution of all differences and betterment of relations.

In an informal talk with reporters after administering oath of office and secrecy to the new Prime Minister, Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali, and his Council of Ministers, Gen. Musharraf complained that India had created problems during his regime. "The Indian Government did create hurdles in my case but now there is a new government, they should talk to them."

Since the collapse of the Agra summit, Gen. Musharraf has repeatedly talked about the hurdles created by 'hardliners' in India on normalisation of ties with Pakistan. In his interview to *The Hindu*, which appeared

on April 1 this year, Gen. Musharraf had held the Union Home Minister, Lal Krishna Advani, responsible for the failure of the Agra summit.

Gen. Musharraf's hope on the resumption of talks was in response to a specific question on the proposed SAARC summit by Islamabad in January and non-confirmation of dates by India. His observations could be interpreted as a gentle reminder to

India for an early response on the dates January 11-13 for the summit proposed by Pakistan.

In the last few days New Delhi and Islamabad have been engaged in a war of words on the proposed SAARC summit. While Pakistan maintains that there was a tentative agreement on the summit dates among the SAARC Foreign Ministers on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in September, India insists that there was no such agreement.

Of course, Gen. Musharraf is also conveying a message that the military has nothing to do with the new civilian setup. Though it is three days since Mr. Jamali was elected Pakistan Prime Minister, the customary congratulatory message from New Delhi is yet to come.

Gen. Musharraf said he was happy to transfer power to the elected Prime Minister. "I have fulfilled yet another promise by handing over responsibility of the Chief Executive."

New Foreign Minister

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, NOV. 23. Khurshid Mehmood Qasoori, a senior leader of the Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-e-Azam), is the new Foreign Minister of Pakistan. The leader of the Pakistan People's Party's dissident group, Faisal Saleh Hayat, is the new Interior Minister and his senior colleague, Rao Sikandar Iqbal, the Defence Minister.

24 NOV 2002

THE HINDU

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2002

PKI
AN UPHILL TASK FOR JAMALI 110-10 23/11

AN ELECTED CIVILIAN has at last been chosen as the Prime Minister of Pakistan after several weeks of suspense and that is perhaps the most, if not the only, positive comment that can be made on the matter. Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali, who will be sworn in on Saturday, won the crucial vote in the National Assembly with the narrowest of margins and thus fulfilled the hopes of the military that a candidate of its preference would hold the executive power that the President, Pervez Musharraf, has promised to hand over. The single vote margin by which Mr. Jamali was able to obtain the support of at least half the members of the House, the fact that he needed the support of over 20 parties to make the grade and the widespread knowledge that he did so only with a great deal of help from the military do not augur well for his term in office. Although Mr. Jamali's party, the Pakistan Muslim League (Qaid-e-Azam), also controls Punjab, it does not appear very likely that the normal logic of Pakistan politics — whereby a Prime Minister with a base in this vital province is able to consolidate his position at the national level — will work in the present circumstances. The fact that Mr. Jamali hails from Baluchistan is probably a relatively minor drawback in this context when compared to the fact that he has never been a major figure in Pakistan politics and that party satraps in Punjab are unlikely to allow him to extend his hold to the province.

With over 20 parties having extended their support, and therefore expecting their share of the largesse, Mr. Jamali will face a harrowing task in trying to cobble together a coalition. While it is possible that the military will extend all its assistance till this objective is accomplished, it is very unlikely that a coalition held together by threat and allurements alone will be either effective or long-lasting. Given that the military leadership did most of the bargaining with all parties in the period between the gener-

al elections and the National Assembly vote for the prime ministership it is probable that Mr. Jamali does not even know what promises have been made and to which party. If there is such a huge potential for disillusionment built into the process of coalition building there is also a very real chance that disenchantment will corrode the very fragile unity of the PML (QA). Were Mr. Jamali to ever surmount these considerable problems he would still have to deal with the perennial struggle between the civilian and military leaderships of Pakistan for the greater share of limited national resources. The history of Pakistan over the past two decades bears ample proof that even those Prime Ministers who enter office as proteges of the military (Mohammed Khan Junejo and Nawaz Sharif being the two examples) turn against their one-time sponsors once the struggle for control intensifies.

Neither can Mr. Jamali expect any mercy from the Opposition. Although there is an ideological cleavage between the second and third largest parties, the Pakistan People's Party and the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal, they have shown over the past few weeks that they can talk to each other. These parties have a common cause in their opposition to the constitutional amendments the military has wrought and in their anger at the manner in which Mr. Jamali's election was accomplished. The wafer-thin margin of Mr. Jamali's victory could not but have whetted the Opposition's appetite for the toppling game. Having vested his office with the power to dismiss the National Assembly, Gen. Musharraf could, in theory, boost Mr. Jamali's chances of survival by confronting the newly elected legislators with the threat that he could make them face the electorate again. But that might not faze an Opposition which has established its relevance despite all that the military did to assist its favourites.

23 NOV 2002

THE HINDU

Pyrrhic victory

5x6 PAKISTAN 2002

Musharraf bites more than he can chew

Mir Zafrullah Khan Jamali, Pakistan's newly elected prime minister, resembles Hu Jintao, the new Chinese president — nobody knows him, but he has powerful backers. Hu had been anointed by Deng Xiaoping to eventually take over. Likewise Jamali is a feudal lord from Baluchistan and a political lightweight, but General Zia ul-Haq thought he was splendid prime ministerial material, which in the army's lexicon is someone who knows how to kowtow. Not surprisingly Jamali is a loyalist of General Musharraf. With the posts of Prime Minister, Speaker and deputy Speaker having gone to the PML(QA), which is favoured by what Pakistani newspapers euphemistically refer to as the "establishment", this round of the battle may have gone to Musharraf, but there is grave doubt whether he has won the war.

Currently, Jamali has a razor-thin one-vote majority in the 342 member national assembly. The PML(QA), by itself, holds only 120 seats, and 52 more votes were procured from a rag-tag bunch of smaller outfits, besides inducing 10 Benazir supporters to cross over, in violation of existing anti-defection rules, through a combination of inducements and strong-arm methods. To add to Jamali's problems of legitimacy, it is not clear under what Constitution the new parliament will function, as roughly 50 per cent of parliamentarians are vociferously opposed to controversial constitutional amendments brought in by Musharraf conferring extraordinary powers on himself and his National Security Council. The issue is so divisive that MMA leader Maulana Fazlur Rahman has warned that Musharraf is driving a coach and horses through the constitution and could land the country in a crisis similar to the 1971 "catastrophe". Eminent editor Najam Sethi has described the government benches as "lambs ready for slaughter", as the experienced and vocal politicians are all in the opposition.

Jamali, in fact, could not be administered his oath of office in parliament for fear of protest; he had to be taken aside and given the oath privately by "President" Musharraf. He is off to an extremely shaky start and will find it impossible to govern without coming to an understanding with either Benazir's PPP or the MMA. But both groups have made it clear that they find Musharraf's amendments unacceptable, the rock on which past parleys have foundered. New Delhi should watch closely and utilise opportunities as they present themselves; the military regime that is primarily responsible for Islamabad's intransigence over Kashmir will soon find itself in trouble domestically.

Jamali sings Pervez praise

Nancy ally is Pakistan PM

OUR BUREAU AND AGENCIES

Nov. 21: Mir Zafarullah Jamali, a pro-military politician backed by US ambassador Nancy Powell, has been elected Pakistan's first civilian Prime Minister since the 1999 coup.

Powell, who has known Jamali for two decades, had lobbied hard for the candidature of the Muslim League (Quaid-e-Azam) nominee. The League is regarded as the "king's party" because of its proximity with President Pervez Musharraf.

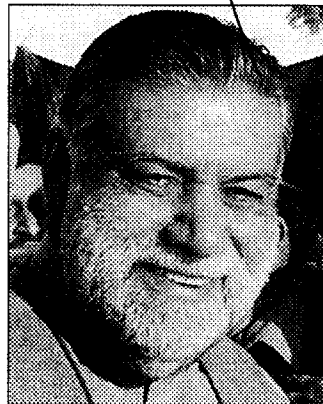
Analysts and diplomats say Jamali has been chosen for the job precisely because he is an establishment figure who is expected to cooperate with the military.

Musharraf has promised to hand over the running of the country to the Prime Minister, but he will remain President for a further five years with considerable influence and the power to dismiss parliament. Jamali will be sworn in on Saturday.

Accepting the vote, Jamali endorsed Musharraf's legacy in the three years since the coup, stressing the general's achievements in foreign and economic policy and implicitly promising more of the same.

"On the external front, because of the policy of the last three years, Pakistan has become a frontline state, Pakistan has respect and dignity," Jamali said. "Thanks to Musharraf who gave a road map and fulfilled his promise... the transfer of power is going on," Jamali said in his acceptance speech.

Jamali won a narrow majority in the ballot with 172 of the 328 votes cast, relying on the help of



Jamali (AFP)

smaller parties and some defectors from his larger rivals. Diplomats are already wondering how long his government will last.

The soft-spoken Jamali is an experienced but staid politician from Baluchistan. Jamali is a moderate Muslim who also served as a minister under Zia-ul-Haq. Married, with four sons and a daughter, Jamali speaks English well and is also fluent in the main local languages, including Urdu, Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashtu and Baluchi.

To the likely relief of investors, an alliance of hardline Islamist groups, which rode a wave of anti-American sentiment in October's general election, was set for a spell in the opposition after declining to join the Muslim League in a coalition. Its candidate Fazul-ur-Rehman won 86 votes today.

Nevertheless the Islamists, who want US forces out of Pakistan, control two provincial assemblies, and are likely to be a powerful force in the Senate or upper house of parliament.

Jamali is Pakistan PM

Muhammad Najeeb
ISLAMABAD 21 NOVEMBER

MIR Zafarullah Khan Jamali was elected as Pakistan's Prime Minister on Thursday. Mr Jamali became the first leader from Baluchistan province to be chosen for the high office.

Mr Jamali, of the Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid-e-Azam (PML-QA), secured 172 of the 329 ballots cast in the 342-member National Assembly or Lower House of Parliament. He defeated two candidates — Maulana Fazlur Rehman of the Islamic alliance Mutahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) who got 86 votes and Shah Mahmood Qureshi of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) who won 70 votes. "It has been ascertained that Mr Jamali commands the confidence of the majority in the House," Speaker Chaudhry Amir Hussain declared after the results were announced.

Mr Hussain also belongs to the PML-QA, a party



which is perceived as being close to President Musharraf. His election to the Speaker's post on Tuesday had been seen as a clear indication that Mr Jamali would become Prime Minister.

Mr Jamali is likely to take his oath of office on Friday to become Pakistan's 16th elected Prime Minister. President Pervez Musharraf, who seized power in a coup in 1999 and conducted elections last month following a Supreme Court order that gave him three years to restore democracy, will administer him the oath of office. The final schedule is yet to be announced.

In the past, all Prime Ministers were elected from either Punjab or Sindh province. No Prime Minister or President in Pakistan's history has ever hailed from Baluchistan, a province that shares its border with Iran and Afghanistan. Pakistan has seen four Prime Ministers being elected from East Pakistan before it won independence in 1971 and became Bangladesh.

— IANS

The Economic Times

2 2 80 002

Musharraf to continue with his role

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, NOV. 20. Less than 14 hours before the Pakistan National Assembly is to elect the Prime Minister, the Pakistan President and Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Pervez Musharraf, tonight claimed to have put the nation on the "on the right course" during his three-year regime and vowed to continue with his role.

It was an address, the first after he took fresh oath as President on November 16 under the partially revived Constitution, meant to present a balance sheet of his three-year reign with a clear message. While the power would be transferred from the military to a civilian set-up, he would very much remain as President in uniform and expect the new set-up to continue with the "good" policies.

Attired in black sherwani (collarless full sleeve coat) Gen. Musharraf, in his 75-minute address, asked the people to recall the bleak scenario when the military ousted the then Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, in October 1999 and compare it to the "bright prospects" of today in all fields. He peppered his speech with statistics and reports in support of his argument.

Gen. Musharraf claimed to have fulfilled all the promises made to the nation and said

now it was the duty of the elected representatives to help the country attain the place visualised by the founders.

He was scathing in his attack on the earlier four civilian governments saying they had failed to come up to the expectations of the people, as they could not function in a democratic manner.

They could not match the achievements of his regime. He said the country needed political reforms for the supremacy of democracy and maintained that in the past there was no system to check corruption and inefficiency and the people had no power to resolve their problems at the local level.

Foreign policy and relations with India figured in the passing. His Government, Gen. Musharraf claimed, was able to boost the prestige of the country at a very difficult time and said that now Pakistan had very good relations with all countries.

On relations with India, he asserted that his Government upheld the "honour and dignity of Pakistan, did not succumb to Indian pressure and highlighted the Kashmir cause at all international fora". Pakistan also raised "Islamic causes", apprised the world of the utility of religious institutions and raised the issue of Indian atrocities against Muslims in Gujarat at the United Nations (U.N.).

Gen. Musharraf said that he had declared his assets when he took over and he was doing so today. He said he had made no personal gains and only drew the salary of the COAS and met his domestic expenses from this salary. He never drew salaries of the Chief Executive or the President. He never took any member of his family or any friend on pleasure trips abroad.

He staunchly defended the political reforms and restructuring by his Government and took credit for the controversial local government system. His Government made "far-reaching constitutional reforms" to keep a check on all powers and for the continuance of democracy and reforms. He asserted that the October 10 elections were "totally fair and transparent" and rejected allegations of pre and post-poll rigging. He claimed credit for what he termed as "unprecedented freedom to the media".

Gen. Musharraf hastened to add that the freedom should be exercised with a sense of responsibility. He said that his regime was successful in eliminating corruption at the top level and said not a single charge of corruption came to the fore during the last three years. "Of course, there were some allegations of corruption. But these were by thieves. I do not accept these charges," he said.

Pak. Speaker begins term on confrontationist note

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, NOV. 20. The newly-elected Speaker of the Pakistan National Assembly, Chaudhry Amir Hussain, has begun his innings on a confrontationist note by asserting that the controversial amendments made by Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, to the statute are part and parcel of the Constitution.

The Legal Framework Order (LFO), incorporating all the amendments, has been contested by several major parties.

At the time of oath-taking on the inaugural day of the new Assembly, members of the alliance of religious parties and the Alliance for Restoration of Democracy (ARD) insisted that they owe allegiance to the 1973 Constitution, as it existed before the October 12, 1999 military coup.

The Opposition had also made it clear that they did not recognise Gen. Musharraf as the President and if he intended to stay on as the first citizen, he should not only resign as Army Chief but also stand for election before the Parliament and the Provincial Assemblies.

In his maiden press encounter, the Speaker maintained that he was also elected to the 1985 National Assembly (constituted after a party-less election under the military dictator, Zia-ul-Haq) which had taken oath under the 1973 Constitution that was amended in a similar fashion as was done by Gen. Musharraf.

"Being the custodian of the House, the Speaker has a very pivotal role because this office is a very

dignified and prestigious one which demands great responsibility," he said.

At the same time, he said, since the provisions in the Constitution relating to defection had not been revived, anti-defection provisions would not be applicable to the members.

The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) said that the observations made by the Speaker on the LFO and the anti-defection provisions were devoid of facts, against the Constitution and the law and amounted to subverting the sovereignty of the Assembly.

"That the Speaker chose to make this statement outside the House before the press and not inside before the members when he presided over its session shows that he knew he could not make such a claim inside the House. It shows him in poor light.

"The correct legal and constitutional position is that the Supreme Court had in Zafar Ali Shah case allowed a three-year period to General Musharraf in which to hold elections.

The Supreme Court also allowed the General to make the bare minimum amendments to the Constitution during this period provided they were not in conflict with its basic character."

The PPP said that the three-year period given by the Supreme Court has expired on October 11 after which the continuation of military regime was unconstitutional and illegal.

"It is most unfortunate that the new Speaker has chosen to make his position controversial from day one by taking a position on this vital issue contrary to the Constitution," the party said.

THE HINDU

PML-Q leader set to become Pak PM

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD, Nov. 20. — Taking advantage of divisions among parties opposed to President Pervez Musharraf, the pro-military PML-Q's nominee, Mir Zafrullah Khan Jamali, is set to be elected Prime Minister by parliament tomorrow.

At the end of the deadline to file nominations today, Mr Jamali, former caretaker Prime Minister of Baluchistan, the pro-Taliban Maulana Fazalur Rehman of the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal and Shah Mehmood Qureshi of the Pakistan People's Party headed by Mrs Benazir Bhutto, filed their nominations.

Mr Jamali appeared set to get elected by the 334-member National Assembly as the country's 19th Prime Minister, judging by yesterday's elections for the posts of Speaker and Deputy Speaker which were won by his party.

The MMA and PPP, which have emerged the second and third largest parties in the elections, failed to reach an agreement over the formation of the new government and decided to contest the election of the

Prime Minister separately. After filing his nomination, Mr Jamali, who political observers feel would be a pliant premier in the government controlled by Gen. Musharraf, told reporters that "if elected, I will take the cove-



Mir Zafrullah Khan Jamali

ted office as a challenge and endeavour to take other political parties along in the National Assembly".

Conceding that the election was a mere formality, PPP spokesman Mr Faratullah Babar said that "at the end of several rounds of talks with MMA, our differences remained.

In the end, we decided to oppose the PML-Q, which is a proxy of Gen. Musharraf, and MMA, which is an

alliance of fundamentalist parties whose policies we disapprove".

He said the party preferred to field Mr Qureshi in place of Mr Mukhdhum Fahim and the change was made by Mrs Bhutto at the request of Mr Fahim. Mr Fahim has proposed the name of Mr Qureshi in the nomination papers.

It now appears that MMA and PPP, who are opposed to the continuation of Gen. Musharraf as President and the constitutional amendments brought in by him, have decided to sit in the Opposition. Already, 10 elected members of the PPP have defected to the PML-Q.

Despite the prospects of defeat, Mr Rehman, the pro-Taliban and anti-US Islamic cleric, told reporters that he would press ahead with his candidature even though the prospects were bleak.

However, it may not be a cakewalk yet for Mr Jamali, a political lightweight from north-west Baluchistan.

A self-proclaimed admirer of Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, he told the media recently that he had first been sounded for the Prime Minister's job by Gen. Zia-ul Haq.

THE STATESMAN

2 1 NOV 2002

PML-Q nominee is Pak Speaker

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD, Nov. 19. — Brightening pro-Musharraf PML-Q's chance of forming a government in Pakistan, its candidate Chaudhary Amir Hussain was today elected as Speaker of the new parliament amidst allegations of rigging and coercion.

Pro-tem Speaker of the National Assembly, Mr Ilahi Bux Sumroo, announced Mr Hussain's election as Speaker after five hours of wrangling between pro and anti-Musharraf parties over the procedures followed in the election held through secret ballot.

Mr Hussain, a former minister who is considered loyal to General Pervez Musharraf, received 167 out of 327 votes, followed by Islamic Parties' alliance MMA candidate Mr Liaqat Baluch who got 80 votes while Mrs Benazir Bhutto's PPP party's nominee Mr Atizaz Asan secured 71 votes in the 342-member House.

Four votes were declared invalid while five members abstained. Six members who won from two constituencies have vacated one of their seats.

Dispute arose over the authenticity of some ballot papers cast during the election and members from PPP and MMA demanded re-election and formation of a House committee to investigate their allegations.

The PPP and MMA alleged that unauthorised ballot papers marked in the lobby have been cast and they found empty ballot papers during the counting.

Disregarding the objection, Mr Sumroo said he has followed fair and transparent procedures, and declared that the election

MMA to sit in Opposition

ISLAMABAD, Nov. 19. — After its candidate was defeated in today's election of the Speaker, Pakistan's hardline Islamist alliance MMA said it has decided to sit in the Opposition.

Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal has decided to sit on the Opposition benches as the Musharraf government didn't agree to the six-party alliance's demands, its parliamentary leader Qazi Hussain Ahmad told reporters after the Speaker's election. He said the alliance would also not support the pro-Musharraf PML-Q in forming the government.

Qazi Ahmad said, "Our demands have not been fulfilled so there is no point to further continue the negotiations regarding formation of government with the other political parties." He said the MMA has differences with PML-Q on the legal framework order which legalised Gen. Musharraf's election through a referendum and conferred sweeping powers to him. — PTI

was valid. Amid protest, he swore in Mr Hussain as the new Speaker and handed over the charge. Both the PPP and the MMA staged a walkout protesting irregularities in the speaker's election.

Later lodging a strong protest, MMA's Prime Ministerial candidate Maulana Fazlur Rahman told the House that they walked out to bring to the notice of the country the irregularities in the election process, which was televised live.

'King's party' nominee elected Pak. Speaker

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, NOV. 19. In the first test of numbers in the National Assembly where no party has a simple majority, the pro-Musharraf parties today managed to get their nominee, Chaudhry Amir Hussain, elected as the Speaker in a three-cornered contest.

Mr. Hussain's election by 167 votes in a House of 335 members would mean that the pro-Musharraf grouping could get their nominee elected as the Leader of the House, who is appointed as the Prime Minister. The election is likely on Thursday.

While the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, has every reason to be pleased with the Speaker's election, the narrow margin in the poll is a reflection of the difficulties that lie ahead for the Government.

It would be a formidable Opposition particularly given the divide among the pro and anti-Musharraf parties on several contentious issues, including continuation of Gen. Musharraf as the President in uniform and several other amendments to the Constitution.

Opposition leaders who congratulated the new Speaker did not miss the opportunity to point out the "patently illegal" manner in which Gen. Musharraf had taken a fresh oath under the Legal Framework Order (LFO), amendments made by him to the Constitution. Some members were very blunt in declaring that they did not recognise Gen. Musharraf as President.

Votes polled by the three contenders tell the story in clear terms. While the 'King's party' nominee who was elected as Speaker secured 167 votes, the Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians candidate, Chaudhry Aitzaz Ahsan, got 71 votes and Liaqat Baloch of the Muttahida Majlis Amal (MMA) 80 votes. Nine votes were rejected as invalid.

There was some drama as PPP and MMA members staged a walkout from the House protesting the "irregularities" in polling and counting. Strangely, there were at least three blank papers stuffed into the ballot box.

There was no surprise in the outcome of the Speaker's election particularly after the three major political formations in the Assembly failed to arrive at an understanding on government formation.

Besides, the pro-Musharraf parties got a boost when the Muttahida Qami Movement (MQM) and Azim Tariq, independent member and chief of a banned sectarian group, announced their support to Mr. Hussain.

However, the support by MQM, which has 17 members in the Assembly, came with a price. On the eve of the voting in the Assembly, the Musharraf regime agreed to the party's demand for a crackdown on its rival group, Mohajir Qami Movement (Haqiqi) and launched a major operation in f Karachi against it.

HQ 10
19/11

AN UNEDIFYING SPECTACLE

PKO 2/11

POLITICS IN PAKISTAN has presented an unedifying spectacle since the conclusion of general elections five weeks ago. The complex situation created by the failure of any single party or group of parties to obtain a simple majority in the National Assembly, and thus stake claim to form the government, has been further complicated by a military leadership that is striving to ensure that the civilian cabinet to be formed will have neither the will nor the power to challenge its pre-eminence. To this end the military leadership, personified by the President, Pervez Musharraf, has brought pressure to bear on the traditionally more independent-minded political formations to make them support the Pakistan Muslim League (Qaid-e-Azam) — a conglomerate of disparate individuals which apparently feels no shame at being labelled the King's party. The institution of corruption cases against members of the parties targeted for persuasion, efforts at striking behind-the-scenes bargains with the leaders of these parties and the sponsorship of barter deals between the PML (QA) and potential allies have been used by the military as part of this exercise. A net result has been that the parties which have won seats in the National Assembly have not been left on their own to work through the process of coalition-building either by taking the high ground of formulating a common programme or even the low-ground option of striking a pragmatic power-sharing arrangement.

The military clearly has no intention of handing over power to an elected government till it has been assured that the rearrangement of the power structure that it has instituted will not be undone. One of the major changes that has been wrought — the prolongation of Gen. Musharraf's presidency for another five years — has already been protected with his having been administered a fresh oath of office under the 1973 Constitution even before the new National Assembly held its first meeting. If this ceremony had not been performed it might have been possible for

the members of the incoming National Assembly to put an end to Gen. Musharraf's presidency through resort to the simple expedient of a refusal to endorse his occupation of that office. Now, if they are so minded, they will have to opt for the far more arduous route of seeking his removal through an impeachment motion. Gen. Musharraf has also taken the position that the other controversial amendments — the grant to the President of the power to dismiss the National Assembly and the creation of a military-dominated National Security Council being the more pernicious among them — have become a part of the Constitution as soon as they were promulgated and cannot thus be removed except through legislative processes that require a special majority. Given the current composition of Parliament it would appear very unlikely that an attempt to amend the Constitution will succeed but the military clearly believes that it can take no chances when the second and third largest parties have been calling for such amendments and the loyalty of the King's party is suspect.

If the Pakistan military has to bear much of the blame for the long-drawn impasse, the political formations are by no means innocent either. They have displayed an unhealthy penchant to throw principle to the winds when provided the opportunity to either strike a favourable deal with the military for themselves or to ensure that rival formations did not derive an advantage. Parliamentarians belonging to the Pakistan Peoples Party are prepared to back the PML (QA)'s bid to nominate the next Prime Minister — even if they have to put up with Gen. Musharraf and his amendments — provided their leader, Benazir Bhutto, is allowed to return from exile and her husband is released from prison. For their part, the religious leaders of the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal are ready to jettison their aversion to the secular forces, the military's entrenchment in the body politic and its perceived pro-western policies provided their nominee is installed as the next Prime Minister.

I saved Pak. from sinking: Musharraf

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, NOV. 16. The Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, today said that his country was "a rudderless ship" when he took over in October 1999, and that he pulled it "out of the storm and set it on full sail."

Presiding over the last joint meeting of the National Security Council and the Cabinet here, Gen. Musharraf claimed that in the last three years, his Government introduced "meritocracy and transparency" in governance and succeeded in running a "corruption-free" administration. He and his colleagues were proud that after more than two decades of stagnation, they had brought the country to a "take-off stage." It was now for the elected government to build on the foundation his team laid.

Gen. Musharraf said that three years ago, he had put together a group of professionals in the Cabinet who were strangers to each other. They, however, soon became a good team and were now parting as friends and comrades who brought strength and pride back to Pakistan. No individual or association was permanent and it was the country alone which had permanence. Governance must, therefore, remain the interest of Pakistan and he had always kept

that interest foremost.

Gen. Musharraf claimed that he had taken certain "difficult decisions" in the larger and long-term interest of the country, particularly in the interest of its economic and political stability. Pakistan could afford no further "disruption and misgovernance" and it was with that objective in mind that he had been emphasising the need to continue reforms.

The next five years, Gen. Musharraf said, would be very

important for Pakistan and expressed the confidence that the new government would take advantage of the sound macro-economic policies initiated by his Government. "If Pakistan follows the course and employs the right tactics to implement the strategy that has been crafted after much deliberation and with great care, rich dividends would soon be available," he told his colleagues.

An official statement said earlier that the Service Chiefs, the

Provincial Governors and members of the Cabinet "paid glowing tributes to the leadership of President Pervez Musharraf, who, they said, is leaving behind an enviable legacy of efficient and honest governance. They said that the high standards of personal integrity, efficiency, commitment and dedication will now be the benchmark against which the performance of all governments will be judged by the people of Pakistan."

Crucial components of Pak. Constitution in suspension

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, NOV. 16. The decision of the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, to 'partially revive' the 1973 Constitution that was suspended after the October 1999 military coup has left many perplexed.

As one constitutional expert, who did not wish to be identified, said "there is no such thing as partial revival of the Constitution. The Constitution exists either in its totality or it is simply not there". A close scrutiny of the notification issued by Gen. Musharraf as Chief Executive, a post he would continue to hold till a new Prime Minister is elected by the National Assembly, suggests that several crucial components of the Constitution

continue to be in suspension.

Some of the Articles that are still not operational include the provisions relating to floor-crossing, qualification of the Members of the National Assembly, the power of Parliament to amend the Constitution in abeyance, provisions related to the suspension of Provincial Assemblies and emergency powers.

All the Articles dealing with the provincial governments, starting from Article 101 to 138, are in abeyance.

Gen. Musharraf also issued another order, Legal Framework (Removal of Difficulty) Order, 2002, providing that the Chief Executive will continue to act till such time the Prime Minister takes oath of his office.

MUSHARRAF SWORN IN PRESIDENT AGAIN

Pak. House meets amid opposition to amendments

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, NOV. 16. After a gap of over three years and a month, the doors of the Pakistan National Assembly were thrown open today but on a controversial note over the validity of the President, Pervez Musharraf's laws. The new Assembly met two hours after Gen. Musharraf was sworn in President for a further period of five years on the basis of the referendum held in April this year.

Gen. Musharraf took oath under the 1973 Constitution. Unless impeached by Parliament or unseated by courts, he will be President till November 16, 2007. The Chief Justice of the Pakistan Supreme Court, Shaikh Riaz Ahmed, administered the oath of office at a ceremony held at the Jinnah Hall of the Aiwan-e-Sadr (presidential palace), before a galaxy of participants.

Neither Gen. Musharraf nor the parties opposed to him are in a mood, at least for now, for a compromise. This was evident when he ignored the demand of some parties to resign as the Army chief and come through Parliament for validation of his position as President, and the representatives of these parties insisted in the National Assembly that they did not recognise Gen. Musharraf's laws.

As per the original schedule, Gen. Musharraf was to have taken fresh oath of office and secrecy only after the National Assembly elected the Leader of the House, who would have been appointed the Prime Minister. However, it appears that Gen. Musharraf decided to reverse the order of things and perhaps not take any chances.

As soon as the Speaker of the



The Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf (left), being greeted by the Chief Justice, Riaz Shiekh, after the former took oath of office for a fresh five-year term, at the Presidential Palace in Islamabad on Saturday. — AP

last National Assembly (dissolved in June 2001), Ellahi Baksh Soomro, called the House to order, representatives of the alliance of religious parties and parties led by the former Prime Ministers, Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, rose to seek clarification on the status of the Musharraf laws. The purpose of the inaugural session was to enable the newly-elected members to take oath of office.

Representatives of the Mutahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), the Pakistan People's Party and the Pakistan Muslim League made it clear that they did not recognise the amendments made by Gen. Musharraf to the 1973 Constitution. They told Mr.

Soomro that they would swear allegiance only to the Constitution as it stood on the day of the military coup in October 1999. Normality was restored only after Mr. Soomro informed them that he was administering the oath as prescribed in the Constitution before the 'intervention' (military takeover).

The Ambassadors of the European Union stayed out of the oath-taking ceremony. Their move appeared hardly surprising, considering the strong stand taken by the E.U. against Gen. Musharraf's referendum early this year and his subsequent constitutional amendments.

See also Page 8

THE HINDU

17 NOV 2002
17 NOV 2002

'Democracy' for Pak, more powers for Pervez

Mubashir Zaidi & Agencies
Islamabad, November 16

PAKISTAN BEGAN a shaky return to democracy on Saturday with the swearing-in of an elected Parliament, but President Pervez Musharraf remains the most powerful figure in the country.

He gave himself new powers to-day to keep issuing laws and changing the Constitution to ensure his amendments are enforced. He already holds the authority to dismiss the legislature if it steps out of line. He was sworn in for a five-year term earlier in the day.

The military ruler issued a decree called the Removal of Diffi-

culty Order just after midnight, two hours after he switched on his controversially rewritten version of the 1973 Constitution.

In its revised form, the Constitution contains most of the 29 amendments he announced in a Legal Framework Order.

Legislators briefly debated the wisdom of taking the oath of office under a Constitution that had been changed by the President. But in the end they did, raising their hands and vowing to uphold the Constitution.

It still isn't known who will form the Government, since elections last month did not give any one party a clear majority.

The largest bloc in the legisla-

ture is the pro-Musharraf Pakistan Muslim League-Qaid-e-Azam group, which controls 103 seats in the 342-seat lower House. Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians has the next largest number of seats with 80, and Right-wing religious parties control 59 seats. Independents and other parties hold 100 seats. The election of the Parliament's Speaker of the House will take place on Monday. Meanwhile, politicians are trying to cobble together a coalition.

A six-party alliance of religious parties has emerged as the power broker, and has been in negotiations with both of the leading parties. Despite her criticism

of the religious Right in speeches given in the West, Bhutto has agreed to form a coalition with them along with other partners in Pakistan's Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy.

If they form the government, they also have agreed to accept Maulana Fazlur Rahman, whose party has been a strong opponent of the US and the war on terror in Afghanistan. Rahman is staunchly pro-Taliban. However, he says his Government's foreign policy would take a more pragmatic approach. That means he might not change Pakistan's support for the war on terror.

The pro-Musharraf party was also negotiating with the reli-

gious Right for its support. But so far they are at odds over a candidate for Prime Minister, as well as Musharraf's role.

The religious Right wants Musharraf to restore the 1973 Constitution, which would remove his right to dismiss the Parliament.

The President's right to fire governments was used several times in the 1990s. Benazir Bhutto was twice dismissed by a President. Sharif was once dismissed and later overthrown by Musharraf in the 1999 coup. Musharraf maintains the right to fire a Parliament is necessary in Pakistan to provide a check on a political system rife with corruption.



Pervez Musharraf takes the oath of office on Saturday.

Part 1
H9-1

Musharraf revives 1973 Constitution

16/11

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, NOV. 15. Hours before he plans to take a fresh oath as President for a further period of five years and the inaugural session of the National Assembly, tomorrow, the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, revived the Constitution of Pakistan "except a few Articles".

An official announcement said the Constitution, which was suspended in the wake of the military coup on October 12, 1999, stands restored except with regard to the Articles pertaining to the 'Provincial Governments, the Senate of Pakistan, etc.'. It said they would be restored later.

It was not clear whether the controversial amendments Gen. Musharraf had made to the Constitution in August through the Legal Framework Order are part of the revived Statute.

It is intriguing why the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, has not revived the Articles pertaining to Senate and provincial assemblies.

The immediate implication of the decision would mean that elections to the Senate and formation of governments in the four provinces would be delayed.

It would also mean that the Parliament of Pakistan would be incomplete in the absence of the Senate. It is the members of National Assembly and Senate who form part of the electoral college for election to the office of President.

In a related development, the former Prime

Minister and Chairperson of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Benazir Bhutto, asserted that her party would continue to fight for "restoration of democracy and supremacy of Parliament" even if there was just one member of her party in the National Assembly.

Addressing the newly-elected members of her party via satellite from the United States Ms. Bhutto asked the PPP legislators-elect to uphold the trust reposed in them by the party and the people by upholding the democratic principles as they entered Parliament.

Her reference was obviously to the split in her party on Thursday night.

Interestingly, the PPP is playing down the decision of 10 of its newly-elected members to form a new group and their announcement to support the efforts of Gen. Musharraf for transfer of power to a civilian set-up.

The PPP maintained that the dissidents continued to be in the party and at the moment there was no proposal for any disciplinary action against them.

"Even if the Party was left with just one MNA in Parliament it will not give up its fight for the restoration of democracy, supremacy of the Constitution and its principles come what may", she declared amid cheers by newly-elected members of her party present at the residence of her husband here.

Pak zealots blame US envoy for failure of talks

Associated Press

ISLAMABAD, Nov. 14. — The Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal today alleged the US ambassador had tampered with the country's political process in order to keep the six-party Muslim alliance from forming a coalition government.

"We were very close to signing an agreement with the Pakistan People's Party, but suddenly the US ambassador, Ms Nancy Powell, became active and our talks failed," Ameer ul-Azeem, spokesman for Muthida Majlis-e-Amal, said.

The Ameer's comments came one week after the 15-party Alliance for Restoration of Democracy, of which former Prime Minister Mrs Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party is a major partner, claimed it had reached a tentative agreement to form a coalition government with the Islamic bloc.

A party allied with President Pervez Musharraf won the most seats in the 342-seat assembly, and Mrs Bhutto's party was second.

The religious coalition was a surprising third, and has been playing the role of power broker since the 10 October polls.

The MMA spokesman said Ms Powell's role was not surprising: "We were expecting it". He said the religious group was now holding coalition talks with the pro-Musharraf Quaid-e-Azam faction of the Pakistan Muslim League.

But the US embassy spokesman here, Mr John Kincannon, denied that Ms Powell

Masked man gave Osama tape to scribe

ISLAMABAD, Nov. 14. — An Islamabad-based correspondent for the *Al-Jazeera* TV network said a masked man in the Pakistani capital gave him the audiotape purportedly of Osama bin Laden hailing recent attacks in West Asia and Bali and threatening the US and its allies.

Mr Ahmed Muhaffaq Zaidan, who has interviewed Bin Laden twice in 2000 and 2001 and has just authored a book on him, said he was "100 per cent sure" the voice belonged to the Al-Qaida chief. "I received a call on Tuesday night from somebody who said he wanted to meet me and had got something for me... I went to the place where he said he would be waiting for me and I met him there. The man's face was half covered. He gave me an audio cassette and said this was from Bin Laden." — AFP

had played any role in Pakistan's internal political negotiations. "The USA supports the democratic process in Pakistan... We will work with whatever government is formed through consultations among Pakistan's political parties," he said.

Gen. Musharraf has called on the legislature to convene Saturday, an indication that an agreement might be near on the formation of a government.



Afghan
refugees

© Polls not bound by Pervez laws

Islamabad, Nov. 12 (PTI): The Pakistan Supreme Court has said the October 10 polls were not conducted as per the newly-amended constitution of President Pervez Musharraf but they took place using the election laws of 2002.

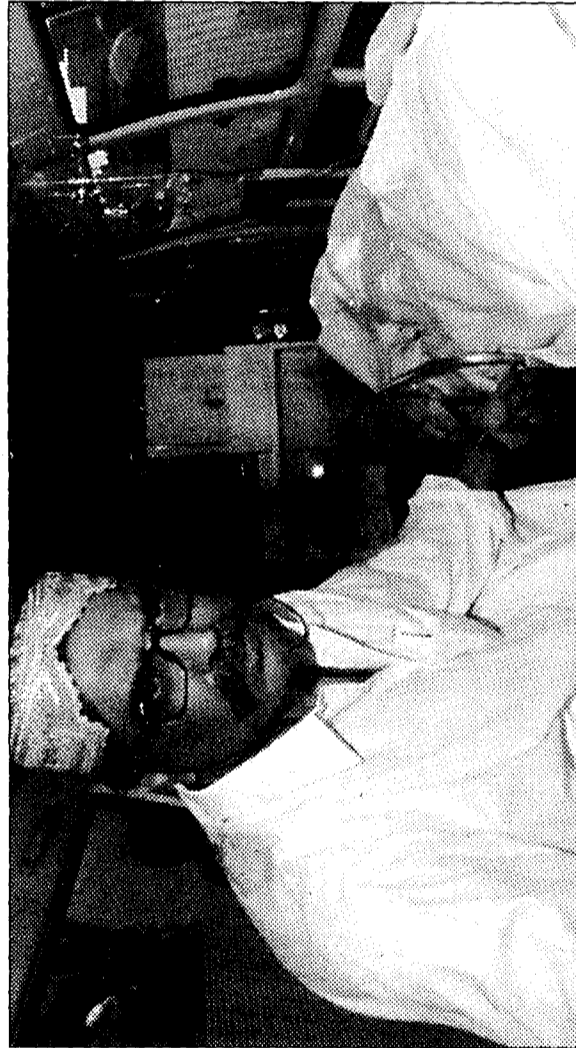
A three-judge bench of the apex court, headed by Chief Justice Qazi Muhammad Farooq, said yesterday that the general elections were not held under the Legal Framework Order (LFO) issued by Musharraf but were conducted as per the Conduct of Election Order 2002.

Justice Farooq said the conduct of elections had nothing to do with the LFO and the constitution as they were kept in abeyance by the military rule.

So "the conditions laid down in the Conduct of Election Order 2002 have an over-riding effect," *The News* quoted him as saying.

Political parties here said the court's interpretation, making a clear distinction between the LFO and the election order, strengthened the position of the anti-Musharraf parties which have taken a firm stand against his constitutional amendments.

Officials in the Musharraf government, including law min-



Asif Ali Zardari sits in an ambulance with the body of his mother, Bilqees Zardari, who died in Karachi on Tuesday. (Reuters)

ister Khalid Ranjha, have argued in recent weeks that the amended constitution was already in use as political parties which contested the polls were elected under the new laws.

The new laws included enhanced membership of the parliament, reservations of 60 seats

for women and barring the politicians convicted by court and people without the qualification of a degree from contesting the polls.

Reacting to the judgment, Faratullah Babar, spokesman for the Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPP), said the

judgment makes it clear that the elected members do not owe anything to the LFO and are not bound by it.

The PPP and host of other parties have already made it clear that their elected members would take oath only under the 1973 constitution, he said.

adding, the court judgment would come in handy for these parties to press their point home when the National Assembly meets.

The judgment follows stringent criticism by the country's lawyers that the judges of the apex court were not taking an independent stand on the constitutional issues as they took oath under the Provisional Constitutional Order (PCO) promulgated by Musharraf after his 1999 military coup.

Differences between the apex court and the Supreme Court Bar Association came to a head recently when the latter withdrew its petition questioning certain constitutional issues stating that there was no point in arguing as the judges were bound by the PCO. The court later took exception to the action of the Bar Association and threatened to take action against the association's president, Hamid Khan, for contempt.

Pakistan's main pro-military party and Islamic conservatives said today they had narrowed differences that have prevented them forming a coalition to return the country to civilian government.

Pervez, parties hold direct talks

Press Trust of India

Benazirspeak

ISLAMABAD, Nov. 11. — In a sudden move, President Pervez Musharraf put off the crucial joint Cabinet and National Security Council meeting called today to discuss the continued stalemate over government formation and instead held direct talks with the leaders of various political parties to iron out the differences.

The Cabinet-NSC meeting had been cancelled on the instructions of Gen. Musharraf last night, media here said, quoting officials. But no reason was given for the cancellation.

The meeting, which was called to discuss options left for Gen. Musharraf to tide over the crisis, was put off following reports that he held prolonged meetings with leaders of parties that were opposed as well as favourably disposed towards him.

Gen. Musharraf is reported to have met Mr Zafarullah Jamali, the prime ministerial candidate of the pro-military Pakistan Muslim League-Qaide Azam, which emerged as the single larg-

ISLAMABAD, Nov. 11. — As the impasse over government formation continued, Mrs Benazir Bhutto today said her party may support a government headed by the hard-line religious parties from outside but would not join it.

In an interview to a Pakistan TV channel, *Geo News*, from Washington, she said the Pakistan People's Party was in favour of formation of a consensus or national government to tide over the stalemate, if other parties agreed to make her party leader, Mr Mukhdhum Amin Fahim, the Prime Minister. — PTI

est party but failed to secure support from any of the mainstream parties due its favourable stand towards Gen. Musharraf and his controversial constitutional amendments.

Mr Jamali and other PML-Q leaders held numerous rounds of talks with the alliance of six religious parties, Muthahida Majlis Amal, to iron out differen-

ces on Gen. Musharraf's presidency as well as constitutional amendments empowering himself with more powers, the reports said.

Gen. Musharraf reportedly met MMA leaders, including the chief of Jamat Islami, Mr Qazi Hussain Ahmad, and discussed their reservations over his presidency as well as his amendments.

Media reports said Gen. Musharraf met Mr MA Fahim, leader of the Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians (PPPP), who was leading the party in the absence of its leader and former Prime Minister Mrs Benazir Bhutto. But there was no official confirmation about any of these meetings.

It now appears that Gen. Musharraf has formally begun direct talks with the political leaders to break the deadlock over the government formation. So far, talks were held by PML-Q leaders on his behalf.

Following his meetings yesterday, Gen. Musharraf reportedly decided to put off his Cabinet-NSC meeting which was called to discuss the progress made over formation of the government.

Pro-Musharraf, religious parties to explore govt. formation

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, NOV. 10. Exactly a month after the general elections that had thrown up a fragmented National Assembly, the military regime has hinted that if the political parties fail to come to an agreement on formation of a government, it might declare the election null and void.

The threats appear to have had the desired impact, with the pro-Musharraf parties and the alliance of religious parties agreeing this evening on a joint committee on formation of a government. The task of the committee is to work out a consensus on all contentious issues. The two groups issued a joint declaration urging the Government to immediately convene the inaugural session of the National Assembly. The Committee is scheduled to meet here again tomorrow.

The Pakistan Interior Minister, Moinuddin Haider, has been quoted as telling reporters in Karachi on Friday that if the political parties did not arrive at a settlement before the National As-

sembly session then "making another reference to people might become unavoidable".

Lt. Gen. (retd.) Haider, a confidant of the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, is known for his "shock value" statements and his hint at the possibility of another election is seen as a threat to political parties to fall in line and agree to form a government on the terms of the military. Controversial amendments made by Gen. Musharraf to the Constitution, including a further period of five years for himself as President and Chief of Army Staff and formalisation of the role of the Army in governance, are a major stumbling block for the parties in the formation of government.

The inaugural session of the National Assembly, which was originally scheduled to be summoned on November 8, was postponed after the pro-Musharraf parties petitioned the regime seeking more time to negotiate with other groups. The postponement came amidst reports of an agreement among the parties opposed to the Musharraf policies.

11 NOV 2002

THE HINDU

PPPP May Ink Pact With Pro-Musharraf Parties, Zardari May Be Released Under Terms Of Deal

US pressure gives Benazir key to Pak govt

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 8 NOVEMBER

PILLORIED as a has-been in Pakistani politics, thrown out by General Pervez Musharraf and prohibited from returning to Pakistan with a rash of corruption charges against her, suddenly Benazir Bhutto has been blessed by the election gods and now holds the key to the next Islamabad government, leading the Islamists, General Musharraf and the Americans on a merry run-around.

When she arrived in Washington DC on October 28, Benazir was curtly told by the state department that despite her party's good showing (PPPP won 76 seats), the US will continue to back General Musharraf. In a political masterstroke, she proposed a coalition with the Islamist parties, the Muttahida-Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) whose 60 seats will put her and the maulanans in the political reckoning that will be the ultimate

American nightmare.

Caught in this cleft stick Washington tried to make the best of the numbers that the elections have thrown up, by getting Benazir to deal with General Musharraf and keeping the MMA out of the game. The US switched tack before you could say Fazlur Rehman and are now trying to persuade her to back the PML(Q) — the king's party — instead. The deal, according to Pakistani reports, is almost through, trampling on not only the Alliance For Restoration Of Democracy (ARD) of which the PPPP is a part, but the maulanans and even the PML (Nawaz) with whom she had reached a working relationship.

For the Americans, they are trying to make the best of a bad deal. There would be no way they would allow the MMA to head the government — in the event of a PPPP tie-up, Fazlur Rehman will be Prime Minister — because of their huge stake in Pakistan which is now the official



COMEBACK TRAIL: Asif Ali Zardari, jailed husband of former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, in Rawalpindi on Thursday. — AFP

haven for Al Qaeda and Taliban leaders. Besides, the idea of the US administration dealing with one of the Taliban and Al Qaeda's strongest public supporters is clearly anathema to Washington. The US has thrown its weight squarely behind General Musharraf because the alternative is too frightening to contem-

plate. Therefore, it makes eminent sense to get Benazir on the same side. The PML(Q) has already absorbed all the independents of the Crescent Group (independent candidates who fought on a single crescent symbol).

But equally, the US' frustration with General Musharraf has been in evidence lately as it has

become clearer that the Al Qaeda's new home is mainland Pakistan. With the arrest of Ramzi bin-al Shibh, it has become painfully clear to the US that Al Qaeda top brass like Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, Usmani etc are wandering with impunity within Pakistan, often with the support of the authorities. This has resulted in some selected leaks by the US intelligence agencies to newspapers on Pakistan's now status as the global destination for fleeing Al Qaeda.

In fact, when their special envoy to Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad visited here recently, he stressed on the presence of Al Qaeda and Taliban in Pakistan and warned that the United States wanted some action from Islamabad. It is a stunning blow for General Musharraf who despite pre-rigging the elections finds his own standing, his political future and his legislative framework order held hostage by none other than his old enemy Benazir, whom he had for-

bidden to even contest the polls.

Clearly if the deal goes through, he will have to eat humble pie and at the very least release Benazir's jailed husband, Asif Zardari. All eyes now are on Zardari's movements as a barometer of the kind of deal struck. The key is how far can Benazir hold out the Islamist threat — it will be virtually impossible for Musharraf to let her return just yet, but it is possible the cases against her may be withdrawn. So she is keeping her options open with the MMA, in case the Musharraf deal falls through.

According to observers here, General Musharraf does have his ultimate card, martial law, if the MMA and PPPP fail to bend to US persuasions. He has already postponed the convening of the National Assembly, and from there it's a short step.

Will the Americans allow it? As always, the key to the government formation in Pakistan is not in Islamabad but Foggy Bottom.

9 NOV 2002

The Economic Time

PARTIES CRITICISE THE GENERAL'S MOVE WHILE THE RACE FOR PREMIERSHIP HEATS UP IN PAKISTAN

Musharraf defers Assembly session

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD, Nov. 7. — Amid reports of horse-trading to form a pro-military government in Pakistan, the 15-party Alliance for Restoration of Democracy and religious parties have condemned Gen. Pervez Musharraf's decision to defer the National Assembly session by a week, calling it "immoral" and a move aimed at benefiting a pro-government party.

Denouncing the decision, Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, Chairman of ARD, which was opposed to the continuation of Musharraf's presidency, has said that he would soon call an All-Party Conference (APC) to oppose the postponement.

"We can call an APC to protest against this illogical and immoral decision," Khan said adding the government had deferred the session to benefit the pro-Musharraf, Pakistan Muslim League (Q) which had failed to achieve simple majority in the Parliament.

The decision to defer the session scheduled for 8 November, was taken by Musharraf at a Cabinet meeting yesterday. He did not announce any fresh dates for the session.

Mr Khan, who claimed he was on the verge of finalising a coalition government of ARD and the hardline Islamic religious party alliance Muthahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), has appealed to politicians, lawyers, scribes and religious

bodies to protest the delay in transfer of power by the military regime.

Former Prime Minister Mrs Benazir Bhutto-led Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) and PML-N, led by Mr Nawaz Sharif also criticised the Musharraf regime.

Mr Khan likened the move to a similar decision by former military ruler Yahya Khan, who in 1970 postponed the Assembly session scheduled to be held in Dhaka. "Yahya also postponed the session on the pretext of national reconciliation but the decision had resulted in the division of the country," he said referring to the emergence of Bangladesh.

Referring to appeals by PML-Q to postpone the session, Mr Khan said another military ruler Zia ul Haq stage managed such requests in order to delay the convening of the session. This time the politicians have demanded postponement of the session on behalf of the government, he said.

Meanwhile, media reports here today said officials have launched hectic efforts to "arm twist" the Opposition to either join or support the PML-Q.

"A few top establishment officials, who are said to have helped form the King's party, have launched full efforts to buy over the support of newly elected Members of the National Assembly for the PML-Q," *The Nation* said.

To marshal a simple majority in the NA for PML-Q and get its Speaker and



Maulana Fazlur Rehman (Left) of the MMA escorts Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, ARD chairman. In Islamabad on Thursday. — AFP

Deputy Speaker elected through a secret ballot, officials have contacted elected members from PPP, MMA, and PML-N in all the four provinces, it said.

In another development, a senior PPP leader, Syed Faisal Saleh Hayat who met Mrs Bhutto's jailed husband, Mr Asif Ali Zardari, hinted that he was forming a "forward block" in PPP to support PML-Q.

He told newsmen: "Revelation of democracy would be delayed if politicians did not act wisely and learn to give and take" but denied reports that he was planning to quit his party.

PPPP denies reports: The PPP today rejected as "disinformation" campaign reports that it has reached a secret understanding with the Musharraf Administration to form a coalition gov-

ernment with PML-Q, even as an anti-corruption court put off a hearing on bail petition of Mr Asif Ali Zardari till 13 November.

"The Party debunks the reports being circulated by vested interests of some secret understand deal between the PPP and the government in the run up to National Assembly's session," PPPP said in a statement here.

"The Party condemns the newspapers had reported

that PPPP-PML-Q have reached an understanding with PPPP leader Mr Mukdhum Amin Fahim as the Prime Minister. The reports also spoke of a "deal" between the Musharraf government and Bhutto to release Zardari and permit her to return from self exile.

The reports of PPPP's secret deal with the government prompted the leaders of the religious parties, with whom it negotiated to form a government, to accuse Bhutto of holding dual talks to get a better bargain.

Race for prime ministry

The PPPP made a last-ditch bid today to convince hard-line Islamists to give it the premiership, AFP adds.

"I hope we'll be able to give the premiership to Mr Fahim," secretary general Mr Raza Rabbani said, adding: "We are still discussing with the Islamic parties." Mr Fahim is the PPP's parliamentary chief, who had been lobbying for coalition with the chief pro-regime party to form what he called "a government of national consensus." Mr Fahim has been accused by impatient Islamic bloc leaders of playing a double game, after his party agreed on Tuesday to field a joint candidate for Prime Minister with the Islamists, but stalled on publicly naming pro-Taliban cleric Maulana Fazlur Rehman.

"The PPPP is playing a dubious game," Rehman's deputy leader Hafiz Hussain Ahmed told the *Daily Times*.

Some newspapers had reported

Musharraf defers convening of National Assembly

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD, Nov. 6. — In a surprise move, Gen. Pervez Musharraf tonight deferred the convening of the newly-elected National Assembly to be held on Friday by a week, a day after hardline religious and secular parties opposed to him agreed on an alliance to form a government.

State-run Ptv announced that a Cabinet meeting presided over by Gen. Musharraf, in response to the appeals made by some political parties due to their failure to clinch a viable coalition government, decided to postpone the session by a week. New dates for the session would be announced later, it said.

A six-member coalition of pro-Taliban Islamic parties and former Prime Minister Mrs Benazir Bhutto's PPP yesterday decided to form an alliance in their bid to form a government.

An official statement later said Gen. Musharraf has informed the Federal Cabinet that the government had noted the suggestions made by certain political leaders for postponement of the first session of the National Assembly to facilitate ongoing

consultations and discussions amongst them for formation of an elected government.

He said the government was keen the country got a stable democratic government and would give due consideration to every suggestion that helps achieve this objective.

According to the statement Gen. Musharraf made it clear that the government would like an early convening of the National Assembly and there was, therefore, no question of an indefinite postponement as has been reported in a section of the media today.

The Opposition PPP criticised the postponement. "We are deeply concerned by this announcement. The postponement was an attempt by the military regime to bolster the chances of the Kings party to form the government," Mr Frataullah Babar, PPP spokesman, said.

The appeal to postpone the session was made by the pro-government Pakistan Muslim League-Qaide Azam, which emerged as the largest group but failed to secure enough majority to form the government.

Government media later said PPP leader Mr Mukh-

dum Fahim has given a letter seeking the postponement. But Mr Fahim, denied having written to Gen. Musharraf.

The plea by PML-Q as well as today's decision by Gen. Musharraf has followed reports of hectic efforts by the Muthahida Majlis-e-Amal, hardline religious parties and the PPP to clinch a deal to form the government.

Despite several closed door meetings the MMA-ARD alliance has not announced the names of their candidates for the posts of Prime Minister, Speaker and deputy Speaker.

Media reports said the Musharraf government held secret parleys with Mrs Bhutto's jailed husband, Asif Ali Zardari to clinch a deal to form a PPPP-PML-Q government. Zardari, was expected to be released tomorrow as his bail petition will come up before a Rawalpindi anti-corruption court.

The appeals for postponement has drawn angry reaction from chief of the Alliance for Restoration of Democracy, Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan. He said last night that the postponement will lead the country towards a disaster.

7 NOV 2002

THE STATESMAN

Slipping control

Emperor Musharraf's new clothes don't fit

Even a dictator's best laid plans can go awry. General Musharraf had been given to understand by his army and ISI henchmen that they could fix an election for him, so that Pakistan could wear the fig-leaf of democratic governance while remaining under military control. Rules were framed with the object of keeping Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif out and to make things difficult for their respective parties, the PPP and the PML-N. The "king's party" however, the pro-military PML-QA, did not turn out to be the sole beneficiary. Instead, the pro-Taliban Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), a conglomerate of six religious parties unexpectedly emerged as a major player, with the 68 seats that it won placing it just behind the PML-QA (120 seats) and PPP (81 seats) in a hung assembly. That places MMA in the role of a power broker, but it has not been responding to Musharraf's assiduous wooing, with "compromise proposals" for forming a government suggested by PML-QA leader Shujaat Hussain being turned down by the MMA. Instead, Musharraf himself has become the issue, as polarisation is now taking place along pro- and anti-Musharraf lines. Despite Musharraf's courtship the MMA has eloped with the 15-party Alliance for Restoration of Democracy (ARD), whose principals are the PPP and the PML-N, having agreed to form with them a coalition which will oppose Musharraf's constitutional reforms and the army-appointed National Security Council which is supposed to hold the whiphand over parliament.

Musharraf has had to commit to convening the National Assembly by 8 November without knowing which group will be able to cobble together a majority. Overtures are currently being made by the PML-QA to the MQM, and their leader Altaf Hussain is being permitted to return to Pakistan. That can only be a sign of desperation, as Hussain is no friend of the military, having made in public the heretical statement that the partition of the Indian subcontinent was a mistake. What all this amounts to is that Musharraf, who has adopted his commando-like bobbing and weaving in the art of statecraft, has made too many enemies. One cannot be a democrat one day and a dictator the next, paper over all the contradictions with a tissue of lies, and hope the whole thing will hang together somehow. What Vajpayee and India found out at the time of the Agra summit, Pakistan may be about to discover soon.

6 NOV 2002

Benazir okays Rehman for Prime Minister

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD, Nov. 5. — Overcoming her reservations, Mrs Benazir Bhutto has reportedly agreed to Maulana Fazlur Rehman as the Prime Ministerial candidate to head a coalition government comprising religious and moderate political parties, which are opposed to President Pervez Musharraf.

After two days of negotiations, Mr Nawabzada Nasarullah Khan, chief of the 15-party Alliance for Restoration of Democracy (ARD) — which included the PPP — announced here today that ARD and the six religious party alliance Muthahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) "in principle" reached an agreement on the candidates for the posts of Prime Minister, Speaker and Deputy Speaker.

Pakistan's Opposition and fundamentalist Islamic parties have agreed to back the joint candidate as Prime Minister to lead the first civilian government in three years, the Opposition alliance chief said. "We have reached a unanimous

agreement on proposing a joint candidate for the Prime Minister and Speaker," Mr Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, head of the Alliance for Restoration of Democracy, said.

Earlier, Mr Khan had refused to confirm if they had settled on fundamentalist cleric Maulana Fazlur Rehman as the Prime Ministerial candidate, the Muthahida Majlis-e-Amal's nominee. He only said the ARD parties would get one position and MMA the other slot. But a party official, requesting anonymity, said the ARD had agreed to back Rehman.

Mr Khan was speaking after meeting executives from the Opposition Pakistan People's Party and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, which spearhead the ARD, and MMA leaders.

Earlier, MMA leaders said the PPP had initially agreed to its candidate Maulana Fazlur Rehman heading the front. But after several rounds of talks with US officials last week, Mrs Benazir Bhutto reportedly developed reservations over the Prime Ministerial post being

given to Rehman, a pro-Taliban religious party leader known for his anti-US stance.

According to media reports here, Mrs Bhutto reportedly insisted on signing a memorandum of understanding between the MMA and ARD and also clearly hinted that Rehman's candidature was not preferable. PPP leader and jailed spouse of Mrs Bhutto, Mr Asif Ali Zardari, yesterday hinted that the next prime minister would be from ARD.

Meanwhile, the Grand National Alliance, a six party loose grouping of pro-Musharraf parties along with PML-Q yesterday claimed to have achieved the required 172 votes in the 342 member National Assembly.

The GNA and the PML-Q have named Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali, a politician from North West Baluchistan as its joint candidate for the Prime Minister's post. GNA's support for Jamali was announced by former President Farooq Ahmed Khan Leghari, who headed a pro-military Millat Party.

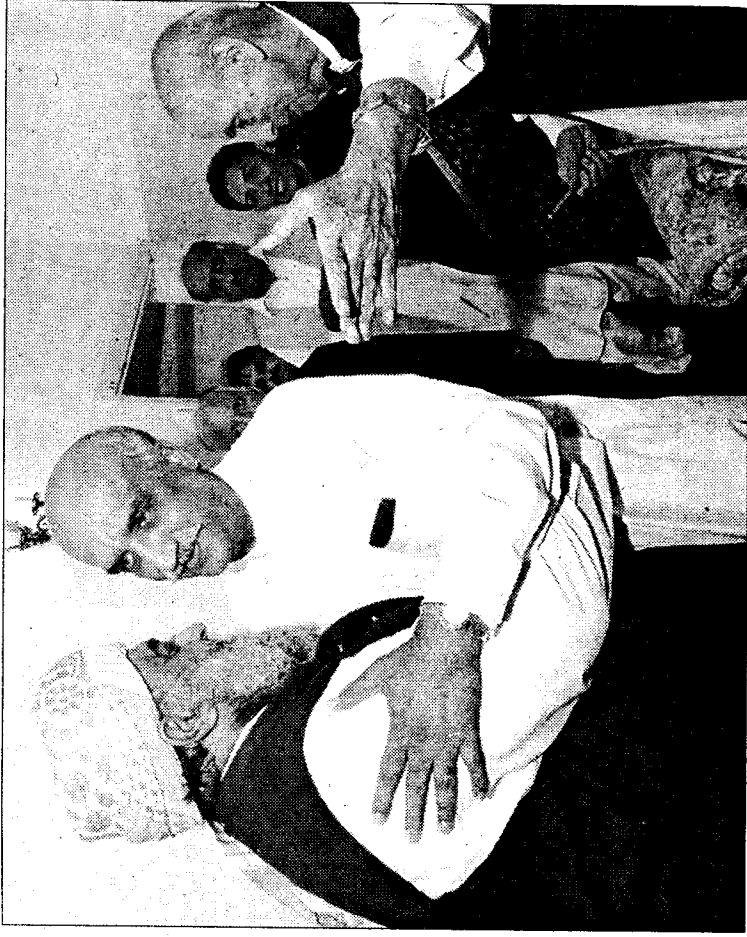
Despite the claims, the GNA and the PML-Q have not released the

list of parties that backed them. The PML-Q, which had won 118 votes was on the verge of losing four votes as its four leaders contested double seats. The party leaders admit that the Jamali so far fell short by 162 votes.

Two Pakistanis to be extradited
Two Pakistanis and one Indian wanted by Washington for allegedly plotting to supply missiles to Osama Bin Laden's terror network are in custody in Hong Kong and awaiting extradition to the USA, media reports said today, adds AP from Hong Kong.

The three men, who were not identified by name, were arrested by Hong Kong police on 20 September after a tip-off by the FBI and appeared in Eastern District Court today, Hong Kong's Commercial Radio and government-owned Radio Television Hong Kong reported.

The men allegedly planned to use profits from smuggling firearms and drugs to the United States to buy four missiles, reports quoted a prosecutor as saying during today's hearing.



ALLIANCE AT LAST: Maulana Fazlur Rehman (left), the Prime Ministerial candidate, greets PPPP leader Mr Khursheed Shah at a meeting of the joint Opposition in Islamabad on Tuesday. — AFP

Musharraf summons Assembly

DAVID BRUNNSTROM

Islamabad, Nov. 2 (Reuters): Pakistan's military ruler Gen. Pervez Musharraf today summoned a newly-elected National Assembly to meet next week, even though rival parties still appear unable to finalise a coalition government.

Radio Pakistan said the assembly members elected in October 10 polls would be sworn in at an opening session on Friday.

Interior minister Moinuddin Haider said he was hopeful power would be transferred to an elected Prime Minister by November 14. However, rival political parties have appeared unable to agree yet on the make-up of Pakistan's first civilian government in three years, or who should lead it.

The pro-military Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-e-Azam (PML-QA) won most seats in the poll but fell well short of the overall majority needed to form a government on its own.

Both the PML-QA and its main rival, the Pakistan People's Party led by former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto have been trying to woo the Muttahidda Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), an alliance of Right-wing religious

groups that unexpectedly emerged from the polls as potential coalition maker.

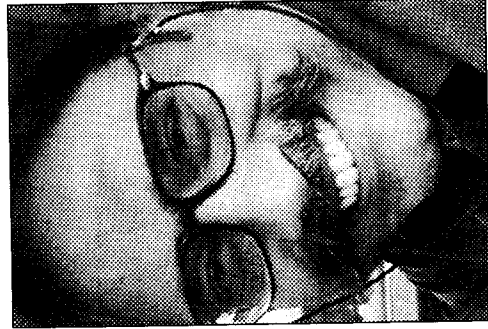
However, the MMA, which rode a wave of anti-Western feeling over the US-led war on terror in Afghanistan and won an unprecedented 45 seats against just two in the previous polls in 1997, insists it should lead any future government.

Maulana Fazlur Rehman, the MMA's prime ministerial candidate, said it would be in a position to form a government with a simple majority in the 342-seat house. "We are very positive," he said. "According to our latest count, we already have 174 seats. These include the PPP and the PML-N as well as some independents."

"Some other people have also pledged their votes to us, but we would like to wait until parliament is convened before disclosing who they are."

The PML-N, a breakaway faction of the Pakistan Muslim League loyal to former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, is the fourth largest party in the assembly.

Yesterday, its rival, the PML-QA named Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali, 58, a veteran politician from the southwestern province



Asif Zardari at Lahore airport just before he appeared in court. (AP/PTI)

of Baluchistan bordering Afghanistan as its candidate for the prime ministership.

Political sources say any coalition involving both the PML-QA and the PPP, which has the second largest number of seats, appears highly unlikely and PPP leaders said on Thursday they were prepared to sit in Opposition.

Yesterday, the 54-nation Com-

Call for Pervez re-election

Islamabad, Nov. 2 (PTI): The six-party religious alliance Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) has said it would not accept Pervez Musharraf's presidency and his constitutional reforms even as it continued parleys with Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians in its efforts to form a coalition government.

"If Musharraf wants to stay as President, he should seek a vote in parliament. But first he must convene the Assembly to allow the smooth transfer of power," MMA leader Qazi Hussain Ahmad said.

monwealth agreed to maintain Pakistan's suspension from the decision-making bodies of the organisation until they had a clearer picture of "the role and functioning of democratic institutions".

They said it was too soon to judge how much control Musharraf, whose 1999 bloodless coup triggered Pakistan's suspension from the group of main-

ly ex-British colonies, would hand over to parliament.

Musharraf has been strongly criticised for amending the constitution before the election to ensure a major role for the military in overseeing the work of a future government and giving himself the power to dismiss parliament if it becomes unruly.

Pakistan's foreign ministry said today the decision by Commonwealth ministers showed a lack of understanding of the country's transition to democracy.

Envoy ordered home

The first Pakistani woman sent overseas as a press attache says she has been suddenly ordered home by the ministry of information without any explanation.

Rizwan Khan, who has been the spokeswoman at Pakistan's UN mission since September 2000, said the only other female press officer posted overseas, Naila Maqsood, had also been ordered to return home from her post in Hong Kong. "I have not been given any reason for my recall except a fax saying that it was a directive from the chief executive's office asking me to return immediately," Khan said.

ARD, MMA fail to reach consensus

Part 1 ST-2 1/11

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD, Oct. 31. — Talks between Pakistan's hardline religious parties and Alliance for Restoration of Democracy to form a government have failed again.

The prospect of forming a coalition government by the ARD constituents and the religious party alliance, the Muthahida Majlis-e-Amal, dimmed as ARD chairman Nawabzada Nasullah Khan failed to get the backing of MMA leaders during his talks with them yesterday.

MMA leaders felt that any political move should wait for the outcome of the talks between pro-Musharraf PML-Q leader Mr Sujat Hussain and the military regime about the imminent constitutional amendments.

The PPPP and the MMA were opposed to Gen. Musharraf's constitutional amendments, while the PML-Q was favouring them.

The Musharraf government and PPPP had come close to clinching a deal over

forming the government last week but the talks ended abruptly when the military officials refused to withdraw corruption charges against Mrs Bhutto.

Gen. Musharraf and PPPP Leader Mr Mukdhum Amin Fanim held several round of talks, *Dawn* reported.

Musharraf plan

NEW DELHI, Oct. 31. — President Pervez Musharraf is contemplating moving the Supreme Court to seek a further extension of military rule under him. *South Asia Tribune*, a web newspaper said. — PTI

Gen. Musharraf told Mr Fahim that the military would accept Mr Fahim as Prime Minister if he hammers out a deal with other parties in Parliament, PPPP sources in Washington said.

Islamists no worry: Gen. Musharraf told Saudi daily *Okaz* that he was "not worried"

about the resurgence of the hardline Islamic parties and offered to cooperate "fully" with the new elected government.

About Pakistan's relations with the Afghan government and the claims that Pakistani prisoners in Afghanistan have been deported to India, he said: "Pakistan has good relations with Afghanistan. We have been assured by the Afghan foreign minister that the reports of Pakistani prisoners being deported to India are baseless."

1 NOV 2001

THE STATESMAN

Pak. hopes C'wealth membership will be restored

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, OCT. 28. Pakistan today expressed the hope that its membership of the Councils of Commonwealth would be restored on the basis of the report of the election observers forum of the group on the October 10 general election.

In a statement here, the Pakistan Foreign Office acknowledged receipt of the report by the observers and noted its 'positive' contents. "Being an important member, it has maintained a constructive interaction with the Commonwealth. Pakistan has been faithfully implementing the road map of democracy announced by the President. Transfer of full executive powers to an elected Prime Minister and the formation of Federal and Provincial governments will take place shortly", it said.

The report said the just-concluded elections would only lead to limited transfer of power from the military to a civilian set-up and it was up to the Commonwealth to decide whether it is enough to let Pakistan back into the forum as a full-fledged member.

The elections in Pakistan had particular significance for the Commonwealth. Immediately after the coup, the association suspended Pakistan from the Councils of the Commonwealth for its violation of the Commonwealth's fundamental political values, as embodied in the Harare Commonwealth Declaration. Commonwealth Heads of Government, which met in South Africa shortly after the military takeover, condemned the overthrow of the Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, and called for the restoration of civilian democratic rule without delay.

The Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group scheduled to meet in November would evaluate the report of the observer group. It is for the Heads of Government of the Commonwealth to decide whether to let Pakistan back into the forum.

In a 67-page report on the general election, the Group led by the former Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tan Sri Musa Hitam, has given a clean chit to the Musharraf regime on the transparency of elections. However, it has endorsed the view of election observers of the European Union that

the whole process of election as such is seriously flawed.

The Pakistan Foreign Office claimed that the Commonwealth observers' report "is overall positive and balanced. It is a matter of satisfaction that the report finds the general election as having been well organised and that the electoral process for the most part was transparent. It concludes that the general election was "credible" and that "the will of the people was expressed and the results reflected their wishes".

It said the Group found that the counting of votes was fair in all respects. The electoral role was relatively accurate and reliable; no cases of impersonation were reported. The Group found no evidence of either stuffing or switching of ballot boxes. No evidence of manipulation at any stage of the electoral process was found. "There were delays but the Group was of the view that these were not deliberate but were caused by poor organisation". Nevertheless, the Election Commission and its polling officers had been commended for the job they did in preparing for and conducting the elections, the Pakistan Foreign Ministry said.

Pervez meets PPPP leader

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD, Oct. 27. — General Pervez Musharraf today held a surprise meeting with PPPP leader Mr Mukhdoom Amin Fahim and discussed the deadlock over the formation of a new government after the 10 October general elections in the country.

Mr Fahim, a loyalist of former premier Ms Benazir Bhutto, was called by Gen. Musharraf's office for the meeting, while the PPP leader was on his way to the airport to go to Karachi, local television reports said.

Mr Fahim met Gen. Musharraf at a restaurant, the reports said. Confirming the reports of the meeting, PPPP (Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians) spokesman Faratullah Babar said that it was a "chance" meeting. The two met at a hilltop restaurant, he said. "It was not a scheduled me-

eting," he said.

The meeting took place a day ahead of Gen. Musharraf's visit to Saudi Arabia during which he is scheduled to hold talks with the Saudi Royal family, which has considerable influence over Pakistan's politicians.

The meeting followed a stalemate over the formation of the government after the elections in which none of the parties won enough seats. The reported meeting is Gen. Musharraf's first with any Opposition party leader since the elections.

The Musharraf-Fahim meeting also took place a day ahead of Ms Bhutto's scheduled meeting with US national security advisor Ms Condoleezza Rice in Washington. Bhutto, who reportedly wrote a letter to Mr George W Bush few days ago making some serious allegations against Gen. Musharraf government, was invited for a

meeting with Ms Rice tomorrow.

The USA which avoided contacts with Bhutto till recently for fear of upsetting Gen. Musharraf, has stepped up contacts with the PPPP after the elections.

Mr Fahim has held two meetings with the US ambassador to Islamabad, Ms Nancy Powell, this week, sparking speculation that the USA has stepped in to help sort out differences between Pro-Musharraf PML-Q and PPPP to form a coalition government and to keep the MMA out of it.

However, there has been no agreement between the two parties so far as Musharraf reportedly is not willing to permit Bhutto to return from her self exile and take part in active politics.

He was also reportedly firm about his controversial constitutional amendments, which were opposed by all mainstream political parties, barring PML-Q.

THE STATESMAN

20 OCT 2001

Rebel Muslim Leaguers choose CM candidate

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, OCT. 26. A fortnight after the general election, the first sign of semblance of return to civilian rule in Pakistan was evident today with the rebel Muslim Leaguers choosing their Chief Ministerial candidate for the Punjab province.

With the decision of a number of newly-elected independent members choosing to join the Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-e-Azam) nicknamed as 'King's party', the rebel Leaguers command confidence of more than half the members in the Punjab Assembly.

Pervez Ellahi, a powerful member of the Chaudhary clan in Gujrat in the Punjab province, has been elected as the leader of the group in the House. Now the ball would be in the court of the Governor to summon the House.

Under the new laws promulgated by Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, the first session of the Assemblies are to elect Speaker and Deputy Speaker followed by 'election' of Leader of the House who would be sworn in Chief Minister.

There have been contradictory and conflicting statements by various functionaries of the Musharraf regime on the 'legal formalities' to be completed before the Assemblies could be summoned for

transfer of power by the military to a civilian setup. Mainstream political parties have accused the Government of deliberately delaying the process of transfer of power.

The Pakistan Law Minister, Khalid Ranja, in his latest statement has maintained that newly-elected members to the National and Provincial Assemblies would elect their respective Leader of the Houses (Prime Minister and Chief Ministers) by 'show of hands'. Two days ago he had said it would be by 'secret ballot'.

Observers see the success of the 'King's party' in the takeover of the Punjab province as the first step before it moved to occupy the Prime Ministerial position. Hectic efforts are on by the rebel Leaguers to woo the members of the Benazir party and the alliance of religious parties to command a simple majority.

So far they have not succeeded. The constitutional amendments made by Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, appears to be one of the major stumbling block in the coming together of the rebel Leaguers and one of the two other combinations.

Assertion made by the Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarian (PPP) and the Mutahida-Majlis-i-Amal (MMA) that they would reach a 'positive conclusion'

on formation of government by Monday evening should be a matter of concern to the 'King's party'. At the same time they are conscious of the serious differences between the Benazir party and the religious parties particularly on the foreign policy front.

There have been speculative reports in Pakistan media suggesting that the U.S. is not comfortable with the idea of the Mutahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) being part of any coalition at the national level. Americans do have a great deal of influence on Benazir Bhutto.

The chief of the MMA, Maulana Shah Ahmed Noorani, called on the PPP leader, Makhdoom Amin Fahim, and exchanged views on the progress in government formation so far. He told correspondents that the meeting was held in a very pleasant manner and they exchanged views on the current political situation, formation of government in centre, Sindh, Balochistan and NWFP and also considered options to enhance the parliamentary strength of both the MMA and the PPP.

They also discussed various other problems of the country particularly of the provinces and their point of view was same on the issues of provinces. The Maulana said that both the parties have presented their point of view on formation of government and

decided that they would reach a final positive understanding on Monday evening.

He asserted that there was no 'deadlock' with the MMA and the PPP and talks would continue. Maulana Noorani said efforts were on to form government with the participation of all the three major parties and the MMA wanted its candidate, Maulana Fazlur Rehman, to be the Prime Minister. To another question, he said that the MMA had its own policy and it was negotiating in the light of the policy to bring out the country from the prevailing political impasse.

Mr. Amin told the journalists that unity for formation of government, protection of rights and sustainable democracy were the need of the hour and important with all the parliamentary parties. "Politics is the game of possibilities and no party has adopted stubborn attitude during talks."

He said there was no deadlock and efforts were under way to form a government with broad consensus. "The PPP is also in contact with the PML(Q) and is trying to avoid any controversy at this point in time to find a way for better future of the country." He said, although the PPP had got highest votes in the election, the formation of government was a democratic right of every political party.

Pak hardliners bicker over poll pie share

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD, Oct. 24 — Differences among the hardline religious parties have come to the fore after their victory in the elections with the Jamat Islami, the main component of the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal alliance, objecting to the Jamat Ulema Islami nominating its candidate for the post of NWFP chief minister.

Opposing the JUI's nomination of Mr. Akram Khan Durrani as the NWFP chief minister, the JI said the nomination was not valid till it was approved by the MMA's central committee, which was scheduled to meet today.

But the JI has not omitted its objections. The MMA is composed of six religious parties and factions. While the JI is the biggest among the six, the JUI, led by Maulana Fazlur Rehman, has emerged the biggest party by winning many National and Provincial Assembly seats from its strongholds in NWFP and Baluchistan. The JI has its

strongholds in Punjab and Sindh where the MMA fared moderately.

The strength of the JUI in the Provincial and National Assemblies prompted the alliance to nominate Mr. Fazlur Rehman as its prime ministerial candidate. It appeared

that the JI, which proposed Mr. Rehman's name, wanted to get the chief minister's post in NWFP. This was not acceptable to the JUI as its candidates have won 29 out of 48 seats bagged by the alliance in the 99-member NWFP Assembly. The JI, which won 20

seats in the Provincial Assembly, was offered the post of Assembly Speaker. The JI also objected to Mr. Durani's candidature as he was not an Islamic cleric, reports said.

Musharraf promise: President Pervez Musharraf has said the responsibility to form a government lies with the elected representatives and denied charges that the military regime was trying to put in place a Prime Minister of his choice.



Senior leaders of Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal at a press meet in Islamabad on Thursday. — AFP

Pak rules out martial regime return



Gen. Pervez Musharraf

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD, Oct. 23. — Pakistan's military regime has ruled out the imposition of martial law if political parties failed to cobble a coalition government and said the election of the Prime Minister and Speaker of the national Assembly would be held through a secret ballot.

Ruling out imposition of martial law, Pakistan's minister for information, Mr Nisar A Memon yesterday told reporters at Muzafarabad that President

Pervez Musharraf would transfer power to the elected civilian government next month.

He said the newly elected members of the national and provincial Assemblies would take oath under the 1973 Constitution as demanded by several political parties. But he has little clue about who would be forming the new government as the pro and anti-Musharraf parties that failed to win the majority in the 10 October polls were unable to break the impasse over their differences to form a coalition.

Meanwhile, federal laws fail to specify who would nominate the pro-term Speaker as the Speaker was not "legally alive" due to the imposition of the Army rule in 1999.

The confusion was further confounded by reports that the controversial Chief Election Commissioner, Mr Irshad Hassan Khan, who was accused of nursing bias towards Gen. Musharraf's administration by the political parties planned to preside over the first session of the national Assembly to administer oath to the members.

21/10

RISE OF THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT

21/10

THE RISE OF the Religious Right in Pakistan, alarming in its portents as it is, is attributable to several factors. Foremost among these surely was the manner in which the regime of the President, Pervez Musharraf, had persistently and systematically de-legitimised the liberal mainstream parties. The credibility of parties such as the Pakistan Peoples Party of Benazir Bhutto and the faction of the Pakistan Muslim League led by Nawaz Sharif was eroded by evoking portrayals of these as corrupt and incompetent to run the affairs of the country. There may have been some substance in these portrayals and such an officially-sponsored demonisation of these formations might not in itself have been sufficient to mar their prospects in the recently-concluded general elections since the people of Pakistan are familiar enough with the nature of these formations. But the military regime's deliberate move to block the leaders of both parties from contesting the elections, through recourse to dubious legislative measures, made clear to the people that they were not to be led by these twice-tested former Prime Ministers. Hence, the Pakistani voter was left to pick between the second or third rung leaders of the PPP or PML (NS) or the largely colourless leaders of the Pakistan Muslim League (Qaid-e-Azam) as his choice for Prime Minister. That clearly was no choice at all. It was against this backdrop — where none of the mainstream parties was able to galvanise the voters — that preferences were decided on a constituency-wise basis. In this scenario, the alliance of six religious parties, the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), which had put up a consolidated list of candidates and which seemed to promise an alternative to the PML (QA), the regime's stalking horse, had an advantage.

While such an analysis could explain the Religious Right's unprecedentedly strong performance at the countrywide level (it won 45 of the 272 general seats in the National Assembly), several other factors contributed to its success in the North West Frontier Province and Baluchistan. Basing its campaign as it did on a

strident opposition to the U.S.-led military action in Afghanistan, the MMA was able to appeal to both the religious as well as nationalist sentiments in the conservative Pashtun belt of both provinces. This reading of political developments in Pakistan's western regions has, however, to be reconciled with the findings (by Pakistani as well as Western observers of the election process) that the military regime did have a hand in shaping the outcome through the extension of administrative support to hand-picked candidates. If a military regime which claims itself to be, and is acclaimed as, a front-line ally in the U.S.-led war on terrorism has actually had a hand in granting power to a religious formation in provinces where terrorists are still being hunted it must be treated as a demonstration of unbelievable skulduggery. Whether the military regime wrought such an outcome or not, it is undeniable that the presence of the MMA in such strength at the centre and in the provinces has considerably enhanced Islamabad's diplomatic leeway. Pakistan's foreign and security policy establishment is now in a position to argue that it can neither proceed against offshoots of the Al-Qaeda nor moderate its policy on Kashmir to the extent that Washington desires since the religious formations (that have been traditionally hardline on both counts) have shown their political relevance.

The MMA's demand that the prime ministerial post be given to one of its leaders has not been taken seriously so far though the permutations and combinations in the extremely fragmented National Assembly could go every which way. Even if it is not a component of the Government to be formed, the MMA would make for a far strong Opposition. While the portents are for a tilt towards the right the question is whether the MMA will hold together over the long run. Other than a penchant for playing to religious sentiments, the six components of the MMA do not have much by way of a common agenda and their leaders are all notorious for their maverick behaviour.

MMA to go soft on US campaign

21/10
Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD, Oct. 20. — Pakistan's hardline religious alliance, which posted major gains in the 10 October general elections, has said that it will go soft on the US crackdown on Al-Qaida militants in the country. But it has demanded the release of the leaders of Lashkar-e-Taiyaba and Jaish-e-Mohammad.

Maulana Fazlur Rehman, Mutthahida Majlis-e-Amal leader and chief of the Jamat Ulema Islamic, told the British High Commissioner to Pakistan that the alliance would allow the USA and UK to complete its drive against the Al-Qaiada militants hiding in Pakistan.

Diplomats from the USA, UK, Canada and the European Union have been holding discussions with the MMA leaders, especially Maulana Rehman, ever since the Alliance posted victory in the polls.

However, the Jamat-e-Islami, a major component of the MMA, has demanded the release of the leaders Lashkar-e-Taiyaba, Jaish-e-Mohammad and Sepha-e-Sehba, an extremist Sunni group which was banned by General Pervez Musharraf in February.

The deputy leader of the

21/10
Jammat-e-Islami, Liaqat Baloch, demanded the release of Jaish-e-Mohammad leader Masood Azhar, who was freed by India in 1999 to end the hijack of a Indian Airlines plane, former Lashkar-e-Taiyaba chief Hafiz Mohammad Saeed and and SSP chief Azim Tariq as the government had "failed to produce any evidence against them, the *Daily Times* quoted him as saying.

"We will press for their release. The state says they are involved in terrorist activities. But they have no evidence to prove the allegations. This is state-sponsored terrorism," Mr Baloch said.

Top US General in Pak
Chief of US Army's Central Command Gen. Tommy R Franks today witnessed the ongoing Pakistan-US joint Army exercise "Inspired Gambit III". Gen. Franks arrived in Pakistan from Afghanistan and visited the exercise along with other members of his entourage, adds PTI from Islamabad.

Local TV showed US and Pakistani soldiers crossing a stream during the exercises, held after a gap of five years.

A company of 115 US troops arrived here on October 15 to take part in the exercises.

Pak hardliners want pro-Taliban cleric as PM

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
ISLAMABAD, OCTOBER 16

PAKISTAN'S newly powerful Islamic parties' alliance will demand that pro-Taliban cleric Maulana Fazlur Rehman be made Prime Minister if they enter into a coalition to form government, an alliance leader has said.

"If the MMA decides to join the government, then our prime minister will be Maulana Fazlur Rehman and we will support him," said Qazi Hussein Ahmed, vice-president of the Muttahidda Majlis-E-Amal.

Ahmed made the comment after talks with a leader of the pro-government Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid PML(Q).

The PML(Q) has been seek-



Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal leaders arrive on Wednesday for a meeting to discuss formation of a new government. Reuters
ing to coax the MMA into a coalition to capture the majority needed to form government. Shujaat Hussain met Ahmed at his residence ahead of an all-im-

form government at the MMA meeting and we will announce our decision after this meeting," Hussain said at his residence.

Maulana Fazlur Rehman heads the Jamiat Ulema-I-Islam Party, known for its close ties to Afghanistan's ousted Taliban regime.

The MMA's unprecedented gains in last week's general elections landed them the balance of power in the National Assembly with 45 of its 272 general seats.

The two biggest winners, the PML(Q) and the Pakistan People's Party of banned ex-Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, with 77 and 63 seats respectively, have been intensively wooing the MMA to form a coalition government.

New MPs can take oath under 1973 Constitution

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan President Musharraf has conceded to the demand by the alliance of Islamic parties to take oath under the 1973 Constitution.

ISLAMABAD: Pak has made it mandatory for its key members and bureaucrats to wear the national dress on formal occasions. The dress comprises white/black *sherwani/achkan* or buttoned-up black waist-coat, *kurta/kameez* and *shalwar/pyjama*, black shoes and matching socks. — Agencies

portant meeting of MMA leaders to debate coalition options.

"We will chalk out our plans to

Pak hardliners in talks to form new govt

MIKE COLLETT-WHITE
ISLAMABAD, OCTOBER 15

QNTD
98.6 16/10

PAKISTAN'S resurgent religious Right, which posted huge gains in last week's general election on a fiercely anti-American platform, held a series of coalition talks on Tuesday with leaders of rival parties.

Fazal-ur-Rehman, secretary-general of the hardline Islamic Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) movement of six religious groups, met the leaders of the two largest parties in last Thursday's poll in Islamabad.

He kept his cards close to his chest, but speculation about the composition of the government was rife and centred on whether the MMA, which this week called for the US military to leave Pakistan, would be part of a coalition or sit in Opposition.

"We hope these talks will end up in the best interests of the country," Rehman said, after meeting Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain and Mir Zafarullah Jamali, leaders of the Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-e-Azam (PML-QA).

Rehman was also due to meet Makhdoom Amin Fahim, the leader in Pakistan of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), which came second. The PPP's main leader is exiled former prime minister Be-



General hits out at EU

ISLAMABAD: Pak President Pervez Musharraf has lashed out at European Union observers' flaying of his controversial changes to the Constitution, Pakistan's official news agency reported on Tuesday.

CHAMAN: Afghanistan expressed concern on Tuesday at gains made by Pakistani Islamic parties in provinces bordering Pakistan in the general election, saying it was a setback to the war on terror. — Agencies

nazir Bhutto, who accused the military of rigging the election. Behind the PML(QA), which

MMA leader Fazal-ur-Rehman (L) with ex-President Farooq Ahmed Khan Leghari on Tuesday. Reuters

won 77 seats, and the PPP with 62 seats, was the MMA with 50 seats, compared with a vote of just two seats for religious parties at the last election in 1997.

Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf has said he expects to hand over power to a civilian prime minister by November 1, and some analysts say it could take three weeks to form a government.

The rise of the MMA has caused concern in the West and in Afghanistan over how it may affect the US-led hunt for Taliban and Al Qaeda fugitives. — Reuters

'Al Qaeda has its eyes on Pakistan'

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON/PESHAWAR,
OCTOBER 15

WITH an alliance of anti-US hardline religious parties emerging strong in Pakistan after the polls, the Al Qaeda terror network is making renewed efforts to regroup and build a "new command centre" there, media reports said on Tuesday even as Pakistani police and FBI agents arrested four men suspected to be linked to Al Qaeda.

"Al Qaeda is seeking allies among defectors from Pakistani militant groups who are unhappy with the military regime's cooperation with the United States and some of their leaders are already hiding in Pakistan," the *Washington Post* said quoting Western and Pakistani officials.

Al Qaeda as part of its new strategy has linked itself with local militants in Pakistan to advance a campaign of

destabilisation and simultaneously find the shelter necessary to build a new command centre, the daily said.

"With the network shifting its operations to smaller-scale and scattered targets after its defeat in Afghanistan and pressures on its financing, it is changing its tactics," the *Washington Post* said adding "its desire to form deeper alliances with other Islamic extremist organisations can be seen in Pakistan".

Pakistani police backed by FBI agents arrested four men on Tuesday suspected to have close ties to Al Qaeda, police said. The four men, all from Afghanistan, were arrested in a three-hour raid at the Jalozi refugee camp, 45 km east of Peshawar, they said.

Authorities seized documents, a computer and a mobile phone. Two passports also were confiscated, one from Afghanistan, the other from Saudi Arabia, they added.

Highly questionable

Musharraf's attempts at democracy rebound

Even the best-laid plans go awry. Islamabad has been working emaniacally to ensure that democratic politicians opposed to General Musharraf entered the electoral fray with one hand tied behind their backs, but the result was an unexpected boost for the fundamentalist Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) which, with 45 seats in the new National Assembly, will be the third largest grouping in parliament. If the "king's party," as the Musharraf supported Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-e-Azam) is known, is to form the government, it will be faced with an unenviable choice of coalition partners. It will either have to accept Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party after denying her an opportunity to contest or it will have to get into bed with the MMA. In case of the latter choice the MMA has already asked for the removal of American bases from the country, and it will be interesting to see how Musharraf responds to that. If the American invasion of Iraq does come through he will be a bigger target than he is already. The rescue of Osama and Omar from Afghanistan at Musharraf's initiative is not enough to overcome the impression given by both Bush and Musharraf that the latter is sitting in the former's pocket. The alternative is to concede control to democratic politicians whom Musharraf has fought hard to neuter. They will settle for nothing less than the surrender of his power to dissolve Parliament and send the government packing for starters. An ominous signal for Musharraf is the Supreme Court verdict early this month that extraordinary powers for his dummy National Security Council will need to be ratified by the new parliament.

If Musharraf has his troubles, the news is not too good for New Delhi either. A government with MMA fanatics entrenched will not allow any dropping off of support for cross-border terrorism, which means that there is almost no room for dialogue with Islamabad, which on the other hand the EU and less blatantly the US are pressing for. New Delhi's strategy will have to be revamped. Instead of refusing point blank the EU and the US, New Delhi could instead turn the tables on them by asking them to ensure that talks with Islamabad succeed; which would need Kashmir to be put on the back burner for now while New Delhi and Islamabad proceed with normalisation of relations in other spheres, a precondition for which is ending support for cross-border terror. That is what Vajpayee sought to accomplish at Agra, but Musharraf aborted by thrusting Kashmir centre-stage. There is no point simply repeating that experience. It won't work.

Pro-Pervez party for tie-up with zealots

APP & PTI

ISLAMABAD, Oct. 14. — The single largest party in Pakistan's hung Parliament today said it was ready to align with an anti-US religious alliance seeking to end Pakistan's role in the war on terror.

"We are willing to form a coalition with the Murtahida Majlis-e-Amal, but we are keeping our options open," Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid chief Mian Mohammad Azhar said.

Mr Azhar himself failed to win a seat in the Parliament but his party, supporters of General Pervez Musharraf, secured 77 of the national Assembly's 272 general seats.

The party needs the MMA alliance of six fundamentalist parties on board if it is to reach the 137 seats required for a simple majority to form government.

The MMA holds the balance of power in the new parliament with 45 seats, the majority from the North West Frontier Province and

south western Baluchistan province bordering Afghanistan.

The religious alliance campaigned on a platform calling for the Islamisation of Pakistan and an end to Islamabad's support of the US-led terror crackdown.

Mr Azhar, however, said his party would support Pakistan's ongoing help to the USA in its effort to crush the Taliban and Al-Qaida.

"Our policy remains that we are against terrorism and Pakistan should extend every possible support to the international war against terrorism," Mr Azhar said. "There will be no change in this policy."

In another development, Mrs Benazir Bhutto's PPP held talks with leaders of other parties, including the headline religious alliance, to explore the possibility of forming a coalition government to thwart the pro-Musharraf PML-Q's efforts in this regard.

The PPP leader, Mr Mukdhum Amin Fahim, whose party has emerged as the second largest party

with 63 seats in the National Assembly, today held a breakfast meeting with senior Murtahida Majlis-e-Amal leader and chief of Jamiat-i-Islami Party Qazi Hussain Ahmed to identify a common ground to form a coalition.

"We've understood each other's position in a better way and agreed to keep on continuing the process of consultations," they told the media after the meeting.

Asked about the outcome of the talks, the two leaders described the talks as "very cordial". The two discussed matters relating to the formation of government in centre and provinces. "We can not make decisions on our own and will apprise the parties' central bodies of the outcome of today's talks," Mr Ahmed said.

Mr Fahim, who returned from London a day earlier after holding consultations with Mrs Bhutto about government formation, said no decisions has been reached during his meeting with Mr Ahmed.

Mr Fahim later met Pakistan

Muslim League (N) chairman Mr Raja Zafarul Haq and discussed the chances of the anti-Musharraf parties forming the government.

The PPP leader was also expected to meet leaders of the Musharraf backed PML-Q, which has emerged as the largest party in the National Assembly by winning 77 seats.

The party has stepped up its efforts after Gen. Musharraf spoke to the some of the leaders of the political over phone from Turkey.

According to officials, the general spoke to the PML-Q leader, Mr Sujahat Hussain, who has been chosen to head the party after its leader Mian Azhar failed to win his Parliamentary seat. Besides Mr Hussain, Mr Musharraf spoke to MMA convenor Moulana Shah Ahmed Noorani and another MMA leader and chief of Jamat Ulema Islami (JUI), Mr Fazalur Rehman.

But it was not clear whether Gen. Musharraf in his talks proposed a coalition government comprising PML-Q, MMA and other political parties.

5/27 15/10 PML-Q

Benazir party's offer on Govt. formation

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

110-11
14/10 PAKI

ISLAMABAD, OCT. 13. Less than 24 hours after it became clear that no single party or formation would be in a position to command a simple majority in the new Pakistan National Assembly, the party led by the former Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, announced that it was ready to explore the possibility of government formation with any and everyone.

The offer made by the Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians chief, Makhdoom Amin Fahim, covered the pro-Musharraf rebel Muslim leaguers, which has emerged as the single largest entity in the Assembly and the alliance of six religious parties.

Mr. Fahim, who has just returned from London after consultations with Ms. Bhutto, said that his party would 'shortly' initiate a dialogue with the Pakistan Muslim League (Q) and the Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal keeping all its options open to form a Government.

The announcement made by Mr. Fahim marked the end of the no-holds-barred campaign by his party in the run-up to the election against the President, Parvez Musharraf, the rebel leaguers nicknamed as "King's party" and the leaders of religious parties.

He gave clear indications that the PPP was prepared for 'bar-

gains of give and take' with Gen. Musharraf and all groups in the Assembly.

A clear picture on who would lead the new Government is not likely to emerge before October 20, the date set by the Election Commission for the gazette notification on constitution of a new Assembly.

The President does not appear to be in a hurry over the formalities related to the new government.

He left this morning to Istanbul to attend the Economic Cooperation Organisation summit. According to the Pakistan Television, Gen. Musharraf stopped over at Teheran and exchanged views with the Iranian leadership on several issues, including the Iran-India gas pipeline project via Pakistan.

Gen. Musharraf had indicated on the afternoon of the elections that he intended to hand over executive powers to the new Prime Minister sometime in early November.

Mr. Fahim told reporters here that "I have come with an open mind."

The PPP President, who is a contender for the Prime Minister's slot, vowed to take the revived democratic process ahead and strengthen the elected institution.

"We will talk to all the democratic forces with the objective that the elected institutions would complete their term."

Asked to identify common grounds, on which the PPP could reach an understanding for forming a Government with the PML(Q), he said they had not yet begun dialogue with any political party.

However, he did not rule out the possibility of cooperation between the PML(Q) and the PPP, which have emerged as the two largest groups in the election.

About some traditional differences with the Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal, he recalled that at the time of forming the People's Parliamentarian Party, he had stated that it was a new entity and would be open for dialogue with all democratic forces.

Regarding the future working relationship with the President, he said the political parties would have to make their moves within the 'given framework.'

For national reconciliation, all the stakeholders, including the President would have to demonstrate some flexibility, he said.

On the statements given by Ms. Bhutto calling for fresh elections, Mr. Fahim said she had monitored the process and given the statement in view of initial complaints.

However, she agreed that the democratic process should be carried forward and the PPP should look ahead to form the Government.

P-W 110-8

PML(Q) emerges on top

M/W

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, OCT. 12. At the end of the counting of votes cast in Pakistan's general elections, the Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-e-Azam), nicknamed the 'King's party' (for its supposed proximity to the military establishment), emerged the single-largest party in the 272-member National Assembly with 76 seats.

Though it is nowhere near the half-way mark of 136, the party threw its hat in the ring as a contender for government formation at the national level. This was evident from the statement by Chaudhary Elahi, one of the senior leaders of the party, that the group, with the help of smaller parties and independents, is already in a position to muster support of the newly-elected members.

The Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, does not appear perturbed over the verdict. He is leaving tonight for Istanbul to attend an international conference.

The Musharraf regime would prefer to hand over the reins of power to the rebel Muslim Leaguers. The Pakistan Information Minister, Nissar Memon, has already indicated that the single-largest party or pre-poll alliance should get an opportunity to explore the possibility of government formation in a "badly hung House."

What surprised observers was the claim made by Mr. Elahi — who is eyeing the Chief Ministership of the Punjab province — that the party was in touch with the senior leaders of the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), so-called third force. The MMA, alliance of six religious parties, emerged as the third-largest party with 44 seats.

The statement of the Jamaat-e-Islami chief and senior MMA leader, Quazi Hussain Ahmed, earlier in the day that the alliance would ask the Americans to vacate its military bases in Pakistan made observers wonder whether the pro-Musharraf party

and the MMA could sail together. After all, Gen. Musharraf's decision to align with the United States in its 'war against terror' and the logistical support extended to it formed the basis for Pakistan to emerge again as a 'frontline state.'

Of course, another way of looking at it is that the rebel Muslim Leaguers and managers in the military establishment are confident of handling the MMA's 'anti-American' rhetoric.

Quazi Ahmed indicated that the MMA was in no 'hurry' to think of government formation at the national level and that it would focus for the time being on forming the government in the Frontier.

The alliance would also make a serious bid to form a government of its own in Balochistan, largest province in geographical terms. It has emerged as the single-largest entity in the 51-member Assembly so far. The rebel League is second.

If some kind of cooperation is worked out at the national level between the two, there is a good chance of their taking over the reins of power in Quetta.

The Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians, headed by the former Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, is the second-largest party in the National Assembly with 63 seats. Its leader, Makhdoom Fahim, who rushed to London on Thursday for consultations with Ms. Bhutto, has not yet returned.

Media reports suggest that Mr. Fahim left after a meeting with the bigwigs in the military headquarters in Rawalpindi. His travel has triggered speculation that the establishment has offered a deal to Ms. Bhutto to either lead or be part of the national government.

Besides the PML (Q), the PPP and the MMA, the independents have emerged as the fourth-largest force by bagging 28 seats.

However, under the new law brought in by Gen. Musharraf, the independents will have to join a political party of their choice

within three days after their election. A majority of them is expected to join the government-backed PML (Q).

In Sindh, the PPP has emerged as the single-largest party with 50 members in the House of 140. The MQM with 30 members is the second largest group and the PML (QA) is third with 10 members.

If the PPP succeeds in striking a deal with the rebel Leaguers at the national level, it can bank on their support in the Sindh Assembly. It would still require the support of smaller parties and the independents.

MMA to support Kashmiris

The Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) chairman, Maulana Ahmed Noorani, has said that the alliance would support Kashmiris "on all fronts".

"We will not desert our Kashmiri brethren," he told Sardar Ejaz, the Jamaat-e-Islami chief in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK). He claimed that success of Islamic parties showed "hatred" of people against the pro-U.S. policies of the Government. "No system of governance can run in the country except the true Islamic system". Sardar Ejaz told Mr. Noorani that the success of the MMA had lifted the spirit of the Kashmiris and said that it was a step towards an "Islamic revolution" in Pakistan and PoK.

In a related development, the central vice-president of the MMA and chief of Jamaat-e-Islami, Qazi Hussain Ahmad, has said Kashmir dispute should be resolved through the U.N. resolutions. In an interview to a local television channel he said Kashmir was a longstanding dispute and it was the right of the people of the Valley to decide their fate through a plebiscite. "India has forcefully occupied Kashmir and we will facilitate Kashmiris to get their rights enshrined in the U.N. resolutions as Pakistan has always provided moral, political and diplomatic support to the Kashmiri brethren," he said.

Pak polls: Fair for USA is foul for EU

5-11-1970

ASSOCIATED PRESS

ISLAMABAD, Oct. 12. — Pakistan's general elections were marked by "serious flaws" caused in part by government attempts to stage-manage the vote by limiting the power of the new Legislature, barring top Opposition candidates and using state resources to help friendly candidates. This is what the European Union observers said today about the just-concluded polls.

But in Washington today, the United States today welcomed the results, calling it "an important milestone in the country's transition to democracy". At the same time, the US rejected the possibility of the victory of hardliners as having anything to do with President Musharraf's Washington ties. The European Union criticism, however, did not deter Gen. Musharraf from calling them the first step towards the return of a democratic Pakistan.

In a sharply critical interim report on the election, the EU observers said it was questionable if these could result in a genuine shift towards democracy. The surprisingly strong showing of hardline Islamic parties running on an anti-Western platform marked a dramatic shift in Pakistani politics and may make it difficult for pro-government parties to form a centrist coalition, one that will support Gen. Musharraf's alliance with the

United States in the war on terror, they said.

Attempts by the military government to influence the election outcome also constituted "unjustified interference with electoral arrangements and the democratic process," said the EU's

India's reaction

WASHINGTON, Oct. 12. — Indian Ambassador to the USA, Mr Lalit Mansingh, said today that the USA can be a "facilitator" rather than a "mediator" in solving the Kashmir issue. "A facilitator is somebody who is a friend, who suggests things and does not dictate. To that extent we welcome the role of USA," he said. If the USA's role as a "facilitator" leads to enduring peace in the region, "nothing could be better for us".

— SNS

chief observer, Mr John Cushman. "The action taken by the authorities led to serious flaws in the process."

Gen. Musharraf issued a series of decrees ahead of the election, including the establishment of a National Security Council that institutionalises the military's role in government.

He also gave himself the power to sack the Prime Minister and dissolve the Legislature, and passed laws that required that all candidates have a universi-



DEMOCRACY IN THE LAND OF THE GUN:
Mr Noorul Haq Qadri is felicitated for his success in the elections from Peero Khel Sharif. — AFP

Hawks to Uncle Sam: Pack up and leave

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ISLAMABAD, Oct. 12. — Anti-US Islamic parties and opposition groups today emerged as power centres following a fractured verdict in the general elections in which a pro-Musharraf party has emerged as the single largest outfit followed by former the Prime Minister, Mrs Benazir Bhutto's, Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians (PPPPP).

The six hardline religious parties, who won major electoral gains, have vowed to close down American airbases in Pakistan and ask the US force deployed in the country to leave. American airbases given permission by the Musharraf government for anti-terrorism operations in the country would be closed down, said Qazi Hussain Ahmad, a key leader, addressing a victory meeting in Peshawar.

"These bases in any form in Pakistan are unacceptable to us. We consider American presence a brazen abridgement of the country's sovereignty and ego and would ask the US forces to leave", the Jamat-e-Islami chief said.

With almost all results for the 272 seats declared, Pakistan Muslim League — Qaid-e-Azam, supportive of General Musharraf, has won 77 seats

followed by 63 bagged by PPPP. But the coalition of six religious parties have won 45 National Assembly seats and was poised to form the first Islamic provincial government in North-west Frontier Province.

The MMA has won the highest number of seats in Baluchistan, bordering Afghanistan. It may form a government in the province with the help of smaller groups and parties. Imran Khan's Tehrik-e-Insaf has won one seat.

For the National Assembly, exiled former Prime Minister Mr Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League has ended with just 14 seats, while 67 seats have gone to independents or other smaller parties.

Observers said the outcome of the elections pointed towards a shift in the country's politics in which hardliners would be holding the key to power. Under the new law brought in by General Musharraf, independent candidates will have to join political parties of their choice within three days of their election. The General had set 1 November as swearing-in of the new Prime Minister.

The National Assembly will be completed after the nomination for 70 seats reserved for the women and minority candidates, apportioned to each party's performance in the polls.

Party close to Musharraf leads in Pak

Democracy trots behind dictator

IDREES BAKHTIAR AND
PRANAY SHARMA

Islamabad/New Delhi, Oct. 11: General Pervez Musharraf today escorted Pakistan closer to a "democracy" that saw the "King's party" emerge as the largest group in the election held yesterday and the rise of a religious fundamentalist kingmaker.

With results in from 226 of the 272 seats, the Pakistan Muslim League (QA), loyal to Musharraf, had 70. But the balance of power appeared to rest with hardline Islamic parties gathered under the flag of the Mutahidda Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), which won 47 seats, dramatically improving its tally from only two in 1997.

Musharraf's main political rivals — Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif — both out of the country and excluded from the polls, performed well below expectations and alleged rigging.

Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party won 48 seats and Sharif's Muslim League faction only 13.

"It is a revolution," MMA vice-president Qazi Hussain Ahmed told supporters on the outskirts of Peshawar. "We will not accept US bases and Western culture."

Religious parties tapped the anger at Pakistan's support for the US-led war on terror to virtually sweep the polls in conservative parts of western Pakistan bordering Afghanistan. Some of



Qazi Hussain Ahmed at a celebration rally. (AFP)

these parties are vocal supporters of the Taliban.

The MMA could also become the strongest party in the two provincial assemblies in Baluchistan and that North West Frontier Province where al Qaida and Taliban activists are suspected to be hiding and where Pakistani law-enforcers have little say.

There were fears that the US job of hunting down al Qaida and Taliban remnants would become more difficult than it already is with the hostile MMA calling the shots in these regions.

Is this bad for Musharraf? Opinion is divided. The MMA's strong showing could prove to be a headache for Musharraf because his closeness to the US has not always gone down well at ho-

me and the grouping could act as a funnel for that unhappiness to pour into the national assembly.

With a share in the power, the MMA could even precipitate a confrontation with the President over foreign policy.

Opponents of this line of argument, however, point to the fact that the MMA was among the only groups allowed to campaign freely before the polls while Musharraf went to the greatest lengths to cripple the challenge from Bhutto and Sharif.

These observers suggested that the result suited Musharraf because he can now parade the growing strength of the religious fundamentalists to emphasize his own usefulness to the Americans and thereby extract more concessions. It will also help him tell Washington not to lean on him too much to crack down on fundamentalist groups for fear of a backlash.

"My information...is that they are giving (North West Frontier Province) to the MMA," Bhutto said. "They are doing this so they can tell the US: 'you need a tinpot dictator strutting on the stage, otherwise the Taliban will take over'."

Delhi agrees with this assessment. Indian officials said the MMA was formed with blessings from Musharraf who tried to gain their support. These forces, Delhi believes, can be used if and when Musharraf desires to foment trouble in Kashmir.

■ See Pages 3 and 6

Pak 10
10-12

'Fears of rigging in Pak. elections proved wrong'

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

11/10

ISLAMABAD, OCT. 10. The apprehensions of various political parties about possible rigging during the general elections in Pakistan today appear to have been proved wrong. By and large there were no complaints from any part of the country of Government interference in the poll process.

However the questions and controversies that dogged the run-up to the elections are likely to continue for some time to come. Most of the parties and independent observers have accused the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, of 'pre-poll rigging' and massive changes in the Constitution, institutionalising the role of the military in governance. The new Parliament is seen as likely to be subservient to Gen. Musharraf as he has armed himself with powers to dissolve it and dismiss the Government on specific grounds.

His decision to bar the two



The Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, casts his ballot at a polling booth in Rawalpindi on Thursday.

— AFP

former Prime Ministers, Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, from contesting and disqualifying them from becoming Prime Minister for a third term added to the perception that he was determined to keep them out of the political ring.

Three-hundred international observers drawn from various world forums, including the European Union and the Commonwealth supervised the elections.

The chief of the EU team told reporters that no incidents of irregularities had come to their notice.

Pre-election opinion polls and at least one exit poll predicted an edge for the party led by the former Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto.

Curiously the head of the new wing floated by her, Makhdoom Fahim, is rushing to London, where Mrs. Bhutto lives in exile, for consultations on the evolving situation.

Projections by a leading Pakistan fortnightly, *Herald*, put Mrs. Bhutto's party ahead in the National Assembly with 76 seats.

The rebel Muslim Leaguers are not very far behind. The original Muslim League is placed in the third place with 35 seats. The magazine predicts a clear victory for PPP in the Sind Assembly and a hung Assembly in Punjab.

Pak poll peaceful but fails to capture public interest

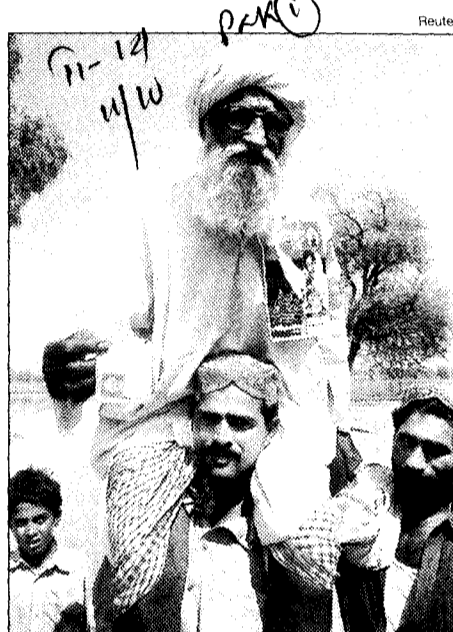
Islamabad: Pakistanis voted on Thursday in the first general election since General Pervez Musharraf seized power in a 1999 coup. Despite the killing of four people in scattered clashes between rival supporters, the polling was otherwise peaceful.

Although security was tight throughout the country amidst concerns about violence from extremist Islamic groups, the election failed to evoke much enthusiasm among the electorate, at least in the main cities, resulting in the voter turnout being low to moderate. "No one is voting to elect a leadership. They are all voting for individuals, for people who have proved themselves unworthy of our trust," said Mussadiq Masood, an advertising professional.

The turnout and enthusiasm seemed a little higher in rural areas in the poll which saw 83 parties contesting. Opinion polls showed a tight fight between the PML (QA), a pro-Musharraf faction of the Pakistan Muslim League, and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) of exiled former prime minister Benazir Bhutto.

Despite the fact that the election is supposed to restore civilian rule in Pakistan, critics say Gen Musharraf has manipulated the vote and will retain considerable powers as President. Gen Musharraf has also been accused by political opponents and independent observers of trying to tilt the field in favour of the PML(QA) and produce a compliant 342-seat national assembly.

But the voting process itself is expected to be fair, with at least 300 observers from the European Union and the Commonwealth spread out across the country. "Despite the controversy surrounding the PML(QA) and the allegations of pre-poll rigging, I will vote for them because I believe they will do something for this country," said Mohsin, a 29-year-old Islamabad banker. Abdul Latif, a tailor and the imam of a mosque in Islamabad



A Pakistani villager carries his father on his shoulders to vote in Larkana, the hometown of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, on Thursday.

said he would vote for the PPP. His reason: "They were given a raw deal last time, and anyone who makes a mistake should be given a second chance."

Meanwhile, shortly after voting in Rawalpindi with his wife and his mother, Gen Musharraf promised to hand over executive powers to the new prime minister by November 1. "We have worked out everything," he said.

"It is a legal process. We will go through the process and by November 1, I will hand over the chief executive authority to the new prime minister." Reuters

Pak goes to poll ^{part 1} today amidst doubts about its fairness ^{11-11 1990}

Islamabad: With opinion polls showing a close fight between the main opposition and a pro-government party, Pakistan goes to general elections on Thursday for the first time since President Pervez Musharraf grabbed power in a bloodless coup in 1999. The country's main human rights group has, however, questioned the credibility of the exercise.

Though Gen Musharraf has assured a free and fair elections, independent human rights commission said on the eve of polling that it had documentary evidence of electoral malpractices.

It also criticised constitutional changes which, it said, would undermine the elections.

Around 72 million people are eligible to vote to elect a 342-member national assembly and four provincial assemblies which were suspended and later dissolved by Gen Musharraf. Over 7,000 candidates are in the fray.

Two of the country's leading political figures, Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, who are in exile, are not con-

testing. While Mr Sharif withdrew his nomination, Ms Bhutto was barred from contesting.

Opinion polls show Ms Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the 18-month-old pro-government Pakistan Muslim League - Quaid (PML-Q) are equal favourites with political observers predicting horse trading.

Though the national assembly has 342 members, under the new rules brought in by the military regime, direct elections will be held for 272 seats only. The rest of the 60 seats, which were reserved for women and ten for minorities, will be allotted to parties in proportion to their voting percentages after the polls.

The polls are being held under the watchful eyes of over 200 foreign poll observers and the new central and provincial governments are expected to take over power from the army by the third week of this month.

According to the survey, the PPP will win 80 seats against PML (Q) 79. PTI

PART 1
AD-1

MUSHARRAF SEES END TO 'FAMILY DOMINATION'

All set for Pak. polls today 10/10

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, OCT. 9. The stage is set for one of the most contentious general elections in Pakistan tomorrow amid assertions by the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, that the polls would usher in a new 'era', ending the "domination by a few families".

But mainstream political parties and independent observers believe that the much-trumpeted transition from the military to a civilian rule might never take place. Numerous pre-election laws and the disqualification of the two former Prime Ministers, Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, have undoubtedly robbed much of the election charm.

Thanks to Gen. Musharraf's decision to lower the voting age to 18, the strength of the electorate has gone up to 71.9 millions. But most expect the turnout to be low as there was hardly any campaign in the absence of the two crowd pullers — Ms. Bhutto and Mr. Sharif. The turnout in the 1997 election, in which Mr. Sharif won with a heavy mandate, is 35.9 per cent.

Extraordinary security measures have been taken to ensure that the polling is smooth. The Army has been kept on the alert and some of the paramilitary forces have been deployed on the eastern and western borders to assist police in poll duties. The 'India factor' is very much in focus with the Government claiming to have detained six RAW 'agents' allegedly on a mission to disrupt the polls.

The contours of the new National and the four provincial Assemblies are expected to be clear by midnight tomorrow as the counting would start immediately after the end of polling at 5 p.m.

It is not just the main parties but the bulk of civil society is convinced that the sweeping changes made by Gen. Mushar-



Bags containing election materials wait to be handed over to polling officials under tight security at the election office in Peshawar, Pakistan on Wednesday. — AP

raf in the Constitution have rendered the yet-to-be-born new Parliament into a 'dummy' house. The extension of his tenure as President for five years and empowering himself to dissolve the National Assembly, besides the creation of the military-dominated National Security Council, through the statute changes, have drawn all-round flak.

The debate among the political parties and the media, in the run-up to the elections, has been dominated by charges of "pre-election rigging" and the alleged blatant and brazen acts of the Government to help its favourite party, Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-e-Azam), to emerge as the single largest

party in the new National Assembly.

Vociferous denials by the Government starting from Gen. Musharraf himself and assurances of holding a 'free, fair and transparent' elections have not helped infuse confidence among the parties and civil society.

In an interview to a television channel, Gen. Musharraf has defended the policies of his regime and the new electoral and other laws. He criticised the old political system that promoted "anti-democratic norms" and hoped that the new and capable leadership would emerge.

"The (past) political culture did now allow new leadership

to emerge and turned the country's politics into a family culture," he said in an interview beamed live on the ARY Digital network.

There was no democracy within the political parties themselves and family members were made to replace the party leadership. "It is not a monarchy," he observed. The previous leadership exhibited politics of hatred and was "acrimonious" in nature, he said. Referring to Ms. Bhutto and Mr. Sharif, he said that since both of them were out of contest, the new leadership of PPP Parliamentarians and the PML would hopefully interact harmoniously in Parliament.

Musharraf's appeal: Page 12

THE BIG STORY

GRAPHIC: ASHUTOSH SAPRU

★ HOW PAKISTAN VOTES ★

Population **144.6** million
Registered voters **72** million

Turnout in 1997: 25 per cent of 56.4 million eligible voters
(Government of Pakistan next day revised figures to 35 per cent)

SEATS IN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Province	General	Women	Total
BALUCHISTAN	14	3	17
NWFP	35	8	43
PUNJAB	148	35	183
SINDH	61	14	75
FATA (Tribal Areas)	12	0	12
ISLAMABAD	2	0	2
TOTAL	272	60	332

SEATS IN THE PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLIES

Province	General	Women	Non-Muslim	Total
BALUCHISTAN	51	11	3	65
NWFP	99	22	3	124
PUNJAB	297	66	8	371
SINDH	130	29	9	168

NUMBER OF CANDIDATES

For seats in the National Assembly **4,020**
For seats in the Provincial Assemblies **9,648**

NUMBER OF PARTIES **73**

Prominent Party	Head
Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP)	BENAZIR BHUTTO
Pakistan Muslim League (N)	NAWAZ SHARIF
Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal	QAZI HUSSAIN AHMED
Jamaat-e-Islami	MAULANA FAZL-UR REHMAN
Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam (F)	MAULANA SAMI-UL HAQ
Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam (S)	MAULANA S.A. NOORANI
Jamiat-e-Ulema Pakistan	ALTAF HUSSAIN
Muttahida Qaumi Movement	IMRAN KHAN
Tehreek-e-Insaf	MIAN AZHAR
PML (Q)	



GENERAL SELECTION

OTHER POLL VAULTS



Ayub Khan (1958-69)

Ayub came up with a multi-tiered system at the bottom of which were Basic Democrats, each representing a group of 10,000. He was subverting the party system to forestall any political challenge to his authority, for the Basic Democrats contested on individual merits, not on party platforms. In 1960 they endorsed Ayub's presidency, and in 1962,

mandated him to frame a new Constitution. Subsequent military dictators like Zia and Musharraf tried to emulate the emasculation of political parties.



Yahya Khan (1969-71)

Yahya gave Pakistan its first genuine general elections, which unfortunately led to the country's dismemberment. Elections were held in December 1970 for the new National Assembly, whose members were directly elected. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Awami League won 162 out of the 300 seats, but neither Yahya nor the Zulfikar Ali Bhutto wanted East Pakistan to rule over the West Wing. Bhutto even refused to discuss power-sharing, and there was a civil war, which led to the creation of Bangladesh.



Zia-ul-Haq (1977-88)

Zia said he took over to hold fair elections. After hanging Bhutto, he cancelled those plans. In 1984 held a referendum over policy of Islamisation; then said a 'yes' vote meant he could stay another five years. Adapted Ayub's Basic Democracies. In 1985, he finally held elections, but didn't allow political parties to participate; the PPP boycotted. Zia sacked his handpicked PM, Mohd Khan Junejo, who had grown too independent, and announced fresh elections. But Zia died. When elections were held, Bhutto's daughter Benazir won.

Musharraf's controlled elections are for a 'controlled democracy'. Though the voting age was lowered to 18, a record low 20 per cent turnout is expected. And a political crisis looms...

Mubashir Zaidi
Islamabad

CONSTITUTIONALLY, 30 years and six months ought to have gone by before Pakistan's sixth general elections. But thanks to the Army's stranglehold over the country's politics, six elections, the latest being conducted on October 10, have been held within a span of 17 years. And still the basic question remains: Will real democracy finally challenge and prevail over military might?

The answer: a big NO. The President, General Pervez Musharraf has resurrected an invention of the last military dictator, General Zia-ul-Haq — the concept of controlled democracy. Musharraf's deft moves to secure all necessary powers so that any new Parliament dare not defy him have placed him firmly in the saddle for the next five years; thus 'controlled democracy' has returned to haunt legislators before they are even elected.

"The military government did not topple the Nawaz Sharif government on October 12, 1999, merely to return power to the same politicians after three years," says a senior government official whom the opposition has dubbed 'chief campaigner' of the pro-Musharraf political parties. Obviously, the military coup dictates the paradigm of Pakistani politics, not the coming elections to the National and Provincial Assemblies. Sharif tried to rewrite civil-military

relations on his own terms. Ultimately the former Prime Minister was forced into exile to learn more about monarchy. Since then the army has tried to cobble together a set of loyal politicians. First it forced a split in Sharif's party, the PML (N). Then it told one-man parties around the country, such as that of former president Farooq Leghari, to patch together an alliance that might have a shot at a parliamentary majority.

Fresh oaths of allegiance were administered to Supreme Court and High Court judges to bolt tight the door for any legal challenge to military rule. Not only that, Musharraf managed to get the apex court to endorse his amendments to the Constitution — a power not with the judiciary but with an elected parliament.

Sovereignty resides in GHQ

Retired civil servant Roedad Khan, who was General Zia's Interior Secretary and later his advisor, says the military will continue to dominate Pakistan's politics until politicians challenge its might. "The fact is that sovereignty neither belongs to parliament, nor to the higher judiciary, nor to the bureaucracy, and not to the constitution. Sovereignty in our country belongs to GHQ. Ultimately it will prevail. It is within their power to abrogate the constitution and get away with it," he says.

Though the constitution's abrogation is treason, military rulers have done it repeatedly. "That's why they are the sovereign power. How can a parliament be sovereign if it can be kicked out in five

minutes and not even a dog barks. This has made political institutions either non-existent or weak. The result is that Army has no difficulty in dissolving the Assembly, dismissing the elected government and then manipulating the next elections. The irony is that everyone still wants to do business with them," Mr Khan observes.

Political parties were willing to do business even without their leaders, Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif. But the military regime is in no mood to trust politicians after the experience with the democrats hand-picked by General Zia in the non-party elections of 1985; after a while, they refused to listen to Zia's dictates. Musharraf has amended the constitution to leave no room for any post-poll challenge. The National Security Council has been revived to ensure that future prime ministers are reminded by the military of their powerlessness. Controversial Article 59(2b) is back to empower the President to dismiss parliament.

Army's anxiety over PPP

Yet there remain worries, such as the rise of Bhutto's Pakistan Peoples Party, despite her disqualification. Ironically, the army-engineered split of Sharif's party will benefit her, for the breakaway PML(Q) has so far been unable to reassure the military it can bag enough seats to form a government. Also, the vote bank of the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal, an umbrella of the major religious parties that are dead against the Musharraf regime, will likely boost the PPP's potential to

secure a majority. The political rise of Imran Khan and his Tehreek-e-Insaf will further divide rightist votes.

So the regime has resorted to pre-poll rigging. The Governors, top bureaucrats and police officials of the four provinces have visited every district to pressurize key candidates to switch sides. The PPP says the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) has threatened anti-Musharraf candidates to fall in line. Nazims (district mayors) have been provided funds for development schemes in the constituencies of pro-Musharraf candidates.

Yet the PPP believes it can secure a majority if the elections are free, fair and transparent. The presence of international observers may prevent ballot-stuffing in urban areas. But in far-flung rural areas, the opposition fears, rigging is still possible. The PPP has asked its polling agents not to leave the polling stations on D-Day till each has received a signed copy of the election results from the presiding officer. Also, Sharif's PML(N) is willing to concede seats in favor of the PPP to ensure the democrats can take on the military.

Till then, Sharif and Bhutto are keenly waiting. So are political pundits who predict a certain conflict between the President and the future Parliament. One thing is clear: Pakistan will witness political instability from day one. Whether the next Prime Minister is a military stooge or a true democrat, things will start happening the moment parliamentarians take oath to protect the Constitution and work for the democracy.

Whom Musharraf fears the most

Benazir and Nawaz 'disqualified' by Army for attempted rapprochement with India

ELECTIONS 2002, and not only are Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif out of the political arena but out of the country as well. From 1988 to 1999, politics revolved around Bhutto and Sharif. He was forcibly exiled to Saudi Arabia while she went to the UK into self-exile to avoid facing graft cases. Both were sentenced by the military for corruption.

Benazir came to power in 1988 with a progressive and liberal agenda. She was labeled a security risk after inviting Rajiv Gandhi to Pakistan. Stories from her 'love affair' with Rajiv to those of her providing him lists of Khalistanis were planted in the press.

She was also said to have blackened the signboards of Kashmir Avenue and Kashmir House to please Rajiv. Then came the corruption cases and her government's

dismissal. Then came Nawaz Sharif, a most obedient servant of the establishment. He was dumped after developing differences with then President Ghulam Ishaq Khan.

Benazir returned in 1993 after having learnt her lesson. She is credited with the Taliban's creation. Yet despite her best efforts, she was fired to pave way for Sharif.

After securing the biggest ever mandate, he started following Benazir's path. A bid to better relations with India was unacceptable to the military. So first Kargil and then a military coup in 1999.

The former Premiers will likely dominate the post-election political scene despite exile. A pointer is the anti-establishment statements from the palaces of Saudi Arabia and the flats of London.

—Mubashir Zaidi



NAWAZ SHARIF AND BENAZIR BHUTTO: Dominated politics during democratic interlude of 1988-1999. He's 'Public Enemy No. 1' while she's a 'Security Risk' says Gen Musharraf.

Pak 1
140-12

Musharraf trying to retain power' 1/10

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

KARACHI, OCT. 3. The Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf's quest for international legitimacy for next week's general elections suffered yet another blow today as a renowned non-governmental organisation accused him of following the pattern set by his predecessors in uniform to perpetuate his own rule.

In a report on the October 10 election, released in Pakistan and Brussels, the International Crisis Group (ICG) alleged that Gen. Musharraf is not exactly sticking to his promise to restore democracy and transfer power to an elected government. "His military government is following the pattern of Pakistan's previous military rulers by unilaterally instituting political and constitutional changes intended to ensure that the generals retain the real power and any democratic transition falters before it begins", it said.

This is the third international group to question the sincerity of the Musharraf Government to ensure full transfer of power to a civilian set-up. The National Institute for Democracy, based in the United States, and the European Union (EU) election observers group had raised similar concerns. However, the EU had clarified that its report, published in a section of the Pakistani press, was meant for internal consumption and did not constitute the final view of the forum.

The ICG report titled 'Pakistan: Transition to Democracy?' said both the military and the political elite were to blame for the failure of the country to develop a democratic government. The ICG South Asia Project Director, Samina Ahmed, said, "the political elite succumbed in the past to the military's tactics, tempted by the spoils of

power, and is again facing a blueprint for more military rule".

The ICG felt external pressure, especially from the United States and the European Union, was vital if Gen. Musharraf were to fulfil his pledge to restore democracy. "Washington and its allies have so far said little, in the misguided belief that Pakistan's military is the only institution that can combat terrorism in the region and hold back the tide of Islamist extremism".

Ms. Samina Ahmed said, "a military government in Pakistan has already exacerbated tensions with India over Kashmir, and elements of the military have used the jihadis for their own purposes. Political stability will elude Pakistan until the country has a representative government. There is a high risk that the coming elections will not be free and fair. But if they are, the victors would be the major, moderate parties who are sympathetic to U.S. goals in the region, who have their own reasons to normalise relations with India and curb the powers of extremist groups".

According to the ICG, the 'reforms' proposed by Gen. Musharraf would actually give the President much greater powers, including the power to dissolve the National Assembly. The General had warned parliamentarians that if they did not accept his amendments they would lose their jobs.

"Electoral procedures have been revised, disqualifying scores of politicians from standing, including former Prime Ministers who lead the major opposition parties, while the judiciary has been subordinated to the executive through forced resignations, selective appointments and inducements".

The report urged Pakistan to conduct free and fair elections and to ensure that local and international observers had se-

cure and unrestricted access to the electoral process.

Confusion

Meanwhile there was confusion over what would be the fate of the constitutional amendments and laws made by Gen. Musharraf after the elections and the constitution of the National Assembly.

A report from Islamabad today claimed that a larger bench of the Supreme Court of Pakistan had observed that the new Parliament can 'rescind or endorse' the Legal Framework Order 2002 under Article 239 of the Constitution. The report said the apex court made the observation while hearing a petition moved by a political party.

Three days ago, all the major dailies had carried a similar report attributed to the judges hearing an election-related petition. However, the following day, the Supreme Court Registrar said there was a 'mis-reporting' of the remarks.

In a related development, the former Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, claimed in an interview from Jeddah to the BBC Urdu Service that he had turned down a deal offered by Gen. Musharraf under which he could return home and contest the elections. Mr. Sharif claimed that the General had sent an envoy for the purpose.

The BBC correspondent, who is now here, said while Mr. Sharif sounded defiant, he did not want the interview to be recorded. He told the BBC that he would continue his fight against the "dictatorship of Musharraf".

He said that as Prime Minister he had administered the oath of office to Gen. Musharraf for the post of army chief under which the latter had promised to uphold the Constitution and serve the government of the day and not get involved in politics.

INDIA

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Musharraf's laws will have to be ratified: SC

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD, Oct. 1. — The Pakistani Supreme Court has said the new laws and rules promulgated by General Pervez Musharraf's government would have to be approved and ratified by parliament to be elected on 10 October.

This observation by the Supreme Court could have serious ramifications on Gen. Musharraf's political future.

A full bench of the Supreme Court yesterday observed that laws promulgated under Provisional Constitutional Order (PCO) had no legal status without Parliament's validation. "The

laws promulgated by the executive authority under the Provincial Constitution Order have no legal or constitutional status till the next Parliament validates them," Mr Justice Qazi Muhammad Farooq said, responding to an election appeal petition.

The only way any legislation brought under a PCO could be part of the country's constitution was through a notification and its endorsement by the future Parliament, he said. Once the constitution was put in abeyance, nothing could be inserted or deleted from it.

Mr Justice Farooq specially mentioned the Legal Framework Order (LFO) brought in by the Musharraf government.

The order outlines various new electoral rules including the controversial clause to prevent people convicted by courts from contesting elections.

The former Prime Minister Mrs Benazir Bhutto has been barred from the election process under this law. Pakistan Bar Council vice-chairman Choudhary Mohd Ashraf Wahla said the observations were a "silver lining" in the "darkest era" of constitutional history.

The court's observation could have serious political ramifications as the PCO, which was promulgated by Gen. Musharraf after he took over power in the October '99 military coup, formed the bed-rock of his regime's legal standing.

Several ordinances, including the recent constitutional amendments and the LFO stipulating numerous rules for politicians to contest the elections, were brought under it. Technically, the PCO lapses this month as the Supreme Court has fixed 12 October as the date for the handover of power to an elected administration.

Elections to the National Assembly and four provincial assemblies would be held on 10 October and the full Parliament would be constituted only after the elections to the Senate on 12 November.

Reprieve for Shahbaz

ISLAMABAD, Oct. 1. — A full bench of Lahore High Court has exonerated Mr Nawaz Sharif's brother Mr Shahbaz Sharif from allegations of bank defaulting. The court has, however, dismissed his appeal against rejection of his nomination papers to contest the elections. — PTI

Pearl
119-14

PAKISTAN / ATTACK IN THE HEART OF KARACHI

26/9

Gunmen raid Christian NGO office

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 25. A day after the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, claimed "marked improvement" in the law and situation, unidentified terrorists struck in the port city of Karachi on Wednesday morning and killed seven persons working for a Christian welfare organisation.

The killings brought back memories of the manner in which the reporter of the *Wall Street Journal*, Daniel Pearl, was brutally murdered in the same city some time in January/February this year. It appears all the victims of the latest incident were tied up in chairs with their hands behind their backs and their mouths taped before being shot point-blank in the head. Barring one, all other victims died on the spot. There is one survivor who was beaten but not shot.

The shooting, in a third floor of a 13-storeyed building on a busy road, was the latest in a string of violent attacks against Christians and Westerners. After the dramatic arrest of Ramzi, one of the suspected planners behind the September 11 attack, and the subsequent busting of a gang of 24 persons of a militant group, the Pakistan Government had claimed to



Family members of a shooting victim cry at a hospital in Karachi on Wednesday. — AP

have broken the "back bone" of the terrorist groups operating in the country.

After today's gruesome incident, it appears the claim has proved to be hasty. The killings have once again brought to fore the nature of the challenge faced by the Musharraf regime from the fundamentalist forces, particularly since it chose to join the U.S.-led coalition in the "war against terrorism".

Till late on Wednesday evening, authorities had no clue about the identity of the killers.

The Pakistan Interior Minister, Moinuddin Haider, told reporters here that it was an act of terrorism by those opposed to Pakistan and it would be a matter of time before the police got them.

Today's killings occurred at the third-floor offices of the Institute for Peace and Justice, or Idara-e-Amn-o-Insaf, a Pakistani Christian charity. It is involved in welfare activities for municipal textile workers in the city. The organisation also brings out a journal. Police have

said that they have recovered eight empty shell casings, one for each of those shot. Five of the dead were found seated in the main room at the office, and the sixth was tied to a chair in the bathroom. Police are questioning an office assistant who was tied up and beaten by the attackers, but not shot.

It appears that the office had an electronic door that could only be opened from the inside. The office assistant has told police there were two gunmen involved in the shooting.

Targeted attacks on Christian organisations have killed at least 36 people and injured about 100 since Gen. Musharraf's decision in September last year to join the U.S. war in the neighbouring Afghanistan.

Condemning the incident, Zia Ahmed Awan, President of Lawyers for Human Rights and Legal Aid (LHRLA) said that despite the claims of Government the threat from terrorists remained very real across the country. In a statement here he said, "trained terrorists — well armed, well-planned and well-funded have played havoc with the Pakistani society". According to LHRLA's research, since January 2002, terrorists have killed 25 doctors, nine lawyers and three professionals of NGOs.

Pak ①
HD-12
2399

'Musharraf gave no assurance to quit as Army chief'

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 22. In what is seen as a "damage limitation" exercise, managers of the Pervez Musharraf regime have been at pains to emphasise that the Pakistan President had not given any assurance to the United States during his recent trip on quitting his job as Chief of the Army Staff (COAS).

The Pakistan Information Minister, Nisar Memon, told correspondents in Lahore on Saturday that Gen. Musharraf had only promised to transfer the "executive powers" to run the Government to the elected Prime Minister.

The controversy over the Pakistan President giving up his position as Army chief was

kicked off by Gen. Musharraf himself. At his first engagement in the U.S., in an interactive session with Harvard students, he had said that he would appoint a new Army chief after he stepped down.

It appears that Gen. Musharraf was caught off guard when a student asked him as to when he intended to hang up his uniform. First, he said that "as soon as I step down".

But he did not stop there and told the audience that "it would not be far off".

The comment led to a great deal of speculation in the Pakistani media. One view was that Gen. Musharraf might have made the observation to silence his critics who have been questioning his wearing the hat of

the Army chief while being President.

Perhaps, he intended to ward off any questions from the American media as his managers had lined up a number of interactive sessions with prestigious U.S. media groups.

That the remark of Gen. Musharraf was no more than an off-the-cuff remark became evident when two days later, the Pakistan Information Minister told journalists in New York that "there was no time frame" fixed for him to quit his job as COAS.

The remark of Gen. Musharraf on his position as Army chief was not the only one to attract wide attention in Pakistan.

Another was his statement in New York while addressing Pakistani Americans that he in-

tended to transfer his powers to dissolve the National Assembly (in his capacity as President) to the National Security Council.

In his interaction with journalists at Lahore, Mr. Memon also denied that there were any plans for postponing the elections.

He said the Government was not favouring any political party and that there was no truth in the charges of the regime favouring the so-called King's party.

The Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-e-Azam), a splinter group of the Muslim League led by the former Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, has been nicknamed as the King's party for its alleged proximity to Gen. Musharraf.

24 SEP 2001

THE HINDU

Cauvery row boils over

SNS & PTI

MANDYA, Sept. 22. — Road traffic between Bangalore and Mysore was crippled and police lathicharged a mob pelting stones at a cinema hall here today, even as farmers' protests continued unabated despite the Karnataka government suspending release of Cauvery waters to Tamil Nadu.

Relations between the two states deteriorated today after Tamil Nadu finance minister Mr C Ponnaiyan criticised Mr SM Krishna for his "inconsiderate, intransigent and intemperate attacks" on Miss Jayalalitha.

In Mandya, agitators blocked the main road with bullock carts thus affecting vehicular traffic. The Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation also suspended its bus serv-

ices. Train services were not disrupted. Police resorted to lathicharge when assailants hurled stones at a cinema hall for screening films at an hour of crisis. The lathicharge strengthened the resolve of the agitators.

Hundreds of agitators from different organisations poured onto the streets, shouting slogans against the Centre, which has issued a fresh directive to Karnataka to release 0.8 TMC ft of water to Tamil Nadu daily.

In a related incident, farmers continued to guard the KRS reservoir in Mandya district to ensure that water was released to Tamil Nadu.

In Chennai, the finance minister said Mr Krishna's "obdurate and intransigent attitude" has caused immense hardship to farmers of both states and "saddened our leader (Miss Jayalalitha)".

2 SEP 2003

THE STATES...

THE STATES...

Plea against Sharif brothers dismissed

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 20. The Lahore High Court has dismissed petitions seeking 'permanent disqualification' of the former Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, and his brother and former Chief Minister of Punjab, Shahbaz Sharif, and two other Pakistan Muslim League (PML) leaders from contesting election in future.

A full bench of the Court has ruled that no petition seeking permanent disqualification of a candidate could be allowed once he had been okayed by the Returning Officer concerned. The authorities accepted the election papers of Mr. Sharif early this month. However, he chose to withdraw them as a gesture of 'solidarity' with another former Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, whose papers were rejected.

The returning officers concerned in the Punjab province also accepted the nomination papers of his brother and wife. However, both were declared ineligible to contest by a tribunal of the Election Commission on a petition filed by the Government.

In the petition before the Lahore High Court, the petitioner had sought 'permanent disqualification' of Khwaja Saad Rafiq and Asad Ashraf, PML candidates for the National Assembly from Lahore besides the Sharif brothers on the plea that they were behind the assault on the Supreme Court building in 1997. The petitioner alleged that Mr. Shahbaz Sharif had monitored the assault through a telephone call from the Prime Minister Secretariat then headed by Mr. Nawaz Sharif.

The bench observed that the petition was not alive to the extent of Mr. Nawaz Sharif since he had withdrawn his candidature, and hence, could not be made a respondent in the petition. The Deputy Advocate-General of Punjab said the election laws had given a right of withdrawal to every candidate and Mr. Nawaz Sharif had exercised such right.

The petitioner, who was told to produce the inquiry report of the Supreme Court assault case to prove his case was unable to do so. In its judgment, the bench was of the view that any writ petition filed even by a rival candidate for declaring the other can-

didate disqualified to contest the polls forever would stand infructuous.

The bench has fixed September 25 for hearing the petitions of Mr. Shahbaz Sharif and Kulsoom Nawaz (wife of Mr. Nawaz Sharif) against their disqualification from contesting the polls.

The bench said it did not want to disturb the sequence of the petitions already fixed for hearing on September 23 and 24. At this point, counsel for the Sharif family, Ashtar Ausaf Ali, requested the bench to take up the petitions on a priority basis, saying that these petitions required immediate attention of the bench. The bench dismissed the plea, saying that other petitions pending before it were equally urgent and important, and the Sharifs' petitions could not be prioritised out of turn.

Ms. Bhutto has also filed petition challenging the amendments made by the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, to the Constitution as well as her disqualification to contest the October polls. The petition on the statute amendments is posted for hearing on October 2.

27 SEP 2003

THE HINDU

Sharif's party mulls boycott of polls

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

ISLAMABAD, Sept. 14. — The Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N), loyal to ex-premier Mr Nawaz Sharif, said today it would consider boycotting the polls next month after top Opposition leaders were barred from contesting.

"The government is acting like a party and a boycott will become inevitable if the pre-poll rigging continues," PML-N chairman Mr Raja Zafar ul Haq told the Press.

"Boycott is an option if interference and undemocratic practices are not stopped... We will consult other parties before taking a de-



Mr. Nawaz Sharif: Loyalists' threat

cision," Mr Zafar said.

He described the rejection of nomination papers of Mr Shahbaz Sharif, PML-N leader and brother of the deposed Prime Minister, and his wife Begum Kulsoom as "undemocratic, illegal and unconstitutional". He also criticised the authorities' refusal to allow self-exiled former Prime Minister Mrs Benazir Bhutto and several of her Pakistan People's Party stalwarts to contest elections. "We will lodge an appeal in the Supreme Court in two or three days against rejection of the candidatures" of the Sharif family members, Mr Zafar said.

The PPP is also planning to challenge the rejection of Mrs Bhutto's papers.

Overplaying his hand

Musharraf comes a cropper in politics

General Pervez Musharraf has succeeded in bringing Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto, the two rivals in Pakistani politics, closer together than they have ever been. It is not necessary to jump to the conclusion that Sharif has burst out into a rash of democratic pimples, he is being extremely shrewd in timing his withdrawal from Musharraf's elections to coincide with the rejection of Benazir's nomination papers to improve his image as a selfless politician and in the process to cause the maximum discomfort to Musharraf. There is some such thing as being too clever by half and Musharraf has been just that. He failed to notice that the meeting between Benazir and Nawaz overseas helped them to plan their strategy to frustrate the dictator who had forced them into the same boat and led them to the conclusion that they had no choice but to get together. Musharraf had declared that he would not let either of them contest in his command performance of illusory polls in October; for good measure he had given two reasons — one they had already been prime minister twice and in a clumsy manoeuvre, Musharraf's edict forbade a third term for anyone. Also that no one with a criminal conviction was to be allowed into the fray and both have been convicted — one for corruption, the other for daring to stand against Musharraf and charged with trying to kill him in mid-air. The dictator then proceeded to do a deal with Nawaz that he would agree to exile himself for ten years in Saudi Arabia.

Musharraf then seems to have relaxed, assured that he had neatly divided the two and called checkmate. He thereafter sought to make assurance doubly sure by accepting Nawaz's papers and rejecting Benazir's. The story that the Pakistan government is not involved in accepting or rejecting nomination papers and election officials are entirely independent is for the birds. Nawaz Sharif's statement read on his behalf that he was withdrawing from the fray and by this action *lodging his strong protest against the unethical, illegal and unconstitutional measures of Pakistan's military regime* need not be taken at face value but it serves to send an unmistakable message to Musharraf that he has been badly beaten in the attempt to deceive the Pakistani people. The Johnny-come-lately General, advertising his self-imposed democratic pretensions, has come a cropper and it is necessary to add that he has invited the embarrassment upon himself.

This may turn out to be a fatal blow to Musharraf's desperate attempts to convince the world that he is a democrat at heart who finds himself in military uniform by accident. Nor does anyone believe that he will remove himself from the scene and vacate centre-stage leaving the new democracy he has invented to function without any further help from him. In overreaching himself thus, he has only exposed the fact that he is as power-hungry as the next man. Where does he go from here? An option is to press on and arrange a democratic government as best he can, which will convince no one; the other is to yield to temptation and say that he did his best to get the vile politicians to work a democratic process but they are unwilling and in the interests of his country he has no option but to continue to rule by decree. The jury is out on which alternative he will adopt and he may be waiting for advice from the White House. With the blinkers he wears as part of his uniform he will tell himself that he only has to convince George Bush, the rest of the world does not matter.

Para 10

ND-12
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Pak. plans new defamation law

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 1. Under a new law proposed by the Musharraf Government, journalists in Pakistan convicted in defamation cases would have to tender an apology besides payment of a minimum compensation of Rs. 50,000, failing which they would have to serve a simple imprisonment for three months.

The Government has asserted that the Defamation Ordinance, 2002 is a response to a long-awaited public demand but critics wonder why an essentially transitional Government, with general elections less than 40 days away, should be in a hurry to bring such a law.

A Cabinet meeting presided over by the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, on Saturday cleared the provisions of the proposed Ordinance and Gen. Musharraf is soon expected to promulgate it invoking his powers under the Provisional Constitution Order (PCO).

The Information Minister, Nisar Memon, who briefed the press about the provisions of

the new law, argued that it would also help in developing a sense of 'responsibility' in the electronic and print media.

Under the provisions of the ordinance in case the defamation is proved to have occurred, the wrongdoer will be directed to tender an apology and publish the same in the same manner and with the same prominence as the defamatory statement. Besides, he/she would have to pay a minimum compensation of Rs. 50,000 and, in case of default in the payment of compensation he/she would suffer a simple imprisonment for three months.

"The authors, editors and all other persons responsible for the publication or circulation of defamatory material shall be liable under this ordinance. In the event of causing defamation, the aggrieved person may bring action against the wrongdoer by issuing a legal notice and thereafter filing the case in the court of district judge," it says.

The Musharraf Government has also approved setting up of the Press Council and Publica-

tion of Press and Periodicals Registration Ordinance. The Council would enforce a 'code of conduct' for the media and the Government has claimed that it has been drawn with the consent of all relevant media organisations.

Mr. Memon told correspondents that the Defamation Ordinance "is based on the principle that the reputation of a member of society, the esteem in which he is held by it, the credit and trust it reposes in its intelligence, honour and integrity are valuable assets of a citizen and these must be safeguarded".

The Minister said the President would appoint the head of the Press Council.

It would have three editors, three publishers and three working journalists as members.

Also, all the four provincial Governors would nominate one educationist each from their provinces.

The Leader of the House and the Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly would also appoint one nominee each to the Council.

Pak gangrape suspects get death

ASIM TANYVEER

Dera Ghazi Khan (Pakistan), Aug. 31 (Reuters): A Pakistani anti-terrorism court today sentenced six men to death for gangraping a woman in Punjab province.

Defence lawyer Mohammad Yaqub told Reuters that eight other men were acquitted in the trial before a special anti-terrorism court in the Punjab town of Dera Ghazi Khan, whose proceedings have highlighted abuses against women in rural Pakistan.

Mukhtar Mai, the 30-year-old divorced victim of the June 22 crime, was not present when the court announced the decision amid heavy security. She told Reuters yesterday members of

her family had been threatened with death if the men were convicted.

Yaqub said four men were sentenced to death for committing the rape and two others for serving on a traditional village jury that authorised the crime.

"The four rapists and two jurors have been given the death penalty and a fine of 40,000 rupees (\$675) each. The remaining eight have been acquitted," he said. "We will appeal," he added.

Yaqub named the four sentenced to death for the rape as brothers Allah Ditta and Abdul Khaliq, Fayyaz Hussain and Ghulam Farid. The two jurors were Faiz Bakhsh and Ramzan Bichar. All the eight acquitted had served on the jury.

Mai said she was raped by

four men after approaching the traditional jury, or panchayat, in her home village of Meerawali in Punjab province to settle a dispute with a rival clan.

Mai said she went to the village jury after her 12-year-old brother Abdul Shakoor was kidnapped and sodomised by members of the rival Mastoi family as a punishment for having an illicit affair with one of their relatives.

Family honour

The jury ruled that to save Mastoi honour, Shakoor should marry the woman with whom he was linked, while Mai was to be given away in marriage to a Mastoi man.

The prosecution said that when she rejected the decision

she was gangraped by four Mastoi men and made to walk home nearly naked in front of hundreds of people.

Yesterday, Mai told Reuters she and her family had been threatened with revenge if the men were convicted.

"We are receiving death threats," she said. "They have told us that if their four people are sentenced to death, they would kill eight of our men. Not only my family, but those who supported us are being threatened with dire consequences."

Armed police units were stationed around Dera Ghazi Khan where hundreds of members of both families and their supporters had gathered for the verdict. Black-clad elite police commandos ringed the court house.



Chief prosecution witness Abdul Razak (second from left) and Hazoor Baksh (right), brother of gangrape victim Mukhtar Mai, at the anti-terrorism court in Dera Ghazi Khan, Pakistan. (AFP)

Sharif pulls out of elections

AGENCIES

ISLAMABAD, Aug. 31. — The exiled former prime minister, Mr Nawaz Sharif, is withdrawing his candidacy for parliament and will throw his support to Mrs Benazir Bhutto, his party announced today.

Raja Zafarul Haq, newly elected chairman of Mr Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League, made the announcement at a press conference a day after the Election Commission rejected her application to run for a seat in Sindh province in the 10 October election.

Mrs Bhutto has applied to run for two other seats and a decision is expected from the commission tomorrow. She is also appealing regulations which banned her candidacy.

"I have decided to withdraw my nomination papers filed and duly accepted for the forthcoming elections," Mr Sharif said in the statement, read by Mr Haq to a press conference. "This decision is aimed at lodging my strong protest against the unethical, illegal and unconstitutional measures of (Pakistan's) military regime under the garb of restoring 'true democracy'," the statement said.



Sharif: To back Benazir

Although the Election Commission approved Mr Sharif's candidacy, the government had already said he would not be allowed to return from exile in Saudi Arabia to run in the election.

However, the gesture represents a step toward unity by opponents of Gen Pervez Musharraf, who ousted Mr Sharif in October 1999.

After the coup, Mr Sharif was convicted of hijacking and other offences and sentenced to life imprisonment. However, he was released in December 2000 and sent to Saudi Arabia on condition he would not return to Pakistan

for 10 years.

Earlier, amid criticism following the rejection of nomination papers of Mrs Benazir Bhutto to run for the polls, the Pakistan government today said it would contest the acceptance of nomination of Mr Nawaz Sharif.

The government would contest the acceptance of nomination forms of Mr Sharif on the grounds that he has been convicted on two counts before he accepted a "deal" to go into exile to Saudi Arabia along with his family, state owned APP news agency quoted unnamed officials as saying.

Gen Pervez Musharraf has already said that he would not permit Mr Sharif and Mrs Bhutto to contest elections as they have been convicted on various charges.

Bhutto nomination: Denying its hand in the rejection of the nomination papers of Ms Benazir Bhutto for the general elections, the government accused her of trying to create differences between Punjab and Sindh provinces.

Pakistan's information minister Mr Nisar Memon said the government has nothing to do with the election officials' decision to reject her papers.

A COMPLETE DICTATORIAL DISPENSATION

PERVEZ MUSHARRAF HAS so re-worked the Constitution of Pakistan as to make himself the envy of all other dictators. Through a package of amendments (clubbed together as Legal Framework Order 2002), the Pakistan President has made the military the guiding force in the country, endowed his office with unlimited discretion to get rid of legislatures and rewarded himself with an extension in tenure. All this in the name of establishing a "sustainable democracy". In the General's view, Pakistan was under a "democratic dictatorship" till he staged a coup on October 12, 1999, and it was his responsibility to restore a new system of checks and balances between the three power centres — the Presidency, the elected Cabinet and the military leadership. Since Gen. Musharraf will continue as President and army chief for another five years it is clear that he will retain the balance of power while the elected representatives will have to suffer the checks. The personalised nature of the new constitutional arrangements was evident in the General's remarks that either he or the National Assembly (that is to be elected soon) will "have to go" in the event of a clash between them and the humorous tone in which he uttered the remark left no doubt as to who would be marching towards the exit in such an eventuality.

These amendments have been carried out on the basis of a very loose interpretation of a Supreme Court verdict that provided him with limited wherewithal to make changes in the basic law if so required for the purpose of governance. The amendments have been carried through despite opposition from all the main political forces and against advice proffered by almost the entire spectrum of intellectual opinion. It is virtually certain that all relevant political forces will base their campaigns for the coming general elections on opposition to the amendment package. It is also possible that the

forces opposed to the amendments will acquire sufficient strength in the post-election National Assembly to try and force through a revocation of the LFO. But, although the elected representatives will retain the legal right to revoke these amendments, their efforts will achieve nothing since the President can now dissolve the Assembly at his discretion. The President does not need to make the case — as he did under a previous, discredited arrangement — that the Assembly and/or the Cabinet had rendered governance in accordance with the Constitution impossible. Those opposed to the LFO can presumably challenge it before the courts but they are not likely to obtain satisfaction when the Order itself states that it cannot be called into question in any court on any ground whatsoever.

Through the setting up of a National Security Council the military's right to participate in the decision-making processes at the highest level has now been institutionalised. The National Security Council is to supposedly be a consultative body and the civilian component of it will include the Prime Minister, the Chief Ministers of the four provinces, the Leader of the Opposition and the head of the Senate. But at the back of it all will, once again, loom the all-encompassing figure of the President. It is not very likely that Gen. Musharraf would not be tempted to resort to his discretion if the elected civilian Cabinet did not abide by the advice of the NSC. While the discretionary power that he has conferred on his office protects all the actions that he will take in the future, Gen. Musharraf has also safeguarded all the actions that he has taken since assuming power in October 1999 by inserting a clause that these measures too cannot be challenged before any court on any ground whatsoever. No dictatorial dispensation can be more complete than that which Gen. Musharraf has created for himself.

26 AUG 2002

Amendments irreversible: Pervez

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD, Aug 22. — Insisting that constitutional amendments brought in by him to empower himself with powers to dismiss National Assembly and provide a permanent role for the Army in governance were “irreversible”, Gen. Pervez Musharraf said he would not take it lightly if Parliament tried to reverse them.

He said the amendments announced yesterday needed no validation by the new Parliament to be elected in October.

But if Parliament tried to reverse them, specially the clause relating to the formation of the National Security Council, either “they (the new parliamentarians) will have to quit or I will quit”, a combative sounding Gen. Musharraf told the local media yesterday.

“I am hereby making it a part of the Constitution through the powers given to me by the Supreme Court and I do not need the Assembly’s approval,” he said when asked whether his amendments would be subjected to the approval of the future Parliament.

He said the amendments would

Benazir files nomination in absentia

ISLAMABAD, Aug 22. — Mrs Benazir Bhutto today filed her nomination for the National Assembly from Larkhana in Sindh province even as a court adjourned her petition questioning the legality of the new electoral laws brought in by the military government to prevent the former prime minister from running in the October polls. The nomination papers of Mrs Bhutto were filed on her behalf by the local leaders of her PPP and president of the district Bar Association, Larkhana, Ayaz Somroo.

In London, Mrs Bhutto said she would return to Pakistan and contest the polls even from the jail if she is allowed to run. Last month, Mrs Bhutto was sentenced to three years in jail in a corruption case tried in absentia. She also condemned Gen. Musharraf’s constitutional amendments and called on US to steer Pakistan toward democracy. — PTI & AP

not have to be ratified by the Parliament, the daily ‘Dawn’ reported.

However, any body having any objection to the amendments could take legal recourse by moving the Supreme Court which had given him the mandate to make them, Gen. Musharraf said.

He said he exercised that right in “national interest.” Asked how the Supreme Court, which itself had no powers to amend the Constitution, could delegate the powers to any individual or institution, he said the matter could be referred to the apex court.

He would continue as President and Chief of Army Staff for the next five years in the interest of Pakistan and for the continuity of reforms, the general said.

Asked when the fresh term for holding the two posts he announced yesterday would start, Gen. Musharraf was not sure about the dates and consulted the chairman of the National Reconstruction Bureau, Gen. Tanvir Hussain Naqvi, who authored the controversial amendments.

Gen. Naqvi, who was sitting in the front row with other officials,

said that Gen. Musharraf’s fresh term would begin the day he would assume charge as President. However, Gen. Naqvi did not give any specific date but was positive it would not start from April, when a referendum declared Gen. Musharraf elected with over 97 per cent “yes” votes.

On the power of the future prime minister, Gen. Musharraf said the PM would run day-to-day affairs of the government and formulate different policies, including trade and financial policies.

He rejected assertions that the establishment of NSC would legitimise army’s role in the government.

“I will not intrude in the running of the government,” he said, adding NSC would be set up to introduce checks and balances.

He said every army chief in the past had to face tremendous pressure from the public and was forced to interfere in governmental affairs.

“I had visited President House more than 100 times (as Chief of Army Staff). “If you want to keep army out, you bring them in. In the presence of this forum the army chief would not take over,” he said.

23 AUG 2002

Benazir party moves U.N., Commonwealth

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By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, AUG. 29. Pakistan People's Party (PPP) today petitioned the United Nations and the Commonwealth about the alleged attempts by the Musharraf regime to prevent the party leader and former Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, from taking part in the October general elections.

Repeated efforts of the PPP to draw international attention to what it believes are "blatant and brazen" moves by the Government to ensure a "pliable Parliament" is an indication of the desperation of the party with elections just five weeks away.

It is also a reflection of the disappointment of the party over the attitude of the world community (a euphemism for the United States and some of its important allies like the United Kingdom) towards the military Government.

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The Central Coordinator of Human Rights Desk of the PPP, Fauzia Wahab, in a letter to the Commonwealth Secretary General, Don McKinnon, complained about what she termed as a "slandorous defaming campaign" being carried out against the party chairperson, Ms Bhutto, since the removal of her government in 1996 and the arrest warrant issued by this military Government against her to stop her from coming back to her homeland.

In a separate letter, the Acting Secretary General of the PPP, Mian Raza Rabbani, has apprised the United Nations of the same subject. In a letter addressed to the U.N Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, Dato' Param Kumaraswamy, Mr. Rabbani said, "Specific laws were passed by military dictator Musharraf to prevent Ms. Bhutto from contesting the elections".

30 AUG 2002

EC approves Sharif's papers

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

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ISLAMABAD, AUG. 29. In a development that could change the complexion of the October 10 general elections the Pakistan Election Commission today approved the nomination papers of the former Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, to run for the National Assembly as a candidate of the Pakistan Muslim League.

The Commission's decision could seriously upset the plans of the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, who has asserted that there was no place for the two former Prime Ministers of the country, Mr. Sharif and Benazir Bhutto, and that they would not be allowed to stand in the parliamentary election. However, there was no immediate reaction from the Government to the development.

Ms. Bhutto, who has also filed her nomination papers from two constituencies in the Sindh province, has petitioned the Sindh High Court challenging the new laws of the Musharraf Government disqualifying her from contesting in the polls. The case is posted for further hearing on September 11.

Mr. Sharif sprang a surprise on the political observers by filing his nomination papers, through an emissary, as a candidate for the election. He

took advantage of the two-day extension of the deadline for filing of papers by the Commission and filed the papers just two hours before the expiry of the deadline. The former Prime Minister had stepped down as President of the PML after the Musharraf regime enacted new election laws that specifically barred convicted persons from contesting elections. The law had even barred such persons from holding a party post. Mr. Sharif had cited 'legal problems' as the reasons for his resignation as the chief of the PML and anointed his brother and the former Chief Minister of Punjab, Shahbaz Sharif, as his successor.

Two days after the election of the younger Sharif as the new PML chief, senior functionaries in the Government had argued that the Sharif clan had moved to Saudi Arabia as per an exile deal with the Government. They had claimed that under the deal none of the Sharif family members could return to Pakistan or dabble in the politics for the next ten years. Today in his interview to the BBC, the Pakistan President, Gen. Musharraf, had stoutly defended the decisions of his Government to prevent the two former Prime Ministers from taking part in the general elections. His argument was that those who have looted and plundered the country have no place in politics of Pakistan.

30 AUG 2002

Arrest warrants against Benazir

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD, Aug. 28. — Adamant at preventing former Premier Mrs Benazir Bhutto from returning home to contest the 10 October polls, Pakistan's military regime has issued "perpetual arrest warrants" for her detention on arrival and is also reportedly planning to seek Interpol assistance for getting her arrested.

The warrants were issued by the National Accountability Bureau and sent to the IGPs of all the four provinces and the federal capital directing them to arrest her on arrival, a media report said today. The arrest warrants against Mrs Bhutto has been issued by a Judge of the Accountability Court last year after declaring her an absconder. She was subsequently convicted by a court for a three year sentence for not responding to its summons.

Due to her absence, the warrants had been sealed by the NAB. But yesterday, the NAB authorities dispatched the warrants to the provincial governments and IGP Islamabad for their compliance, a report in the daily Dawn published today said.

The SP of Clifton Karachi, where the former Premier's residence is located, has also been directed to arrest her if she comes to her house. It said the warrants which had been kept under seal due to Mrs

Bhutto's self exile were opened in the wake of intelligence reports that she may reach Pakistan any time.

Mrs Bhutto, who shuttles between Dubai and London, filed her nomination papers to contest two seats of the National Assembly from her home town in Larkhana in Southern Sindh province on 22 August.

Shahbaz Sharif's nomination papers cleared for one seat: Deposed Pakistan

Prime Minister Mr Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz rejoiced today as the Election Commission reportedly accepted the nomination papers of his exiled brother Shahbaz to contest the forthcoming general elections.

Nawaz Sharif along with his wife Kulsoom and Shahbaz have filed their nominations to contest for six seats from Lahore for both the National and Punjab Provincial Assembly.

Shahbaz nominations for PP-141, for the Punjab Assembly, (PA) has been cleared by the Presiding Officers, media reports here said. Decision on his nominations for one more PA seat and NA seat, however, is yet to be cleared.

The clearance was considered to be significant as officials said that Shahbaz, who was the former Chief Minister of the Punjab province, would be deported back to Saudi Arabia if he returned from his exile in Jeddah.



Mrs Benazir Bhutto

Christian school closes doors after attack

ASSOCIATED PRESS

ISLAMABAD, Aug. 17. — A Christian school attacked last week by Islamic militants has closed its doors for the rest of the year, the school board announced.

The decision, posted on the Murree Christian School's Website, comes at a time when many Western governments are urging their nationals to leave Pakistan amid fears of a renewed wave of terrorism.

Authorities believe the extremists are targeting Christians and Westerners in Pakistan in retaliation to government's support for the US-led war on terrorism.

"The board takes seriously its duty to ensure that the children and staff who make up this historic school can live and work in a secure and happy environment," the statement said. "Maintaining such an environment is not possible at this time," it said.

Three armed men burst through the gates of the school on 5 August, opened fire and killed six Pakistanis, including a bystander. The dead included a receptionist, two security guards, a cook, and a carpenter. None of the 150 students, who hail from 20 countries, was injured.

On the following day, three men blew themselves up with grenades, but before that warned that the group would carry out similar attacks against "Americans and non-believers." Last Friday, three armed militants lobbed grenades at women leaving a church service on the grounds of a Presbyterian hospital. Three women members of the hospital staff died on the spot; a fourth died two days later. One of the attackers was also killed when grenade shrapnel entered his back and pierced his heart.

HC tells Musharraf govt to disclose Sharif's exile deal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ISLAMABAD, Aug 17. — The Lahore High court has asked Pakistan's military regime to disclose details of the "exile package" of Mr Nawaz Sharif and his family worked out with the Saudi government adding a new twist to the issue of the return of the deposed premier's kin ahead of the October elections.

The Lahore High Court yesterday directed the deputy attorney-general to seek the details of "exile package" of the Sharif family under which they were sent to Jeddah in 2000 allegedly on a ten-year exile.

The details were sought in connection with a petition filed by an activist of Mr Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) questioning the government's recent statements that Mr Shahabaz Sharif, the brother of Mr Nawaz Sharif who has been nominated to head the party, would not be permitted to return as he too was bound by the "arrangement" under which Mr Sharif and family was

permitted to go abroad.

Ever since Mr Sharif nominated Shahbaz to head the party early this month, a number of ministers and officials in the recent days have asserted that Shahbaz too would not be permitted to return even though no cases were registered against him.

The interior minister, Mr Moinuddin Haider, has said Mr Sharif along with his family went on an exile for 10 years under an "arrangement" reached between Mr Sharif's family, Pakistan and Saudi Arabian governments. He, however, declined to divulge the details of the "arrangements".

The Sharif family argued that the arrangement lasted the three year tenure fixed by the Supreme Court for Gen Musharraf to hold elections and hand over power to an elected government.

Acting on a petition, Mr Justice Tasadduq Hussain Jilani yesterday issued these directions on a writ petition filed by Mr Gulzar Ahmed, a local PML(N) leader.

In his petition, Mr Ahmed contended that the government was contemplating blocking the new PML(N) president, Mr Shahbaz Sharif's return to Pakistan.

"Shahbaz, like any other citizen of Pakistan had every right to return to his homeland," he pleaded arguing that "since there was no case against Shahbaz there was no question of his absconding a court of law." According to Mr Ahmed, Shahbaz has denied that he is on self-exile. The government should place the proof of the so-called exile deal on record, if it had any," he said.

He also cited former President Rafiq Tarar, during whose tenure the Sharifs were exiled, as having said that he (Tarar) was not aware of any such deal.

Mr Sharif was sentenced to life by an anti-terrorism court for allegedly preventing the plane of Gen Musharraf, then army chief, from landing in Karachi which led to the coup on 12 October, 1999. The government was expected to file a reply shortly on the petition.

Common enemy

It is not going Musharraf's way

What keeps Pervez Musharraf going is the lack of unity among democratic forces in Pakistan, which is why the electoral alliance sought by Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto cannot come as good news to him. Both parties appear to have gotten their acts together. Instead of responding to draconian electioneering restrictions imposed on them by boycotting the polls, as Musharraf might have hoped, they are coordinating efforts to avoid votes for the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) and Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians, as they have been respectively renamed, from cutting into each other's support. Faced with such an ominous consolidation of democratic forces, Musharraf is falling back on time-honoured tactics of dictators in Pakistan — cosyng up to the religious right. Only this time, he is being rebuffed — the Jamaat-e-Islami remembers how Musharraf walked out on the Taliban under US pressure. He has lined up a number of two-bit political parties who take their directions from him, known in Pakistan as the "king's party", but given the Jamaat's refusal to back them, the PPP-PML(N) alliance should have the advantage. Bhutto is planning to return to Pakistan in late August or early September; Sharif, by contrast, appears content to stay put in exile in Saudi Arabia. If democratic leaders want to assert themselves and provide leadership it is absolutely necessary to lead from the front. A lot depends, therefore, on a quick return if their parties are to reap the advantage at the polls. Musharraf has promised to put them in jail if they do so, which will project them as martyrs and help their campaign.

If the PPP and PML-N should turn in good performances and dominate the national and provincial assemblies, given the constitutional powers Musharraf has arrogated to himself after a rigged referendum, something like a balance of power will prevail with the military holding the whip hand but unable to go too far for fear of bringing together elected parliamentarians against it. This is not unlike previous political arrangements in Pakistan, with three differences. One, Musharraf has been humiliating politicians since his coup in October 1999, and they will be awaiting their chance to get back at him. Two, an unelected president's powers have now been formalised as never before, which should concentrate the minds of democrats who want to rid Pakistan of military influence in politics. Three, Pakistan will be under international scrutiny. A mission from the EU is now in Pakistan to assess whether election procedures are free and fair, and defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld has attributed the growth of terrorist organisations like the Jaish-e-Mohammad to conditions prevailing in countries, "including some with nuclear weapons", where there is no capable or responsible government, a clear warning to Pakistan. Interesting times are ahead — Musharraf may find his freedom of action increasingly circumscribed in the days ahead.

20 June 2002

HD 12
19/8

Pak. Govt. approach to elections criticised

Pak (1)

By K.K. Katyal

NEW DELHI, AUG. 18. Just when the Musharraf Government accuses India of organising "far-farical" elections in Jammu and Kashmir, it faces sharp criticism from within the country and from abroad for the manner in which it is preparing to hold the parliamentary elections. As for the Government's campaign against religious extremists operating internally, the reaction in Pakistan is mixed — one section is not happy with the Government "acting at the behest of the Americans", while the others find fault with it for not making serious efforts to implement its declared policy. This second viewpoint, according to observers here, confirms the charge of "double standards" levelled against Islamabad by India.

The attitude to Government in regard to the conduct of the parliamentary elections is amply reflected by the print media. *Dawn*, to cite an instance, is not impressed by Gen. Pervez Musharraf's assurances. In its editorial comment today, it says "One hopes that the 'genuine democracy' which the President has spoken of repeatedly does not turn out to be a cover for a manipulated exercise intended to produce 'preferred' results. We sound this cautionary note in view of Pakistan's bit-

ter experience of similar experiments in the past." Certain forebodings, according to it, are worrying.

"The changes in laws relating to political parties, the ban on a third term for a Prime Minister, the almost certain revival of Article 58(2-b) and a constitutional role for the armed forces through the proposed National Security Council — all these create serious doubts about the kind of dispensation that will emerge after October."

The European Union observation team, now in Pakistan to watch the electoral process, ran into a rough patch, as the Information Minister, Nisar Memon, accused it of interfering in Pakistan's internal affairs and the Chief Election Commissioner, Irshad Hasan Khan, said the EU should confine itself to observing the poll and not oversee the entire election process, which was the job of the Election Commission. The head of the team, John Cushnahan, Irish member of the European Parliament, maintained that his mission would follow established procedures when assessing voter registration, independence of the election administration, the constitutional and legal framework, media access, abuses of State resources and freedom to campaign.

On the campaign against religious extre-

mists, a leading commentator, Shahid Sheik, has this to say: "The absence of action in this area raises questions about the Government's intent and has a direct bearing on the assurances that Pakistan has extended regarding the State's ability to control the militants, internally and externally. This manifests itself in a divergence between the stated policy and its implementation, resulting in the seeming reluctance of those charged with implementing anti-terrorist measures to apply the full force of the State to apprehend the wanted elements. Considering the serious threats posed to internal peace and stability by the forces of terrorism and extremism, it is strange that action against militant groups and elements should be slow and hesitant."

The other section — the biggest one — is, however, unhappy with the Government for following a week-kneed approach and proceeding against Jehadi organisations under Anglo-U.S. pressure. They regard the support by Washington and London to the Assembly elections in Kashmir a big conspiracy. Reflecting this opinion, *Jang*, in a longish editorial, makes a case for scuttling the "electoral stunt." It pleads for material help to the Jihad in Kashmir, apart from the moral, political and diplomatic assistance.

1 9 AUG 2002

Musharraf to be President and Army chief till 2007

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, AUG. 21. Ignoring pleas from political and apolitical quarters, the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, today went ahead with the controversial amendments to the suspended 1973 Constitution formalising the role of the Army in governance and added an article appointing himself the President of the country and Chief of the Army Staff till October 2007.

The Pakistan Army, that has been in the forefront of political affairs since 1958 directly or indirectly, would now have a formal role sanctified by the Constitution, through the National Security Council. The Council, ostensibly a consultative body, with representation to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the three Service Chiefs, would deal with matters pertaining to 'sovereignty, integrity and security' of the state.

Restoration of the President's powers to dissolve the National Assembly at his/her 'discretion'; power of the Governor to dissolve the Provincial Assembly; Presidential power to appoint Joint Chiefs of Staff and the three Service Chiefs; Governors in consultation with the Prime Minister; constitution of an interim government 60 days before the expiry of the term of a government or dissolution of the Assembly and autonomy to the Election Commission are the other highlights of the amendments that have been introduced.

Gen. Musharraf contended that there was no need for him to get the amendments or his position as President ratified by the new Parliament — he is deemed to have been elected as President for a further period of five years from October 2002 through the controversial referendum held in April this year.

The only concession Gen. Musharraf gave the critics of his statute amendment package related to the expansion of the civilian component of the National Security Council. He said at a crowded press conference here that the Council, to be headed by the President, besides the Army representatives, would consist of the Prime Minister, the Chief Ministers of the four provinces, the Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly and the Leader of the Senate.

Gen. Musharraf was frank in his admission that a majority of those consulted by his Government in the last five weeks had opposed the idea of creating the Council. But, in his view the Council was essential. His defence being "if you want to keep the Army out, you have to get them in."

On the incorporation of a specific article for his continuation as the President and COAS for another five years, Gen. Musharraf reiterated what he has been saying for over a year now. "I see a role for myself and the need for my continuation. It is too important to be delegated to anyone else."

Pakistan is passing through a very crucial transitional period. We are taking Pakistan from a democratic dictatorship to an elected democracy. I want to introduce a sustainable democratic order."

Responding to questions, Gen. Musharraf said the future Parliament would have the powers to roll back the amendments. At the same time, the amendments were necessary and it would not be wise to undo any of them.

On the contention of political parties that the amendments were in violation of the Supreme Court verdict (that validated the military takeover) Gen. Musharraf said "these amendments have been made by me and are now part of the Constitution. They are very much within the parameters of the apex court judgement."

The amendments were necessary to effect the essential mechanism of checks and balances for achieving a "sustainable democratic order." Using his pet phrase in the last few weeks, he said there was need for checks and balances on the three "power brokers" — the President, the Prime Minister and the COAS.

He said his Government's efforts would be crowned with success if "we brought about a sustainable democratic order and a clean political environment in Pakistan for all times to come."

The 13th amendment to the Constitution has been scrapped, which revoked the powers of the President to dissolve the Assemblies and appoint the Service Chiefs in his discretion. The amendment was introduced by the military ruler, Zia-ul-Haq, and annulled during the regime of the former Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif.

On checks and balances, article 58 (2B) has been restored, which empowers the President to dissolve the National Assembly. However, a part of it, dealing with the dismissal of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet by the President, has been dropped. Likewise, article 243 has been restored which provides for the appointment of Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee and the three Service Chiefs in his "discretion."

Article 63 has been modified to debar loan defaulters, beneficiaries of written-off loans, absconders, criminals and utility bill defaulters. The offices of the National Accountability Bureau, the Governor, State Bank of Pakistan, and the local bodies system have been placed in Schedule Six to provide them constitutional protection.

The other provisions in Schedule Six include the granting of autonomous status to the Election Commission of Pakistan, lowering the voters age from 21 to 18 years, increase in the general seats in the National and Provincial Assemblies and the Senate and reservation for women; reservation of ten seats for non-Muslim Pakistanis, restoration of joint electorate system and fixing of B.A. as minimum qualification to contest elections.

Benazir, Sharif strike poll deal

17/8 PAKO HF-13
Islamabad, August 16

FORMER PAKISTAN Prime Ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif have formed a new electoral alliance to put up a joint fight to oust the military regime in the October general elections, while President Pervez Musharraf's attempt to rope in religious parties to back him has come a cropper.

The much-feared poll alliance between Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) and PML-N appeared to have already been clinched with both reaching an understanding to have a co-ordinated strategy to contest the poll, a news report said.

Confirming the headway, PPPP spokesman Faratullah Babar said yesterday that under the new deal, PPPP would not contest in the constituencies where the PML-N candidates were strong and vice versa. "It cements Opposition against the Government and acts as an impetus for the restoration of democracy," he said, but declined to speculate whether it would herald an alliance between Bhutto and Sharif to launch a joint effort to oust Musharraf.

Meanwhile, the daily *Dawn* said Musharraf during his sudden meeting with Qazi Hussain Ahmed, the chief of the hard-line Jamaat-E-Islami, on Wednesday sought the support of Jamaat to back the Grand National Council. But his efforts failed as Hussain refused to budge due to his opposition to Government's policies, particularly that of crackdown on the Islamic groups, it said.

In his meeting, Musharraf hoped that the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), the new religious party headed by Jamaat, should join hands with pro-Gov-

Bhutto appeal hearing

A PAKISTANI court on Friday began hearing an appeal by self-exiled former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto against laws barring her from the October 10 polls.

The Sindh High Court in Karachi heard a submission by Bhutto's lawyers in a brief hearing attended by scores of Bhutto's supporters from her Pakistan People's Party. The court issued a notice to Pakistan's Government to appear in the hearing and give a response to the challenge, said one of Bhutto's lawyers.

AFP/Karachi

ernment forces to block Bhutto's new party winning the election.

It said Musharraf also wanted the MMA not to have any alliance with PPPP as Hussain had met Bhutto loyalist and PPPP's leader, Makhdhum Faheem a day earlier and held talks to strike a political alliance along with Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz).

However, there was no possibility of the MMA extending any cooperation to the GNA, *Dawn* quoted religious party sources as saying. "The Jamaat and the military regime are poles apart," they said, brushing aside the possibility of the Jamaat softening its attitude towards the Government or its allies.

A PPPP source said the emerging alliance between Bhutto and Sharif has made Musharraf rush for the support of the hard-line religious parties.

PTI

17 AUG 2002

THE likelihood of free and fair parliamentary elections in Pakistan on October 10 is diminishing, notwithstanding the government's protestations to the contrary. The names of several hundred thousand eligible voters have not been included in the voters' lists. Ten million eligible voters have not been issued a national identity card, which is mandatory for registered voters to exercise their franchise. Leaders of the two major parties in the country—Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif—have been excluded from the electoral process through decrees designed exclusively to keep them out.



HUSAIN HAQQANI

And, if all that was not enough, covert machinations have already started to prop up a King's Party in the form of the Grand National Alliance, comprising minor parties. The referendum, and the dubious manner in which it was conducted, showed that the present government was not very different from past military regimes. The general's October election is unlikely to add to Pakistan's prestige and will certainly not confer the legitimacy being sought by his regime.

The argument offered to justify the manipulated political process is that there is no alternative. The fact is, there are several alternatives. General Musharraf could go back to being the military leader. That would require him to hold an honest election and to accept its results. Or he could take the risk of becoming a politician and run for office himself, creating a political party to oppose the politicians he despises. But he must face the fact that his recent actions in the political sphere have not found many takers. He could also try talking to the political leaders with an open mind, not as an officer ordering his men into battle. Instead, he is allowing the country to drift once again into a fixed election. When the recipe is an old one, how will

If the current manipulation of the

The gov't's decision to persecute opposition leaders has resulted in their parties drawing closer to each other. The gov't's inability to secure convictions on corruption charges has taken the sting out of the allegations. If, despite the manipulation, the PPP and PML emerge as the major winners, Musharraf's new political order will be dead on arrival

the outcome be different?

The government's decision to relentlessly persecute leaders of the country's largest mainstream political parties has resulted in these parties drawing closer to each other than ever before.

Free? Fair? Farce? Don't ask the General about elections



Supporters of Nawaz Sharif, whose party has announced a seat-sharing arrangement with Bhutto's PPP. Reuters

Public support for politicians diminishes but does not end as a result of corruption allegations. The inability of the government to secure convictions from courts on substantive charges despite years of "accountability" has taken the sting out of the allegations, in any case. Both Sharif and Bhutto continue to enjoy the support of their core groups of political workers. The consequence of this political reality is a no-win situation for the military regime.

If the current manipulation of the

electoral process, described by the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) as pre-poll rigging, succeeds, the new parliament will have little respect or credibility. If the PPP and the PML emerge as the major winners in the election despite all

the maneuvers against them, General Musharraf's new political order will be dead on arrival.

There is no doubt that the weaknesses of the traditional political class contributed to the military takeover of October 12, 1999. But the Pakistani establishment's entrenched biases are also militating against the country moving forward. As if enough fault-lines did not exist in Pakistani society already, a civil-military division has been added to the divisions between religious and secular, Punjabi and non-Punjabi, rich and poor, urban and rural. While the flaws of the political class are listed again and again, there has been insufficient appraisal of the establishment's own role in institutional and political decline.

For more than half its existence as an independent country, military leaders have governed Pakistan. Their mistakes have contributed as much, if not more, to the mess. Field Marshal Ayub Khan was responsible for introducing the political culture of labelling critics and opponents as traitors. General Yahya used force against fellow Pakistanis in erstwhile East Pakistan and failed to recog-

nise the results of an election he had himself as traitors. General Ziaul Haq stepped in to restore order after intense political polarisation. He ended up defining the party he had ousted from power—the PPP—as "the enemy" and waged a war against it. In the process, he increased sponsored religious fanaticism, fanned sectarianism and encouraged ethnic politics, all in the name of keeping "the enemy" out of power.

One of Zia's lieutenants, General Ghulam Gilani Khan, launched the political career of Nawaz Sharif whose rise to power was also aided by Generals Beg and Hameed Gul. The manner in which the Grand National Alliance is currently being supported is reminiscent of Sharif's promotion. Then, as now, the justification was the need to create a new political class. But politics is an organic process and politicians must evolve naturally from the masses. Manipulated politics and controlled democracy are doomed to fail.

In 1988, the establishment manipulated the political process to contain the PPP's popular influence and helped create and finance the LJI led by Nawaz

Sharif. The result was the last ten years of quasi-civilian rule, which ended with Musharraf's takeover. The LJI was created with the help of covert agencies before Bhutto's election as prime minister for the first time. If the official hostility to her is only a consequence of her alleged incompetence and corruption, one may well ask why intelligence services opposed her election even before any of these "failings" came to light?

Ironically, at that time Sharif had no political support. He benefited from the fact that the military was looking for an alternative to the populist legacy of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, a one time military protégé who became a political giant in his own right after serving as a minister in Ayub Khan's cabinet for eight years. Just as these politicians fell afoul of the military leadership that had helped them in their political careers, it is perfectly possible that the new politicians currently being courted may turn out to be liabilities a few years down the road.

Military officers are used to dealing with regimented minds. The troops under their command ask no questions while obeying orders. But when called upon to command civilians, military men find it difficult to deal with the constant debates and disagreements. It is now time to let the people of Pakistan make their own choices.

(Husain Haqqani is a Visiting Scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington. He served as adviser to prime ministers Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto and as Pakistan's Ambassador to Sri Lanka)



Pak (1)
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Pakistan announces election schedule

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By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, AUG. 16. Amidst allegations by the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) that the Musharraf regime is gearing up for 'computerised rigging' of the October 10 general elections, the Pakistan Election Commission today announced the schedule for the election to the national and four provincial Assemblies.

Under the schedule, candidates could file nomination papers from August 19 to 24 and the last date for the withdrawal of the papers is September 12. The Election Commission would publish the revised list of candidates on September 13, leaving 28 clear days for campaigning.

Ironically, while the candidates could file their nomination papers three days from today, there is no word yet from the military government on lifting of the ban 'outdoor' political activities. Senior functionaries of the Musharraf regime in recent days have indicated that at the appropriate time parties would get an opportunity to go to public with their election

campaign.

With the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, having announced the election date in his address to the people of Pakistan in the first week of July, the Election Commission was left with the task of only finalising the schedule for the candidates.

In fact, the commission was to have announced the schedule a few days ago but had to delay it as the secretariat of Gen. Musharraf failed to modify his earlier election order that had envisaged simultaneous election to the Senate as well along with the national and provincial assemblies.

As per the original plan of Constitution amendments proposed by the Musharraf regime, the tenure of Senate (equivalent to the Rajya Sabha in India) was to have been made concurrent with the term of the National Assembly. In other words the Senate was proposed to be converted from a permanent to a temporary body with a fixed term of four years.

The PPP today complained to the Chief Election Commission-

er (CEC) apprising him of the Government's efforts to the 'systematic pre-poll rigging and the adverse propaganda campaign on electronic media by the Government against it.

The Acting Secretary General of the party, Raza Rabbani, that adverse campaign was on against PPP despite the directives of the Election Commission that no such campaign shall be launched against any political party.

In a letter Mian Raza Rabbani wrote "the party has on a number of occasions pointed out to the Election Commission the use of the civil administration and the Offices of the Governors to further the political agenda of the regime in the said elections".

In another representation, the party expressed 'grave' concern over the reports that a computer software developing firm whose director is also a sitting Minister of State in the military government of Gen. Musharraf has been given contract to supply software to the Government for use in the elections.

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THE HINDU

Pak govt will not allow Shahbaz Sharif to return

Benazir asked to make 'plea bargain'

Islamabad: The Pakistan government on Monday said it will not allow Shahbaz Sharif, recently elected Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) chief, to return and asked former premier Benazir Bhutto to head back home to make a "plea bargain" in the corruption cases against her.

The military regime will not permit deposed premier Nawaz Sharif's brother Shahbaz to return from his exile despite his election as leader of PML(N), interior minister Moinuddin Haider told reporters in Karachi.

"Mr Shahbaz and other members of Mr Sharif's family opted to leave the country as part of a deal struck with the government and would be dealt with accordingly... It is between the parties that permitted them to leave Pakistan safely and his return would be a violation", Mr Haider said.

Mr Nawaz Sharif has consistently denied any deal between him and the regime that banished him and his family for 10 years.

Mr Haider denied media reports that Mr Shahbaz Sharif's election followed a deal between Mr Nawaz Sharif and the Musharraf regime to isolate former prime minister Ms Bhutto.

Mr Haider also said Ms Bhutto should return from her self-exile to "admit to her guilt" in the corruption cases filed against her and apply for a "plea bargain".

"She should return to Pakistan and start a plea bargain before the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) as a number of others facing corruption charges have done. In the process she might get relief as well", he said.

Plea bargain is the new compromise formula brought in by the military regime under which politicians and officials are given the chance to plead guilty to charges against them and pay the stipulated amounts fixed by the NAB, an official agency probing corrup-

tion cases.

Meanwhile, political parties began applying to the government for approval to contest national polls on October 10.

The Election Commission will determine whether the parties have met new electoral laws on party leaders and finances, before deciding whether they can contest the elections.

Under the laws, all parties were required to hold fresh intra-party polls to elect party leaders by August 5 in order to qualify for registration to run in the national elections. They also must submit details of party finances.

Parties have to submit the results of their internal polls within 10 days of holding them.

Small religious parties were the first to arrive at the commission's offices on Monday morning to submit their papers.

The submissions are a major test of ex-prime minister Benazir Bhutto's vow to run in the elections, in defiance of the laws brought in by President Pervez Musharraf.

The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) re-elected Ms Bhutto chairwoman in an internal ballot on July 28, despite her disqualification on two counts under the new restrictions.

As a two-time former prime minister Ms Bhutto is barred from bidding for a third term in office, and as a twice-convicted absconder she is barred from leading a party and running for election.

The PPP has formed a separate wing to contest the elections without her, party officials said on Monday, placing Ms Bhutto's promised political comeback in doubt.

The PPP has formed "a separate entity" called the Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians which will run for election, the PPP announced after a hastily-called meeting of party executives.

The new wing will be led by Makhdoom Amin Fahim, previously the PPP's senior vice-chairman.

But the PPP also said it would launch a legal challenge to a law passed on August 2 that bans absconders from holding party office or running for election. Agencies



S. Sharif



B. Bhutto

Six killed in attack on Pak Christian school

DAVID BRUNNSTROM

Jhika Gali (Pakistan), Aug. 5 (Reuters): Six Pakistanis were killed and at least three people wounded today when masked men burst into the compound of a Christian missionary school near the town of Murree and opened fire.

The Australian principal of Murree Christian School, Russell Morton, said two security guards, a cook and a carpenter were among the dead.

A receptionist, who was badly wounded in the crossfire, may also have died of his wounds, he said, adding that a Filipino woman, who was visiting her children, had been hit in

the hand. "This is a disaster for the foreign missionary community," he said in Jhika Gali, where the school is located just outside Murree, northeast of Islamabad.

"They wanted to hit at the missionary community. What better way than to hit at their kids?"

Police said it was too soon to say who was behind the shooting, but it was at least the third fatal strike against a Christian minority target since Pakistan began supporting the US-led war on terror after the September 11 attacks.

Reverend Saeed Javed, a pastor and father of one of the victims and the uncle of another,

blamed terrorists. "Personally, I think this is a terrorist attack," he said. "Good Muslims could not do this."

Khurseed Abbassi, the mayor of Murree, told Reuters that six Pakistani men died — two of them Christians and four Muslims.

Blood stains could be seen in the sentry box just outside the school compound and around the church within its walls. Three guards exchanged fire for 10-15 minutes with the three intruders before they escaped apparently unharmed.

The assailants fired indiscriminately, hitting an empty boarding house, but according to witnesses, had walked past the

school building where children were in class.

Around 150 missionary children aged six to 18 study there, including about 30 Americans.

Morton said the school was holding a crisis meeting to decide whether to continue classes or close down temporarily. The children have all been sent home.

Dozens of heavily armed soldiers milled around the scene of the incident and an army helicopter hovered overhead.

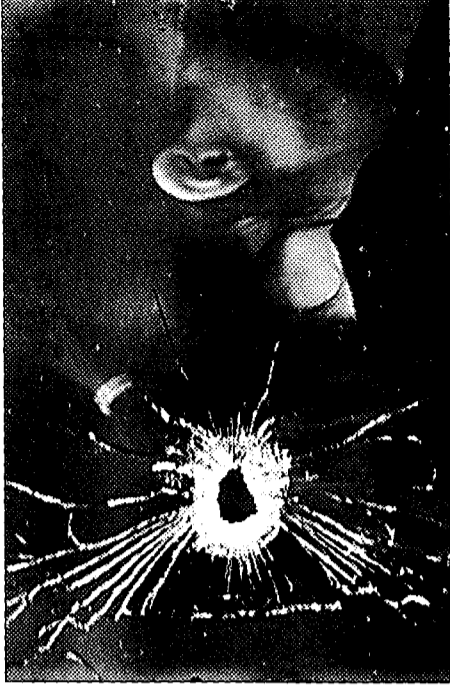
The gunmen opened fire just after the children had returned to classes after a morning break at 11.00 am, Morton said.

"It is my opinion that this attack was designed to cause trou-

ble for the Pakistan authorities," he said. "The school has been operating for 46 years and we have never had any problems with the local community in the past."

Musharraf's support for the US-led campaign against al Qaeda and the Taliban in neighboring Afghanistan has angered Pakistan-based Islamic militant groups, who have been blamed for a string of attacks on foreign targets in recent months.

Eleven French engineers and three Pakistanis were killed in a bomb attack in the southern city of Karachi on May 8 and 12 Pakistanis died and 20 were wounded when a car bomb exploded outside the US consulate on June 14.



A bullet hole is left in a window after gunmen burst into the Christian missionary school in Jhika Gali, Pakistan. (Reuters)

Hy-10

UNITING AGAINST A DICTATORSHIP

16/8

THE PAKISTAN ELECTION Commission's decision to allow the country's two main political formations — the Pakistan Peoples Party headed by Benazir Bhutto and the Pakistan Muslim League faction headed by Nawaz Sharif — to contest the coming general election merits a reserved welcome at best. Both parties had made a few cosmetic changes in their make-up and/or organisational arrangements so as to qualify for recognition by the Commission under the stricter criteria that have been recently enforced by the military-based Government. While the PPP had cloned a parliamentary wing to serve as its entrant in the electoral race, Nawaz Sharif had been substituted by his brother as the head of their faction of the PML. Since the rank and file of both parties continued to swear allegiance to their true leaders, the minor changes could not obscure the fact that these formations retained their essential character. As such, there was no reason for the military-based Government to have cast aside the intense hostility that it has displayed towards both the parties and there was cause to fear that the Election Commission would find a way to stop them from contesting the polls. If, in deciding to not block the PPP parliamentarians and the PML (NS) from contesting the election, the Commission has indeed shown a measure of independence vis-a-vis the military-based Government, then it is a positive development.

From another perspective, the Commission's decision merits no approval whatsoever since it appears to have emanated from the basic fact that the military Government did not really have any other choice. It would have been absurd to conduct a poll from which the two most authentic formations were excluded and Pakistan can ill afford the international censure that a decision on these lines would

have elicited. An election from which forces led by Ms. Bhutto and Mr. Sharif were absent could hardly be described as a democratic exercise in which the people of Pakistan were given a free choice. A Commission and a Government that had conducted a farcical referendum on Pervez Musharraf's continuation as President would have once again covered itself with ridicule. Further, there are reasons to believe that the Commission's decision of yesterday may serve to divert attention from a more sinister game plan already set into motion by the Government. Barely concealing its ideas about the preferred outcome, the Government has cobbled together an alliance consisting of a host of smaller and very pliable parties that will eventually become a "King's party" of the sort that Pakistan's military dictatorships have foisted on their people from time to time. If such a client formation can ostensibly, albeit with the military's full support, defeat the more established political parties it could claim a legitimacy that it would otherwise never possess. In this context, it is welcome news that the PPP and the PML (NS) have at last become aware of their responsibilities and realised their common interest. It has been evident for more than a decade that democratic forces in Pakistan could survive and thrive only if, and when, they learnt to share the political space with each other. Both the PPP and the PML (NS) had frittered away chances to achieve a principled mode of democratic behaviour towards each other when they were respectively in power. These parties have now realised that they have to work together if they are to thwart the military from destroying them and have tentatively begun to explore the possibilities of electoral adjustments *inter se* so that the "King's party" does not grow into something greater than the non-entity that it is.

Proposed amendments to curb militancy, track finances

Pak's new anti-terror plan

Islamabad, Aug. 12 (PTI): Pakistan has worked out a "multi-pronged trans-national anti-terrorism" strategy to speed up investigation and prosecution of militant groups, including those involved in Kashmir and Afghanistan.

The new measure includes amendments to the Anti-Terrorism Act to make it an effective law for curbing terrorism and to keep track of finances of militant and extremist parties, *The News* said today.

The amendments were proposed after officials found the existing laws deficient in many respects. The loopholes in the existing laws allowed militant groups to acquire funds through illegal transactions, it said.

According to *The News*, the law ministry is also working on a new set of measures to control the movement of militants who are involved in subversive activities in Kashmir and Afghanistan and various sectarian parties in Pakistan.

The measures would make it mandatory for suspected terrorists to report periodically to police stations and file bonds and sureties of good behaviour.

The government has also classified militants in various categories on the basis of their activities and is working on a



Residents prepare to spread a large Pakistani flag as part of independence day celebrations in Karachi. Pakistan celebrates its 55th independence day on Wednesday. (Reuters)

strategy to closely monitor the movement of foreigners in the country, the paper said.

The "A" category terrorists included activists of proscribed parties and groups which acted as motivating forces at the district level.

It also includes those who fund such parties or groups besides those who physically carry out terrorist crimes.

A profile of each "A" category

activist is being compiled which would enlist activities, record of arrests, previous convictions, besides a picture or sketch.

The dossier would also cite reasons for including the activist in category "A", it said.

"The list has been finalised in consultation with the home department, police, ISI and the Intelligence Bureau, *The News* said.

In order to ensure that the police and other law-enforcement agencies carry out the investigation of terrorists without fear or favour, army officers of the rank of a lieutenant colonel have been attached with each anti-terrorism court in Punjab and Sindh to supervise investigations and monitor prosecution.

In this regard, out of 89 terrorism cases notified for priority hearing, 51 have been disposed off since monitoring started on March 24, it said.

EC clears PPP, PML for elections

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, AUG. 13. The Pakistan Muslim League (PML) and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) heaved a sigh of relief as the Election Commission accorded recognition to them and declared that the papers they have submitted as per the new rules framed by the Musharraf regime are in order.

The Commission tonight approved 72 political parties' bids to contest October general election.

Both the parties (PPP, PML) experienced anxious moments in the last 48 hours as the military Government questioned the election of Shabaz Sharif in place of Nawaz Sharif on the ground that he is a co-accused in at least two cases of loan default.

There were even doubts about recognition of the newly-created 'entity' called the PPP

Parliamentarians as it swore allegiance to the former Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, who decided to stay out of elections as she is a convicted person.

The Election Commission issued a list of 72 parties whose "constitutions, documents and information... are in substantial compliance with the provisions" of new electoral laws.

Under the new laws all parties were required to submit copies of their constitutions, financial records and the results of intra-party polls to the Commission in order to qualify to run in the elections.

The Commission rejected another 57 parties, saying their documents were "not in conformity with the provisions."

The most prominent among the losers included Izaz-ul-Haq, son of military dictator, Zia-ul-Haq.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 10, 2002

PROMOTING THE MILITARY'S INTEREST

THERE ARE FIRM indications that Pakistan's President, Pervez Musharraf, is determined to go ahead with certain constitutional amendments aimed at institutionalising the military's dominance over the power structure. Gen. Musharraf has adamantly insisted that he will restore constitutional provisions that will enable Presidents to dismiss Prime Ministers and dissolve National Assemblies. An enabling mechanism of this sort was first inserted into the 1973 Constitution (currently suspended) by an earlier military dictator, and its deletion from the basic law fulfilled a part of the democratic aspirations of the people of Pakistan. As such, the reinsertion of such a provision does not mark merely an adverse twist in Pakistan's tortuous march to a more wholesome constitutional order. It is a deliberate reversal of the progress that Pakistan's democratic forces had made in their unfortunate history. To go by the record of the past it might take another decade for Pakistan's democratic forces to assert their rights against a President who would be either unelected or elected by a very narrow base of voters.

If a revival of the President's real (as distinguished from the symbolic) supremacy in Pakistan's constitutional scheme is bad enough, the other amendment that Gen. Musharraf is insistent on foisting on Pakistan will further strangulate the prospects for a true democratic order. The proposal to provide an over-arching role for the National Security Council (NSC) is nothing but a scheme to entrench the military in the highest echelons of the country's decision-making apparatus. By way of throwing a few sops to the democratic forces, and perhaps international opinion as well, Gen. Musharraf has indicated that he might be willing to consider an expansion of the civilian component of the NSC. This would be a transparently cosmetic exercise since the

three service chiefs and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff will, as they have in the past, most certainly act in concert against the elected civilians. As the saying goes in Pakistan, the military is the country's most strongly organised political force and this component of the NSC would be easily able to hold its own against civilian leaders from the four provinces who could very possibly belong to different political parties.

Gen. Musharraf has justified these amendments on the grounds that they are in the national interest. Pakistan's autocrats of the past, whether thrust up from the ranks of the bureaucracy or self-imposed with the military's backing, have demonstrated often enough that they are quite incapable of distinguishing between the national and their own personal or partisan interests. Gen. Musharraf is perhaps a more sincere man than his predecessors but that is small guarantee that he will be able to impartially perceive the true national interest when the military gets locked into a confrontation with the elected civilians. Equally pernicious is the General's argument that the re-casting of the constitutional scheme cannot be postponed till the election of a civilian government (a matter of a mere two months if all goes well) since the re-ordering of the relative balances between institutions is necessary to protect the economic and political reforms he has undertaken. It is not merely that many Pakistanis do not appear to believe that Gen. Musharraf's regime has ushered in such far-reaching and positive changes as would need the protection of a special constitutional arrangement. No programme for fundamental, political, economic and social changes can be sustained if the public at large is not committed to it and no citizenry can give such a commitment unless they can believe that they are in control of the process of reform.

PWK (1) HP-11 10/8

3 killed in Pak. church attack

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, AUG. 9. In yet another terrorist strike in Pakistan, three unidentified persons hurled grenades at women leaving a church in the vicinity of a missionary hospital in the Taxila town, 40 km from here, killing three nurses and injuring about 25 persons. The nurses were Pakistanis. The condition of ten of the injured is stated to be serious.

This is the second strike against Christian or Western targets in a span of four days and fourth since the U.S. military operations in Afghanistan. It is seen as the handiwork of remnants of the Al-Qaeda and the Taliban who have launched a terror campaign in Pakistan.

Reports from Taxila said the attack took place around 7.35

a.m. and one of the attackers died on the grounds of the hospital as a grenade exploded in his hand. Today's attack came exactly four days after the incident at a missionary school for foreign students in Murree in which six Pakistanis perished in the attack as three militants opened indiscriminate firing in a bid to gain entry into the school.

Islamabad feels that the per-

petrators of the attack could be linked to the terrorist strike on the school in Murree. "It is clear that the terrorists are targeting the Christian community in Pakistan," S.K. Tressler, the Minister in-charge of Minority Affairs, said.

The series of terror attack in Pakistan in the last few weeks clearly indicate the nature of the challenge faced by the Musharraf Government from

the fundamentalists who have been opposing his decision to support the U.S.-led coalition against international terrorism.

Besides the attack in Taxila, the military government has reasons to be worried over the incident in the capital of Baluchistan, Quetta, in which a senior Army officer was shot and wounded in a suspected sectarian attack. It is for the first time that a military officer has become the target of such an attack.

Reports said that two unidentified assailants opened fire on the car of Brig. Bartar Hussain Naqvi, who is an official of the National Database and Registration Authority, while he was on his way to his office. He has been admitted in the military hospital with bullet injuries in the shoulder.

Australia cancels Pak. tour

MELBOURNE, AUG. 9. Australia has cancelled its October test cricket tour of Pakistan and proposed that it should be shifted to a neutral country because of security fears.

The Australian Cricket Board (ACB) Chief Executive, James Sutherland, and Chairman, Bob Merriman, made the announcement at a news conference in Melbourne today. —Reuters

Votaries of 'jihad' warn Musharraf Govt.

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, AUG. 9. Despite the professed commitment of the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, to stop anti-India activities, a few groups, particularly from Muzaffarabad, continue to articulate the belief that 'jihad' (holy war) is the only way to "liberate" Kashmir.

This was evident at a school function organised in the capital of Pakistan-occupied Kash-

mir by the Jamaat-ud-Dawa, headed by the former chief of the banned Lashkar-e-Taiba, Hafeez Muhammad Saeed. The whereabouts of Prof. Saeed have become a mystery since the Pakistan Government told a Lahore court last week that it had neither arrested nor detained him.

Speakers at the function warned the Musharraf Government against provoking the group's workers by its "atti-

tude" towards their leader. Some of them could not resist the temptation of reiterating that "no power on earth" could stop the ongoing 'jihad' in Kashmir.

Those who were present at the function included the Jamaat-ud-Dawa PoK chief, Abdul Azeez Alvi, and the PoK Assembly member and Parliament secretary, Meer Ali Akbar.

Maulana Alvi told the gathering that the Jamaat's workers

were trained followers of Islam and believed that rioting, strikes and vandalism were against their religion. The Government should not force them to adopt a way of violence. Its attitude towards a "great leader" (Prof. Saeed) was proof of terrorism, he alleged. And Mr. Akbar said that no power could stop the "freedom struggle" in Kashmir and that 'jihad' would continue till the "total departure" of the Indian forces from Kashmir.

Pakistan missionary attackers blow themselves up

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD, Aug. 7. — Three suspected militants who carried out the attack on a Christian missionary school near Pakistan's hill resort of Murree blew themselves up in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir after they were confronted by local villagers.

The militants killed themselves by exploding hand grenades while running towards river Jhelum after they were chased by people of Khaddar village, 50 km south of PoK capital Muzaffarabad, police said.

The three armed men, believed to have been involved in the Monday's attack on the school at village Gharrial near Murree in which six persons were killed, were identified by the villagers when they reached there

from the nearby jungles. The villagers, who recognised them by their details published in yesterday's newspapers, questioned them after which the trio ran towards the river.

The villagers also informed the police as they chased the militants, who pitched themselves on a rock in the river pleading mercy before blowing themselves up.

Bodies of two of the militants were swept away in the river while police recovered one body which was beyond recognition.

The three men who were in their late 20s reportedly left their Kalashnikov rifles and bullet pouches used in the attack in the jungles before emerging in the village. Residents of the village said the militants, who spoke Urdu, ran towards the river as they questioned their identity.

The three men went several

Gunmen warned of more attacks

ISLAMABAD, Aug. 7. — Gunmen who tried to kill scores of foreign pupils at a Christian school left behind a note warning of more attacks, a Christian rights activist said today. Six of the militant attackers on Monday were shot dead by Islamist Shaheed Bhatti, who heads the All Pakistan Missionaries' Alliance. The letter was signed by a group called Al-Jihad Al-Pakistan (Revenge of the People of Pakistan), Mr Bhatti said. — AFP

feet deep inside the river and positioned themselves on a rock urging the villagers to let them go to Muzaffarabad.

But they later panicked and blew themselves up when the local police arrived at the scene. Some local police officers claimed to have intercepted them after which they ran towards the river. Briefing the press about Monday's attack, the

Director-General of Police Mr Asif also has 35 foreign staff mem-

bers. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan has asked the government to end all kinds of discrimination against religious minorities, saying Monday's attack reflected the increasing security threats faced by them. In a strongly worded statement, HRCP said the attack "highlights the increasing threat to security faced by minorities in the country. The outrageous incident also shows that despite claims to the contrary by the military regime, the threat from militants remains very real across the country".

Govt adopts anti-terrorism law: In a significant development, the Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir Government has adopted an anti-terrorism law to punish people involved in terrorist activities. Announcing this to the media, law minister Mr Raja Nisar Ahmed Khan said yesterday in

Muzaffarabad that initially no special courts would be established under the law and the powers of such courts would be given to the district and sessions judges. Referring to India's assertion that there were militant training camps in PoK, Mr Khan said the province was generally safe from terrorist incidents but the government brought in the new law to meet any eventuality.

Bhutto, Shahbaz return alert: Pakistani intelligence agencies have been put on alert on all international airports to watch out for the possible return of former Premier Mrs Benazir Bhutto or any member of deposed Prime Minister Mr Nawaz Sharif's family. The interior ministry made this decision following statements made by Mrs Bhutto and members of the Sharif family about their return to Pakistan.

Benazir nominates leaders for elections

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD, Aug 5. — Mrs Benazir Bhutto today backed out from a direct confrontation with President Pervez Musharraf in the last minute by nominating a new leadership to head her Pakistan People's Party to spare its disqualification by the Election Commission under the regime's new election rules.

The development came as political parties rushed to the Election Commission today to submit reports on their new internal elections as well as accounts as stipulated by the Musharraf government.

There was a virtual scramble at the Election Commission office here as today was the last date for the parties to submit their reports in order to register afresh with the commission to contest the 10 October general election to the National Assembly and four provincial assemblies.

Benazir sprang a last-minute surprise by nominating a new wing of her Pakistan People's party called the Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians under present vice-chairman, Mr Makhdoom Amin Fahim, to run for the polls. Another senior leader, Raja Pervez Ashraf, was appointed secretary-general, a PPP press release here said. Mr Fahim later filed the papers before the Election Commission notifying his election.

Benazir made the changes in compliance with the rule brought in by the Musharraf government barring any politician or a politi-

Pakistan says no to Shahbaz return

ISLAMABAD, Aug 5. — Islamabad today said it will not allow Mr Shahbaz Sharif, recently elected PML (N) chief, to return and asked Benazir to head back home to make a "plea bargain" in the corruption cases against her. The military regime will not permit deposed premier Mr Nawaz Sharif's brother, Shahbaz, to return from his exile despite his election as leader of Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz), the Interior minister, Mr Moinuddin Haider, told reporters in Karachi. "Shahbaz and other members of the Sharif's family opted to leave the country as a part of a deal struck with the government and would be dealt with accordingly... it is between the parties that permitted them to leave Pakistan safely and his return would be a violation", Mr Haider said.

Mr Sharif has consistently denied any deal between him and the regime that banished him and his family for 10 years. Mr Haider denied media reports that Shahbaz's election followed a deal between Mr Nawaz Sharif and the Musharraf regime to isolate Benazir. Mr Haider also said Benazir should return from her self-exile to "admit to her guilt" in the corruption cases filed against her and apply for a "plea bargain". "She should return to Pakistan and start a plea bargain before the National Accountability Bureau as a number of others facing corruption charges have done. In the process she might get relief as well", he said. — PTI

cal party headed by him or her that she would not back down from contesting the polls if they not appearing before the court. but stepped back in the last minute as it could make it easier for Mrs Bhutto, who is in self-exile, however, maintained earlier the regime to disqualify her party.

ty, which was perceived to be front-runner to win the polls.

In order to spare the party, the PPP said that the party has formed a subsidiary called PPP Parliamentarians group, which would be headed by Mr Fahim. "A group of leaders met in Islamabad today to form the PPP Parliamentarians. The aims of PPP Parliamentarians is to build a progressive and democratic society in accordance with the principles, philosophies and politics of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Quaid-e-Awam Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Quaid-e-Jamhooriyat Benazir Bhutto", the PPP release said.

The party maintained that Mrs Bhutto would remain a political guide of this new grouping although she would not hold an elective office in it.

This is the first time that the party nominated a non-Bhutto as its leader after it was founded by Benazir's father, the late ZA Bhutto, who was executed by the previous military regime. The press release was silent on whether Mrs Bhutto would return to fight the regime and take part in the polls. Mrs Bhutto has been threatening to end her self-exile to take the military regime head on. Barring a few, almost all parties, Mr Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) filed their papers with the Election Commission, which has been accused by mainstream political parties as "rubber stamp" of the government.

Two days ago Mr Sharif, backed out and nominated his brother Mr Shahbaz Sharif to head the party.

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Deadline test for Benazir

Islamabad, Aug. 4 (Reuters): All eyes are on Pakistan's exiled former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto today ahead of a key deadline in a parliamentary election that military leader Pervez Musharraf has been accused of manipulating.

The charismatic daughter of Pakistan's first elected premier has vowed to return home from self-imposed exile in Britain to contest the poll, setting the scene for a showdown with arch-rival Musharraf who has moved to ban her.

But she faces arrest if she

does, and the participation of her Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in the October 10 election is in doubt as long as she is at the helm, political analysts say.

All parties wanting to run for seats in parliament must complete their own internal elections and submit a list of candidates to the election commission by Monday.

Musharraf has sought to remove both Bhutto and fellow former Prime Minister Nawaz

Sharif from the election by barring ex-prime ministers who have served twice.

Bhutto and Sharif both face corruption charges, which would also disqualify them under rules proposed by the President. Sharif, in exile in Saudi Arabia, bowed out of the contest yesterday by handing over the leadership of the Pakistan Muslim League (PML) to his younger brother.

But Bhutto has yet to budge just one day before the August 5 deadline. "We have selected her (Bhutto) as chairperson," a senior PPP official said.



Bhutto

"The party will go to the election commission tomorrow and submit the forms. The government is very clear from its side and we are from ours. We will see what happens."

While enjoying considerable support at home, Bhutto's position may have been weakened by the change of PML leader.

Newspapers today said the appointment of Shahbaz Sharif as PML president meant Musharraf would find it easier to stick to his guns on barring Bhutto.

There was also speculation that the PML reshuffle was the result of a behind-the-scenes deal with Musharraf.

Nawaz Sharif's brother elected party chief

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, AUG. 3. Shahbaz Sharif, brother and former Chief Minister of Punjab, was today 'elected' as the new President of the Pakistan Muslim League (PML) after the former Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, expressed his inability to continue as party chief in view of the new rules framed by the Musharraf regime. Decision of Mr. Sharif to step down is a major setback to the former Prime Minister and Chairperson of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Benazir Bhutto, who has decided to defy the new law enacted by the military Government and contest it in a court of law.

The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) led by Ms. Bhutto and the MQM led by Altaf Hussain could be denied the party symbols for the October polls by the Pakistan Election Commission as under the new rules convicted persons cannot remain as party office bearers. Both Mrs. Bhutto and Mr. Hussain, who are convicted in various cases and live in exile, had been re-elected by their parties despite new rules.

The decision of PML to replace the former Prime Minister as head of the party with his younger brother is seen as some kind of a 'deal' between the Musharraf Government and the Muslim League to 'isolate' Ms. Bhutto.

On Friday the Working Committee of PML had reposed 'faith' in the leadership of Nawaz Sharif and asked him to remain as the party chief. However, the resolution appears to be no more than a 'red-herring'. Senior PML leader, Raza Zafarul Haq, told correspondents here today that the party decided to obey the orders of the former Prime Minister and install his younger brother as the new chief. 'Mr. Nawaz Sharif called up from Saudi Arabia yesterday evening and expressed his inability to continue as the President in view of the legal difficulties that could arise on account of the new law. He suggested the name of Shahbaz Sharif and we unanimously agreed on his name', Mr. Haq said.

The Pakistan Election Commission had directed all the parties to complete internal elections before August 5 as per the new rules framed by the military government if they intended to stay in the fray for the October election. After the developments in PML, it would be difficult for PPP and MQM to fight the October elections.

The new rules bar convicted persons from holding a party post. Ms. Bhutto is convicted by a court of law in absentia in a corruption case and she has also been declared a proclaimed offender. The PPP however has sought to argue that her election was very much within the framework of the new law.

Mr. Sharif, who went to Saudi Arabia along with his entire clan after an agreement with the Musharraf regime in December 2000, in recent days has been sending signals to his confidants in the party that he has no intention at the moment to return to Pakistan. Implied in the signal is the suggestion that he does not want to confront the military government at the current juncture.

In a related development the factional group of the League, which is known as PML (Quaid-e-Azam), has re-elected Mian Mohammad Azar as party chief. The election witnessed a bitter fight with Ijazul Haq, the party leader and son of former military dictator, Zia-ul-Haq, challenging the supremacy Mr. Azar. He had questioned the electoral list and threatened to take the matter to court.

Khaleda's game

Bizarre means of consolidating power

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Bangladesh's ten-month-old Khaleda Zia government is doing bizarre things to consolidate its power. Not content with sacking the seven university vice-chancellors, the three service chiefs, the country's President and the principals of Dhaka's three most reputed schools, her government ordered the male police to storm a women's students hostel of Dhaka University and beat up and molest inmates for protesting against the illegal stay of outsiders, mostly ruling party leaders, in the hostel. Except for the crackdown by the Pakistani Army in 1971, there is no parallel for such barbarism in this 80-year-old institution, once called the Oxford of the East. The incident traumatised the girl students who wondered how a woman prime minister could be responsible? Although the vice-chancellor, a ruling partyman, has been made a scapegoat and forced to resign, he ordered the police raid on receiving instructions from the "top". The student wing of the ruling BNP and Jamat-e-Islam with help from terrorist gangs have thrown out rival student unions from Dhaka and other universities. Now the rival students factions of the ruling coalition are fighting gun battles among themselves to spread their influence.

The police say the ruling coalition does not want to control the armed goons who helped rig the parliamentary election last October. They are being allowed to indulge in indiscriminate killings, mass rape and dacoities as reward for their services. There are instances where the police have been forced to release party criminals. This is having a debilitating effect on the country's socio-economic and political scene. A sad commentary on a leader who came to power promising to "free the country from fear and lawlessness."

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Musharraf issues new order on elections

Part (1)

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, AUG. 2. Confounding the confusion over the proposed package of amendments to the Constitution, the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, late on Thursday night issued yet another order containing several new features with regard to the October general elections.

Political observers are intrigued as to how Gen. Musharraf could issue the order when he was actually in Beijing, and was pre-occupied in the last four days with his official visit to Dhaka and Colombo.

Some of the new features proposed in the order are actually part of the package of statute amendments unveiled by the regime in the first half of July. The Musharraf Government had said it would wait for

the feedback from a cross-section of the society before deciding on the statute changes.

The most important change announced through the new order relates to the Senate. While the earlier proposal was to convert the Senate (equivalent to the Rajya Sabha) into a temporary House with a fixed four-year tenure, the new order seeks to revert it to a "permanent" house with a six-year tenure. It also seeks to restore the existing provision, whereby one-third of the members retires every three years.

Under the new order, the provision of ten special seats for minorities would be retained. The Musharraf Government had decided to scrap the quota of seats in the Assemblies for minorities after the introduction of a joint electorate system. It is not clear why the quota is being restored, when

the system of joint electorate would remain.

Also gone is the idea of reserving 25 seats for technocrats in the National Assembly. The number of the proposed National Assembly seats stands reduced from 357 to 342. The Conduct of General Elections (Fourth Amendment) Order 2002, issued on Thursday, provides that the Senate's elections will be held according to the existing electoral college, as provided in the 1973 Constitution, and not as was proposed by the National Reconstruction Bureau (NRB).

The NRB had proposed direct election to the Senate through a complicated system whereby each party's representation in the House would have been determined on the basis of the percentage of votes polled by it at the national level.

2 AUG 2002

Benazir and Sharif parties face poll ban

Mubashir Zaidi & PTI
Islamabad, July 30

TWO FORMER Pakistani Prime Ministers, Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, and their political parties PPP and PML(N) are likely to be denied an election symbol in the forthcoming elections to be held in October this year.

Highly placed Government sources told *Hindustan Times* that the parties' refusal to change their leadership would mean that Election Commission would not allow an election symbol to the two parties.

Benazir Bhutto was re-elected as PPP's chairperson again yesterday while Nawaz Sharif is likely to be re-elected as president of PML(N). Both leaders are in exile for different reasons.

Nawaz Sharif, whose Government was overthrown by the military on October 12, 1999 by General Pervez

Musharraf, was sent to Saudi Arabia under a secret deal under which Sharif was barred from contesting elections for at least ten years.

Benazir Bhutto went into exile in 1999, few months before military took over power, to avoid arrest under corruption cases filed against her for taking alleged kickbacks and commissions in various contracts.

But military Government managed to get a conviction against her from a National Accountability Court, which sentenced her to three years in absentia and declared her as proclaimed offender.

However, her lawyer Farooq Naik said military Government is wrong in saying that his client is disqualified as she went abroad with the permission of

Lahore High Court. "A Division bench of Lahore High

Court permitted her to go abroad and allowed her to be represented by her lawyers," he claimed. Therefore, he added, that accountability court deliberately under pressure from the military regime overlooked the permission order and sentenced her in absentia.

Military regime's Law Minister Khalid Ranjha told *Hindustan Times* that if Bhutto do not return before

August 5, the last date set by the Election Commission for the political parties to hold re-elections and submit their accounts, she and her party will not be allowed the election symbol to contest October elections as she did not challenge her conviction by the accountability court.

The ouster of the two mainstream parties which ruled the country from 1988 to 1999, give a hope to President General Musharraf to bring in a puppet Parliament which would remain subservient to the whims and wishes of the powerful military establishment.

Meanwhile, Pakistan police has issued a fresh warning that former PM Benazir Bhutto will be arrested on her return to the country amidst strong indications that she would end her self-exile to contest the October 10 general elections.

Inspector-general of police, Punjab province, Malik Asif Hayat told reporters that any politician including Bhutto, who had been convicted by the courts, would be arrested on her return to Pakistan.

However, the police would go by courts orders in this regard, he was quoted as saying by local daily the news.

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31 JUL 2002

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Bout of the year: Pervez vs Benazir

FROM SIMON DENYER

Islamabad, July 28 (Reuters): Forget Lewis-Tyson. There's a mouthwatering showdown looming in Pakistan this October that could really set the pulses racing — if it is allowed to take place.

Benazir Bhutto, the leading lady of Pakistani politics, says she is coming home after three years of self-imposed exile to contest October's parliamentary elections.

Pakistan's military ruler President Pervez Musharraf has vowed to exclude her from the polls, and recently changed the law so she can never become prime minister again.

The courts have threatened to imprison her for failing to show up to defend corruption charges — but her spokesman says she is prepared to go to jail to fight for democracy.

"She knows when she lands

she will be sent to jail," Farhatullah Babar said. "She is ready, she will contest the elections even behind the jail bars."

Whatever happens, Musharraf will remain as President and retain substantial powers over the post-election prime minister.

Nevertheless, a showdown between the general and Benazir seems to be looming, the latest episode in the series of classic battles between the Bhutto family and military rulers.

Despite Babar's insistence, some insiders doubt Benazir has really made a final decision about coming back to Pakistan. Analysts say she would only return if her Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) manages to generate enough momentum to make it worthwhile.

"At the moment there is shadow boxing taking place," said political commentator Ayaz Amir. "I think she will look at events very carefully. The main thing is

whether election fever really rises when the election schedule is announced."

Twice elected prime minister, twice ousted on charges of corruption, Benazir cannot rely on the same popular adoration she had in 1986, when she returned from her first stay in exile to challenge another military ruler, General Zia-ul-Haq.

That was the height of her personal popularity, when every woman whose father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had been ousted as prime minister by Zia and later hanged.

Today, Benazir's husband Asif Ali Zardari, who was nicknamed "Mr. 10 Per cent", remains in jail on corruption and murder charges, although nothing has yet been proven. Her own reputation has been badly damaged by her record in office.

It would be a huge gamble for her to return home now, for both

personal and political reasons.

"Her mother has Alzheimers', her kids are all minors and their father is in jail," said Samina Ahmed of the International Crisis Group. "The last time she returned she didn't have the same kind of personal burdens she has now."

Benazir also has to be sure the PPP could really set the country alight if she were to be sent to jail. "If she comes back and is put inside and it turns out to be a damp squib, then she would start to look finished," said Ayaz Amir. The problem for Benazir is that she also risks becoming marginalised if she stays away. And there are plenty of other reasons why coming home makes sense.

If she gets thrown in jail, it would be a major international and domestic embarrassment for Musharraf — and might help to rebuild her tarnished image. If she were freed, her presence

would give a huge boost to her party's chances in the elections. "She has concluded that the time has come when she has to take this decision (to return)," said Babar.

Benazir may not have the pulling power she once had, but she still commands a substantial vote bank.

Musharraf as president might be the choice of Western diplomats, who have applauded his efforts to curb graft and crack down on militants. But despite the whiff of corruption and chaos which surrounded her two governments, Benazir as prime minister would still be the choice of many Pakistanis.

There is of course the problem of how to get here. PPP officials are said to be considering chartering a plane to bring Benazir home, surrounded by loyalists. Whether such a plane would ever be allowed to land in Pakistan remains to be seen.

CMFO T-A 29/7

Musharraf 'determined' to go ahead with statute changes

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, JULY 23. Even as he is engaged in a consultative process with a cross-section of society over the statute changes, the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, tonight asserted that he did not agree with those who believed his regime had no authority to make amendments to the suspended 1973 Constitution.

In an interview to the newly-launched Pakistan Television News channel, Gen. Musharraf argued that the Supreme Court had empowered his Government to amend the Constitution and he was determined to go ahead with the "necessary changes". "Several people who have met me have said that the subject of amendments to the Constitution should be left to the new Parliament. I do not agree with them. We would make amendments in the Constitution that we believe are in national interest."

The PTV decision to launch a news channel is seen as an effort by the regime to gear up for the competition that is expected after the Government recently decided to open up electronic media to the private sector. A prominent media group is all set to launch its channel on August 14, Pakistan's Independence Day.

In his brief interview, Gen. Musharraf maintained that his Government would ensure a "free, fair and transparent" election in October and said it would welcome any number of international observers to monitor them.

At the same time, he said that he was apprehensive of a malicious campaign by "losers". Some parties had already launched a campaign that there was "pre-election rigging". "The problem is we are bad losers", he said. He defended the proposal in the package for statute changes to restore the power of President to dismiss the Prime Minister. "People say the balance of power is tilted in favour of the President. I simply do not understand the argument. I have said again and again that the Prime Minister would be the supreme executive authority and decide on all matters of govern-

ance. The role of President would be limited to ensuring that there is proper governance with the help of the National Security Council."

On his recent meeting with leaders of religious parties, Gen. Musharraf said it would be wrong to categorise some groups as Islamic parties. "After all we are all Muslims. We are all as good or as bad Muslims as any one else. My Government has no quarrel with religious parties. I conveyed the message to them that the writ of Government would run and sought their co-operation for the purpose."

General's election

5/10/77 Where is Musharraf taking Pakistan? PAKO

Pervez Musharraf's latest contribution to democracy — putting term limits on prime ministers and chief ministers — is targeted at keeping Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto out of contention. Both have been prime ministers twice, albeit with no great distinction, and both retain enough political and popular support to pose problems for the general. Even if the October general elections are not postponed, Musharraf reckons on keeping Bhutto and Sharif out and help him get a prime minister of his choice. If the elections are half-way fair, that outcome is not guaranteed. Supporters of Bhutto and Sharif may get alternative candidates and the heightened anti-Musharraf feelings may, in fact, consolidate their position. The general then will join the long list of dictators to put too much faith on the power of manipulation and take little heed of popular dissatisfaction. As it is, Musharraf's proposal that he be empowered to dismiss prime minister and parliament, have been fiercely opposed by Pakistani opinion-makers, including lawyers. The country is therefore set for yet another prolonged period of political instability and constitutional conundrums, just as it used to be before Musharraf's coup. This inability to inject order has already cost Musharraf much of the middle class support he received after his self-installation. Signs that he loves high office just as much as anyone else and is prepared to railroad opposition can only increase middle class misgivings.

The extremist religious power centres that Pakistan's rulers have nurtured since Zia ul Haq and those which the general had wanted to crush are not only alive and well but are making no secret of their contempt for the president. Mullahs and jihadis now find anti-Musharraf rhetoric getting a lot more air than in the immediate 9/11 aftermath. Then, Musharraf's decision to do the US's bidding was applauded and his seeming ability to use the American connection to produce Washingtonian ambivalence on Kashmir had won him plaudits. While India still finds US positions on Kashmir less than palatable, Pakistan has found the change impossible to swallow. From a smart opportunist Musharraf has turned, in popular Pakistani perception, into a weak factotum. This is ideal for the extremists whose power to create mayhem is not inconsiderable: The bomb blasts in Pakistan were widely seen as *jihadi* warnings. More such notices can be expected. Dealing with them will not be impossible, though it will be difficult, as long as Musharraf has the army commanders with him. But when this business intersects with elections and political agitation, the mix can be explosive. The general could still remain president but the country he is ruling may be in a far bigger mess than when he took over.

Opp forces Musharraf to scale down amendments

Islamabad, July 19

FACED WITH fierce opposition from mainstream political and religious parties, the military regime in Pakistan might withdraw some of the proposed constitutional amendments but the principal amendments would not be touched.

"With the passage of time President Pervez Musharraf himself feels that there is a need to withdraw various proposed constitutional amendments," Pakistan Information Minister Nisar Memon said.

The Government will withdraw some of the proposed constitutional amendments in the light of suggestions made by politicians, experts and intellectuals, he told reporters here yesterday.

The minister, however, emphasised that while withdrawing certain proposals, principal amendments would not be touched and it would be ensured that the reform process was not compromised at any stage.

In separate meetings with Musharraf yesterday, as part of the President's consultative process to seek public opinion, Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) and Awami National Party questioned his authority to amend constitution and asked him to leave the job to Parliament, the *Dawn* reported today.

Musharraf, accompanied by



Pervez Musharraf
Rethink

his team of experts including National Reconstruction Bureau chief Husain Naqvi, held discussions with the parties on the two constitutional packages and political parties' order, the paper said. The MQM was represented by its deputy chief convenor Aftab Sheikh while the five-member ANP delegation was led by party president Asfandiyar Wali.

An apex body of Pakistan newspapers has accused the Musharraf Government of making "backdoor attempts" to stifle the media by amending the relevant sections of the constitution that guaranteed freedom of press and resolved to campaign

"aggressively and affirmatively" against it.

"A backdoor attempt is being made to transform a vital tenet of the constitution of Pakistan—Article 19, that guarantees freedom of expression and freedom of press and sets up the watchdog role of the press in any future democratic set-up," the All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS) said at an emergency meeting in Hyderabad in Pakistan.

Sharply attacking Information Minister Nisar Memon, the APNS noted there has been a "deterioration of press-Government relation since his induction".

The body urged President Musharraf to review the measures which is "leading the Government and the press on a virtual collision course, instead of focusing support on his battles to purge the country of the corrupt, curtail incidence of extremism, to lessen tensions on our borders".

Listing the series of proposed changes, including some "draconian defamation laws", the APNS said even factual assertion which is true, fair and made in public interest will be treated as defamation.

Compulsory apology and an exorbitant fine under a civil defamation suit is also being proposed.

AP

30 JUL 2002

Omar appeals his conviction

Karachi, July 19

THE BRITISH-BORN Islamic militant sentenced to death for masterminding the kidnap and slaying of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl filed an appeal today, a defence lawyer said.

Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh was convicted on Monday and sentenced to die by hanging. His appeal, filed in a Karachi court, claims the verdict was based upon "fake, false and provenly planted evidence". He appealed the ruling and the sentence.

Saeed's lawyer, Abdul Waheed Katpar, said: "Two high court judges will hear this appeal, and I am 100 per cent confident that justice will be done," the lawyer said.

Three other defendants in the case — Salman Saqib, Fahad Naseem and Shaikh Adil — were also convicted on Monday and sentenced to life imprisonment, which in Pakistan means 25

Pearl DNA proof

THE US will "soon" give Pakistani investigators the results of DNA tests reportedly proving that a dismembered body believed to be Pearl's is indeed that of the slain journalist, a US official said on Friday.

AFP, Islamabad

years. They filed appeals on Wednesday. If the appeals are denied at the provincial level, the men can take their case to the Supreme Court.

Pearl disappeared January 23 in Karachi while researching links between Pakistani extremists and Richard C Reid, arrested in December on a flight from Paris to Miami with explosive in his shoes. AI

20 JUL 2002

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Pak divided over Omar sentence

FROM ZEESHAN HAIDER

Karachi, July 15 (Reuters): Pakistanis are divided over the guilty verdict and death sentence handed down to a British-born Islamic fundamentalist today for the kidnapping and murder of American reporter Daniel Pearl.

Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh, better known as Omar Sheikh, was sentenced to death and his three accomplices handed life sentences after they were found guilty at a closed-door trial held inside a prison in Hyderabad.

All had pleaded not guilty.

The views expressed on the trial mirror the divided opinion in Pakistan over President Pervez Musharraf's wholesale backing of the US-led war on terrorism since the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington. One woman civil servant in Karachi — considered a hot-bed of Islamic fundamentalism and

the city in which Pearl was kidnapped and murdered — said Omar deserved to hang.

"In my view every terrorist should be hanged," she said, after asking not to be identified. "Pakistan has had terrorism problems in the past because we did not deal with them with an iron fist. "If these people are involved in this case, then they must be hanged." Aslam Reza, sales manager in a pharmaceutical company, hoped the sentence would act as a deterrent.

"I think it is a fair judgment. Otherwise everyone in Pakistan would think they can commit a crime and go scot-free," he said. But Omar also had plenty of supporters on the street — many of whom were suspicious of the secrecy that surrounded the trial. Reporters were not allowed to attend court and were briefed at the end of each day's proceedings by defence and prosecution lawyers. "It is a wrong decision.

Now Allah's wrath will fall on this government," said taxi driver Khan Zaman. "These people are jihadis and God has called for jihad."

"It is an American conspiracy ... these people are being falsely implicated," said Bismillah Khan, a security guard.

Zahid Saleem, studying for his MBA in Hyderabad, said he was against capital punishment in general, but felt the verdict was a travesty.

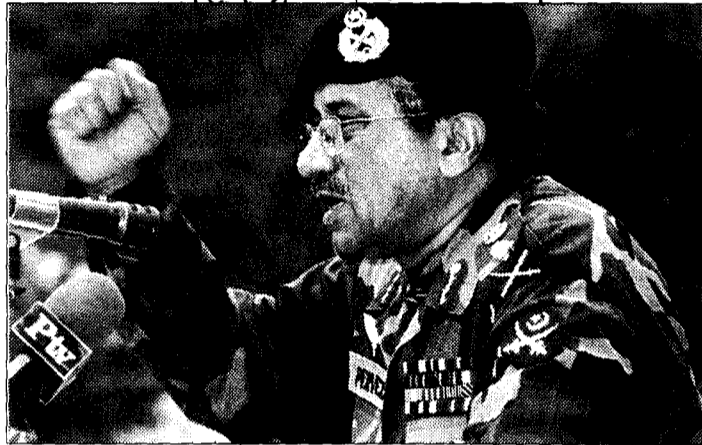
"It is all being done at the behest of Americans. There have been several terrorism and murder cases pending in Pakistani courts for years, but no decision has been taken on them."

Asma, a school teacher, agreed. "How come a case is finalised and decision is given in few months in a case in which police could not even establish whether the body was that of Pearl," she said. "It was all done under US pressure."

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THE TELEGRAPH

Coup against Pervez after 3 yrs: Report



AP PHOTO

A file photograph of Pervez Musharraf addressing troops in May.

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, July 9

GENERAL PERVEZ Musharraf's removal will make no difference to Pakistan's economic and foreign policies. He may survive another 3-4 years before being removed in another coup. The most likely reason for his removal will be unmanageable social and economic ills in Pakistan.

These are some predictions in *The Future of Pakistan*, a report by the Mumbai-based International Centre for Peace Initiatives.

The report says Pakistan is caught in a vicious cycle of economic decline that promotes jihadis and weakens democratic institutions. This allows the military to rule. But the generals are too wary of social unrest to carry out necessary economic reforms.

If its economy continues to regress, says the report, half the

population will fall into poverty by 2010, triple the 1987 level.

Pakistan already has 15-20 million young men. With few jobs or schools, 10 per cent of them go to madrassas. Net result: a one-million strong pool of jihadis of whom 200,000 are already under arms.

The report calculates it would have taken 4-5 years for the "economy to hit rock bottom and generate massive public protests against the army". The Afghan war has given Pakistan a reprieve of only two years.

If Pakistan decided to take the path of a developmental state giving up on jihad and focussing on the economy, the report says it could restore growth to 6 per cent by decade's end.

To do this, Musharraf will only have to fulfil his promises to the international community for six months to a year.

So far, Pakistan seems wedded to a policy of conflict.

MONDAY, JULY 15, 2002

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AN ARBITRARY AGENDA

PERVEZ MUSHARRAF'S MOVE to constitute a new counter-terrorism force in Pakistan and his stated willingness to turn the heat on the Taliban as also the Al-Qaeda elements within his domain will surely please the international community. However, the Pakistanis themselves have not rallied behind him. The reason, simply, is that he seems unable to convince his compatriots that he can be trusted to become Pakistan's man of "democratic" destiny in spite of his military moorings. What appears to eclipse Gen. Musharraf's anti-terror stand is the arbitrary political agenda which he seeks to impose on Pakistan whose citizens, as he might discover to his dismay, are no strangers to the authoritarian mindset of military rulers. The calculation behind the Pakistan President's recent actions is that the political transparency of his willingness to allow a public debate over his proposals for sweeping constitutional changes should itself suffice as an index of his good faith. The collective memory of the people, however, teaches them to be wary of solicitous military rulers. Gen. Musharraf's dilemma, though, is quite unprecedented by the standards of Pakistan's contemporary history. Having taken a strategic decision to marginalise the Islamic terrorists in Pakistan's own long-term interests, he seems to have reckoned that his best bet is to stay on in office for this purpose and, more importantly, for his own political survival. Not surprisingly in these circumstances, what lies at the core of the current crisis in Pakistan is the alternative view that power rather than the high principle is the motive force of Gen. Musharraf's military presidency that seeks to perpetuate itself.

Two popular perceptions of Gen. Musharraf's style and policies contribute to the present crisis of confidence within Pakistan. In the first place, he is seen by many of his critics, especially among Pakistan's religious radicals, as an anti-terror puppet of the U.S. President, George W. Bush. That explains the insinuatory denunciations of a "Busharaff presidency" in Islamabad. Independ-

ent of such a harsh innuendo is the more important rejection of Gen. Musharraf's "constitutional package" by diverse quarters such as Pakistan's civilian political tribe and the country's media. His opponents are driven, for the most part, by their strong belief that many of his proposals are designed to create a new parliament which will then be used by him as a "rubber stamp legislature" to legalise them with retrospective effect. Credible is the argument in this context that 98-99 per cent of Pakistan's population will be disenfranchised from contesting for legislative seats in the general election proposed to be held next October. Popular fears of this magnitude are stoked by the military government's judicially-endorsed fiat that only those with recognised university degrees can stand as candidates. This proposal has few parallels for its negation of the universally recognised democratic spirit. The prescription suggests political chicanery worse than that implicit in the other formula which enshrines a limit for prime ministerial tenures — one that conspicuously keeps out two familiar faces, Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif.

No less problematical is the move by Gen. Musharraf to institutionalise the proposed National Security Council as the new centre of gravity in every sphere of his country's life. As the balance of power in the prospective council will tilt overwhelmingly in his favour as the imperious military leader, the proposal hardly qualifies to be seen as a diktat for an apolitical instrument of checks and balances in governance. Less encouraging is his latest defence of a role in politics for Pakistan's military. The international community, on its part, cannot take kindly to this proposal that might produce a popular backlash in Pakistan against its current President, who yet tends to project the planned council as the only real guarantor of his country's stability. At stake is the issue of how best to prevent the terrorists from scrambling for Pakistan's nuclear weapons in the event of its destabilisation.

THE HINDU

15 JULY 2002

'Nawaz brother Pak pawn for smooth ride'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ISLAMABAD, JULY 10

THE brother of deposed premier Nawaz Sharif and former chief minister of Pakistan's eastern Punjab province, Sharif might be allowed to return to the country to balance the political equation, a report on Wednesday said. Sharif's re-entry could decode the entire political

matrix and leave multiple options with the military government for arranging the future political course of the country without having serious apprehensions. *The News* daily said.

It can well be one of the options the regime has been weighing to make all ends meet in the pre- and post-election scenario, it said.

"The Sharif return plan" has gone beyond the rumours and serious

groundwork was on to expedite his return, sources close to Nawaz's Pakistan Muslim League (PML) said.

"Well, I wish to come back to Pakistan. I am ready to return provided there is no impediment in the whole process. I wish to be where I belong, and it is my right for I have done nothing wrong. Rather I served the people with sincerity," Sharif told the newspaper.

However, he did not con-

firm any contact made at any level by or on behalf of the government. Though no evident efforts on the part of the government were underway, direct and indirect "Track-II Rendezvous" between the establishment and Sharif could be smelt from the chain of events taking place in recent weeks, it said.

Meanwhile, rejecting the government's proposed constitutional amendments, the Alliance for Restoration of

Democracy (ARD) said the forthcoming elections will be used to put in place a "show-piece" Parliament and insisted on a caretaker national consensus government to ensure free and fair polls.

"In presence of proposed amendments, power won't be transferred to elected representatives but to a Parliament which will neither be independent nor sovereign," ARD chief Nawabzada Nusrullah Khan said.

Pearl trial ends, court verdict on Monday

■ HYDERABAD: Trial of four militants charged with the murder of American reporter Daniel Pearl ended on Wednesday. The verdict will be handed down on Monday.

■ KARACHI: A court sent three men to police custody for trying to kill the Pak President. They will return to court in a week.

■ LONDON: The PPP on Wednesday rejected as 'illegal and unconstitutional' the three-year jail term for ex-PM Benazir Bhutto for failing to appear before an anti-corruption court.

■ ISLAMABAD: The World Bank on Tuesday night approved a \$236.5 million loan for Pakistan to support the country's ongoing reform programmes and help reduce poverty — Agencies

49-10

TRIFLING WITH PAKISTAN'S FUTURE

1977

THE PAKISTAN PRESIDENT, Pervez Musharraf, appears to be constantly getting his sums wrong as he now seeks to refashion his country's constitutional order ahead of the general election that must be held by October for a judicially-mandated restoration of democracy. His move to disable two high-profile even if discredited civilian leaders and his plans for a praetorian National Security Council reflect a sense of political desperation that is totally out of sync with his exudation of confidence as the arbiter of Pakistan's destiny. Not only that. Gen. Musharraf's authoritarian overdrive will not suit Pakistan's long-term interests. In a purely personal reckoning too, Gen. Musharraf's popularity graph is already languishing at the lower end of the spectrum in quite an inverse proportion to the massive scale of the votes that he garnered in a recent referendum. The flawed 'mandate', which he obtained in the presidential referendum on April 30, has not only eroded his efforts at 'democratising' his military rule but also accentuated his sense of anxiety to safeguard his political flanks for years to come in the misty future. As a result, he seems to have decided at this point to gamble on transparently draconian proposals which, by his book of politics, are 'democratic' innovations though. While the circumstances of his coup in October 1999 and the general tenor of his administration have always remained an affront to the spirit of democracy, in spite of his welcome measures to curb political extremism and religious radicalism, Gen. Musharraf's first major failure to win friends and influence people at home was the recent referendum. Conceived in haste and carried out in a blatantly partisan fashion, the political plebiscite on his rule proved a disaster for Pakistan and for him. What he should do, therefore, is to undertake a reality check regarding Pakistan's priorities and review his new proposals in that light.

The Musharraf administration's latest decree on a two-term limit for Pakistan's Prime Ministers

and provincial Chief Ministers is more tenuous than a thinly veiled ban on any efforts by either Benazir Bhutto or Nawaz Sharif or indeed both to run for the prime ministerial stakes. In a sense, this 'constitutional' fiat might have been devised as a final indictment on these two leaders who had themselves messed up their own separate mandates of the people during their independent tenures in office. Yet, Gen. Musharraf has no less revealed his own political nervousness at having to deal with the civilian leaders who might be able to communicate with the people as professional politicians. What is more appalling is that a military ruler with a controversial 'mandate' of the people should try to set the rules for the internal democracy of Pakistan's conventional political parties. Not surprisingly, Ms. Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party has quickly responded with a hint that it would re-elect her as its leader even under any rules that the military government might frame. Mr. Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League is less assertive in its reaction but reflects a similar sense of disdain for Gen. Musharraf's dos and don'ts for political parties.

Gen. Musharraf's proposed new state policy marks a negation of democratic ethos. The plan to revive and update the powers of the President to dismiss elected Prime Ministers and dissolve legislatures suggests a clueless lurch to a previous era of politics without fair play. A device with a more corrosive impact on the 'constitutional' evolution of Pakistan is the new initiative for a National Security Council as the ostensible forum for checks and balances at the highest echelon of governance. While the Pakistanis are no strangers to this formula, which redefines the old military-civilian establishment, the latest move by Gen. Musharraf to sustain his supervision of the political process beyond the promised general election can hardly be concealed, given that the council would bring together not only the President and the (future) Prime Minister but also the military chief.

THE HINDU

1977

New Pakistan order may force change in PPP, PML-N chiefs

By Muhammad Najeeb

Islamabad: Pakistan's two most influential political parties are likely to change their chiefs, worried by new government orders that disqualify them from contesting the October general election. The new orders were bad news for exiled former prime ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif who head the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) respectively.

Proposed amendments to the Constitution and several orders by President Pervez Musharraf's military regime make the two ineligible to head their respective parties and contest polls scheduled for October this year. The Political Parties Act amended by the government last week says any person convicted by a court or absconding in a case cannot take part in politics or head a political party.

In another order issued on Saturday, the regime said a person who has been prime minister or chief minister twice, irrespective of whether he or she completed the term, will not qualify for the posts a third time. Mr Sharif and Ms Bhutto have been prime ministers twice each. Both could not complete their respective terms and were dismissed on charges of corruption, nepotism, incompetence and malpractice.

Consequently, PML-N and PPP leaders say they are giving a serious thought to changing their party chiefs. A PML-N leader said Mr Sharif's wife Kalsoom Nawaz tops the list of probable candidates for the presidency of his party.

A PPP leader said Ms Bhutto's



Benazir Bhutto



Nawaz Sharif

younger sister, Sanam, is likely to be elected chairperson in case the former is disqualified by the courts.

After General Musharraf's takeover in October 1999 when almost all men of the Sharif family were arrested, "Kalsoom effectively represented the party at all forums, so the party leaders are proposing her name," said a PML-N leader. He said a final decision would be taken at the party's executive council meeting in Islamabad in two weeks. He said Nawaz Sharif, who lives in Saudi Arabia, would address the meeting on the telephone. As for Ms Bhutto's party, a PPP leader said, "Sanam was the only choice to keep the Bhutto factor in the party." In self-exile, Benazir Bhutto shuttles between Britain and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Sanam has been living in London since 1977 when military dictator Zia-ul-Haq overthrew her father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's government. Since then she has rarely visited Pakistan. The PPP leader said Sanam appeared reluctant to head the party and is the only member of the Bhutto family who has never taken part in politics. IANS

Sharif, Bhutto talk strategy in Jeddah

9/17 PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ISLAMABAD, July 6. — In a move that could upset Gen Pervez Musharraf, former Prime Ministers Mrs Benazir Bhutto and Mr Nawaz Sharif met in Jeddah earlier this week and are reported to have chalked out a joint political strategy to oust the military regime as well as a coordinated approach to contest the general elections to be held in October this year.

While there was no official announcement, media reports said today that the two leaders who lived abroad in exile met after prayers in Jeddah during Mrs Bhutto's trip there on Thursday.

Mrs Bhutto flew to Jeddah along with her children to offer prayers in Mecca. Mr Sharif, who has been exiled by Gen Musharraf after sentenced to life for preventing the General's plane from landing during the October, 1999 military coup, lives in Jeddah.

During their meeting both the leaders decided to launch a joint movement to oust Gen Musharraf and use their influence in the USA and European Union for that purpose, the 'Daily Times' reported today.

The two leaders also agreed that Pakistan People's Party led by Mrs Bhutto and the faction of the Pakistan Muslim League led by Mr Sharif should have a co-ordinated approach towards elections.

They agreed that both the PPP and PML-N should contest the party-based polls and make seat adjustments in some constituencies instead of forging an electoral alliance. This would pose a strong challenge to the pro-Musharraf

politicians being fielded with the tacit support of the government.

Under the deal Mr Sharif agreed to field candidates on all the national and provincial assembly seats which would ultimately favour the PPP, it said.

"Mr Sharif said if the PPP came to power through elections or some deal he would welcome it as in such an eventuality he would get a chance to return to Pakistan", it reported adding Mr Sharif also apologised to Mrs Bhutto for the treat-

Musharraf salvo

ISLAMABAD, July 6. — In an apparent move to prevent Mrs Benazir Bhutto and Mr Nawaz Sharif from returning to power, Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf today passed an Executive Order barring anyone seeking a third term as Prime Minister.

The order said anyone who has been the Prime Minister and the provincial chief minister twice would not be qualified to hold the same post a third time. Both Sharif and Bhutto have served two terms as Prime Minister. — PTI

ment PPP received during his terms as the prime minister.

A host of corruption cases faced by Mrs Bhutto and her husband Mr Asif Ali Zardari were actually instituted by Mr Sharif after he came to power in 1997.

The Sharif-Bhutto meeting reportedly was arranged by a mutual friend from the UAE.

The meeting was held in secrecy and their partymen were not informed.

Pakistan officials here argue that Mr Sharif and his family were sent to Jeddah following understanding reached between Musharraf government and Saudi royal family that they would not indulge in politics from Jeddah.

The meeting between the two leaders came as a shock here as it was believed that it would not have taken place without the express permission of both the Saudi and UAE governments. It comes a few days after the military government promulgated an order and introduced constitutional amendments to prevent both Mr Sharif and Mrs Bhutto from contesting the polls on the pretext that both were convicted by the courts.

THE STATESMAN

7 00 2002

Seal on Pak

PAK 1
SC 3
'secret'
liaisons 17

Islamabad, June 30 (PTI): Defending the constitutional amendments seeking a power sharing arrangement with elected governments, Pakistan's military regime said they would prevent military coups and formalise the "secret" relationship that existed between the democratic regimes and army.

The amendments empowering a 10-member military-dominated National Security Council (NSC) to have a say in political and administrative decisions would prevent future military coups, its author Gen (ret'd) Tanvir Naqvi said.

Naqvi, who headed the national reconstruction bureau that formulated the amendments, told *Dawn* daily that the new arrangement would "formalise hitherto secret relationship between the military and the elected governments".

"The army has an unspecified, unwritten and informal role in political affairs of the country", which was accepted by politicians in the past, especially during the conflict between the President and the Prime Minister, he said.

Commenting on NSC and its role, Naqvi said, it aims at bringing all the power "wielders" in the country to one forum, which included the top brass of the army. "It is a reality, let us recognise it and bring it to a forum," he said adding, the NSC was a "consultative" body and not designed to supersede parliament. "Its role will be consultative, not (one of) executive."

Naqvi denied the proposed amendments were aimed at preventing former Prime Ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif from contesting October polls.

Public appeal

Calling them "dangerous religious terrorists", the Pakistani government made a public appeal today for help in finding Osama bin Laden, his top aide and 16 other al Qaida members.

The appeal, made in a news release carried in at least one Urdu-language newspaper, did not say if authorities believe bin Laden or the others are in Pakistan.

THE STATESMAN

Pak issues most-wanted list

FROM IMRAN MAQBOOL

Karachi, June 29 (Reuters): Pakistan issued a "most wanted" list of 10 suspected Islamic militants today and offered big rewards for their capture in connection with the killing of U.S. reporter Daniel Pearl and the bombing of Western targets.

Police posted in newspapers rewards totalling 20 million rupees (\$330,000) along with photographs of the 10 men.

Several of the suspects were named as members of the banned Lashkar-e-Janghvi group, a Sunni movement that police have previously associated with sectarian killings of minority Shias, rather than with attacks on foreigners.

Top of the list was Asif Ramzi, a former leader of the group named as a suspect in the murder of Pearl, a reporter for the *Wall Street Journal* who was kidnapped in the southern port city of Karachi in January and subsequently killed.

The list also named suspects for the first time in a suicide bombing outside the US consulate in Karachi that killed 12 Pakistanis on June 14 and in the bombing of a bus in the city on May 8 that killed 11 French engineers and two Pakistanis.

A man identified as Sharib was named as a suspect in both bombings. A second man, named as Naveedul Hassan, was listed in connection with the attack on the US consulate.

Other wanted men whose photographs appeared included



A man sits next to a newspaper in Islamabad showing the pictures of the most wanted terrorists in Pakistan. (Reuters)

three un-named associates of Ramzi, two unidentified Lashkar-e-Janghvi activists and a man named as Abdul Rehman Sindhi.

Sindhi was named as an associate of Saud Memon, a fugitive businessman police say is the owner of land on the outskirts of Karachi where a body was found that investigators believe may be that of Pearl.

The police chief for Sindh province, Syed Kamal Shah, said some of the suspects named in today's newspaper advertisement had previously been wanted for sectarian killings.

"Some of the names have been added after the recent attacks," Shah said. "We have some clues about these people and we are developing these clues."

Pervez dumps referendum right hand

London, June 28

PRESIDENT PERVEZ Musharraf has sacked a senior General in the ISI who was in charge of the April 30 referendum, media reports said today.

Maj.Gen Ehtesham Zamir, head of the ISI's political wing who played a key role in organising the referendum, had been ordered back to regular Army duty after less than a year in the agency. *The Guardian* reported from Islamabad quoting sources close to the military.

The report said Musharraf had admitted to irregularities in the referendum, in which Government employees had been ordered to vote. Now the embarrassed leader wanted heads to roll, the report said.

According to official figures, which claimed a huge voter turnout, Musharraf secured 98 per cent 'yes' votes in the referendum, which extended his term in office by another five years.

Zamir was a divisional commander in Karachi till last August when he became a powerful figure and influential aide after being promoted to top ranks in the ISI.

He was one of a handful of advisors who suggested a referendum would give Musharraf the nationwide endorsement he sought.

"Gen Zamir has been made a scapegoat. It was his idea to hold the referendum," the daily quoted a source close to the Army leadership.

Meanwhile, Musharraf yesterday asserted that Kashmir was in Pakistan's "national interest" on which he would never compromise. He denied that that the issue had been buried during his talks with US and Western leaders.

He said Pakistan had changed its policy in Afghanistan keeping in view the changing circumstances, "but Kashmir is our national interest and we will never compromise on that".

"Policies could be changed but not the national interests," he told a meeting of Army offi-

29/6
cials at the National Defence College in Islamabad.

The meeting, attended by the military top brass, was part of a presentation on "suggested national security for Pakistan".

To a question, Musharraf said Pakistan and Kashmir co-existed and there was no question of ignoring the Kashmir issue. He denied that the issue had been relegated to the background and said it needed to be resolved amicably through peaceful means, and in accordance with UN resolutions and the wishes of the Kashmiri people.

He also spoke of various challenges that Pakistan was facing and responses to them to protect its national interests.

Meanwhile, Musharraf today rejected the mounting criticism of his proposed constitutional amendments, saying the new set-up was aimed at ensuring checks and balances between the President, Prime Minister and the Army chief.

Musharraf, who seized power in a military coup by ousting Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, has unveiled a series of proposals that would give the President the power to fire the Prime Minister, his Cabinet and Parliament, and provide a permanent role for the Army in the country's power structure.

Speaking at a meeting of senior defence officials here, he defended the amendments that paved the way for constitution of a military-dominated national security council (NSC) to be headed by him.

The NSC has to be headed by the president to ensure strong checks and balances among the three power brokers — the President, the Prime Minister and the Army chief, — he said adding the Premier can not play a balancing role.

He claimed that such a move was necessary so that the President and the Army chief would help the prime minister in case the opposition of the country tried to create problems for the government of the day.

Agencies

Pakistan launches major hunt for al-Qaida

Islamabad, June 28

PAKISTANI SOLDIERS fanned out through the hills and mountains of the country's lawless west on Friday as a major new front opened in the hunt for Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network.

At the same time, officials negotiated with tribal elders and asked them to hand over a group of about 20 or 30 suspected al-Qaida militants, who killed 10 Pakistani soldiers after a botched raid on their hideout near the Afghan border earlier this week.

Analysts said Pakistan's army, after some prevarication, appeared to have finally started to hunt for al-Qaida in earnest in the fiercely independent tribal areas, where hundreds are thought to have fled to escape the US dragnet in Afghanistan.

But they said the military government still needed to

grasp the nettle of domestic Islamic extremism in its vast and unruly cities if al-Qaida was truly to be rooted out in Pakistan. President Pervez Musharraf's friendliness with Washington has already provoked a violent backlash from the extremists, and is beginning to be exploited by opposition politicians ahead of parliamentary elections in October.

But Musharraf has little choice but to keep treading the path on which he has been leading Pakistan since abandoning the Afghan Taliban, al-Qaida's protectors, in the wake of September 11. "They will have to confront them (domestic militants) sooner rather than later," said Samina Ahmed of the International Crisis Group (ICG). "Or the international community, and in particular the US will see Pakistan as part of the problem rather than part of the solution."

Pakistan's semi-autonomous tribal areas earned the 19th century nickname Yaghistan, or Land of the Unruly, and they retain that reputation to this day. Pakistani law does not apply there, and the heavily armed tribesmen resent outside interference. Fleeing Taliban and al-Qaida militants are thought to have found shelter from the ethnic Pashtuns who inhabit the area, many of whom fought alongside the Taliban in Afghanistan last year.

Wary of offending tribal honor and sparking a full-scale uprising, Pakistan's army has been forced to tread carefully.

The use of US troops has been ruled out, with the presence of a handful of American intelligence experts in the area already causing widespread resentment.

"Given such constraints, any operation in the tribal areas must be backed by accurate in-

telligence information and carried out swiftly rather than be allowed to drag on indefinitely," the *New York Times* warned in an editorial on Friday.

But the military's patience may be running out, after the death of 10 servicemen this week at the hands of suspected al-Qaida militants near the town of Wana.

"We cannot have killers and terrorists running loose in Pakistan," presidential spokesman Major-General Rashid Qureshi told. "There is added zeal and motivation to bring these people to justice."

Qureshi says 300 suspected al-Qaida and Taliban militants have been found in the tribal areas and handed over to US-led forces, with the cooperation of tribal elders. Some analysts doubt that figure, but acknowledge the army is making an effort.

Reuters

Outfit getting fresh arms: Rumsfeld

Washington, June 28

AL-QAIDA FIGHTERS in Pakistan and Afghanistan have received new shipments of weapons and other equipment, US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld told *The Washington Times*.

"We have very recently discovered some new stuff that is not old, and it is modern," Rumsfeld said in an interview published today. "It is expensive. It is well-done."

Without disclosing where the equipment was found, he said it included "25 backpacks all well done with the right equipment and modern stuff and professionally done." He

declined to describe the "modern stuff," but said it was being separated for the emerging Afghan National Army. Older equipment was "dangerous and unstable" and is destroyed.

Rumsfeld said the equipment came from "everywhere. If you spread it all out, the passports are from lots of different places. The medical equipment and the weapons are from lots of different places."

"So it's not like the money's dried up. There's still more money and more new things coming in," Rumsfeld said referring to al-Qaida's finances.

AFP

29 JUN 2002

Library dispensary

The Bihari issue

FRANCIS
L.S.A.
7/10/77

Debunks Pakistan's two nation theory

The Pakistani home minister Moinuddin Haider has stirred up a hornets' nest by reminding Islamabad of its responsibility to bring back home the stranded Pakistanis popularly known as Biharis living in terrible refugee camps for over three decades in Bangladesh. It has raked up the vexed issues of repatriating them from Bangladesh and rehabilitating them in Pakistan. The Bihari Muslim issue, a product of the partition, has defied solution as Pakistan's two most dominant ethnic groups, Sindhis and Punjabis, have dourly resisted their return. Their objection, specially to Sindhis, is that their return would swell the large concentration of mohajirs in ethnically divided cities and provinces like Karachi and Sindh, and make an already bad situation worse. As it is much of Sindh's politics and economy are controlled by mohajirs who, unlike the majority of the indigenous Sindhis, have moved up socially very fast. The MQM phenomenon is well known and Sindhis fear that arrival of 240,000 mohajirs will make them foreigners in their own land. Similar apprehensions were expressed both by Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharief as prime ministers. They remained unmoved by threats of Biharis to undertake long marches across India to Pakistan.

There is no doubt that a terrible guilt haunts the country's leadership for abandoning those who first opted for Pakistan and during Bangladesh's liberation war collaborated with the Pakistani Army in committing genocide against Bengalis to prevent Pakistan's break-up. By disowning them Islamabad has caused almost 700,000 of about 10 lakh Biharis to illegally trickle back to their roots in India with no hope of return to what remained of their homeland. The ethnic violence in Pakistan has also acted as a damper. Their return to India has debunked the two-nation theory that Pakistan assiduously preaches for annexing the Muslim majority Kashmir.

Al Qaida raid kills 10 Pak soldiers

Islamabad, June 26 (Reuters): Ten Pakistani soldiers and two suspected al Qaida militants were killed in a gun battle in the lawless tribal area bordering Afghanistan, the army and government officials said today.

The men were killed when Pakistani soldiers raided a house they suspected of being a hideout for al Qaida operatives who had fled Afghanistan, a statement issued by the military's Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Directorate said.

Sources said a small number of US forces were also in the area helping in the search for al Qaida and Taliban fugitives but did not take part in the raid and were not hurt. The ISPR said Pakistani security forces carried out a search operation near the town of Wana, the headquarters of the South Waziristan tribal region, where a group of al Qaida operatives were hiding in some houses, among the civilian population. "In an effort to apprehend the al Qaida elements using minimum force due to concern for safety of the civilian population, 10 security persons embraced Shahadat (martyrdom)," the statement said.

A source said that the dead soldiers included two officers.

The ISPR said an unspecified number of "foreign terrorists" were also killed. But a senior government official, who asked not to be named, said that two suspected al Qaida men were killed and a Chechen arrested in the encounter which took place last evening. "The rest of the people inside the house escaped under cover of darkness and the

firing, but the search for them is still on," Brigadier Javed Iqbal Cheema, a senior security official in Islamabad, said. A government official in Wana said the raid was conducted in the village of Azam Warsak, only 10 to 12 km from the Afghan border.

The US team was at least a kilometre away when the shootout took place. Hundreds of militants from the Taliban and Osama bin Laden's al Qaida network are believed to have crossed into Pakistan's semi-autonomous tribal region after a big ground battle with US-led forces in eastern Afghanistan in March.

Pakistan's army is trying to track them down with the help of a small number of US personnel, but many of the fugitives are thought to have melted into the local population or to have continued their flight towards Pakistan's cities. Many tribesmen in the area still sympathise with the Taliban and some actually joined their ranks to fight against international forces in Afghanistan.

They are also fiercely opposed to the presence of US personnel on their land, and there have been several rocket attacks on a vocational school used as a US base in North Waziristan, although no one has been hurt.

Pakistan's tribal regions are awashed with arms that have spilled over from Afghanistan, but the sale of heavy arms and ammunition was banned by the government when President Pervez Musharraf threw his weight behind the US-led war on terror after the September 11 attacks on the United States.

THE TELEGRAPH

Pak to lift ban on political activities from July 12

Islamabad: Ahead of the general elections, the Pakistan government has said it will lift restrictions on outdoor political activities from July 12 and announce the schedule for the polls the same day.

"The government will announce the schedule for general elections on July 12 with which the ban on political activities would go," law minister Khalid Ranjha told reporters in Rawalpindi on Monday.

Mr Ranjha's announcement follows the decision by the 15-party umbrella group, Alliance for Restoration of Democracy (ARD), to defy the ban and hold outdoor political rallies from July 15. The ARD announced that its first rally would be held in Quetta on July 15 followed by Peshawar and other big towns.

The ban on outdoor political activities was imposed soon after the military coup in October 1999.

The political activities are expected to gather steam as and when exiled former prime ministers, Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, re-

turn to contest the elections. Both of them had said they would return to lead their parties during the polls.

Mr Ranjha also said the government would release the package of controversial constitutional amendments in the first week of July for debate, media reports here said.

The amendments, which were opposed by the country's mainstream political parties, were aimed at strengthening the powers of the country's President over Parliament and the cabinet. The power to be vested on presidency included power to dismiss the elected governments and inviting unelected persons to form the governments with a provision to get elected later.

The government has already banned the non-graduates from contesting the polls. The new rule was strongly opposed by the political parties.

The new constitutional amendments also empower the military-dominated National Security Council (NSC) to have a permanent role in decision-making. PTI

100 activists of banned outfits arrested in Pak

Islamabad: Continuing its crackdown on banned sectarian groups, the Pakistan police in co-ordination with FBI officials have rounded up more than 100 activists, suspected to be aiding Al Qaida and Taliban in carrying bomb attacks in the country.

The arrests were made on Monday in a joint operation carried out by the Punjab and Sindh police, the Pakistani daily, "Dawn," said on Tuesday. "The personnel of the American Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) are said to have supervised the crackdown," it quoted

sources as saying.

But a senior Punjab police officer, however, denied the FBI's involvement or supervision, saying: "There is nothing like that. We acted upon our own information and took into custody some dozen people belonging to the banned Jehadi organisations."

The crackdown, launched on Sunday, was mainly aimed at two banned Sunni sectarian outfits, Sipha-e-Sehbha of Pakistan, (SSP) and its armed wing, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi which were believed to be close associates of Al Qaida and Taliban. PTI

THE TIMES OF INDIA

26 JUN 2002

Terrorism in Pakistan

96-8 Put counter-terrorism on a sound road map before the polls 17/6

THE terrorist attack in Karachi is another act in the continuing chain of brutal senseless violence that has become a way of life in and from Pakistan for over two decades. The terrorist attack outside the US consulate was similar to the earlier attack outside the American Center in Kolkata. But the important thing is that this is the fourth major terrorist strike aimed at US and western citizens and interests in Pakistan. The aim, besides the twisted logic of terror as an instrument of jihad, like in the earlier attacks, was to signal that jihad through violence even aimed at innocents is very much alive and killing. The jihadis apparently want to perpetuate the myth that the war against terrorism being waged by the US and its allies is only a war against Muslims. And the US information campaign appears to have slowed perceptibly in this domain.

The latest incident may once again give credence to the theory that the government of General Musharraf is not in control of the jihadi fighters. Such an erroneous assumption could severely undermine the global war against international terrorism, and hence must not be accepted without serious questioning. Obviously, it would be naive to believe that Islamabad would control each and every individual fired up by the terrorist ideology even if that ideology and motivation have been consciously promoted in Pakistan. As steps are expanded and deepened to wipe out terrorism, it is to be

expected that many groups would fractionate into sub-groups with new nomenclatures and even choose autonomous vectors in accordance with the philosophy promoted by Islamabad. But in essential terms General Musharraf continues to hold power and authority to implement a robust policy to wind down the jihadi machine.

Musharraf and his government must recognise that like in so many other fields, half-measures can prove to be not only self-defeating but create a strong blow back. Fainthearted steps against terrorism could lead to increasing instability in Pakistan since the extremists, who are believed by innocent gullible people who provide the recruiting base for jihadi terrorists, would be seen to be winning. The country is awash with millions of lethal loose weapons, drug traffickers, criminal mafia, and tens of thousands of madrassas are still continuing along the old path since reforms have hardly begun to take effect. Musharraf may want to leave the tough measures to an "elected" political leadership. But in the process he would be aggravating the problem immensely. For the same reason the US, in particular, must press for more definitive steps to wind down terrorism inside Pakistan before the elections so that politicians have a clear and broadly accepted road map on which to continue moving. Otherwise, less, and not more, counter-terrorism is likely after October.

Car bomb blast near U.S. consulate kills 10

KARACHI, JUNE 14. An attacker crashed a bomb-laden vehicle into the security perimeter outside the heavily-guarded United States Consulate in Karachi on Friday, killing himself and at least nine persons and injuring 45.

The blast incinerated a dozen cars, blew a 3-metre-wide hole in the compound wall, and sent debris flying a kilometre away. No Americans were believed killed, but according to Mark Wentworth, a U.S. Embassy spokesman in Islamabad, six consulate employees — one U.S. Marine security guard and five Pakistani employees — suffered minor injuries when struck by the debris.

Some of the victims were blown apart, making it difficult to determine exactly how many were killed.

Dr. Hafiz Athar, a police surgeon, said 11 persons were killed, including 10 identified by relatives or colleagues. The other set of remains was thought to be of that of the bomber.

Those killed were four Pakistani police constables, a passerby, the bomber and four women, police said. Three of the women had just finished a driver's education course and were en route to get their licenses.

No one claimed responsibility for the attack, but suspicion has fallen on Al-Qaeda fugitives who have taken refuge in Pakistan since the collapse of the Taliban rule in Afghanistan.

The blast occurred 1.5 km from the site where 11 French engineers and three others were killed in a suicide bombing last month.

Police said the bomb was concealed in a white vehicle and the driver crashed into a



Policemen removing a body from a car destroyed in an explosion in front of the U.S. Consulate in Karachi on Friday.— Reuters

police guard post at the southern end of the consulate at 11:08 a.m. The vehicle exploded after careening into one of the metre-high, sand-filled concrete security barriers that encircle the compound.

U.S. missions shuttered

A report from Washington quoting State Department officials said the U.S. today shuttered its diplomatic missions in Pakistan as well as the American Center in Islamabad after the attack.

The officials said they would evaluate anew, the number of U.S. personnel to be kept in Pakistan.

"It is a deplorable act of terrorism and our condolences go to the families of the victims, and we wish a full and speedy recovery to all those injured," a White House spokesman, Sean McCormack, said.

The White House Press Secretary, Ari Fleischer, said: "this is a vivid reminder of the fact that our nation is at war. Terror-

ists will use whatever means are at their disposal, no matter how despicable, to harm Americans and others."

Gen. Musharraf's spokesman, Rashid Qureshi, told CNN he was unsure whether the consulate was the target. "We are investigating all angles, including whether there were any foreign intelligence agencies involved, because we have indications that there are attempts to destabilise Pakistan and Pakistan's economy by scaring away investments..."

India condemns blast

India today severely condemned the blast in Karachi, describing it as "yet another act of terrorism".

Speaking to presspersons in New Delhi after a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security that took stock of the current border tension with Pakistan, the External Affairs Minister, Jaswant Singh, today described the blast as "sad and regrettable". — AP, Reuters, AFP, UNI

Pak. ordinance to regulate 'madrassas'

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, JUNE 20. Acting on his promise made on January 12 to curb religious fundamentalism and sectarianism, the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, has promulgated an ordinance to regulate the functioning of 'madrassas' (religious schools) in the country.

The ordinance announced on Wednesday makes it obligatory for religious schools to register themselves with a new board proposed for regulation of the functioning of such schools. Those who refuse to fall in line will no longer get any kind of assistance from the federal or provincial governments.

According to estimates there are more than 6,000 religious institutions in Pakistan, with a total number of students estimated at more than 600,000. An estimated 15,000 foreign students, mostly from the Arab world, are supposed to be studying in these schools. The Pakistan Minister for Information and Media Development,

Nisar Memon, was candid in his admission about the objective of the latest ordinance. "One of the objectives of introducing this regulatory mechanism is to control those religious schools which had supported militancy".

Anyone who wilfully contravenes the provisions of the ordinance will attract closure of the 'madrassas' or a fine, or both. "The details of fine are being worked out," he said.

The ordinance cleared at a Cabinet meeting, presided over by Gen. Musharraf, stipulates that religious schools would also facilitate teaching of science, mathematics, English and Urdu, providing an opportunity to the students to enrol in the professional educational institutions if they so wished.

There are several provisions to check foreign funding of the schools.

Some of the prominent Islamic countries are suspected to be funding some of these to promote their version of Islam. Every registered 'madrassa', ac-

ording to the ordinance, will maintain accounts and submit an annual report to the respective education board.

A registered 'madrassa' will not receive any grant, donation or aid from any foreign sources or allow admission to foreign students or make appointment of teachers without valid visa and no objection certificate from the Interior Ministry.

The Pakistan Government might expel a number of foreign students now studying at religious schools across Pakistan worried that their presence could fuel possible militant activities.

THE HINDU launches today its eleventh edition and its second in Karnataka from Mangalore. This edition is aimed at serving the region better with a more extensive coverage and an earlier delivery of copies.

PPP criticises Musharraf speech

ISLAMABAD, MAY 28. The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) of the former Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, today dismissed the President, Pervez Musharraf's speech last night as a rehash of "pious hopes and vague promises" aimed at retaining his hold on power and called for a change of regime to pursue peace with India.

"The Monday night address was no more than a regurgitation of pious hopes and vague promises designed only to once again hoodwink the domestic and international public opinion and to perpetuate his illegitimate hold on power," it said.

Scoffing at the President's plan to seek consensus on dealing with rising tensions with India, the PPP accused him of pursuing "lone range" poli-

tics alienating mainstream political parties.

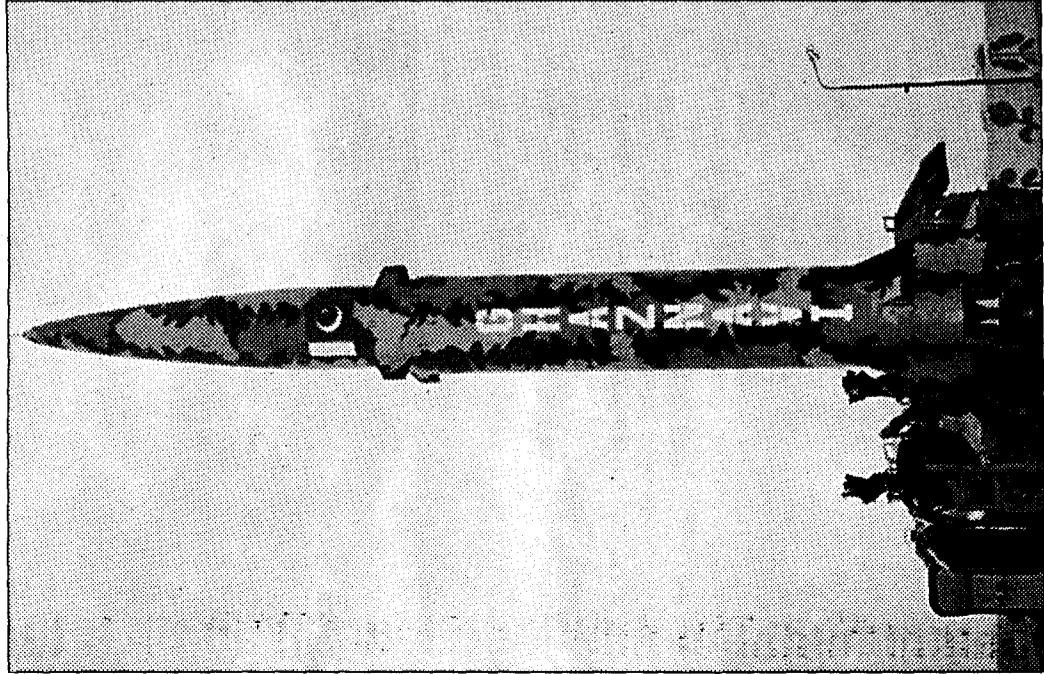
"The General's claim that he wishes to seek political consensus on the issue of the border situation is belied by his lone range politics which has pitted him against domestic political forces and polarised the country," it said in a statement.

Gen. Musharraf, the party said, sought to reassure the people about defence preparedness but did not utter a word about the peace efforts undertaken by the international community. "The nation is interested more in peace rather than flexing of military muscle". Referring to the President's announcement that elections will be held between October 7 and 11 this year, it said, "the party hopes that the General will not renege, as did General Zia, on the promise." — PTI

THE HINDO

7 MAY 2002

Pervez promises action with a refrain: Reciprocate



Surface-to-surface short range *Haaf-III (Ghaznavi)* missile in Pakistan before it was tested on Sunday. (AFP)

FROM STEVE COLL (V&S)

Islamabad, May 26: Seeking to ease the threat of war with India, President Pervez Musharraf declared that infiltration of Islamic militants into Kashmir has stopped, but he demanded an expansive response from New Delhi, including the renewal of direct talks between the two countries.

In an interview, Musharraf rejected criticism that his government has retreated from pledges to crack down on Islamic radicals nurtured by Pakistan's intelligence services, including some who have been inserted for years across Kashmir's disputed boundary to attack Indian targets.

"We will ensure that terrorism does not go from Pakistan anywhere outside into the world," Musharraf said. "That is our stand, and we adhere to it."

Musharraf said he knows "a lot of people are having doubts" about his commitment to forswear Islamic radicalism as a tool of Pakistani policy, but he declared: "Let me assure you, there is no backtracking."

At the same time, the Pakistani leader heatedly accused India of sponsoring terrorism in Pakistan, bullying its neighbors and provoking him with inflamed rhetoric. He said India has used massive border deployments and war threats in recent weeks "to destabilise me, my government and Pakistan."

Musharraf threatened that if

war erupted between the nuclear-armed rivals, "we'll take the offensive into Indian territory."

Infiltration is a decade-old problem that analysts say could not persist without direct aid from Pakistan's army and intelligence services.

The issue is sensitive in Pakistan where the militants described as terrorists by India have been championed as heroic freedom fighters. Musharraf made clear today that he was offering a fresh pledge to end the border crossings, but he declined to offer specifics, and the language he used was at times ambiguous.

Musharraf used the same words four times during the 45-minute interview, stressing that "there is nothing happening across the Line of Control."

Asked to describe concrete steps he had taken that would reassure outside observers about this claim, Musharraf demurred. Asked if the absence of militant infiltrations he described had been achieved through specific decisions made in the last week or two, he responded: "I repeat: There is nothing happening on the Line of Control. That is what I would like to repeat. And I would like to repeat again: Reciprocation is important."

Musharraf said he would not consider "de-escalation alone" by India along the border an adequate response, demanding in addition "initiation of (a) dialogue process (and) reduction of atrocities within Kashmir. And

when I say that, on defining it, it really means that as a first step, the (Indian) military should leave the towns and cities of Kashmir and be in the outskirts."

Musharraf appeared to be signalling to the West and India that he was prepared to be held accountable on the issue of cross-border attacks in Kashmir, though his precisely chosen, repetitive invocations made it difficult to be certain. And by attaching his apparent concession to demands for renewed talks with India and redeployment of Indian forces in Kashmir, Musharraf seemed to indicate that he would not accept a resolution that left him vulnerable to accusations he had merely capitulated to Indian military intimidation.

Musharraf rejected criticism that his performance has not lived up to a pledge made in a nationally televised speech on January 12, in which he declared that Pakistan would no longer tolerate radicals at home or use them as instruments of foreign policy.

He said Pakistan's commitment to fight terrorism had three components: its partnership with the US to battle al Qaeda and Taliban forces in Afghanistan and Pakistan, "the issue of cross-border terrorism" in Kashmir and battles between rival Sunni and Shi'ite sects in Pakistan.

Musharraf spoke most forcefully about al Qaeda. "Pakistan will not — repeat, will not — allow any foreign mercenaries,

militants, anywhere inside Pakistan, whether they are infiltrating through Afghanistan or coming from any other place."

On Kashmir, he defended the cause of the insurgents but cited the attacks on the Indian Parliament, the shooting of civilians in an army camp this month and other, similar incidents as cases where "there were civilians who have been killed — and I call them terrorist acts. There is no doubt in my mind."

But as to accusations that Pakistanis were involved in these incidents, he said: "Let's have proof. Let us have evidence."

Musharraf said he told secretary of state Colin Powell and other US officials last week that infiltrations had ended, and made the same demands for Indian reciprocity. He said he also complained about the volume of "chest thumping that goes on from the other side. Continuously, there is jabbing at us, a rhetoric, which is annoying."

Asked to describe the circumstances in which he would consider using nuclear weapons, Musharraf said this was a scenario "I wouldn't like even to imagine," and instead talked at length about the potency of Pakistan's conventional army and irregular volunteers. "Pakistan is no Iraq. India is no United States. We have forces. They follow a strategy of deterrence."

If deterrence fails, "we are very capable of an offensive defence... These words are very im-

portant," he said. "We'll take the offensive into Indian territory."

Musharraf identified the basic problem as India's unwillingness to accept a growing, stable Pakistan as its neighbour.

"No, sir, this is not what they want. They want a subservient Pakistan which remains subservient to them" and subcontracts foreign and economic policy to New Delhi, he said.

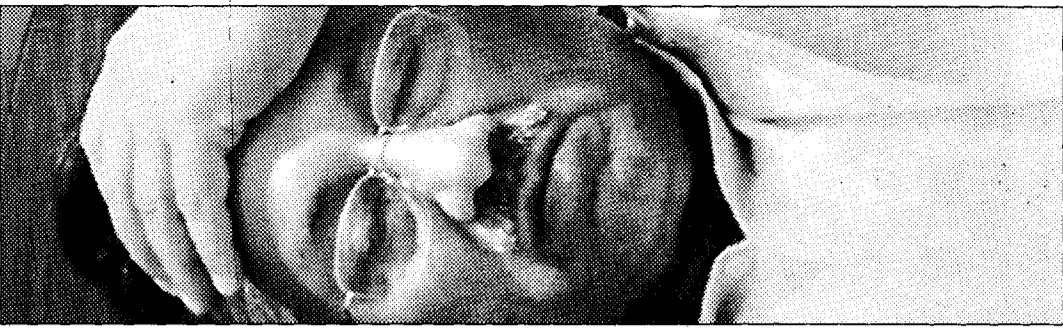
"They are arrogant, and they want to impose their will on every country in the region. We want to live in peace. But we want to live in peace with our sovereignty guaranteed, with our honour and dignity not compromised."

Only the US, Musharraf said, can help. "They must help. They can bring normalcy here. They must resolve this dispute. And they must ensure balance in the region."

As the interview concluded, Musharraf admitted that he was struggling to compose an important speech to deliver on national television. What the message of the speech should be, he said, was "an important question. It has to be — we want to avoid war. We want to bring peace into the region. So, therefore, the message is to be addressed to the outside world. The message has to be addressed to India. The message has to be addressed to my own people."

"Complicated," a visitor observed. "Very complicated. This is a complicated region."

LAT-HP



Musharraf

THE TELEGRAPH

'One hopes there isn't a war, nobody wants it'

Excerpts from Riz Khan's interview with General Pervez Musharraf, which was telecast on BBC World. The interview kicks off a 10-part series by the channel on Pakistan

SPECIAL TO THE EXPRESS

■ Let me start first actually with something quite topical, and that is the rising tensions with India, the increased shelling of the line of control and the trouble over Kashmir. What is the chance of all-out war breaking out?

WELL, one only hopes that it doesn't. Nobody, no sane person would like to go to war. But certainly the tensions are high, and it's dangerous because India has massed its troops on the border — army, navy as well as air force. So they have the capability of undertaking any adventurous act. So as long as that capability exists, the situation remains dangerous.

■ How far are you willing to take the fighting?

WELL if we are attacked, we'll certainly defend all the way, with all our might. We certainly would defend every inch of Pakistan.

■ What do you believe is behind the escalating tensions?

WELL, it started with the attack on the parliament, frankly. There was a terrorist attack on the Indian parliament, which — an act which we condemned because it was a terrorist attack, certainly. But I think — I personally feel that — er — the Indian government acted in great haste and rather in an irresponsible fashion that they, because of this terrorist act, they massed all

'I would like to condemn the attack on the Kaluchak army camp because it involved killing of civilians. There is no doubt in our mind that killing of civilians — in a bus or in a barracks, the families of military men — is condemnable'

their troops and raised the ante.

It started with that, and the troops were, are confronting each other. We reacted to it, of course, and all our army, navy, air force also got alert. Since then we are maintaining the highest alert. Now this act on Kaluchak, this attack on Kaluchak, the army camp, is again... I would first of all like to condemn this act, because it involved killing of civilians. Now there is no doubt in our mind, killing of civilians — in a bus or in a barracks, the families of military men — is condemnable, definitely.

■ At this stage, what chance is there of a diplomatic solution? What sort of intervention could take place?

WELL, we hope that first of all good sense prevails on both sides between India and Pakistan. Other than that, the United States is playing a role, and all that I would like to say is that, we, Pakistan, would like to co-operate certainly, because we don't want war. But let war not be thrust on us; then we'll defend.

■ Perhaps a difficult question to put to essentially a military man, but what if Pakistan was to take the stance of withdrawing its sort of heavy troop presence from the line of control? What would you expect to happen?

WELL, that may be quite dangerous, I would say, if we were to withdraw. I wouldn't be able to do that unilaterally. We've taken so many unilateral actions which was reason enough to de-escalate, but that did not happen. But now if we withdraw, and suppose there is some adventurism on the other side, we won't be there on the borders at all; we'll lose territory, I think, and that wouldn't be acceptable.

■ But you have the United States on your side to some degree following September 11, and Pakistan's co-operation. Surely now would be a very bad time for India to even consider this when the US has tried, has rebuilt its ally status with Pakistan somewhat?

WELL that could be a reason all right. But as I said, mainly I believe in defending oneself. We will defend ourselves if we are attacked, against any aggression. We cannot bank on anybody else. But this restraint, yes, it can be a restraining factor all right, the US presence here in the region.

■ Let me go on to the issue of leadership. What made you hold a referendum?

WELL yes, there's a story behind it. I know there are pros and cons. A lot of people thought that there was no need of a referendum. But I thought there is a need. And that is because October elections were nearing, there was a lot of political activity going on. And a political activity which was creating a degree of destabilisation in the political environment of Pakistan. There was a likelihood that we would go to the pre-'99 politics of — unhealthy politics — politics of loot and plunder. That had to be arrested, and I thought the only way of arresting it is to, for me to come into the fray and let the people decide whether they really want me as a leader.

■ More of that in a second, but the burning question on the streets of the Pakistan is: who advised you to hold the referendum?

WELL, I can't pinpoint any person really. A leader is responsible for whatever happens or does not happen. So I take the responsibility myself...

■ Any regrets, the way it turned out?

NO, no, I don't regret, because, as I



said, it's not the immediate effects, it's the subsequent effects that will follow now with the people having mandated me. It's the effects that get created now after October and beyond October.

■ But realistically did the people mandate you, if you look at the turnout of the election. I know the official quotes were 70%, but most people would assess it closer to under 10%. Is that really a mandate?

I THINK that's absolutely ridiculous. Official quote is I think 56%. And that is where it is. And there is no question that it is 10%. If you go around anywhere, all over Pakistan, you go into the rural areas, you go into the urban areas, you ask people. I've got letters from them, I've got telephone calls. Many people in the urban areas, old people who've never voted in their lives, have voted this time.

■ If that's the case, if this all happened, how do you plan to battle the perception that it was the other way?

WELL, it's unfortunate that this kind of perception is being created by vested interests.

■ ... Who would be the vested interests?

MANY who want to destabilise us. Anyone who wants to destabilise us. Anyone who is not agreeing with our reforms and restructuring. Anyone who wants to revert to the pre-'99 political scenario.

■ Do you think you suffered any harm by ignoring the constitution which says that the national assembly should elect a president, rather than going through referendum?

NOW, we are jumping the gun. I would say, who's talking of elections. We asked a question: I asked a question, whether the Pakistanis want me to continue as the President. Now what happens in October we'll see when we reach October. I mean, why the presumption that this is an election for the President?

■ What do you expect to happen in October? Can you guarantee that it'll be fair and free and that it'll be a true people's vote?

YES, absolutely, it's going to be very fair and totally above board, certainly. As was the referendum. Now, I know again in Pakistan, every time, anyone who's the loser will keep talking. They will start a propaganda that it was unfair. We are going to invite foreign observers, any amount — any amount to come and see. But I know that whether it is the fairest election, and any amount of foreign observers, the losers are going to cry.

■ Putting a comment that one of your critics said was: it was a mistake for you to hold the referendum, it damaged your credibility, but you haven't lost the chance yet that the way you handle the election will really determine where Pakistan goes, and how you as a leader turn out. Do you feel that kind of pressure in any way?

WELL, the October elections are going to be extremely important, because then onwards, the essence of democracy that I want to introduce, what I've been saying all along, that we want to introduce a real democracy into Pakistan. We've al-



'The October election will be very fair and above board, as was the referendum. We are going to invite any amount of foreign observers to come and see. But I know that whether it is the fairest election, there are losers in Pak who will cry'

ready started it with the local government elections and the local governments in place. The world is going to see real democracy in Pakistan. So it's extremely essential what happens in October and beyond.

■ Now when you took power, you were being hailed as a saviour both by people within Pakistan and a lot outside as well. And there was a groundswell of goodwill at that time. People said you were a great chance for Pakistan. Some said the last chance for Pakistan. How well do you

think you have used that opportunity for change?

I THINK I've used it pretty well. There is a tremendous amount of change in Pakistan.

■ One of the key things that were actually concerned with was the rooting out corruption. And some say, well, sadly, you've gone down the path of having to make deals with those who are suspect in the first place, that you've had to acquiesce to the old system.

NO, no, not at all. The point is that now elections are coming in October. Now two and a half years are not enough really to change the social order in a country. The National Accountability Bureau is functioning very well.

It has its own courts; we don't have any military courts to speed up the process. But with the existing legal framework, they are functioning. The number of people, all higher ups, politicians, bureaucrats, military men, all senior people who could never be touched before, have been put behind bars. And we have recovered wealth of this country to the tune of almost 100 billion rupees.

Well, obviously they are not perfect. But to say they haven't done anything, or that I have now acquiesced or gone back... no the National Accountability Bureau is functioning.

■ To what extent do you feel Pakistan has to adopt democracy according to a Western standards? What's the kind of pressure for that?

WELL, democracy has to be tailored in accordance with the local environment in a particular country. There is no set piece formula for democracy. It is a parliamentary form of government that we are going to have. It is a Western democracy really, but we are going to tailor it to our own re-

the country, must be vested in the Prime Minister of Pakistan. But there has to be a check, a balance on him, on his performance.

■ How much do you have the military behind you if you decide to take a few strong steps here and there?

A TOTAL, absolute total support. I have never commanded a formation where I was not popular or the formation was not behind me.

■ Is there any divide between the military and the civilian political rulers?

NO, there is no division at all. The military I take along always, and that is why they remain with me. But when you look around and you read papers, then you get a feeling as if there's a dichotomy between what is being projected and what is the reality on ground.

'Pakistan has taken so many unilateral actions which was reason enough to de-escalate. But now if we withdraw from our borders, suppose there is adventurism on the other side, we'll lose territory and that would not be acceptable'

■ Any chance you could be wrong?

NO (chuckles) I'm a realist. I remain in touch. I'm not isolated. I meet people, and I get feedbacks. I'm not one of those who keep sycophants around me, who just keep praising me. I believe in talking to the lowest man, I believe in getting feedback from the lowest person to the highest person. Therefore I'm very sure what the ground realities are.

■ How long ideally, being honest about it, how long would you like to remain in power?

WELL I can't really say that. I haven't decided on it at all. Now I was given a mandate of three years by the supreme court. In these three years we did whatever we have done. We have revived the economy, we have introduced new, better governments into the country. And now we are going around for political restructuring.

I want to consolidate democracy in Pakistan, and therefore I think, since the people also want me around, and which I know, therefore I would like to see democracy taking roots into Pakistan for the first tenure of the assembly, of the parliament.

■ You were saying you would do what it takes to do something good for the country. If there was a signal from the people of Pakistan that the thing that would help them move forward in their eyes is for you to step down, would you consider that?

YES, indeed. The moment I see that the people of Pakistan are not with me, I would like to quit.

UK cuts back



mission staff in Pak

DOMINIC EVANS
LONDON, MAY 22

BRITAIN said on Wednesday it was withdrawing a large number of embassy staff from Pakistan and advising its nationals to leave the country after terrorist threats against British organisations there.

"The security threat to British interests in Pakistan has led me to take the difficult decision to reduce the level of diplomatic representation," Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said.

"We will begin reducing the number of staff and dependants in Pakistan with immediate effect."

A diplomat said "quite a large number" would return home.

Britons should not travel in Pakistan, a boy stands near burnt-out vehicles in Karachi on Tuesday after violence broke out between followers of Shia and Sunni sects. One person was killed and 25 vehicles were set ablaze. *Reuters*

istan except "where there are compelling reasons to do so, and security is assured," he said.

"We are also advising British nationals in Pakistan to consider leaving".

Straw is to visit Pakistan and India next week in an attempt to cool down border tension between the two nations. But diplomats said the decision to withdraw staff was primarily a response to the threats to British targets.

"There have been no specific threats to individuals but some threats to British facilities," one diplomat said, saying it was not clear whether the warnings, which he described as "terrorist threats", came from supporters of the militant Al Qaeda network.

Since September 11, Britain has been Washington's staunchest ally in its "war on terror". Osama bin Laden, accused by Washington of masterminding the September 11 attacks, has named Britain as a prime target.

Following the US-led military onslaught on his Al Qaeda network in Afghanistan, many of his supporters are believed to have slipped across Afghanistan's border into Pakistan.

Eleven French Navy engineers were killed by a suicide bomber in Pakistan's southern port city of Karachi two weeks ago.

"Clearly the situation is volatile," a diplomat said.

The British High Commission in Pakistan warned British citizens living and working there of a heightened risk to their safety. "The British High Commission has decided to close all our visa sections in Pakistan for the time being in response to a number of very recent threats to British interests," the mission said.

"The British High Commission cannot judge the authenticity of the threats but is taking them seriously," it added, saying British citizens should exercise particular care over their personal security. — *Reuters*

23 MAY 2002

Musharraf faces enemy within and without

Islamabad, May 20 (PTI): Mainstream political parties in Pakistan denounced President Pervez Musharraf as an "isolated" ruler and asked him to resign immediately and hand over power to a caretaker government, in a setback to Musharraf's plans of building a national consensus to deal with heightened border tensions.

Musharraf should resign both as President and chief of the army to form a caretaker government which is better suited to handle the crisis, said a unanimous resolution adopted by 30 political and religious parties at a quickly convened meeting in Lahore yesterday.

The meeting was held amid moves by Musharraf to call an

all-party conference to discuss the steps being taken to deal with rising tensions with India.

"The President must resign immediately. The demand for Musharraf's resignation even at a time when India has taken an aggressive posture against Pakistan is important because the general doesn't enjoy the moral or constitutional authority to take decisions at this juncture," said Alliance for Restoration of Democracy chairman Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan.

"No individual isolated from the masses can be a best leader while the nation is in a state of war," Khan said.

He, however, did not give a categorical answer when asked if ARD constituents would at-

tend the all-party conference. The resolution also demanded the appointment of "a full time chief of army staff who can devote his whole-hearted attention to the defence of Pakistan and to meeting the threat to national security and territorial integrity".

The meeting also asked India to "desist from any aggression" and resolve all outstanding issues with Pakistan through negotiations.

The parties' demand came as federal information minister Nisar Memon appealed for national unity. "This is a national situation and everybody should come forward and support the government to respond to the situation," Memon said.

The meet was attended by, among others, the Pakistan People's Party, the Pakistan Muslim League and the Jamat-e-Islami.

Musharraf stood "discredited" after rigging the referendum, Khan said. He lacked the stature and moral authority to deal with the current threat to national security and territorial integrity, he added.

Asked if the demand for Musharraf's resignation at such a critical juncture would not endanger the country's defence, Khan said nobody was more important than the national interest.

Musharraf has been taking all important decisions on his own and inviting political leaders subsequently only to inform

them, he said.

The ARD chief also demanded revoking the ban on political activities and former Prime Ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif be allowed to return.

The situation on the country's borders called for mass mobilisation to inspire people into facing the challenge, he added.

"All leaders should be allowed to freely take part in political activities to galvanise the nation to face the Indian challenge because wars cannot be fought unless the nation backs its armed forces," he said.

Khan accused Musharraf of having "manipulated and rigged a farcical and unconstitutional referendum, which has been re-

jected by the people as well as the national and international intelligentsia".

"The fraudulent referendum has surpassed the combined turnout of any of the two general elections, with Musharraf having stolen more votes than the total votes got by both the ruling and Opposition parties and their allies in 1988, 1990 and 1997 general elections."

The resolution also demanded the removal of chief election commissioner Irshad Hasan Khan and his colleagues for being a party to the referendum and decided to set up a "truth commission" to look into "the misuse of state machinery and funds in the referendum."



Musharraf

THE TELEGRAPH

MAY 20 1999

Musharraf challenged by jihadis

The Times, London

ISLAMABAD, May 15. — Despite his unwavering support for the war on terrorism, President Musharraf finds it extremely difficult to contain Pakistani-based Islamic militant groups fighting Indian forces in the disputed Himalayan state of Kashmir.

The Army commanders who rallied around him when he turned around Pakistan's long-standing policy of supporting the Afghan Taliban and joined the US-led international coalition against terror may not be willing to support any move to withdraw Pakistan's backing for the Kashmiri struggle.

The military government's crackdown on Islamic militants in the country has not affected Pakistan's support for the mainstream Kashmiri separatists. While there has not been any change in Islamabad's policy on the Kashmir issue there is, however, a shift in approach.

Pakistani military officials

maintain the emphasis is now on political struggle rather than on guerrilla action.

They also concede, however, that the military government cannot stop the Islamic militant groups from supporting what they describe as the "Kashmiri war of liberation". Most of the Islamic militant groups which have been fighting Indian forces in Kashmir had originally been sponsored by the Inter Services Intelligence, which provided guerrilla training and weapons.

The ISI's involvement deepened in the mid-1990s when Pakistan-based groups like Harakatul Mujahideen, Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-i-Taiyaba became the dominant guerrilla forces that sidelined indigenous Kashmiri fighters. There was also an attempt by these groups to "Islamise" the Kashmiri separatist movement, with a disastrous long-term effect.

The "guest fighters" — most of them from Punjab and other parts of Pakistan — tried to impose on Kashmiris their own

Blank passport books looted in Pak

ISLAMABAD, May 15. — A gang of four unidentified armed men looted the Regional Passport Office in Sukkur in Punjab province and decamped with 1,400 blank international passport books, reports said today. The quartet forced their entry by overpowering the security staff and took away about 1400 blank books of international passports lying in a cabinet inside the strong room. Before fleeing, they cut off the telephone line of the office and bolted the staff inside. The employees were later rescued by people from the neighbourhood, official APP news agency reported.

Militants blow up bridge: Suspected militants are reported to have blown up a suspension bridge in semi-autonomous Waziristan agency bordering Pakistan, even as Army officials for the first time banned the display arms in the volatile tribal area.

A 90-metre long suspension bridge linking Ragh Kani Garam area in the Waziristan mountains was blown off with powerful time bombs yesterday, Pakistan's NNI news agency reported. — PTI

hardline interpretation of Islam.

The rise of Jihadi groups had even more serious domestic implications for Pakistan.

Under the patronage of military establishment, they openly recruited volunteers giving rise to a new militant culture. Armed Jihadi groups virtually became a state within a state. Given a free hand to flout the law, militant

groups were free to hold public rallies. To the shock of the international community, Maulana Masood Azhar, the chief of Jaish-e-Mohammed, after his release from an Indian jail in December 1999, went on a campaign in Pakistan to recruit "half a million" Muslim volunteers and called for the destruction of India.

THE STATESMAN

1 MAY 2002

Afghans held in Pak crackdown on illegal immigrants

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD, May 12. — Hundreds of Afghans were today arrested in the Pakistan government's crackdown on illegal immigrants following the suicide attack in Karachi even as President Pervez Musharraf called off his visit to Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia to deal with the prevailing security situation in the country.

The arrests of the illegal immigrants in Islamabad and Rawalpindi followed the government's decision last night to extend the ongoing crackdown on the militant groups to the immigrants. The crackdown was directed against immigrants who had not registered themselves and were staying in Pakistan illegally.

President Musharraf, meanwhile, called off his scheduled visit to Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, which was due next week, to deal with the prevailing security situation. "The government is determined to protect the life and property of every Pakistani and of every foreigner living in Pakistan," an official

announcement quoted the President as saying. "It was with this resolve that President Musharraf decided to stay at home as the federal and provincial law enforcement machinery puts up a massive and coordinated effort to track down terrorists," the announcement said.

The crackdown decision was taken at a high security meeting presided over by Gen. Musharraf to review the security situation, which also announced formation of a well manned and well-equipped anti-terrorism cell at the federal level to coordinate crackdown against the terrorist groups.

The meeting has given 30 May as the deadline for all police officers to account for the immigrants.

After the deadline, if any illegal immigrant was found in the country, the station house officers of the area concerned would face dismissal, while senior SPs would also be served with "displeasure notice", the daily *Dawn* reported.

According to estimates Pakistan has over five million immigrants, majority of them displaced Afghan nationals,



General Pervez Musharraf

settled in Pakistan following the two decade long internal conflict in their country. A majority of the three million refugees who lived in makeshift camps have already begun going back.

In Islamabad alone there were over 81,000 illegal Afghan immigrants. There were also reports of former Taliban leaders taking refuge in the North West Frontier Province bordering Afghanistan.

Foreign office spokesman Mr Aziz Ahmad Khan said police wanted to question the Afghan immigrants about the killing of two police officers and the wounding of another in a routine, pre-dawn vehicle check on Wednesday near Islamabad, adds AP. The surviving officer said the attackers were Afghans, he said.

The Afghan embassy protested against the crackdown on immigrants. "We are very much concerned over the arrest of our citizens as they were living here peacefully for the last 23 years. We don't know what caused the police to take such an extreme step," Mr Abdul Jabbar Naeemi, a diplomat at the Afghan embassy, said.

"These arrests were shocking for us," Mr Naeemi said. "We have taken up this issue with the Pakistani foreign office, and we hope and expect that Pakistan will release our nationals without any delay."

'Pak misjudged security risks': French defence minister Ms Michele Alliot-Marie today criticised Pakistani officials for miscalculating the security needs of French citizens working there, after 11

were killed in the suicide car bombing, AFP adds from Paris. Officials had determined the best way to protect the men working in Karachi was to "keep them together in a place that could be watched over and protected, and to have them travel together," she said. Though there was "clearly an error made by Pakistani officials," it was difficult to blame them for Wednesday's attack as they had underestimated the multiple security risks. "What they feared most were individual kidnappings," she explained.

Bodies arrive home: A plane carrying the bodies of 11 French naval workers killed last week in the Pakistani car bomb arrived today at Maupertus airport east of the Channel port of Cherbourg. The Hercules C130 military transport plane touched down in Maupertus after making a stop at the military airport in Villacoublay outside Paris.

Rocket fired: A rocket was fired at a building housing US agents hunting Al-Qaida and Taliban fighters in northwestern Pakistan near the Afghan border but no casualties were reported, AFP adds.

11 French nationals killed in Karachi suicide attack

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, MAY 8. In yet another act of terror, the third in the current year, terrorists struck in the heart of Karachi when a suicide bomber blew up a mini bus killing 14 persons, including 11 French citizens, and injuring at least 30, 16 of them French. Many of the injured are in a critical condition.

Today's attack took place around 7.30 a.m. IST when the French technicians working for a multinational corporation were boarding the shuttle to proceed to the Karachi Naval Yard to work on the second submarine that Pakistan has bought from France.

According to police and eyewitness accounts relayed on the State-run PTV and other television networks, an explosive-laden car pulled up beside the shuttle parked outside the Sheraton Hotel and it blew up as the engineers and technicians were boarding the bus.

Such was the impact of the explosion that nine persons died on the spot. All buildings in the vicinity, including the hotel where the visiting New Zealand cricket team is staying, were affected. The blast left a large crater on the road and destroyed many vehicles. A police no one has claimed responsibility for the act, it is believed to be the handiwork of forces opposed to the Musharraf Government's decision to join the U.S.-led coalition in its war against the Al-Qaeda.

The Pakistan President, Per-

vez Musharraf, who chaired an emergency meeting of the National Security Council and heads of Intelligence agencies today, dubbed the attack an "act of terrorism aimed at weakening the defence of the country." Though the meeting did not rule out the possibility of a "foreign hand from across the eastern borders from a country perpetually inimical to Pakistan," Gen. Musharraf was clear in his message to the international community that Islamabad was more inclined to look at the attack as a reaction to its decision of joining the U.S.-led global alliance against terror.

Speaking on PTV, Gen. Musharraf said the attack was an attempt to "destabilise Pakistan and weaken its defence capabilities... We feel this act of international terrorism has to be met with full force. My Government has the complete resolve of meeting this threat."

The likely fall-out of the Karachi incident was evident from two developments during the day; the New Zealand cricket team decided to cut short its tour and return home and the Singapore Airlines announced that it is suspending its operations to Pakistan for an indefinite period.

India dismisses charges

By Atul Aneja

NEW DELHI, MAY 8. India today dismissed as "completely baseless", the Pakistani insinuation about its involvement in the terrorist attack in Karachi this morning in which several French nationals were killed.

According to Nirupama Rao, spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs, these allegations are "totally and completely baseless and, as usual, a shining example of Pakistani fabrication." These observations should be treated with the "disdain that they deserve". India was firmly against terrorism anywhere. To a question, she said this morning's terrorist incident points to the need for retaining a "continued focus" against terrorists, which include the remnants of the Al-Qaeda as well. "We need to continue the struggle against terrorism until this scourge is completely eradicated".

Sources said the French nationals killed in the incident were involved in the construction of the second of the three Agosta 90-B class submarines for Pakistan. The first of this submarine called Khalid was constructed in France. The second submarine is scheduled for delivery later this year while the construction of a third is planned for 2003. These submarines are state-of-the-art as they are capable of firing missiles and have the ability to stay under water for long durations.

THE HINDU

Musharraf refutes rigging charges

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, MAY 4. The Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, has expressed concern over Indian military exercises near the border, but at the same time was of the view that they did not pose any serious threat.

"I do not think at the moment there is a serious threat but I would like to say that we are watching, so we are concerned because of the capabilities that they have for any kind of adventurism," he told a group of foreign journalists here today.

It was the first encounter of Gen. Musharraf with the media after the controversial referendum that triggered charges of unprecedented rigging and irregularities. Ridiculing the allegations he asserted that the people of Pakistan had voted

overwhelmingly in favour of the policies pursued by his regime. "When 45 or 46 million people vote there are incidents that take place, with pluses and minuses," he said in response to questions on eyewitness accounts of rigging and multiple voting by international and national media teams.

The Pakistan President said the Election Commission had held the referendum in a "fair, open and impartial manner. I'm proud of the fact that people had so much faith in me and voted for me."

However he would not say whether he would go before the new national and provincial assemblies for ratification of his election as the President. Under the Pakistan Constitution, members of the national and provincial assemblies constitute the Electoral College for elec-

tion of President.

He told journalists that political parties would be allowed to contest elections. However he would not say when his government intended to lift the ban on political activities.

Gen. Musharraf said while the Prime Minister in the new set-up would have all the powers, there would be effective checks and balances on his-her functioning. The Prime Minister and Parliament would have no powers to reverse the economic and political reforms initiated by his Government. To resolve any potential struggles between the President and Prime Minister, they were considering a National Security Council which would include the heads of the armed forces. He said the council would "have the power to check any misdoing of the Government".

THE HINDU

The General's Ploy

If Tuesday's stage-managed presidential referendum has allowed General Pervez Musharraf to take a small step towards christening himself Pakistan's perpetual president, then it has also propelled Pakistan into taking a giant leap, if only into the political wilderness. Given the wide gap between the government and opposition claims regarding the turnout, not to mention numerous accounts of blatant electoral malpractice, one wonders why Mr Musharraf thought it necessary to conduct the referendum in the first place. After all, the people of Pakistan were more than reconciled to a Musharraf presidency and were not, at least publicly, clamouring for his ouster. Clearly, president Musharraf was only following in the dubious footsteps of his predecessors, generals Ayub Khan and Zia-ul-Haq. But if the referendum was necessary — and this is his spin — because as a great reformer he was seeking a mandate for his evangelical mission of establishing a constitutional democracy in Pakistan, then sadly, Pakistan's CEO has dealt his credibility a mortal blow. In the event, he has left virtually everyone unconvinced, except perhaps the US government. Indeed, at a time when virtually every Pakistani and American commentator worth his salt has decried Mr Musharraf's "farcical referendum ploy" to legitimise his dictatorship, the US has, for obvious reasons, rather cynically thrown its weight behind him. When asked what she thought of Musharraf's retrogressive bid to hijack power, US national security advisor, Condoleezza Rice, is reported to have said, "Musharraf is doing useful things towards creating conditions for greater democracy and getting Pakistan back on the democratic path".

"Useful" may be, but for whom? Equally, what is stopping Mr Musharraf from fully crossing the thin line that distinguishes a benevolent dictator from an absolute one, which he has anyway threatened to do by bringing amendments to the constitution? Absolutely nothing, or rather, no one save the US. And herein lies the rub. In the absence of any real political opposition, Mr Musharraf knows that as long as he serves the interests of Big Brother America, he will be allowed to get away with anything. And this is really what is most worrying about the situation in Pakistan. History tells us that when Islamabad (during Zia's tenure, for instance) has been more obsessed with legitimising its own rule and serving the interests of foreign governments rather than those of its people, democratic, civil and economic institutions have invariably suffered damage. There is a real danger that under president Musharraf this may happen again. Unless of course he demurs from amending the constitution and introduces a "system of checks and balances" more real than the self-serving proposal of setting up a security council to monitor parliament and reinstitute the Eighth Amendment. For the latter will only ensure that the elected government that comes to power in October, will serve feudal-military class interests, rather than respond to the common man's demands. Not only will this bring instability to Pakistan but it will also harm the sub-continent as a whole. Only a politically stable Pakistan, with a greater socio-economic stake in the region, can distance itself from subversive activities such as providing refuge to terrorists and sponsoring cross-border terrorism. For New Delhi then, the best way to respond to Pakistan president's victory would be to adopt a wait-and-watch policy.

THE TELEGRAPH

Benazir, Nawaz stay in circulation with help of technology

Net keeps exiles in the loop

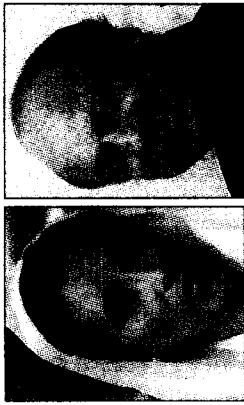
FROM BHARAT BHUSHAN

Lahore, May 3: Political exile from Pakistan no longer means banishing someone from the domestic political landscape.

When Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy chose to go into exile in the 1960s, instead of rotting in Ayub Khan's jails, he in effect wrote his political obituary. In a few years, he was all but forgotten in his own country. Suhrawardy unfortunately, did not have the advantage of living in the age of the Internet and mobile phones.

Three major political leaders of Pakistan are in exile today. Benazir Bhutto spends her time in London and Dubai. Mian Nawaz Sharif lives in a gilded cage in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. And Altaf Hussain lives in London. However, this no longer means that they are not able to direct politics in Pakistan.

For the last 10 years, Altaf Hussain of the Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM) has been addressing political rallies in Pakistan while in exile in London. Earlier, he used to send taped



Benazir, Sharif

speeches to be played before a devotional audience at the MQM rallies. Now, he addresses them live over the telephone.

Last week, he addressed an MQM rally in Sindh live over the phone from London. In fact, his voice was shown on Pakistan TV directing the crowd. "Let the women and children go first," it urged the audience at the rally. Was he keeping a watch on the crowd through a web camera? One does not know.

Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party has already earned the dubious reputation of being Pakistan's first Internet party. Bhutto keeps the world-wide web bristling with heavy political traffic. Her PPP lieutenants in Pakistan do little without seeking email instructions from her.

"The PPP has a tradition of running the politics of this country by remote control. Earlier, people had to go to all the way to London and Dubai to meet Benazir Bhutto. But the Internet and email have eased their access problem," said Prof Khalid Mahmud of the Institute of Regional Studies.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

Remote control through Net

FROM PAGE 1

When she had left the country earlier in the late 1970s, she had little or no contact with the people back home. But things are different this time around because of new technology. The exiled politicians today are making innovative use of it. Benazir has been giving a lot of email interviews to the press," remarked Aasha'ar Rehman, the editor of *The News*, on Sunday.

He thought that email interviews were quite convenient for politicians like Benazir as "they get time to think over the answers instead of providing an off-the-cuff response to queries".

Benazir Bhutto, Rehman points out, has also been sending articles on email for the *Dawn*, *The Nation* and *The News*. The transcript of her taped speeches to PPP workers is sent to journalists in no time at

all on the Net.

Benazir is not alone in doing this. The Sharif brothers have also been using the Net effectively.

A close colleague of the two in the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) said that he has been chatting on the Net with them. Shahbaz Sharif, he said, sits on the Net himself and Internet chats with him are clearer than with his elder brother.

Nawaz Sharif does not type and dictates his messages to a typist. This makes chatting with him difficult, he revealed.

However, Nawaz Sharif apparently prefers email messages being read out to him rather than discussing politics over the phone.

"He is very cautious on the phone and prefers that people write down whatever they have to say and send it to him on email," a colleague of his said.

But isn't email also monitored?

"We believe that it is monitored. But the intelligence outfits here are happier dealing with written messages than with telephone conversations, which need to be interpreted. This way they get a written statement in hand — half their work is already done for them by those sending and receiving messages," he said.

Mobile telephones are allowing the exiled Pakistani leaders to call up their colleagues even at political rallies for last minute consultations.

"Both Benazir and Nawaz Sharif called the chairman of the Alliance for the restoration of democracy Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan on his mobile phone even when the April 27 Lahore rally was in progress," said Hamid Mir, the editor of *Ausaf*.

Yet another journalist from the *Jang* group of newspapers said Nawaz Sharif called a colleague of his on his mobile

phone at the rally to get his "objective" assessment of the rally.

A major drawback of politics relying on new technology, according to Aasha'ar Rehman, is that there is a sense of resentment among those who do not have access to the technology and, therefore, their leader.

"If earlier, Benazir was surrounded by the so-called 'Pajero group' who like her drove around in Pajeros, today her coterie could be referred to as the 'Internet group'. For every little thing they flash statements from Benazir received on the Net. Who knows whether what they are ascribing to Benazir is correct or not.

"But the point is that this has created a privileged group of politicians within PPP — those who have access to Benazir on the Net as opposed to those who don't," Rehman said.

15 Pak. parties reject referendum outcome

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, MAY 4. The Alliance for Restoration of Democracy (ARD), a conglomerate of 15 Pakistani political parties, today rejected the outcome of the April 30 presidential referendum as a "complete farce" and criticised the Pakistan Chief Election Commissioner for his alleged crude attempt to give it a certificate of legitimacy.

The ARD declared that it would not recognise Pervez Musharraf as Pakistan President and no leader of any of the constituents would meet him on any issue other than for "restoration of democracy".

An extraordinary meeting of the ARD under the chairmanship of the octogenarian political leader, Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, authorised him to contact all like-minded parties, organisations and other bodies for holding of an all-party conference to discuss the future course of action.

Alleging that the referendum figures put out by the Election Commission were blatantly false, the meeting adopted a resolution expressing total "lack of confidence" in the Election Commission and demanded the constitution of a new "independent and impartial" Election Commission in consultation with major politi-

cal parties. "The present regime has wasted public funds in billions through various departments and local government on staging the farce referendum for the prolongation of unconstitutional role (of Gen. Musharraf) beyond the three-year period allowed to him by the Supreme Court of Pakistan," the resolution said.

Significantly, there was no reference in the resolutions of the meeting to the demand for the resignation of Gen. Musharraf and handing over of power to an interim government to ensure free and fair elections to the national and provincial assemblies.

The ARD demanded the immediate lifting of the ban on political activities to enable parties' approach the electorate freely. It also demanded the immediate release of all the leaders detained on the "pretext of fabricated cases" by the National Accountability Bureau and sought an immediate end to "politically motivated and selective accountability".

The Alliance said that leaders of major political parties like the Pakistan People's Party chairperson, Benazir Bhutto, and the Pakistan Muslim League President, Nawaz Sharif, should be allowed "safe passage" to Pakistan from exile and permitted to take part in elections.

THE HINDU

General failure

Dictator Musharraf was better for Pakistan

Given Pervez Musharraf's deft manoeuvres since 11 September, the referendum may seem justified in terms of realpolitik. But that assessment ignores the impact of other forces. For General Musharraf potential upsets can come from three sources. First, given that the turnout at the referendum, by all available evidence, was extremely modest and that marked by allegations of brazen multiple voting, the dictator turned president has not gained any more popular support. What he has lost is a part of the popular perception that he was different from politicians. The referendum was crassly opportunist, clumsy and dishonourable and encouraged fraud. These are precisely the traits Musharraf saw in politicians. Second, he has not — or not yet — gone back on his undertaking that general elections will be held in October, an exercise that will yield a Prime Minister, a council of ministers and a legislature, all of whom, of course, will be subordinate to the President-headed National Security Council. But politicians may not be as disciplined as corps commanders who form Musharraf's praetorian guard. The general can and probably will, sack politicians falling out of line. But each punishment will add to his and Pakistan's problems. Third, and related to the second, if the composition of the council of ministers from the October elections is such that Musharraf's declared, and worthy, aim to take on Islamic extremism strikes opposition, however muted, within the ruling structure, radicals will find an useful platform for mischief making.

A basically weak system is extremely vulnerable to the interaction of such forces. The silver lining about Musharraf's coup was that it provided some direction and clarity. Both will now get compromised in the general's vain ambition to see himself as a democrat. He would have done himself and Pakistan, better service had he simply stayed on as a dictator and quit when he thought the job of getting Pakistan back from a mix of economic ruin and Islamic extremism was done. This is, in fact, what he had promised when he deposed Nawaz Sharif and especially after 11 September, he had notched up successes. Western aid and debt rescheduling have eased Pakistan's immediate default concerns. The police and financial actions against a variety of Islamic radical groups have been akin to a farce while he releases jailed militants and ignores India's demands. The measures would have been easier for an unelected President Musharraf, because Pakistan had understood where he stood. Now, Pakistanis are not so sure. Neither is the general.

THE STATESMAN

THE STATESMAN

4 MAY 2001

Pak vote result baffles Opposition, ministers

FROM IDREES BAKHTIAR

Islamabad, May 2: The Election Commission yesterday said President Pervez Musharraf won 42.8 million votes out of a total of 43.9 million in the referendum.

However, the figure, which is much more than votes polled in general elections, has not only baffled the Opposition but exceeded the expectations of some ministers in Musharraf's Cab-

net. In Pakistan, not more than 37 per cent votes have been polled in previous elections which were held two years after elected governments were dismissed by various Presidents.

But Election Commission figures show that more than 50 per cent votes have been polled in the referendum.

The government had reduced the age limit of voters from 21 years to 18 to enable the young people to vote. According to the

census, more than 72 million people are around the age of 18.

Of these 51 million voted in favour of Musharraf.

The Opposition parties said the polling was not more than five per cent, a claim that is disputed by the government.

However, the figures certainly exceeded the expectations of some federal ministers.

Information minister Nisar Memon, in an interview with Pakistan Television, said: "We have got more votes than what was polled in the 1997 elections when the so-called heavy mandate was based on 16 per cent votes in favour out of a 35 per cent turnout."

Memon said a 50 per cent voter turnout exceeds our expectations.

"We had expected the turnout at around 40 per cent but this is beyond our expectations — and that is because the people have expressed their support for President Musharraf's policies and reforms," he added.

Foreign minister Abdul Sattar said the "the huge turnout" in the presidential referendum was "unprecedented."

He termed the referendum "as an unexpected turnout of voters ever recorded in our country's history".

THE TELEGRAPH

13 May 2002

Rigged referendum

Pakistan's domestic polarisation poses new threats

GENERAL Pervez Musharraf, as expected and programmed, has won the referendum but has lost much more which could create serious problems for Pakistan and its neighbours in the coming months. There is something in autocratic rulers that make them absolutists. Z.A. Bhutto, not content with the likely victory, rigged elections to ensure a thumping majority. General Zia-ul-Haq did the same through a referendum. And Musharraf has proved no different. That he would win the self-designed referendum was not in doubt even if the government machinery had not been mobilised. After all there was no credible alternative. But the way the referendum has been carried out has robbed him of credibility and legitimacy even as a dictator. Pakistan today is far more polarised than three days ago. The gap between estimates of 5 per cent voter participation and the government's claim of 70 per cent turnout represents the credibility gap in the effort to legitimise the army rule.

The immediate assessment emerging from knowledgeable quarters in Pakistan is that Musharraf's "election" through the referendum would deepen the polarisation in the country. His announcement that he believed in unity of command and hence would not share power with an elected prime minister had pushed political groups to come together into a 33-party Alliance for Restoration of Democracy. The major political parties have joined the Islamic fundamentalists in demanding the removal of Musharraf. The view of the civil society in Pakistan, or what little of it is allowed by the army rule, is summed up by the Human Rights Commission's verdict on the

process of referendum that irregularities "exceed our worst fears." On the other side, in spite of external aid and increased remittances, economic recovery is hobbled by low agricultural growth due to continuing drought. Inefficiency in administration has forced Pakistan's strategic ally to suspend future development aid till current projects show progress. The finance minister has admitted to the fiscal deficit being hit by continuing drought and military deployments on the border.

But there seems to be little interest among the rulers of Pakistan allied to the US in the war against terrorism in rolling back cross-border terrorism in India. Compared to the earlier winters the last three months have witnessed an increase in incidence of militancy and terrorism in J&K. During his referendum campaign Musharraf had raised the anti-India rhetoric to levels which included the threat of using nuclear weapons. With Musharraf weakened by the referendum and the country heading towards greater polarisation, the risk of religious extreme gaining ground increases. With the army's credibility experiencing a severe blow, its jihadi elements, who have been chafing at the bit since September 11, could start to assert themselves as the only alternative to corrupt politicians and bungling military moderates. US presence, both physical as well as strategic, would no doubt act as a moderator for any irrational act. But given Pakistan's long-held ideology, its propensity for risk-taking and with increasing crisis of legitimacy and discontent within, we need to closely examine the options and scenarios that could emerge to challenge our security and well-being.

A FLAWED 'MANDATE' IN PAKISTAN

THE PRESIDENTIAL REFERENDUM held in Pakistan on April 30 has certainly produced a definitive result but only a deeply flawed mandate. Of no surprise at all is the fact that Pervez Musharraf has secured an 'yes' vote for his continuance as the Head of State for another five years. The actual size of the positive vote is still a matter in political dispute. With the Pakistan Supreme Court having endorsed the legality of the latest opinion-call, ahead of the controversial exercise itself, Gen. Musharraf's unmollified critics at home may now find themselves with little or no real scope for a constitutional remedy against this new reality which negates the quintessential spirit of genuine democracy. It is no solace to the pro-democracy forces across the world, inclusive of some political sections within Pakistan itself, that the relevant ruling by the Supreme Court was specifically linked to the peculiar constitutional dilemmas of India's estranged neighbour. If, in a sense, the international community has by and large remained ambivalent, almost to the point of being unconcerned, about Gen. Musharraf's political gamesmanship at home, the reason has much to do with his present friendship with the Bush administration in Washington. However, it remains open to doubt whether Gen. Musharraf can cite the outcome of the one-point plebiscite on his rule as President of Pakistan to erase a fact that did no credit to him. He had, in the first place, sinned against democracy by ousting an elected Prime Minister in a military coup in 1999, however bloodless his surgical move might have been. Now, by winning the issue-based referendum, which did not therefore provide for the basic democratic principle of a free and fair contest of persons for a high constitutional office, Gen. Musharraf has still left himself exposed to another wave of charges of usurpation if not worse.

Two important controversies do not seem to

have died down despite the strenuous efforts of the Musharraf administration's spin doctors in regard to the issues at stake in the opinion-vote on April 30. First, the issue of the President's political legitimacy has not ceased to be a question of debate. The relevant reasoning goes beyond the fact that the present "appeal" to the people's will was not an affirmative restoration of democracy. If, therefore, the referendum were intended to demonstrate Gen. Musharraf's popularity, the result can hardly be equated with the legitimacy that accrues to any reading on a barometer of truly competitive democratic politics. More significantly, the quality of his victory is eroded not only by the dispute over the actual turnout of voters but also by the pervasive allegations from civilian politicians of Pakistan that a massive rigging in many different forms has been resorted to by the Musharraf administration. The second aspect of the new controversies pertains to the steps that Gen. Musharraf might now contemplate in regard to the parliamentary and provincial elections that he should hold under the terms of a judicial order that in fact squared up his coup with the country's constitution.

In a comment, which seems to mark a sense of resignation concerning the current developments in Pakistan, the Commonwealth is reported to have said that the entrenchment of any undemocratic form of government in that country would be unacceptable in the future. At another level of international awareness, Gen. Musharraf's decision to go in for a referendum was itself out of line with his record of courage in dealing with Islamic fundamentalism and other political issues within Pakistan since the terrorist outrage that shook America and the world last September. Nonetheless, an American school of thought has it that the size of Gen. Musharraf's pluses in this plebiscite will reflect the extent of support within Pakistan for his present pro-U.S. foreign policy.

THE HINDU

MAY 2002

'RECORD' TURNOUT RAISES EYEBROWS

POK (1) 'Yes' for Musharraf H9-1 215

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, MAY 1. Amidst charges of rigging and serious irregularities by independent observers, the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, was declared by the Pakistan Election Commission a winner in the presidential referendum.

While the victory of Gen. Musharraf, with no other contestant in the fray, was a foregone conclusion, it is the nearly 98 per cent approval in a record voter turnout of 58 per cent that has raised several eyebrows in the country.

After counting over 80 per cent votes polled (36.5 million out of an estimated electorate of 62 million) at 8 p.m. Gen. Musharraf was projected to get the approval of over 35 million voters. All mainstream political and religious parties, most of the media and independent observers had asserted on Tuesday that there was hardly any enthusiasm among the people for the referendum.

While the political parties that had given a call for boycott of the referendum estimated the voter turnout between 5 to 10 percent, others had talked about low turnout without speculating on numbers. There was consensus among all on the irregularities in the referendum without electoral lists and freedom for the voter to vote from anywhere in the country.

The controversy over the voter turnout and the size of the victory is expected to go on for some time. However, the managers of the Musharraf referendum appear to be least affected by the questions raised in several quarters on the exercise.

The Federal Information Minister, Nisar Memon, declared at a news conference



A private security officer is seen beside a billboard of the Pakistani President, Pervez Musharraf, in Islamabad on Wednesday. — AFP

here that the turnout reflected the "clear verdict" of the nation in favour of Gen. Musharraf.

"The people have given their verdict clearly, and the opposing political parties' refusal to accept the referendum turnout is a negation of democracy," he said. The Minister accused the political parties opposed to the referendum of changing their stand on the issue according to a pre-conceived strategy.

"First they said that they would vote against the President and then they said they would boycott the referendum. Similarly, it was out of political strategy and not in accordance with ground realities that initially they put the turnout at not more than 5 per cent and yesterday they conceded that it was 10 per cent — an improvement of 100 per cent. This meant that President Musharraf has got votes more than twice the figure of the 1997 elections when the

so-called heavy mandate was based on 16 per cent votes in favour, out of a total of 35 per cent turnout."

The chairman of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), Afrasaib Khattak, in a statement said the referendum was marred by blatant ballot rigging and generally low turnout. "The HRCP regrets that the irregularities witnessed during (Tuesday's) referendum exceeded its worst fears."

"It was farcical. The question of turnout is totally irrelevant because everywhere the votes were stuffed," the HRCP Director, I.A. Rahman, said.

"After the low turnout... Gen. Pervez Musharraf should immediately step down and hand over the Government to the Supreme Court of Pakistan so that a democratic Government can be installed," the PPP Acting Secretary-General, Raza Rabbani, said.

THE HINDU

REFERENDUM IN PAKISTAN

Musharraf claims large turnout

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 30. The presidential referendum in Pakistan today on whether or not the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, should continue for a further period of five years appears to have sharply polarised society.

It was not clear at the end of the eight-hour exercise, from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Pakistan Standard Time, how many of the 60 million eligible voters turned up at the polling booths to exercise their option.

The statistics on the voter turnout and the result would be known only tomorrow afternoon. The Pakistan Election Commission began the counting process minutes after the voting. Trends would be known later tonight.

There were over 87,000 polling booths all over the country. Since the peculiar method of treating the whole country as "one constituency" was adopted, the eligible voters had the option of voting from anywhere. For the first time 18-year olds and non-resident Pakistanis were allowed to vote.

The expected "clear victory with an overwhelming majority" in favour of Gen. Musharraf is not likely to end the controversy on the referendum. The result could just be the beginning of a new battle between the mainstream political and religious parties opposed to the referendum and his regime.

This was evident from the diametrically opposite views expressed by the two sides on the turnout. Gen. Musharraf claimed that the "large turnout" of people was a rejection of the leadership of the mainstream and religious parties. The political parties, however, asserted that the turnout was the lowest ever in any democratic exercise witnessed in the country.

Most mainstream and religious political parties described the turnout as worse than in 1984 when the then military dictator, Zia-ul-Haq, held a referendum on the issue of Islamisation. The turnout in that referendum was estimated at 10 per cent, though a much higher percentage was claimed by the then regime. If the parties succeed in selling the line on the turnout in the current referendum, the credibility of the whole exercise would be jeopardised.

The Press Secretary to the Pakistan President and Director-General of the Inter-Services



The Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, casting his vote in the presidential referendum along with his wife, Sehba Pervez, in Rawalpindi on Tuesday. — AFP

Public Relations (ISPR), Rashid Qureshi, claimed that the overall turnout was between 40 to 45 per cent.

Gen. Musharraf, who went round the polling stations here, told presspersons that the people's enthusiasm had showed that they had rejected the boycott call given by the parties. "The people have divorced the leaders of political parties. The referendum has proved that they have no following among the masses."

He said the people were "fed up" with the so-called political parties that functioned as "drawing room" parties. Gen. Musharraf said he was happy about the response. The Opposition parties had failed to muster even a few thousand people for their anti-referendum rally at Lahore in contrast to the large attendance at his rallies. In the course of his 20-day tour, he addressed 23 major and medium rallies in different parts of the country.

Voting was moderate till afternoon but the State-controlled media maintained that it picked in the last few hours.

The mood among the parties was reflected in the statement issued by the Pakistan People's Party, led by the former Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto. "The PPP salutes the valiant and democracy-loving people of Pakistan for their enthusiastic response to the boycott call by the Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy and the PPP and abstaining from the comical referendum today. According to credible estimates, the turnout throughout the country has been less than five per cent. In Sindh, it has been far less, a hopeless two per cent."

THE HINDU

Rigging shadow over Pak vote

Mubashir Zaidi & Reuters
Islamabad, April 30

LOW TURNOUT and allegations of rigging marred the referendum held in Pakistan today on whether to extend President Pervez Musharraf's rule for five more years.

According to the Government the expected turnout was around 30 per cent though the Opposition said it was as low as 5 per cent. The result of the referendum would be announced by Wednesday noon.

Voter turnout was low across the country but was mostly visible in polling booths set up in Government offices where it was alleged that the employees were forced by the seniors to cast vote.

Most polling stations in Islamabad and Rawalpindi remained deserted.

Information Minister Nisar Memon told a late night Press conference that the turnout was more than expected and was unprecedented.

The Opposition, Alliance for Restoration of Democracy, (ARD) comprising major political and religious parties, termed the turnout lowest in the country's electoral history claiming it was not more than 5 per cent. ARD spokesman Zafar Ali Shah, at a Press conference, President General Pervez Musharraf to resign as he did no more enjoyed the people's trust.

Most Government officials said they were forced to cast vote. They were asked to put down their names and identification details on the ballot paper so that action could be taken



AP PHOTO

Pervez Musharraf, along with wife Sehba, casts his vote on Tuesday in Rawalpindi in the referendum.

against those who abstained from voting.

In Rawalpindi, around 100 employees of the state's Water and Sanitation Authority arrived at the Islamia High School polling station with their superiors. "We are being dragged to vote," said one employee, who declined to give his name.

Journalists saw an inspector open several ballot papers at the polling station to see which way people had voted. He also brushed aside polling agents'

objections when a man turned up to vote without an identity card.

Throughout Rawalpindi, food was being cooked for voters to encourage them to attend — on the orders of local councillors — while a private band in green and red uniforms played folk songs on bagpipes and drums outside the Islamia High School.

Meanwhile, President Pervez Musharraf today said he was confident of victory in the ref-

erendum. But warnings by his opponents that he might use the machinery of state to influence the result gained some credence as evidence emerged that employees of Pakistan's vast civil service were being pressured into casting their ballot.

"I am very confident," Musharraf said as he voted at the Fatima Jinnah Women's University in Rawalpindi.

"The information I have got is that the turnout is very good," the President said.

Benazir calls for boycott

Mubashir Zaidi & PTI
Islamabad, April 29

FORMER PRIME Minister and Pakistan People's Party leader Benazir Bhutto has called for boycott of the referendum tomorrow to extend President Pervez Musharraf's term for five-years saying it was the last chance to save the country from dictatorship.

"Power hungry generals have destroyed democracy, democratic institutions, aspirations of the people and endangered the security and stability of the country," she said.

Benazir categorically denied having worked out a backroom deal with Musharraf and said that although her party had talks with him, the focus was restoration of democracy. "Gen Musharraf is allergic to me. I was the one who refused to give the green signal for the Kargil operation. He does not want me to go back and contest elections. But I have to contest the elections. I am not afraid of the army," Bhutto said.

Musharraf, meanwhile, made a last-ditch attempt to woo voters to turn up in high numbers tomorrow to elect him for the next five years. In a televised address, he said, "The referendum is not being held for me. It is for the continuity of reforms and sustainability of the democratic process in the country."

EC relaxes rule

JUST A day before the referendum on extending Pakistan's military ruler's term as President, the Election Commission on Monday relaxed voting rules again to ensure maximum turnout, adding driving licenses and employment cards to the documents accepted as proof of identity.

AP, Islamabad

The address, apparently, was aimed at attracting a high turnout, which is otherwise not expected. The General himself said he would be satisfied if he gets 30 per cent votes. Analysts fear the turnout may be the lowest in the history of the country.

Though Musharraf is expecting to get additional votes by reducing the age limit of the voters from 21 to 18, there are remote chances of a good turnout.

Musharraf played the Islamic card to woo the religious community by saying he would not touch the Islamic provisions of the Constitution. He said foreign observers had been invited to monitor the referendum, which would be fair and transparent.

The President assured the nation that elections to the National and Provincial Assemblies and Senate will be held in October.

Court decision historic, says Musharraf

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 28. The Pakistani President, Pervez Musharraf, today rounded-off his Presidential referendum campaign with a mammoth meeting at the Jinnah Memorial grounds in Karachi.

Speaking on the unanimous verdict of the Supreme Court authorising the April 30 referendum, Gen. Musharraf hailed it as historic and said that he saluted the judges for their decision. "This order has confirmed my belief that referendum was according to law and the Constitution."

Thanks to the decision of the Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM) to stay neutral on the referendum and give permission to its cadres to participate in the rally, the crowd was sizable. For most of Gen. Musharraf's 30-minute speech, broadcast live on Pakistan Television, there was little response from the audience.

Voting on the referendum is scheduled to take place on April 30. Voters are expected to answer "yes or no" to whether they support the reforms of Gen. Musharraf's Government. If a majority answers in the affirmative, Gen. Musharraf will be consid-

ered elected President for another five years, from the date of the first meeting of the National Assembly. Such a meeting is expected in November, as general elections for the national and provincial assemblies are promised for October.

For the referendum, the whole of Pakistan will be treated as a "single constituency". This will mean that any Pakistani citizen above the age of 18 can vote from anywhere in the country. Through an ordinance last week, the Government did away with the requirement of production of a National Identity Card (NIC) and made the system of identification more flexible.

The symbolic significance of the Karachi rally can be gauged by the fact that the city accounts for ten per cent of the total population of Pakistan. Karachi is tricky for Gen. Musharraf and his referendum managers in more than one way.

Managers of Gen. Musharraf's campaign also wanted to demonstrate their abilities to gather crowds in the capital of Sindh — considered to be the stronghold of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP). It was against this backdrop that the pact with the MQM is seen as a political victory.

Unlike his speech in Lahore on April 9, when Gen. Musharraf kicked off his campaign, this time he chose to confine his speech to the achievements of his Government and promised to restore the lost glory of Karachi. He avoided attacking the two former Prime Ministers, Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, and religious parties.

He sought to identify himself with the people of the Mega City when he repeatedly reminded them that he had spent most of his childhood in the city and understood their expectations and aspirations.

He also conceded that Karachi has lost some of its old charm due to the poor civil order situation and vowed to deal with the sectarian violence that has become a regular feature of the city. Earlier addressing the media, Gen. Musharraf said that the proposed National Security Council (NSC) would act as a mechanism of checks and balances and would ensure the preservation of national interests. He once again asserted that the reforms introduced by his regime were "irreversible", and that the Security Council would deal with any future Government that attempted to reverse the reforms.

I was sacked by Musharraf: Tarar

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 25. In a revelation that could prove to be embarrassing to the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, particularly when the Supreme Court is hearing a number of petitions challenging his assumption of office of President and before the April 30 referendum, the former President, Rafiq Tarar, has asserted that he was sacked by Gen. Musharraf when he refused to resign.

In an interview to *The Nation*, Mr. Tarar claimed that he was forced to break his silence about the circumstances under which he had to vacate the Aiwan-e-Sadar (Presidential palace) in view of some of the observations attributed to the nine-member bench of the Supreme Court during the hearings in the referendum case.

The local media has quoted some of the judges as telling the lawyers that they were not sure if Mr. Tarar wanted to continue as President after the October 1999 coup and whether he had been unwilling to leave office when Gen. Musharraf took over as President on June 20, 1999.

Mr. Tarar said that it was wrong to say he had never recorded his protest after his removal. "I spoke it in very clear words and recorded my resentment to Gen. Musharraf and his generals when they had a meeting with me and demanded my resignation. In that meeting I refused to resign."

He said "under Article 243-1A of the Constitution, I was the Supreme Commander of the armed forces but the CE/COAS (Chief Executive/Chief of Armed Services) removed me through a PCO (Provisional Constitutional Order) on June

20, 2001. And on the same evening the then Chief Justice of Pakistan administered oath to General Pervez Musharraf as President of Pakistan".

Mr. Tarar said all the judges of the Supreme Court available in Islamabad on that day not only participated in the oath-taking ceremony but also congratulated Gen. Musharraf on assuming office. He claimed that after the coup he chose to remain in office when Gen. Musharraf requested him to do so for the sake of the solidarity of the federation.

He quoted an observation of the apex court, published in an Urdu daily, that said, "Rafiq Tarar had become part of the new system on the very first day and that he did not show any resentment over his removal from the office of President".

Mr. Tarar described the observations as 'totally false and incorrect'.

50 injured in boiler blast

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, APRIL 25. At least 50 persons were injured, three of them critically, in a powerful explosion in a 10-storey commercial complex in Manhattan, New York today. It is said plumbers were working on a boiler in the building when the blast took place. Several of the injured were hit by flying glass. A spokesman for the Office of Emergency Management said the building houses commercial tenants. Students at a nearby technical school said they heard a loud explosion.

Battle lines drawn on referendum

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 25. The battle lines between the Musharraf regime and those opposed to the April 30 referendum are drawn and both sides are engaged in hectic canvassing for and against the Presidential referendum.

As the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, travels impressing people to move out and cast their 'yes' vote, the mainstream political and religious parties are gearing up for a show of strength in Lahore on April 27.

The convenor of the ARD and veteran politician, Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, has called for an all-party meeting (APC) tomorrow in Lahore to chalk out a strategy to take on Gen. Musharraf and make the referendum a 'flop show'. Indications are that all political and religious parties would take part in the APC. Political observers believe that the meeting could as well become the largest gathering of representatives of parties since the October 1999 military coup.

General's far away from the cheering crowds

SPECIAL TO THE EXPRESS



BENAZIR BHUTTO

PAKISTAN'S military dictator decided this month to seek the country's presidency through a referendum. An Election Commission judge resigned protesting that the referendum on April 30 was unconstitutional. The Pakistan Bar Association, the Pakistani press and political parties called it unconstitutional too. And despite using public funds to benefit his campaign, the General found the rent a crowd chillingly indifferent to him.

When he seized power in October 1999, General Musharraf made many promises. He promised to end the victimisation of political opponents, crack down on militancy, end corruption, revive the economy and transfer power to the people through a road map to

codding of the Taliban, who harboured the al Qaeda, led to the killing of innocents in America and the resultant bombing of Afghanistan.

Despite international financial largesse, national revenues remained low. Embarrassingly, revenues were 14% of GDP as opposed to 18% in 1996, under his political rival. Growth was lower too, half of the six% in 1996. Investment was pitiable. The corruption drive foundered on the rock of political necessity. Those convicted by courts were freed on "humanitarian grounds". Those without convictions continue facing the politically motivated iron fist of the regime. Corruption cases filed by the Opposition against Musharraf's ministers remain unattended. The democratic leaders' practice of inviting tenders for contracts was done away with in selected cases.

The General then decided to pass a law to benefit himself. Not satisfied with the expensive house at public expense he took as army chief, he declared he

referendum because he did not believe in "sharing power". He campaigned in army fatigues with army generals sitting on the stage. His speeches spared the religious parties that supported militancy. His goal was discrediting democratic leaders to the benefit of the military he swore to control. It seemed he was contesting against the leader of the Pakistan Peoples Party although she has little interest in the Pakistani presidency having declared her candidature for the premiership.

The General's personality driven politics found him drawing lines in the sand between those that supported him and those that refused. Had he taken off the army uniform, his could be the only vote in his corner. Far wiser was it to draw lines on Pakistan's future direction as a state dedicated to building peace in the neighbourhood and prosperity for its impoverished people. The Opposition, sensing blood, called for a boycott of the referendum. It asked Musharraf to hand power to the Supreme Court's

Democracies don't start wars or protect militancy. Operating under constraints, they consider the country more than an army battalion and the people more than subordinates. If Musharraf retreated from Kargil, it's time for him to retreat again in the face of public criticism

democracy. He was unable to deliver on those promises despite a tenure as long as the political leaders he is fond of criticising.

Under Musharraf's watch as army chief and chief executive, Islamabad twice found itself at the brink of a potential nuclear war with India. Domestically militants grew in strength, killing doctors, gunning down worshippers in a Protestant Church and a Rawalpindi mosque, tossing grenades in Lahore and brutally murdering *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl. The General's

deserved an additional state funded expensive house as president. He twice doubled his salary in three years whilst poverty rates in the country increased. Little wonder that the General was unable to excite the crowds.

To ensure that the General won the referendum, it was decided to do away with electoral lists, independent observers and polling agents to watch the cast of votes. It was also decided to have mobile polling stations in place of regular polling stations.

The General said he was having the

Chief Justice if less than 50% of the people turned out to vote. This the General declined to do, confirming suspicions that he was less confident of truly winning than he publicly declared.

The referendum mess polarises Pakistani society at a time when the international campaign against terrorism enters a dangerous new phase. The arrest of al Qaeda militant Abu Zubayda in the Pakistani heartland of Punjab shows that al Qaeda members could either be hiding in Pakistan or have passed through it. Simultaneously, the Middle



East is on fire, fuelling Muslim anger.

Indian and Pakistani troops continue pointing guns and missiles at each other across their borders. Were the Indo-Pak border to flare up at this time, the world could face a big mess. General Musharraf may gamble that the international support he currently enjoys makes him the West's best bet. But if he ends up polarising Pakistani society at this critical juncture, he could turn out to be its worst nightmare.

Presently Pakistan's national and provincial assemblies are abolished. The elected President has been sacked, the Constitution suspended. Political parties are persecuted and leaders face state sponsored perversion of justice. Political activities are banned — except for those who support the dictatorship.

The state of democracy and human rights in Pakistan is similar today to what it was 20 years ago under General Zia ul Haq. He used Pakistan's critical importance to the United States in Afghanistan as a smokescreen for his own dictatorship. Now General

Musharraf, contradicting Pakistan's written constitution, has announced a referendum to extend his military dictatorship by five years, irrespective of subsequent election results.

Unless the people of Pakistan are empowered, a blowback in Afghanistan could become the prelude to a more horrific blowback in neighbouring, nuclear Pakistan. The stakes are high, the implications great. Democracies don't start wars, just as they don't protect militancy. Democracies, operating under public constraints, consider the country more than an army battalion and the people more than subordinates to command. If General Musharraf wishes to be part of the country's democratic future, he should seek election in accordance with the constitution.

A wise general knows when to retreat. And this General already retreated unilaterally from Kargil's difficult peaks in spring 1999 when India and Pakistan nearly went to war. It's time for him to retreat again in the face of Pakistani public opinion.

Pervez Musharraf presidency illegal, says Opp

Islamabad, April 23

GENERAL PERVEZ MUSHARRAF assumed the presidency illegally and was trying to turn democracy on its head, Pakistani Supreme Court was told today.

The court is hearing three petitions from Opposition parties and the Supreme Court bar association challenging the constitutionality of a referendum due on April 30 to extend Musharraf's term as President.

Farooq Hassan, a lawyer for fundamentalist Jamaat-i-Islami party, told the court on the second day of the hearing that Musharraf assumed the presidency unlawfully after he removed elected President Mohammed Rafiq Tarar in June

last year.

"It is a negation of the whole parliamentary democracy when the chief executive comes and assumes the power of the President. He has destroyed the system and buried parliamentary democracy," Hassan said.

Citing an earlier court ruling, he said, "any attempt to dilute a constitutional functionary under the garb, pretext, device or strategy of law would be guilty of treason."

"So far the culprits have escaped punishment. There must be an end to this," he said, referring to repeated military intervention in Pakistani democracy.

In a televised press conference last week, Musharraf quoted article 48 of Constitu-



PERVEZ MUSHARRAF

tion stating the President can call a referendum to decide any matter of national importance.

But Hassan said the article "deals with the power of the President, not the election of the President" which is covered by other articles of the 1973 Constitution. He said the Constitution was also clear that the President could not also hold the title of armed forces chief.

The hearing will continue tomorrow. **AFP**

'Omar e-mailed Pearl a day before he disappeared'

Karachi, April 23

THE SLAIN US JOURNALIST, Daniel Pearl, was in e-mail contact with Islamic extremist Sheikh Omar on trial for the killing, the day before his disappearance, a witness told a court here today.

Citizen-police liaison committee chief Jamil Yusuf also said the *Wall Street Journal* reporter had received phone calls from another of the accused while he was in Yusuf's office on the day of his abduction in January.

Omar allegedly masterminded Pearl's kidnapping and murder in a bid to secure the release of Pakistanis captured during the US-led war against the Taliban and al-Qaida in neighbouring Afghanistan.

He is standing trial for murder.

Osama in Peshawar?

THE LATEST bit on Osama bin Laden is that his sympathisers have hidden him in Peshawar, Pakistan, since early December.

Quoting a tribal chieftain, *The Washington Times* has reported that bin Laden crossed over to Pakistan on December 9 when the Pakistani army began deploying its troops along a 30-mile stretch of the mountainous border. The paper wondered if bin Laden had plastic surgery to alter his appearance, as indicated by some reports. It quotes the unnamed tribal leader as saying that bin Laden was thought to be safe in Peshawar. The al-Qaida chief is said to have escaped from Afghanistan's Tora Bora with about 50 of his fighters through the Tirah Valley, inhabited by fiercely independent tribesmen hostile to the Pakistani Government.

HTC, Washington

kidnapping and terrorist activities along with three other men who allegedly sent e-mails to the journal showing pictures of Pearl in captivity with a gun to his head. Seven other men are facing the same charges but haven't been captured by police. Pearl's body also has not been found. **AFP**

Jamaat chief arrested H9-12

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 21. Amidst signs of growing resistance to the April 30 presidential referendum, the Pakistan Government today detained the Jamaat-e-Islami chief, Quazi Hussain Ahmed, in Lahore even as his organisation was getting ready to launch an agitation against the referendum.

Though the political forces in the country are in no position to mount a serious challenge to the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, Gen. Musharraf had not expected such a resistance to the referendum move from such a wide spectrum of the society.

The Alliance for Restoration of Democracy (ARD), a conglomerate of 15 parties, including the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League, has announced a plan for a public rally on April 27 in Lahore.

The alliance of religious parties led by the Jamaat is

likely to participate in the rally organised by the ARD.

Besides the strong anti-referendum statements by the mainstream and religious parties, the lawyers' community has also taken a strong view against referendum. Representatives of the Bar Associations from across the country held a rally in Lahore on Saturday to register their protest.

The rally was held despite warning from the police, who erected heavy barricades to prevent it from taking place. This was the first major protest after Gen. Musharraf took over power in October 1999.

The demonstration held near the Lahore High Court raised slogans against Gen. Musharraf, the military rule as well as the federal and provincial Law Ministers.

The lawyers raised slogans praising Justice Tariq Mahmood, who resigned from the Election Commission and the judge of the Baluchistan High Court, who protested

against the proposed referendum. Earlier, a conference of Bar leaders urged the people to boycott the referendum and decided to hold rallies in different cities on April 25.

All eyes would be on the Supreme Court as the nine-member bench of the apex court begins hearing a spate of petitions on Monday questioning the legality of the referendum. Mr. Ahmed, who was the first to file petition in the Supreme Court, said in an interview to a local daily that the judiciary itself was on trial and the Supreme Court should gather courage to decide the constitutionality of the referendum. "If it picks up courage and decide the matter in accordance with the Constitution, it will find the entire nation standing behind it," he was quoted as saying today by the local daily *The Nation*.

Besides questioning the legality of the referendum Mr. Ahmed's petition also challenged the legality of Gen. Musharraf holding office.

Musharraf muzzles protest

FROM AURANGZEB

Lahore, April 21 (Reuters): Pakistani authorities stifled today the first major protest against a bid by military President Pervez Musharraf to stay in power for five more years through a controversial referendum.

Police surrounded the compound of the Islamic Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) party in Lahore, the capital of Punjab province, to prevent a protest "caravan" departing for Rawalpindi near Islamabad.

When Jamaat chief Qazi Hussain Ahmed drove out of the compound with a few supporters, riot police waited behind their barricades while he made a

speech denouncing Musharraf and the referendum. He was then detained peacefully.

Officials said the Punjab government issued an order late last night barring the protest because of possible traffic problems.

Jamaat officials said they met Punjab officials yesterday to negotiate details for the caravan and were baffled by the sudden change of heart and arrest of several party leaders at their homes early this morning.

A Jamaat case against the referendum is due to go before



Ahmed

Pakistan's Supreme Court on Monday. Musharraf has been holding campaign rallies for the April 30 referendum, saying he needs to stay in power to ensure there is no reversal of political, social and economic reforms by politicians he denounced as corrupt when he seized power in

1999.

Most major parties oppose the referendum as unconstitutional, arguing the constitution stipulates that the president is elected by the bicameral parliament and the four provincial assemblies.

Musharraf says he took advice from constitutional experts who assured him the vote was legal because the president is allowed to call referendums on "issues of national importance". Today's caravan was to be the first major public protest following Musharraf's challenge to opponents at a news conference last week to match the crowd at his first referendum campaign in Lahore, where he said 250,000 people turned out.

Local reporters put the crowd at about 50,000 and there have been widespread accusations that Musharraf's speeches have been delivered to government workers and teachers obliged to attend by their bosses.

Experts divided over referendum

By MUHAMMAD NAJEEB

ISLAMABAD: Experts are divided on the implications of a yes vote for President Pervez Musharraf in Tuesday's referendum, with some saying it would consolidate his position and others saying it would backfire. Some political experts say Pakistan's military regime would gain confidence to carry out reforms if Musharraf wins the referendum that would extend his term as president by five years.

"A win in the referendum would give confidence to Pervez Musharraf to introduce constitutional and political reforms," says a professor at the Quaid-e-Azam University's Pakistan Studies department.

Gen Musharraf, who came to power in a coup in 1999 and declared himself president last year, is certain of winning the referendum.

But some analysts say Musharraf's controversial mandate could cost him dearly, helping galvanise and consolidate a fragmented political opposition into forming a hostile Parliament after the October elections.

Gen Musharraf has refused to say whether he will step down if he loses, but many believe their votes will have little influence on the outcome.

"There is no question of Musharraf losing the referendum. Even if he is not winning, the establishment will make sure he wins," says Khalid Mahmood, a researcher at Islamabad's Institute of Regional Studies.

He is of the view that it would give a chance to Musharraf to introduce "reforms of his choice."

All the major political and religious parties have condemned the referendum as unconstitutional and

have asked the masses to boycott it.

But political commentator and columnist Ataul Haq Qasmi says, "The referendum scheme has been designed in such a way that it is impossible for him to lose. Surely he will win. No matter if all the people of Pakistan boycott it."

Analysts say Gen Musharraf is in a hurry to cash in on the public goodwill earned by stabilising the economy, curbing corruption and cracking down on internal terrorism in the past two-and-a-half years



About half of Pakistan's 140-million population will be entitled to stamp their mark on referendum ballot papers, which link the vote to a continuation of reforms, the restoration of democracy and a clamp-down on religious extremism and sectarianism. The referendum order provides that any citizen

who has attained the age of 18 on or before April 30, and has valid proof of age, will be free to cast his vote at any polling station of his choice, indicating that no voters' list would be used in the referendum.

"The whole of Pakistan should be a single constituency and every voter be entitled to cast his vote at a polling station of his choice, regardless of his residence," says the order.

There would be more than 80,000 polling stations where voters would be able to cast their votes from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.

The question in the referendum asks the voters, "For consolidating the local government system; establishment of democracy; continuation of reforms; end to sectarianism and fundamentalism; and fulfilment of Quaid-i-Azam's concept of Pakistan, would you like to elect President General Pervez Musharraf as president of Pakistan for five years?"

Analysts say Gen Musharraf is in a hurry to cash in on the public goodwill earned by stabilising the economy, curbing corruption, and cracking down on internal terrorism in the past two-and-a-half years.

"Buoyed by international support for his key role in the U.S.-led war on terrorism in Afghanistan, he appears confident not only of winning but also controlling opposition through constitutional changes to keep Parliament in check," says political analyst Mohsin Raza. But Mr Raza says in launching a political career, Musharraf may have ignited a fuse.

"It will not cause him problems in the immediate future, but he may face long term problems when he is dealing with Parliament and opposition under the constitution," says Raza. (IANS)

Musharraf's agenda: Me, myself and I reign

ON PAKISTAN'S western border, the US-led coalition is still engaged in its war against terrorism. US Special Forces, intelligence operatives and FBI agents are scouring the caves and mountains of Afghanistan for members of Al-Qaeda. They have been promised, and are dependent upon, Pakistani support in their effort.

Along the country's 2,912-km (1,800-mile) eastern frontier, one million Indian and Pakistani soldiers have been facing each other since last December. The two South Asian rivals have fought three wars since their independence in 1947. Both possess nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles, sophisticated air force jets and other lethal weaponry.

But instead of staying focused on Pakistan's security interests in Afghanistan and on managing tensions with India, Pakistan's ruler, General Pervez Musharraf, has decided to ridicule the country's politicians and confront the nation's media. General Musharraf appears to believe that legitimising and strengthening his position is more important than unifying the nation and healing its past divisions.

The constitutionality of the referendum scheduled for April 30 is doubtful and General Musharraf's campaign so far has failed to ignite much enthusiasm around the country. He would have lost less ground if he had maintained some sense of proportion while embarking on his uncontested campaign trail. But his appearance at his first rally in military uniform, his decision to address orchestrated rallies with military officers on stage, and his recent insistence on the media reporting things the way he sees them has cost him the high moral ground.

General Musharraf is increasingly polarising Pakistani society. Addressing newspaper editors and columnists at the start of his campaign, he reportedly said that he saw this as a moment for Pakistanis to choose between supporting and opposing him. He cited President George Bush's remark, "You are either with us or against us", uttered in the context of the war against terrorism and aimed at other nations. But even President Bush was criticised for creating a "them and us" paradigm. In any case, a formula for relations among nations devised by the world's sole superpower can hardly be applied to relations between the ruler and the ruled of an impoverished nation.

Not every one criticising General Musharraf is necessarily his adversary or enemy. There are many who think that he needs to change course and then, if elected in an open contest, he can continue to lead the country. Some are convinced that politics, by definition, creates disagreements and rivalries that must be handled with tolerance and mutual respect.

The army is a national institution and deserves the support of every Pakistani in defending the country's frontiers. But politicising this national institution, by trying to influence the outcome of a political exercise through the involvement of what should be a politically neutral institution, can only undermine Pakistan's capability to defend itself and root out terrorism in the region.

The anger currently being voiced against the media for misreporting on the General's referendum campaign is also a sign that the Musharraf government is moving in the wrong direction. If the press was right and responsible when it supported General Musharraf in his commitments against terrorism last September, its intentions should not be doubted now merely because it disagrees with the official version. Pakistan would be

better off if, instead of blaming the media, General Musharraf tries to rectify the mistakes he accuses the media of wrongly attributing to his regime.

General Musharraf is frustrated by anyone who questions his effort to "change the system". But the nation has attempted complete overhauls several times since 1958, to no avail. After each "change", things have remained more or less the same. Corruption, inefficiency and disregard for law have varied in degrees but have never disappeared. Perhaps it is time for us to take stock of why, despite the yearning for revolution, Pakistanis cannot change their lives.

If the experience of other nations is any guide, changes in society and forms of government result from an evolutionary process. Evolution requires patience. It also demands acceptance of the past as an integral part of the present. Thus, every western country has built its political system in stages. At every stage, the gains of the past were carried forward to the future and the mistakes were treated as lessons. Even sordid chapters and unhappy events were duly acknowledged.

In Pakistan, however, there is a tendency to deny the past. Every change of government is described as a revolution and every ruler spends a great deal of time and energy denying that anything good ever happened before him. In the United States every President, whatever his faults or accomplishments, is remembered officially. India builds a memorial to every dead Prime Minister. Indira Gandhi's mistakes during the Emergency did not lead to her being written out of history. Rajiv Gandhi received full honours upon death even though the investigation relating to Bofors continued. Egypt gives due respect to Jamal Abdel Nasser and Anwar Sadat despite abandoning the political legacy of one and the economic policies of the other.

For Pakistan's rulers, the past is just a dirty secret that should be confined to a closet. We do not like talking about Ghulam Muhammad, Iskander Mirza and Yahya Khan. Ayub Khan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Ziaul Haq receive no official acknowledgement. Both our recent elected leaders have been forced into exile and are being castigated by General Musharraf without

even an opportunity to defend their conduct. The present government would have been able to improve things a lot more if it had avoided the pitfall of creating a black and white paradigm, considering itself and its dreams as white and the rest as black. It could have restored constitutional checks and balances so ruthlessly destroyed by Nawaz Sharif. It could have ruled that political parties must elect their officials, thereby laying the foundations of intra-party democracy. It could have re-established the writ of law, by rebuilding our shattered judiciary. It could have restored the independence of the civil services.

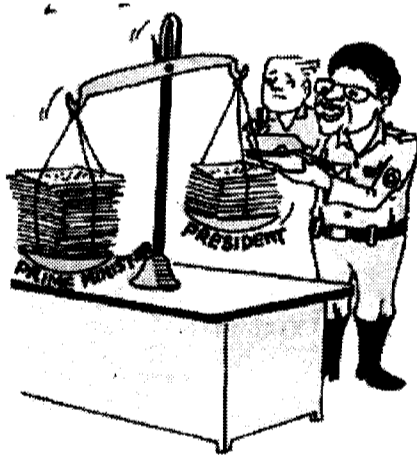
Instead, it has embarked on the course of trying to re-invent military rule as "real democracy". As a result, everything seems to have been put on hold while nominal gains are being trumpeted as major advances. Instead of denying and erasing the past, Pakistan would be better served if we accept the past and build our future in light of lessons learnt from it. One of the most significant lessons of Pakistani history is that polarisation only breeds violence and insecurity.

(Husain Haqqani is currently a visiting scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington, DC. He served as adviser to prime ministers Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto and as Pakistan's ambassador to Sri Lanka)



SPECIAL TO THE EXPRESS
HUSAIN HAQQANI

Trying to influence a political exercise by involving what should be a politically neutral institution, the Army, can only undermine Pakistan's capability to defend itself



'All I want is to remove this imbalance. That's all'

Show up or lose pay: Gen pulls govt staff to his rally

REUTERS

ABBOTTABAD, APRIL 17

IT WAS not a public holiday, but government offices were almost deserted in this small Pakistan hill town. Government schools and colleges were closed.

Officials, pupils and teachers were all at the grounds of the Army's golf course to attend military President Pervez Musharraf's rally to whip up support for an April 30 referendum in which he is seeking five more years in office.

The crowd was large and colourful. But not everyone was there because they wanted to be.

Teachers and government officials said they were told to show up at Monday's rally or risk being marked absent — which could mean losing a day's pay — in a country where attendance registers are still kept.

"Government employees in the entire division were ordered to attend the meeting," said one official, who asked not to be named. "They were told that their attendance would be marked at the golf course."

Heads of the government departments were seen holding registers. Such use of the government machinery, including obliging bus and truck drivers to ferry people to rallies, has been the focus of much criticism since Musharraf launched his blitzkrieg referendum campaign with a planned 19 rallies in 20 days.

That's just what elected governments used to do to stay in power, newspaper editorials fumed. They said such actions fit badly with a general who, projecting an image of an upright man who lost patience with corrupt and vengeful party politics, took power in a bloodless October 1999 coup promising to clean up the system.

At a news conference on Tuesday night, Musharraf dismissed criticism, accusing newspapers who say the referendum is unconstitutional of minimising the numbers of people at his rallies and denying anyone was forced to attend. Musharraf said 250,000 people attended his opening rally in Lahore. Local newspapers put the number at 50,000. "I am not that naive not to understand whether people are coming on their own volition or they are being forced to come. And if at all somebody is arranging transport for them or facilitating their coming, he is not forcing them to come. You can force hundreds or a thousand people, but you can't force 250,000 people to come," Musharraf said.



'General stands to lose respect on referendum'

■ NEW YORK: The proposed referendum ordered by Musharraf would be an undemocratic exercise and carries the risk of the President losing the respect he has earned around the globe since September 11, according to the New York Times.

"General Musharraf deludes himself if he thinks the presidential referendum he has scheduled at the end of the month is an affirmation of democracy...He is wrong, in principle and in practice" the daily said in an editorial today.

The report called on the Bush administration to more forcefully tell Musharraf that his plans would only undermine the respect he has earned throughout the world since Sept 11 with his support to the fight against terrorism.

Opp trying to destabilise Pakistan: Musharraf

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Agence France-Press

ISLAMABAD, April 16. — Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf today claimed his political Opposition was trying to destabilise the country ahead of elections in October.

The General, who seized power in a military coup in October 1999, warned of an "environment of uncertainty pervading in the country ... to an extent causing destabilisation in the environment".

Speaking during a nationally televised press conference, Musharraf accused exiled former Prime Ministers Mr Nawaz Sharif, who was ousted in the coup, and Mrs Benazir Bhutto of plotting to destabilise the country.

"I know exactly what is going on abroad. I know what all the people sitting abroad are doing, and I know with whom they are doing it," he said.

'Musharraf power base in US Administration': Former Pakistani Prime Minister Mrs Benazir Bhutto, who has planned to end her self-exile by returning home with a large team of international media, has accused President Pervez Musharraf of exploiting the army for his personal gains and that his power base lies in the US Administration.

"General Musharraf presumably hopes to exploit the army for personal gain and get it to rig the referendum and declare himself as President. We hope the army will not allow itself to be exploited by any individual," Mrs Bhutto, who is in self-exile and faces prosecution on corruption charges on return to Pakistan, said in an interview to local newspaper *Daily Times*.

Mrs Bhutto, who was in the USA last weekend to invite the



Pakistani President Gen. Pervez Musharraf gestures during a nationally-televised press conference in Islamabad on Tuesday. — AFP

Pak EC member resigns

ISLAMABAD, April 16. — A judge of the Baluchistan High Court, Mr Tariq Mehmood, who was appointed as one of the members of the five-member Election Commission has resigned questioning the legality of the commission holding the referendum. The government later said that Mr Mehmood was transferred from the post of member of the commission.

Mr Mahmood said he had resigned because he believed the 30 April referendum was unconstitutional and he felt he was being pressured into giving it his endorsement.

"I cannot become part of a dark page of history by playing a role in the presidential referendum," he said.

"I have no objection over referendums which are constitutional, that can be conducted over national issues, but not for the election of the President." — PTI

major international media to accompany her as and when she decides to return home, said the referendum being held by Gen Musharraf was only a publicity stunt as his real power base res-

ted with the army and US Administration.

Mrs Bhutto said she would return in the near future to face arrests and contest the October elections.

Pakistan opens two new defence lines

Islamabad, March 15

ADOPTING AN "aggressive strategy", to deny any strategic advantage to Indian army in the event of war, Pakistan has strengthened its defences along the Lahore sector on the Punjab borders by constructing two more defence lines.

With the Indian Army establishing a strategic superiority in the Punjab sector in both 1965 and 1971 wars, the Pakistan Army has now adopted a more aggressive defence strategy to defend the Lahore sector by beefing up the defences with two more defence lines in addition to the BRB canal which provided a natural line of defence, according to media reports today.

The double defence arrangements were shown to the local media by the Pakistan defence officials yesterday, the reports said. "We have fortified our defences with an assortment of natural as well as man-made hurdles to prevent enemy incursion," the official APP news agency quoted a brigade commander as saying.

Besides, the anti-tank Bakhtar Shikan missile battery, which has a range of 3,000 yards, longer range 122 mm howitzer guns and 130 mm "Rani Guns" were seen pointed towards Indian defence formations.

"This gun has a range of 30



AP PHOTO

BSF jawans relax before deployment along the Indo-Pak border.

km and from my position I can easily target the Indian city of Amritsar," a young officer manning the Rani Gun said.

The Pakistani Army was fully prepared to counter any offensive from India with the area along the zero line was fully covered with landmines, Pakistan Defence spokesman Maj-Gen Rashid Quereshi told reporters at a briefing. Also new bridges have been constructed and an aggressive strategy evolved to prevent the Indian Army to have any strategic advantage.

He said the heavy artillery had been moved closer to the border and Amritsar was completely under the range of heavy machine guns. In addition to this, Pakistan has also installed sophisticated radar system, which provided an edge

in the event of any ground battle. Apart from laying landmines, the Pakistani troops have dug trenches along the entire border so that the Indian troops can not move forward by more than 1,000 metres, he said.

The Pakistan Army has also constructed huge embankments so that in case of ground battle, it could face any attack from the upper side. Trenches have also been constructed in the embankments where anti-tank missiles have been installed. A large quantity of arms and ammunition has also been moved to the zero line, he said.

The Pakistan Army has also installed laser range finders along the zero line to keep a vigil on the movement of the Indian Army.

PTI

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Musharraf summons meet to finalise amendments

Benazir vows to contest polls

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD, April 14. — Pakistan President Gen Pervez Musharraf has summoned a joint meeting of the Cabinet and the National Security Council on Tuesday to finalise major Constitutional amendments.

The meeting was called after Gen Musharraf, who is seeking a five-year extension of his presidency through a referendum on 30 April, two days ago said that he has decided to bring in the amendments well before the general elections scheduled to be held in October this year, media reports said.

The new amendments, which officials said, would outline a new power sharing arrangements among President, Prime Minister and the Army Chief with system of checks and balances, would be made operational soon after the referendum and would be in place well before the October general elections. The amendments were being drafted and finalised by Gen Musharraf's legal advisors as well as the National Reconstruction Bureau headed by a military official. His proposed constitutional

amendments were strongly opposed by the mainstream political parties saying that the President in the first place has no authority to arrogate himself with the power of Parliament to bring in the amendments, which were aimed at strengthening his own power base in the Army.

The proposed amendments were aimed at giving a strong role to the NSC in the country's decision making process, which was originally vested with Parliament, Cabinet and the Prime Minister. However, officials of the Musharraf government argue that he has been vested with limited powers to amend the Constitution by the Supreme Court while legitimising his military coup. The Court has given Gen Musharraf three years to hand over the power to an elected administration. The three year period would come to an end by October this year.

Gen Musharraf has maintained that he planned to bring in minor changes to the Constitution which came into effect in 1973 but the leaders of the political parties alleged that his amendments empowering the President and the Army Chief to veto the decisions of the Parlia-

ment and the Cabinet, effectively altered the basic structure of the Constitution. Gen Musharraf, meanwhile, continued his whirlwind tour of Pakistan addressing the public meetings organised by provincial governors and local officials to campaign for his election as the President for another five years through the referendum. In all he planned to address 18 to 20 public rallies before 30 April. To ensure a good turnout the Election Commission has declared the entire country as one constituency and made electoral roles or voters' lists redundant. The voting age has also been reduced to 18 years and people could vote anywhere showing their national identity cards.

Pearl case: The Pakistan government reacted cautiously to the contempt petition filed by prime minister in the Daniel Pearl murder case. Shiekh Omar Saeed against Gen Musharraf alleging he had prejudged the case even before the trial started. Clarifying the remarks made by Gen Musharraf over Omar's fate to German periodical Der Spiegel, an official spokesman said the President has not said he wanted the accused to receive capital punishment.

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD, April 14. — Terming Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf's move to hold a referendum to get himself elected for five years as a "critical error", former Prime Minister Mrs Benazir Bhutto has said she would return to the country to fight polls even as the government planned to promulgate an ordinance banning anyone from becoming Prime Minister for third time.

Mrs Bhutto, who is currently in the USA, said she would come back to Pakistan to contest this year's elections "even if I was sent to jail". "The elections are the credibility test of this regime and my participation also becomes the credibility test," she said in an interview to local daily *Dawn* from New York.

But, the Musharraf government has planned to promulgate a new ordinance banning anyone from holding the office of the Prime Minister for more than two terms. Such a ban would effectively restrict both Mrs Bhutto and deposed Prime Minister Mr Nawaz Sharif, who held the office twice, from becoming Prime Ministers for third time.



Mrs Benazir Bhutto

She said Gen Musharraf's move to get himself elected through a referendum was a "critical error" and it was "unconstitutional and illegal".

"He (Gen Musharraf) has made it clear in his speech (last week in Lahore) he will not share power and he made a critical error by calling for referendum. He cannot dictate," Mrs Bhutto said. She said when Gen Musharraf seized power in a military coup ousting Mr Sharif in 1999 "all of us accepted him because he promised democracy" but "now he is reneging on that promise. He is trying to stab the constitution in the back." She, however, said Gen Musharraf could get elected through parliament.

Court dismisses plea against referendum

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ISLAMABAD, April 13. — In a setback to the opponents of Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's plans to get himself elected to a five-year term through referendum, the Lahore High Court has dismissed a petition questioning the legality of the move.

The Rawalpindi Bench of the Lahore High Court yesterday dismissed a petition filed by Mr Azmat Qureshi, challenging the holding of referendum on the plea that Gen Musharraf, a serving government servant as the Chief of the Pakistan Army, was not entitled to hold the referendum, the *Dawn* newspaper reported today.

Mr Qureshi's advocate Mr M Sharif, said the petition was heard by Justice Mian

Jehangir for a few minutes after which the judge told him that the admissibility of it would be decided later after going through the application. Mr Sharif was quoted by the newspaper that the reader of the court informed him that the petition was dismissed. The same newspaper meanwhile reported that the Supreme Court, which received several petitions questioning as well as supporting Gen Musharraf's controversial referendum plan has no immediate plans of hearing the petitions.

The main petition questioning the legality of the referendum as well as constitutionality of Gen Musharraf holding the office of the Presidency has been filed by the main religious party the leader of the Jamat-e-Islami, Qazi Hussain Ahmed.

The petition in support of the referendum was filed by Moulvi Iqbal Haider of Awami Himayat Tehrik party which supported the referendum plan.

In his petition, Moulvi Iqbal Haider, prayed the apex court to declare that there was no bar in the Constitution to prevent Gen Musharraf from holding referendum to fill up the constitutional vacuum created after the resignation of the elected president, Mohammad Rafiq Tarar. The newspaper quoted the officials of the Supreme Court as saying that there was no immediate plan of taking up the petition of Qazi Hussain Ahmad.

The Jamaat leader, on knowing that the apex court would not take up the applications, filed another application in the same Court yes-

terday, praying that Musharraf be restrained from "unlawfully acting to implement the Chief Executive Order issued on 10 April, as it was unconstitutional, void and of no legal effect."

The 10 April order issued by Gen Musharraf in his capacity as chief executive laid down the rules and procedures for the referendum.

A leading US newspaper yesterday urged the Bush Administration to ask Gen Musharraf to drop the referendum. It is unlikely the General would be attempting the move which is "opposed overwhelmingly by Pakistan's educated elite-political parties, media and other civil institutions," unless he believed he had earned the indulgence of a grateful Washington," *The Washington Post* said.

Benazir, Nawaz Sharif can't stand for election: Musharraf

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, MARCH 13. The promised general election in Pakistan in October this year could well turn out to be much ado about nothing as the military Government of Pervez Musharraf is determined not to allow the two former Prime Ministers, Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, to take part in the process.

Addressing a news conference at Tokyo, Gen. Musharraf, currently on a four-day visit to Japan, ruled out any possibility of the leaders being allowed to stand for election. "Well, the answer is very short — no," he said in reply to a question, on the first full day of his official visit to Japan.

Though there have been several hints by the Musharraf regime in recent weeks about not allowing the two former Prime Ministers to take part in the election process, it is for the first time that Gen. Musharraf has made such a categorical announcement on the subject.

His announcement, that too in a foreign land, is bound to stir the proverbial hornet's nest in Pakistan. To begin with, it puts a question mark on the whole election process, as the two former Prime Ministers happen to head the two largest political parties in the country. It is to be seen how the international community, particularly the United States, would react to the decision.

The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) headed by Mrs. Bhutto has already declared that it would not take part in the elec-

tion if its leader was going to be barred. The Pakistan Muslim League (PML) led by Mr. Sharif cannot be expected to take a different path though it is vulnerable to manipulation by the establishment.

While Gen. Musharraf has not spelt out the grounds on which Mrs. Bhutto and Mr. Sharif are going to be disqualified from contesting the election, there have been enough hints from the establishment that it is working on a strategy to keep them out of the electoral arena.

The Musharraf Government has enacted legislation under which all persons indicted by any court of law, irrespective of the state of appeal against the indictment, stand debarred from contesting elections. Besides being disqualified from contesting any public office, such individuals cannot even hold party offices. Despite the law, both Mrs. Bhutto and Mr. Sharif, who are indicted by courts in separate cases of corruption, continue to preside over their respective parties.

There are also speculations in a section of the media that the Government is contemplating another law under which a person cannot become Prime Minister for a third time. Both Mrs. Bhutto and Mr. Sharif have already had two terms as the Prime Minister.

A number of political parties and individuals in recent days have charged the Musharraf regime with trying to create a 'King's party' in a bid to manipulate the forthcoming election and get a National Assembly of

its choice. The idea, according to critics, is that such an Assembly would be useful in ensuring a five-year term for Gen. Musharraf.

The PPP has alleged that "the process of rigging the forthcoming elections has already started with the regime backing the King's Party, seeking to break the PPP and forcing to keep out of elections the genuine representatives of the people through politically motivated cases, perversion of justice and blatant manipulation of the so-called accountability process for political purposes".

In a statement here, the former Interior Minister and senior PPP leader, Naseerullah Babar, contested the Government claim that it was not taking sides in the elections.

An official spokesman on Monday claimed that the Government was under no pressure to take sides in the coming elections, and was committed to ensuring that the elections were free and transparent.

Gen. Babar said that the regime's attempts to manipulate the elections with a view to achieving the "desired" results was also evident from other steps taken by it after the King's Party's failure to take off. These included promoting the PPP renegades Farooq Leghari and Aftab followed by Imran Khan. The latest press reports that the military regime is contemplating to hold a referendum and elections on non-party basis is also part of the same manipulative tactics to rig the elections, he added.

THE HINDU

4 MAR 2002

The possible and the saleable

Bertrand Russell, famous British philosopher and Nobel laureate (1872-1970), wrote in his famous book, *Political Ideals* (in 1917): "The mere possession of power tends to produce a love of power, which is a very dangerous motive, because the only sure proof of power consists in preventing others from what they wish to do." His observation applies to all power-holders and power-wielders. But if power-holders with a military background were to be compared to those with a democratic background, the former would come closer to Russell's observation.

Generally, leaders coming to power through a democratic political process are guided by the fact that votes have a right to out them. Those coming to power through coups — bloody or bloodless — generally feel they are indispensable. At times, the existing socio-political milieu makes them feel so more strongly. Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf, who grabbed power on 12 October 1999 from then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, is fast moving towards entrenching himself for another five years through a nationwide referendum.

Earlier, on 6 June 2001, he made himself President while retaining the posts of Chief Executive (which he assumed after the 12 October 1999 coup) and Chief of Army Staff (which post was given to him by Mr Sharif on 7 October 1998 under the assumption that he would be more amenable than anyone else). His referendum would be the third in Pakistan's history: the first was held during President Ayub Khan's regime on 14 February 1960 and the second during General Zia-ul-Haq's regime on 19 December 1984.

The international political scene has probably emboldened President Musharraf to go for a referendum after a gap of 17 years. Thanks to his services in fighting terrorism in Pakistan, he feels the international community needs him as President of his country more than anyone else. Under similar circumstances in the past, General Zia also felt he was needed by the USA to create a group of terrorists in Afghanistan to fight the Soviet forces there. General Ayub Khan, on his part, had felt domestic political circumstances were favourable for his continuing in power through a legitimising referendum.

General Zia had stressed the importance of Islamising Pakistan's polity for his continuance in power in the belief that very few would dare vote against this. In the event, some 97.7 per cent of the vote (about 62 per cent of the registered voters were announced to have participated) were said to have favoured Zia's Islamisation — which *ipso facto* was to be treated as a vote in his favour. The fairness of his 19 December 1984 referendum continues to be questioned.

General Ayub Khan's referendum of 14 February 1960 was free from the programme of Islamisation — indeed, he wanted to create a modernised Pakistan — but the people's participation was quite narrow and limited. Only 80,000 Basic Democrats could have participated. Under the President's Order 3 of 1960, Basic Democrats were required to vote by secret ballot on the question: "Have you confidence in President Field Marshal Muhammad Ayub Khan, *Hilal-i-Jurat*?" If a majority of votes were in his favour, Ayub would have been deemed to have got the authority to get a constitution drafted. He would also have been elected President, to hold office for the first term under a constitution drafted by him. About 60 per cent of the Basic Democrats were said to have participated in the referendum and 96 per cent of them were announced to have approved of Ayub's programme — and *ipso facto* his election as Pakistan's President. Relevantly, both Ayub and Zia imposed martial law in the

country before holding their referenda — the former on 7 October 1958, the latter on 5 July 1977. Whatever else he might have done, General Musharraf did not impose martial law and, instead of becoming Chief Martial Law Administrator, chose to become Chief Executive of Pakistan.

At a meeting with editors and columnists in Islamabad on 31 March, he said: "I believe in taking calculated risks. I want to know whether or not they require me." Indeed, he went to the extent of saying that the referendum would "tell the world that Pakistanis need me". Asked if he enjoyed the support of the international community in holding the referendum, he said: "No foreign country is against me. They are all with me in whatever I am doing." General Musharraf emphasised he would ensure ground support for a "respectable" turnout in the proposed referendum.

"Nazims and union councils will bring voters," he stressed. The General underlined that his referendum would be far different from those held by previous military rulers like Ayub Khan and Zia-ul-Haq. Significantly, Pakistan's Election Commission has told General Musharraf that a referendum, should be held within a month of its announcement. Of late, the General has been concentrating on

General Pervez Musharraf waves to his supporters during a mass rally on Monday in Lahore where he launched his campaign to remain president for five years at his first mass rally ahead of a national referendum later in April. — AFP

President Musharraf is fast moving towards entrenching himself for another five years through a nationwide referendum. For various and varied India-baiters, he has shown he can keep the core South Asian state on tenterhooks and appears to be more convenient to America than Ayub Khan or Zia-ul-Haq were at one point of time in international politics. Indeed, he doesn't seem to be standing on a very weak wicket, writes

PARMANAND

revamping the country's administration.

Of course, for public consumption it has been announced that revamping and reorganising the police, judicial and intelligence networks are aimed at effectively checking the recurrence of terrorist and subversive acts. Political analysts, however, feel this step would help General Musharraf win in the referendum. Needless to say, having won the approval of his cabinet and the National Security Council on 3 April, the General will move fast in this direction. Hearteningly for him, the Election Commission is quite cooperative. After all, these bodies are staffed with the President's men.

Circumstances also seem somewhat favourable for the General regardless of what the Benazir Bhutto-led Pakistan People's Party and the Nawaz Sharif-led Pakistan Muslim League (N) say. Being a Mohajir himself, General Musharraf has, even if unwittingly, marginalised the influence of the Muttahida Quami Mahaz led by Ataf Hussain, a party of Mohajirs in Pakistan. Unlike professional politicians, corruption charges have not sur-

faced against him — not even in the international media. Pakistan's economic health has improved, thanks to the withdrawal of sanctions by America and the financial assistance offered by various organisations influenced by that superpower. For various and varied India-baiters, Musharraf has shown he can keep the core South Asian state on tenterhooks. He appears more convenient to America than Ayub Khan or Zia-ul-Haq was at one point of time in international politics. In the army, he has shown political prowess and despite news of low-intensity discontent, no serious challenge has emerged to his authority.

Thus, while he has succeeded in establishing a good rapport with the two As — the army and America — the third vital A — Allah, represented by religious groups — is opposed to him, though apparently not strong enough to cause him damage. At times, it is said that the three As run Pakistan.

Significantly, all major political parties have opposed a referendum but General Musharraf was quoted as having said he is prepared to run the risk of a negative vote if he decides to go ahead. In fact, there has been no poll to assess public opinion. Government spokesmen, though, keep saying they are convinced the country's "silent majority" will back General Musharraf to have five more years as President. Besides, continuing to rule based on the result of the referendum will warrant a constitutional amendment. General Musharraf has stressed that "the Supreme Court has given me the mandate to exercise the option".

The Jamaat-e-Islami has termed the proposed referendum a "challenge to the respect of the people". Its chief, Qazi Hussain Ahmad, has called on party workers to ensure that polling stations presented a deserted look on referendum day. He has said, "General Musharraf is a government servant, and if he is very keen to become President, he should resign from the office of Army Chief and wait for two years after which he may contest for the post."

Overall, the political scenario in Pakistan is expected to become more interesting. Many years have passed since the Ayub and Zia referenda. But General Musharraf has opportunity and a challenge to face and he doesn't seem to be standing on a very weak wicket. Referendum victory — even if manipulated — may allow him the opportunity of entrenching himself in power for five more years as also legitimise the army's role in Pakistan's polity and politics. Here he is more in agreement with Zia-ul-Haq and wants the Turkish model (significantly, General Musharraf spent his formative years in Turkey) of the army's role to be aped in Pakistan.

The country may be forced to encounter an 8th Constitutional Amendment — where the head of state will be able to keep the head of government on tenterhooks. During Benazir Bhutto's first tenure as Prime Minister, it was often said that she was in government but not in power. The absence of a strong democratic political culture, as also the training Indian political leaders received during the freedom struggle, are probably making all these things possible. Politics, after all, is the art of the possible and the saleable.

(The author is Honorary Director, South Asian Studies Foundation, New Delhi.)



Pervez poll parade rolls

Lahore, April 9 (Reuters): Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf kicked off his campaign for another five years in power today with an election-style rally as the countdown to an April 30 referendum began.

"In this city, I am starting a new political era," Musharraf told the crowd at the Minar-e-Pakistan, where the Muslim League passed a resolution demanding an independent Pakistan in 1940.

"I have come before you to seek strength from you, to seek your support," Musharraf, wearing a camouflage jacket over his uniform, said in the historic city of Lahore near the border with India and once the capital of a Sikh empire.

"I need confidence from you that the people of the whole of Pakistan are with me, I am not standing alone," he told a crowd estimated by local journalists at 50,000.

The first few rows of seats at the rally were packed with military men in civilian clothes and bus drivers, some of whom alleged that they had been brought into the city for the occasion.

Yakub Khan said police had brought him from Khushab 210 km away to ferry people to the rally.

"They confiscated the documents for our vehicles and brought us to Lahore," he said.

Musharraf's critics say that is the kind of tactic he will use to win a healthy "yes" vote in a country which remembers a 1984 referendum in which military dictator Zia ul-Haq claimed a big victory on a turnout most say



Pervez Musharraf at a public meeting in Lahore on Tuesday. (Reuters)

was no more than 10 per cent.

Musharraf repeated his key argument that he needed to stay in power to ensure his economic, political and social reforms were not reversed by corrupt politicians.

"On referendum day, you have to decide whether you want to give Pakistan back into the hands of the same looters," he said.

'Benazir, Sharif betrayed Kashmir'

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 9. The Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, launched his campaign for the referendum in grand style at the Minar-e-Pakistan in Lahore this evening with a no-holds-barred attack on the two former Prime Ministers, Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, and a veiled criticism of India.

It was at this place, that the Muslim League had adopted a resolution in 1940 envisaging the creation of Pakistan. Gen. Musharraf's decision to choose the venue is significant in more than one way. Besides hoping to convince the people that the interest of Pakistan is supreme for him, the rally attended by thousands of people marked the transformation of the General into a political leader.

The 40-minute speech was full of quotable quotes against the two former Prime Ministers and the 'spectacular achievements' of his regime in a span of two and half years.

It was a Government show right from the word go. In attendance at the rally were the Core Commander of Lahore, the Governor and the Mayor, besides all the senior functionaries of the Punjab administra-

tion. The Pakistan Television's international channel telecast the show live.

Though the date for the rally was fixed a few days ago, the Election Commission notified the referendum only a few hours before Gen. Musharraf took the stage. The referendum to be held on April 30 would pose a question to the people of Pakistan whether they endorse the Presidency of Gen. Musharraf for five more years. The Election Commission issued the order on the basis of the Referendum Order, 2002 promulgated by Gen. Musharraf in his capacity as the Chief Executive.

Raising his voice repeatedly, Gen. Musharraf said that Ms. Bhutto and Mr. Sharif had plundered the wealth of the country and sucked its blood and that he would never allow them to return to the political arena.

Amid cheers from those seated in the front rows, Gen. Musharraf claimed that contrary to predictions by his critics he never compromised on the Kashmir cause at his summit meeting with the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee. "There were charges that I would sell the Kashmir cause. On the contrary, I made the In-

dian people and leaders realise that there could be no peace without resolution of Kashmir".

In contrast, he said that during her recent trip to India Ms. Bhutto had denounced the "foreign fighters in Kashmir as terrorists". The truth was that the Kashmir struggle was "indigenous". Ms. Bhutto had talked of a common currency and open borders between India and Pakistan. "This is against the very foundation and ideology of Pakistan," he said.

Ms. Bhutto wants "slavery of Hindustan" and is blind to the Gujarat happenings. She had even appealed to India to pressure the United States for the restoration of democracy in Pakistan. "She has no place in Pakistan. We will not allow her to come here," he declared.

He accused Mr. Sharif of agreeing to sign a declaration at Lahore during Mr. Vajpayee's visit that contained no reference to Kashmir. "It was at my insistence as the Army Chief that Kashmir figured in the final declaration thrice."

Gen. Musharraf did not spare the alliance of religious parties that have vowed to oppose the referendum and accused them of misleading the people of Pakistan on Afghanistan. "They

claim to be contractors of Islam. Are you people not Muslims," he asked. Thanks to these persons, a number of our misguided youth went to Afghanistan to fight along with the Taliban. During my recent visit to Afghanistan, I took up the matter with the Karzai Government in a bid to secure their release".

The sum and substance of his speech was that his Government had done its best for the betterment of the Pakistani people and would not allow any future set-up to reverse the political and economic reforms.

He invoked the name of Allama Iqbal, the national poet, and Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, at the beginning of his speech and pledged to follow in their footsteps. He tried to strike a sentimental rapport with the people by telling them that he had studied in Lahore and had fond memories of it.

The referendum move has attracted flak within and outside Pakistan, especially because Gen. Musharraf has declared that he is not giving up his position as the Chief of the Army Staff (COAS). All the institutions he presides over today are by virtue of his title as COAS.

AN AFFRONT TO THE DEMOCRATIC SPIRIT

BY ANY TEST of genuine democratic ethos, the decision by Pakistan's President, Pervez Musharraf, to seek political legitimacy through a referendum is unwise. In fact, Gen. Musharraf's controversial move is out of sync with his own record of being courageous, often innovative as well, in addressing the challenges that confront him and his country. While he seems to regard the proposed referendum as a strategic masterstroke in domestic politics, it must be denounced. Pakistan's military ruler has clearly deviated from the straight path towards restoration of democracy. Although he seized power in October 1999 through a coup that was entirely bloodless, he remained beyond the pale of international diplomacy for a considerable period thereafter. The main argument was that he had sinned against democracy by toppling an elected Prime Minister. It was at the height of such international pressure that Gen. Musharraf outlined a roadmap to revive Pakistan's democracy. Now, apt indeed in these circumstances is the remark by the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Don McKinnon, that the Pakistan President has swerved from the positive roadmap which he himself drew up not long ago. There was no place for a power-endorsing referendum of this type in that scheme of reinventing democracy in Pakistan. The second factor of equal concern to the international community is the manner in which Gen. Musharraf has ignored pro-democracy opinion at home too.

In a sense, an amorphous coalition of forces opposed to Gen. Musharraf is beginning to take shape within Pakistan in the countdown to the prospective referendum. With some brazenly radicalised Islamic parties seeking to make common cause with the disparate groups on the pro-democracy circuit, the going may not be as smooth as he seems to have wished. More importantly, the arguments being marshalled against the planned referendum are not without

a political sting. At a purely legal-constitutional level, the prime issue is whether a plebiscite will be in tune with the letter and spirit of the Pakistan Supreme Court's ruling that mandated a resuscitation of the democratic polity by October 2002. Although Gen. Musharraf contends that his plan is no infraction of the court's blueprint, he is no less embarrassed by the comparisons already being drawn between him and Pakistan's previous military dictators, Ayub Khan and Zia ul Haq, insofar as their methods to entrench themselves in power were concerned. With Gen. Musharraf pledging to avoid their deviousness and to pose a constitution-friendly question at the referendum, it is obvious that he does not want to get bogged down in legalities.

Gen. Musharraf's critics at home ask why he should fight shy of facing the people in a normal democratic election if, as he claims, the "silent majority" of Pakistanis backs his reforms for snuffing out religious-political extremism and reviving the stagnant economy. Closely linked to such criticism is a caustic suggestion that he ought to send soldiers-in-uniform to the homes of Pakistanis to ascertain their real preferences for him. While the biting sarcasm can hardly be missed, the larger question is whether Gen. Musharraf actually intends to create a militarised form of presidential government by opting for this referendum ahead of the parliamentary elections that were implicitly suggested in the relevant ruling of the Supreme Court. Overall, the litmus test in Pakistan will be the restoration of genuine democracy even if Gen. Musharraf, helped by the current distractions of the international community and America's diplomatic ambivalence about his calculations, is able to move on. His own reasoning, as spelt out in an exclusive interview to this newspaper, is that "if the people of Pakistan are with me, everything is doable". The question is whether a manipulative referendum can be a real test of the people's will.

'REAL DEMOCRACY ESTABLISHED'

Referendum in May on whether Pak. needs Musharraf

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 5. Pakistan would vote in the first week of May on a referendum whether the President, Pervez Musharraf, should continue for a further period of five years in office.

"Am I (Pervez Musharraf) required for Pakistan? If yes, what should be the shape of the coming Assemblies and my relationship with them" are the two key questions in the referendum, Gen. Musharraf disclosed here tonight.

Attired in military uniform, Gen. Musharraf made the full use of his address to the nation, televised and broadcast on the state-owned media, to convince the people that his regime had already established "real democracy" and empowered people through the party-less elections to local bodies.

The crux of his 100-minute speech was that while he was convinced that his continuation as President was essential for



The Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, addressing the nation on television in Islamabad on Friday. — AFP

the good of Pakistan, he would like to be reassured that he had the backing of the people. "Let the entire world know that I am not alone. Behind me are 140 million of people of Pakistan," he declared.

He asserted that no future set-up could reverse the reforms initiated by him and "democracy" should never be allowed to be derailed. He desir-

ed a harmonious relationship with the future Prime Minister and asserted that he would never allow the Prime Minister to either go against 'national interest' or reverse reforms.

Gen. Musharraf is determined to take head-on the two mainstream political parties in the country, Pakistan People's Party (PPP) led by the former Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, and the Pakistan Muslim League led by another ex-premier, Nawaz Sharif.

He does not want them to have a role either in the May referendum or the proposed general elections in October.

As anticipated, the address led to angry reactions from political and religious parties.

"We view the presidential referendum as pre-poll rigging by the military regime and we denounce Gen. Musharraf's unconstitutional efforts to become President", the PPP said.

The response reflected the views of a majority of parties.

THE HINDU

Democracy not tied to Pak vote

Islamabad, April 8 (Reuters): Pakistan said today military President Pervez Musharraf was sticking scrupulously to his plans for a return to democracy and a referendum on keeping him in power was a separate issue.

"As far as this referendum is concerned, it is a separate issue," a foreign ministry spokesman said in response to Commonwealth secretary-general Don McKinnon's complaint that Musharraf was deviating from a "road map" to democracy. "The road map for the restoration of democracy that had been earlier outlined is being followed scrupulously and everybody has expressed appreciation of the fact that Pakistan has been following that road map," said spokesman Aziz Ahmed Khan.

"Under that road map elections will be held to the provincial and the National Assembly in October," he said. Musharraf announced on Friday he would hold a referendum in early May on whether he should stay in power.

He also promised again the provincial and national assembly elections would be held by the October deadline set by the Supreme Court.

The political parties Musharraf has sidelined since taking power in a bloodless coup in October 1999 oppose as unconstitutional a referendum in which Musharraf is expected to seek the usual five-year presidential term. McKinnon said soon after Friday's announcement the road map back to democracy an-

nounced by Musharraf last year "did not include provision for such a referendum". "In his discussions with me when we last met, General Musharraf reaffirmed his commitment to this road map," he said.

Canada pull out

Canada said today it will pull out all dependents of its diplomats in Pakistan.

The embassy said in a statement Ottawa's decision was taken "for broad reasons of prudence" and diplomats would be given a choice of accompanying their families, remaining until the middle of the year or serving out their postings.

The US withdrew some of its diplomatic staff and all dependents last month after a grenade attack on a church in Islamabad killed five people, including the wife and daughter of an American diplomat. Citizens of various western nations, including Canada, were wounded in the attack on the Protestant International Church.

Army shorts

The Pakistan army has fired four doctors for refusing to wear shorts which they said was against their Islamic faith, an army spokesman said today.

Pak alliance to boycott referendum

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD, April 7. — Pakistan's 15-party Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy today announced a formal boycott of President Pervez Musharraf's referendum next month.

The alliance also asked Mrs Benazir Bhutto and Mr Nawaz Shaif to end their exile and return home to reinforce the Opposition against the military regime.

"We consider the referendum extra-constitutional and illegal," ARD chief Mr Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan said after a meeting on the grouping, which includes Mrs Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party and Mr Sharif's

Pakistan Muslim League.

Gen Musharraf has kicked off the campaign for a referendum for extension of his term in office by meeting local body officials to enlist their support.

The General yesterday addressed a meeting of district Nazims and Naiz Nazims. "I have decided to hold a referendum to ensure that our political and economic reforms are capped by a practical democratic system that is democratic," he said.

"People have high hopes and are expecting a real change from the past. If the continuity of the present economic, administrative and political reforms is not ensured, it will disrupt the political system," he said.

The President, who declared former Prime Ministers Mrs Be-

nazir Bhutto and Mr Nawaz Sharif will not be allowed to play any role in the country's politics, told the local body officials that his decision was not born out of any grudge against the two exiled leaders.

Stating that he firmly believed the country was his top priority, Gen Musharraf said nobody could change or reverse the reforms introduced by him. "By strengthening democracy, we would be strengthening the country," he said.

'Referendum constitutional': Defending Gen Musharraf's move to get elected through a referendum as "constitutional", his legal advisor and former law minister, Mr Abdul Hafeez Pirzada, has said it was the only "sober" way left to tide over the complex

political situation of the country. Refuting allegations of political parties and the media that the referendum was "unconstitutional", Mr Pirzada said that the 1973 constitution, which was kept in abeyance by Gen Musharraf after he took power in 1999, made a provision for the referendum.

"Now, we have to ensure that in future the state institutions work in harmony," he said.

Mr Pirzada, considered to be the architect of Gen Musharraf's referendum plan, said when he came to power in October 1999, the entire country supported him. **Jamat files second petition:** The Jamat-i-Islami party has filed another petition in the Supreme Court questioning the legality of the referendum being held by

President Musharraf and sought a stay order against it.

Jamat leader Qazi Hussain Ahmed yesterday filed his second petition in the Supreme Court seeking its immediate intervention to restrain Gen Musharraf from going ahead with the referendum.

The petition also requested the court to issue an order restraining the President from taking further steps to hold a referendum next month saying it was violative of the Supreme Court's order conferring limited legality to the military regime. The petition argued that despite the limited authority vested with the President, Gen Musharraf had ceaselessly tried to "cling on to the reins of power under pretext of his indispensability for Pakistan".

Pak media flays referendum move: Asking for reversal of Gen Musharraf's decision to hold a referendum, the country's media today criticised it as clear violation of the constitution and joined political and religious groups in condemning the move. The decision may have an extreme adverse impact on the country's federal polity, leading English daily *Dawn* said.

Coming down heavily against the referendum, *The Nation* said Gen Musharraf has opted to go for referendum against the advice of the mainstream political parties and sections of the press. "We oppose the quasi presidential system that emerges from the description the President gave of his intentions," it said and asked him to reverse his decision.

Moves on to defeat Musharraf's 'designs'

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 6. Barring a small group of pro-Government parties, the mainstream political and religious parties in Pakistan have rejected outright the referendum plan announced by the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, on Friday night.

The Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy (ARD), a conglomerate of 18 parties, including the two largest parties (Pakistan People's Party and Pakistan Muslim League), is meeting here tomorrow to chalk out a strategy to "defeat the designs" of Gen. Musharraf to legitimise his role as President for a further period of five years.

Religious parties, including the Jamaat-e-Islami (the largest religio-political party in the country) have expressed similar views on the subject. The JI has filed a petition in the Supreme Court questioning the assumption of the office of President by Gen. Musharraf and prayed to the Court to stop the military Government from going ahead with its referendum plans.

For all the noises and anger from the political parties, observers are not certain about the capability of the political forces to actually resist Gen. Musharraf's plans. Despite their best efforts in the last two and a half years, ever since the military coup in October 1999, political parties in Pakistan have not just been a divided house but also completely directionless.

The leaders of all the three mainstream political parties are in exile. These are the two former Prime Ministers, Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, who lead the Pakistan People's Party and the Pakistan Muslim League and the MQM leader, Altaf Hussain.

It is not a coincidence that Gen. Musharraf made a direct appeal to PPP and PML members to forget about their leaders and 'side' with him.

Managers of the Musharraf Government are convinced that the political and religious parties are not in a position to pose any real challenge. Certainly, their stance can affect the voter turnout, given the categorical assertion of Gen. Musharraf that Ms. Bhutto and Mr. Sharif have no place in the country's politics.

Gen. Musharraf would be banking heavily on the institution of Nazims, created by his regime through party-less elections to local bodies, for a respectable turnout and positive vote in his favour. One of the factors that appear to have influenced Gen. Musharraf's decision to opt for the first week of May to hold the referendum is to give as little time as possible to his opponents to counter his strategy.

Leaders of the PPP, the PML-N, the Mutahida Majlis-i-Amal, the Jamaat-i-Islami, the Jamaat Ulema Islami (F) and the Jamaat Ulema Islami (S), have unanimously rejected Gen. Musharraf's version of democracy, saying, "it would kill federal parliamentary democracy, which was envisioned by the Father of Nation."

The PPP has vowed to resist Gen. Musharraf's agenda and has declared that Ms. Bhutto will return and take part in the elections. "The Pakistani Constitution clearly states that the federal and provincial legislatures will elect the President of Pakistan," a party spokesman said.

The PML-N senior vice-president, Akram Zaki, ridiculed the President's assertion that his referendum was not unconstitu-

tional, saying his claim held no water when the Supreme Court, high court bars and the entire lawyers' community had rejected the referendum as a route to Presidency.

He alleged that the General "wants to impose a democracy of his own liking by foisting himself as its fountainhead". As for Gen. Musharraf's dismissal of Mr. Sharif as a nonentity in the country's politics, Mr. Zaki said this was to be decided by the country's masses.

The Jamaat-i-Islami chief, Qazi Hussain Ahmed, said Gen. Musharraf had failed to convince the nation about any of his assumptions in his lengthy speech on the national television and radio "as he was guilty conscious." He regretted that the General was oblivious of the respect of the institution of Army which he was trying to involve in politics.

"He is more exposed for his misdeeds before the nation today and it would be in his own interest to step down at this juncture of national history," the JI leader said and added that all the major political parties had already spurned the referendum plan.

The JUI (S) leader, Maulana Samiul Haq, said Gen. Musharraf's repeated mention about his performance being appreciated by the people abroad clearly showed that he was "playing to the tunes of those for whom he was in power."

He said the President had exposed himself as an autocrat by saying that the Parliament, Cabinet and the Prime Minister will have to live in harmony with him. "We don't understand what would be the type of democracy in which all the elected representatives will be controlled by one unelected person," he added.

Musharraf sets May date for referendum

Associated Press

ISLAMABAD, April 5. — The Pakistani President today launched a campaign to remain in power even after the restoration of civilian rule, setting a referendum for early May to ask voters if they want him to stay in office.

General Pervez Musharraf, who seized power in October 1999, said the referendum would be aimed at introducing "real democracy" in Pakistan, which has lived under military rule for half of its 54-year history. He vowed to honour his promise to hold general elections in October, but would propose constitutional amendments to prevent abuse of power by elected representatives. "The problem is that elected governments had indulged in looting and corruption. It destroyed governance. It destroyed the economy. Our problem is that those who were voted to power and trusted by the people destroyed that trust."

He didn't specify a date for the referendum or spell out the wording on the ballot during his more than 90-minute speech. The government news agency said those details would be determined by the election commission. The General, however, declared he wouldn't allow Mrs Benazir Bhutto and Mr Nawaz Sharif (both former Prime Ministers) to return to Pakistan

to contest an election and "plunder the national wealth". The two, he said, "have no role in Pakistani politics".

Gen Musharraf ousted Mr Sharif, leader of the Pakistan Muslim League, for his alleged corruption and drove him into exile in Saudi Arabia. Mrs Bhutto of the Pakistan People's Party left the country after being dismissed as Prime Minister in 1996. She, too, faces several corruption charges here. Both Mr Sharif and Mrs Bhutto pledged to boycott the referendum and not recognise

chosen by the two Houses of Parliament. By holding a referendum, Gen Musharraf may try to bypass the legislature and ensure his stay in power for another five years regardless of the outcome of the October polls.

The President seemed to be gambling that the status he has been enjoying ever since he joined the US-led war on terrorism would enable him to overcome the opposition from political parties and commentators, who have described the referendum plan as unconstitutional.

The President said he wouldn't allow Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto to return and contest polls and 'plunder the national wealth'. The PPP, however, said its leader would take part in the general elections scheduled for October

its result.

The PPP said Mrs Bhutto would return and take part in the October polls, "whether it pleases or annoys the dictator." Mr Sharif's party said he would "play a role" in politics but didn't say whether he would return.

After seizing power, Gen Musharraf agreed to abide by a Supreme Court ruling that democracy should be restored within three years. Parliamentary polls have been announced for October in line with the pledge. Heads of State in Pakistan are

"People should use their right of vote to determine my role..." he said. "You, the people of Pakistan, should decide what should be my role in the next set-up. Those who want me to continue my reforms should be on my side."

Much of his speech was devoted to an account of his accomplishments in reforming the economy, fighting poverty, restoring law and order and combating Islamic extremism. The achievements of his government, he said, would be wasted if he couldn't "cap the restructuring

and reforms" he has undertaken.

The General abandoned the Taliban after the 11 September attacks on the USA and banned five Islamic extremist groups in January, signaling a sea-change in two decades of Pakistani policies. He referred indirectly to his decision to join the US-led war on terrorism, saying "after 11 September the world has changed... I'm proud to note that we've been able to boost our stature in all these months. Now we're an honourable state. No one is saying that we should be declared a terrorist state."

He spoke of the need for a new relationship between the President, traditionally a figure-head position, and the Prime Minister who wields the real power. He wishes to retain some powers so that the new Prime Minister "can't damage the national interest".

"I want to have power to the extent that he (Prime Minister) dares not undo what I have said. He dares not violate national interests. He dares not reverse the national agenda. I want to assure you that I'll support the Prime Minister if he practices governance rightly in the interest of Pakistan."

The PPP denounced the comments as "the language used by all dictators in the past" and said it was "most arrogant" for a "handful of Generals" to define the national interests.

Pak parties up in arms against referendum bid

REUTERS

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 4

PAKISTAN'S main political parties condemned military ruler General Pervez Musharraf's plan to hold a referendum to extend his rule, arguing on Thursday the vote will subvert democracy and the Constitution.

General Musharraf won Cabinet approval on Wednesday for his plans to hold a referendum to extend his rule for another five years and will announce details in a national address on Friday.

Most analysts expect Musharraf to win the vote, expected in early May, by mobilising the machinery of state, despite opposition from the main political parties which were sidelined after the October 1999 coup.

The exercise might satisfy the West — Musharraf is valued as a key partner in the US-led war on terrorism and American support is all but guaranteed — but it is unlikely to give his regime much more than a thin veneer of legitimacy at home.

"The proposed referendum is unconstitutional, it is illegal," said Farhatullah Barbar, spokesman for exiled former prime minister Benazir Bhutto. "The sham referendum is an attempt to secure political legitimacy, but legitimacy will continue to elude him, as it has eluded dictators in the past," he said.

Other parties across the political spectrum expressed similar views, with the prospect of electing a president through a simple "Yes or No" viewed with horror. Only a few small parties have thrown their lot in with Musharraf.

Insiders say Musharraf is likely



Abdul Waheed Katpar (left), a defence lawyer of Sheikh Omar, with Ahmed Saeed Sheikh, father of Sheikh Omar, inside the premises of Sind High Court on Thursday. A court in Karachi turned down a defence bid to hold the trial in a normal court on Thursday. The trial of Sheikh Omar and three alleged accomplices for the murder of American reporter Daniel Pearl will go ahead in a Pakistani jail today, lawyers said. Reuters

Tough choices

■ ISLAMABAD: Pakistan appeared torn on Thursday on whether to keep military ruler Pervez Musharraf in power through a referendum, balancing a deep desire for stability with fears it would end hopes of real democracy.

But for some businessmen, who suffered through a decade of political and economic strife under elected governments before Musharraf staged a coup in October 1999, allowing Musharraf to continue his reforms was a bigger issue. "Pakistan needs Musharraf for the continuation of economic reforms," said Anwarul Haque, head of the Karachi trade body.

to offer Pakistan's people a simple question in the referendum — do they want him or not.

"There will probably be a sort of preamble listing the reforms he has brought about," said a senior government source privy to meetings on the referendum. "But the question will only be one ... he does not want any confusion."

After decades of misrule, many Pakistanis support Musharraf's efforts to clean up and modernise their country and analysts expect Musharraf to win the vote despite opposition from the political elite.

He is also likely to get support from district councils across the country, whose own legitimacy depends on Musharraf staying and will mobilise voters in his favour. Political parties, by contrast, will not be allowed to campaign.

Coming up: bad news for Gen Musharraf

SPECIAL TO THE EXPRESS

HUSAIN HAQQANI



If recent reports of the western media are any guide, General Pervez Musharraf's honeymoon as a western ally is gradually coming to an end. Soon after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, Pakistan's military ruler was hailed as one of the most significant members of the US-led coalition against terrorism. President George W. Bush, in his State of the Union address, praised General Musharraf, along with interim Afghan leader Hamid Karzai as the man who made the war against the Taliban possible.

Praise also came from the international media where General Musharraf was described as a visionary who wanted to save Pakistan from militant Islamists. But now the western media has started criticising the general. He is being accused of wavering in his commitment to build Pakistan as a moderate Muslim state. Given that western democracies are driven by public opinion, it is a matter of time before media criticism starts influencing policies in the world's major capitals.

General Musharraf's apolitical approach to governance led him to think that the crisis created by the September 11 attacks was his opportunity. He thought that complete support to American military operations, a few strong statements against terrorism and some restrictions against Pakistani militants was all that he needed to secure massive doses of US economic assistance. Once foreign assistance started flowing, the general expected that he would be able to transform the life of ordinary Pakistanis thereby ensuring their support for his vision of a 'democracy' guided by the military. But the political world — and all governance and international relations are politi-

cal — operates on slightly more complicated terms. The US, and other western nations expected a faster and broader change in Pakistan's policy direction than General Musharraf seems to have bargained for. The feeling that the shift in policy is somewhat limited in scope is causing concern that is increasingly being reflected in international media comments about General Musharraf and his regime.

The Pakistani president could have protected himself against such criticism by broadening the base of his government. The in-

fluence of the shift in his foreign policy. He saw himself as changing course "in the national interest", and thought everyone else should see things the way he does. The result is increased questioning of General Musharraf's contradictory stance, coupled with the general's own confusion over why people find it contradictory.

THE Western media's recent onslaught against General Musharraf is based on the allegation that his government is less effective than it claims to be. The general's own, rather unique, definition of democracy ("The peo-

ple can vote as long as I remain in charge") is also coming in for criticism. But the general's greatest problem seems to be that he cannot see his inconsistencies nor is he prepared to accept that his actions, rather than the machinations of his (and Pakistan's) adversaries, are responsible for the end of his honeymoon with the international community.

Some critics are blaming the US government for allowing General Musharraf to get away with a lot less than he should be doing to justify American support for Pakistan and his regime. Writing in the *Washington Post* recently, Jim

Hoagland asserted, "President Pervez Musharraf's failure to match promises with sustained action undermines Bush's campaign to make his war on terrorists a clear struggle of good vs. evil." Hoagland also accused General Musharraf of steadily backing away "from his January boldness even as Pakistan rakes in hundreds of millions of US dollars in aid." He then warns the US administration that "False allies are often more troublesome for America than declared enemies. The moral and diplomatic drift on Pakistan now strongly resembles the failure of the first Bush ad-

ministration on Iraq in the late 1980s..."

Such harsh language is not limited to foreign policy hawks in the US. The arbiter of liberal opinion in Britain, *The Guardian*, warned in an editorial, "Pakistan is entering perhaps its most fractious period of instability since September 11 forced General Pervez Musharraf to sign up for the 'war against terrorism'. Far from being fortified by US military aid and backslapping, Gen Musharraf is struggling to hold the line against resurgent extremist violence." According to the newspaper, "The self-styled Pakistani presi-



The Guardian on the General: Musharraf is struggling to hold the line against resurgent extremist violence... Students of double-dealing should note that over half those arrested have been quietly freed

as diverse as the *Baltimore Sun* and the *London Observer* have made similar points. The *NYT* editorial was captioned 'Musharraf's Travails', while an article in the *Observer* bore the self-explanatory title "The myth of the good General Musharraf". The *Baltimore Sun* article by former US Ambassador to Paraguay Timothy Towell ran under the heading 'Hollow alliance with Musharraf yields only empty promises'.

Having ruled out compromise with domestic political forces, General Musharraf had started counting on international support

and the legitimacy that his 1999 coup failed to confer." Armed with a genuine mandate from the Pakistani people, and transformed into a political leader instead of being a military man dedicated to the destruction of politicians, General Musharraf may yet be able to deliver on his promises of a better future for Pakistan.

(Husain Haqqani is currently a Visiting Scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington, D.C. He served as adviser to Pakistani Prime Ministers Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto)

counting on international support

Pak. Cabinet okays referendum plan

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By B. Muralidhar Reddy

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ISLAMABAD, APRIL 3. It is official now. The Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, would seek the mandate of people to stay on as President for a further period of five years. Opposition from the mainstream and religious parties has clearly not deterred his resolve for a referendum.

A joint session of the National Security Council and the Federal Cabinet chaired by Gen. Musharraf today unanimously approved holding of a national referendum on 'important national issues'. The President would address the nation on Friday to spell out details of the referendum. It could be held in early May.

The meeting was attended by the Service chiefs, Vice Chief of the Army Staff and the Provincial Governors besides members of the Cabinet. Gen. Musharraf appointed himself as the President days before the Agra Summit in July last after the then President, Rafiq Tarar, 'ceased' to be President. The legal argument was that with the dissolution of the National and Provincial Assemblies, which constitutes the electoral college for election of President, Mr. Tarar cannot continue in office.

Though the official statement is silent on whether continuation of Gen. Musharraf as President would be one of the issues to be framed as part of the wording of the referendum, it is more than evident from pointers in the last few days. There has been a spate of statements by influential functionaries in the Musharraf government in the last few days. In his interview to *The Hindu* last Thursday Gen. Musharraf had said that he would decide on the subject in a week or two. Most of the mainstream and religious parties, barring the MQM, have questioned the proposal for referendum and termed it as illegal and unconstitutional. The Jamaat-e-Islami has, in fact, filed a petition in the Supreme Court questioning the ascendancy of Gen. Musharraf to the post of President.

Besides seeking the 'approval' of people on continuation of Gen. Musharraf for a further term of five years, the referendum is expected to ask mandate on the package of 'political and economic' measures undertaken and proposed by his regime. Gen. Musharraf has been persistently talking of introduction of a system under which the future governments could not reverse the reform process.

Argue with Bonaparte?

PRAD
Musharraf toys with ideas of referendum.

Musharraf wants to hold a referendum some time in May this year to get himself legitimised as President before any election that may be held in October; his own proposal accepted by the Supreme Court. A referendum is a simple and effective device to avoid a political contest, all the voter will be asked is to say yes to Musharraf. The only problem Musharraf will have to contend with is a possible no from a majority of voters, but then what is the army there for? He's already got the Supreme Court to swear an oath of allegiance to him, personally, and to render a guilty verdict in the Nawaz Sharif case. The army has a stranglehold on the institutions of the state. It is true that the election commission has contradicted Musharraf by saying that he couldn't prevent Sharif or Bhutto from contesting elections, but then he doesn't need to lean on the EC for that, he's got Pakistan's foremost civilian leaders nicely entangled in legal difficulties. Sharif, convicted, is in exile in Saudi Arabia and Bhutto is threatened with arrest the moment she sets foot on Pakistani soil. The judiciary is there, but will it object? Remains to be seen. Right now it doesn't look as if it has the spine to make Musharraf stick to the October deadline. All sorts of expedients can be found to extend that deadline and, generally, to make things conducive for Musharraf to continue being president of his country. You can't argue with Bonaparte: "I found the crown of France lying in my path, I picked it up with my sword."

Before September 11, most people were of the opinion that Musharraf's lack of a political base would be a problem for him, especially when it came to putting his mildly liberalising policies into practice and tackling the jihadis and their allies in conservatism, the traders and shopkeepers. Before that date, one only saw one lamentable capitulation after another, on issues such as disarming the jihadis and imposing sales tax. After that, however, things have changed. A powerful imperative has been created for Musharraf to act as he wishes by Pakistan's participation in the American — sorry, global — coalition against terrorism, by virtue of which that country has practically been placed under American tutelage! Sanctions have been lifted and IMF facilities restored in step with Musharraf's compliance with demands. The disappearance of the Taliban has taken off some more pressure. The main thing is that he has been able to sell an anti-radical Islam line of thinking to the Army. Musharraf will remain president as long as he retains the loyalty of the army in which the Americans will help him considerably since they think he is their man. On the other hand, with Afghanistan gone and terrorism, especially Islamic terrorism, a bad word, Islamic fellow travellers in the Army have seen both their agenda and their importance diminish. This works in Musharraf's favour too.

There is no threat from the established political parties either. The Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy, that brings the PML, PPP and others together on a single platform, is politically ineffective. They are unable to get a mass movement against Musharraf going, probably because the masses aren't particularly bothered. They've seen Sharif and Bhutto and have decided that Musharraf is no worse. Whatever happens in October, if at all anything, the hunch is that Musharraf will be around for a while. /r

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THE STATESMAN

Let us look to the future...

AD-13



never allow them to come into politics again. If they have a place then I don't have a place.

Finally, is there hope of moving relations between India and Pakistan to a better level?

Frankly, I have a grouse that the Indian leadership has converted the positive Indian public opinion and positive media opinion into a negative one. I went to Agra with all sincerity and had all the sincerity when I came back even though we were let down in Agra by your leadership. In SAARC when we met, I showed all my positive attitude there. There is this continuous negative propaganda against Pakistan and me and a deliberate attempt to convert a healthy environment into an unhealthy environment... we haven't done anything to deserve this kind of attitude... it is all being done at the behest of happenings in India. There is a kind of hatred between the two countries which did not exist in Agra in July. In seven or eight months, the environment has changed from good to bad. And it is not our fault at all if I may say. We haven't done anything to invite such change. This is my disappointment.

How would you beat this if this is how you feel? How do you overcome this negative environment?

I don't know. I was creative in SAARC when I went there, I wanted to meet the Prime Minister, I went up and shook hands with him. It was disappointment again when people said it is gimmicky and sort of PR. I am not a PR man. I am a realist. I believe in acting on whatever I like to do...

When I see that these twelve years of ruin that was done by Mr. Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto, they certainly have no place in Pakistan. I don't want them to come and plunder this country."

Whatever I am thinking in my mind and in my heart I do. If I thought I must shake hands with Mr. Vajpayee, I went and shook hands. Now there was no acting going on. I wasn't acting, I wasn't pretending. It wasn't meant for the cameras, it was an urge that I just felt and I went and shook hands with him. Now let us not read between the lines. I am not that kind of a man. It is unfortunate. It hurt me again... the media saying that I am a PR man, trying to act all the time... it is not showmanship, it is reality.

So what do you want to see now happening between India and Pakistan?

Sincerely, we want friendship. In the immediate context we need to de-escalate but if India thinks I am saying so because it is going to bleed us, they are sadly mistaken. You want to stay one year or two years or five years on the border, we are prepared to stay five years on the border.

I am saying all this in sincerity that we need to de-escalate in the interests of both the countries. In the interest of armies of both the countries, I know what the Indian army is feeling. No army feels very happy staying in the desert for years now. When the summer comes I don't know what they will be feeling because most of your army, I know where they are concentrated, they are all in the deserts. Let them remain in the deserts. There are about I think 7 or 8 divisions in the desert. Let them remain there. We will feel happy. Let us see them spending summers in the deserts.

But the need is to move forward...

Honestly, I don't know. I have done so much. We have moved against extremism here... We encouraged the United States who is mediating. We know that they are telling them to talk. We have said we are prepared to talk but we are not getting positive responses from the Indian side. Not at all, we are not getting it at all. In fact, on the contrary, every time anyone talks it is all negative. I really don't know where to go from here. We have done everything. Do-



unflock. You see, in diplomacy they say that you should always keep the door a little open but here we are being taught a new form of diplomacy. Slam the door shut and now ask the other side to please open the door for us. Why should I open the door for you? You slammed it shut. You open it yourself. I didn't slam it shut for you. All that has happened, it is just unfortunate.

I am sorry to be showing this emotion but I would like you to convey this to the people of India and to the Indian media that I am open to peace in the region. We want peace in the region. We want to resolve disputes, all disputes, I repeat, all disputes. I read articles, I read statements that he is just talking of Kashmir. I have said a hundred times that I am prepared to talk on every issue but let us not be naive, let us not bluff ourselves — Kashmir is the main issue. We will discuss every issue but Kashmir has to be accepted as the main issue.

Why can't we live in harmony and when we are talking of harmony, let me also say that it is the elder brother, it is the elder partner, we are far from calling each other brothers, but it's the elder brother who has to show magnanimity. It is the bigger partner who has to show magnanimity. Magnanimity does not come from the smaller partner. It is always from the bigger one. If I have a relationship with a smaller country I have to show magnanimity. I will not expect magnanimity from a smaller country because it has its honour to guard, its dignity to protect. It is the bigger one which should stoop down and give them ease and comfort... that's not being done by the bigger force here. Unfortunately, they are expecting every time the smaller force to come begging and crawling to them. We don't crawl. We're not going to crawl.

mestically, we have taken actions, which could have encouraged positive response from the Indian side. We didn't see it. At SAARC, we again sat down, I took action which could have de-escalated now. It did not take place.

"It is the bigger partner who has to show magnanimity. Magnanimity does not come from the smaller partner."

And then this, the closing of the airspace. Now who did that? Who did that? Why did this happen? And, interestingly, you are suffering far more. India is suffering far more than Pakistan. Far more. We have calculated I am going to lose 200 million rupees in a year if this carries on. Peanuts okay? We know how much India is going to suffer.

We know there are about 140 flights, some people say 130 or 150 or 160 flights. Obviously, how can you go Afghanistan, how can you go to Russia? Can you go to Russia? You take a detour anywhere you go, to the east, to the west you have to take a lot of detours. Look at what you are suffering. Why did you have to close the airspace? Look at the tension which is being created for nothing and then expecting me to

...Continued from previous page

that is not happening, fifty years have gone by, or let us say after the Shimla Accord which brought in this word of bilateralism, now since Shimla Accord, thirty years have gone by, where have we gone, what have we achieved, other than Siachen, okay I will include Kargil... Siachen, Kargil, this firing and shooting each other, what have we achieved? Have we moved an inch ahead in resolving disputes? Yes, there was a bus diplomacy, which is being boasted about by India. Yes, there was a good beginning, but if it had led to some kind of a negotiation further on Kashmir, it would have been positive.

You have taken on a huge challenge in combating terrorism internally, you have taken major steps to strengthen secularism here, abolished separate electorates for minorities, reforming madrassas... why not take political democracy a step further... why introduce talk of referendum and why say people like Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif should not contest elections? Does that not impair the whole resolve to make Pakistan a genuine democracy?

Every country has its environment. All actions are dependent on the local environment and our local experience. I am taking action keeping our national interest in view and seeing our past experiences. When you see the twelve years experience between 1987 and 1999 of so-called democracy in Pakistan, where we have had four democratically-elected governments, two by Nawaz Sharif and two by Benazir, both of them led to disaster for this country. Economic disaster, administrative disaster, political disaster. So now, when we are now coming into elections and I am trying to do political restructuring, I said my focus was on four things, fight from October 1999. Economic revival of Pakistan, poverty alleviation in Pakistan, bringing good governance to all spheres of activities in Pakistan and political restructuring. I have not missed this focus at all. I took each one of them and

'INDIA SHOULD OPEN THE DOOR TO TALKS'

Pak. has done enough to curb terrorism: Musharraf

By Malini Parthasarathy

ISLAMABAD. The President of Pakistan, Pervez Musharraf, is of the firm view that his actions in recent months including the banning of the two terrorist organisations, the Jaish-e-Mohammed and the Lashkar-e-Taiba, thereby taking steps to curb terrorism directed at India have provided enough reason for India to de-escalate the military standoff on the border and to start talking. Both countries "have had enough... let us start going back. I think we should start talking," he said. The Pakistan President also suggested that there could be an immediate ceasefire on the Line of Control where firing has resumed.

In an exclusive hour-long interview at his Army House residence in Rawalpindi last Thursday evening, the first such interview to an Indian publication since last July, the Pakistan President pointed out that actions taken to "crush extremism" which he had taken in Pakistan's own national interest "very fortunately" happen to "coincide in certain forms with whatever Indian desires are...". His administration had taken "so much action" in Pakistan's own internal environment to "curb terrorism". This, he said, "was enough reason, much more than enough reason for any leadership in India to have decided to de-escalate... but unfortunately they are so slow in their response." The inability to take "concrete action fast enough" would mean letting go of "fleeting opportunities". Asked what could be a meeting point between India and Pakistan, given the virtually unbridgeable gap between the hard positions on both sides, Gen. Musharraf said: "Frankly, the meeting point is very clear, we have to start talking and without preconditions... let's stop da-

maging each other, let's resolve these disputes."

Asked whether he would not take a fresh initiative to break the stalemate, Gen. Musharraf said that Pakistan had said that it was prepared to talk but "we are not getting any positive responses from the Indian side... we have done everything... domestically we have taken actions that could have encouraged positive response from the Indian side... we didn't see it...". He also indicated that since he felt that Pakistan had taken enough steps to prove its sincerity and which offered a basis for India to begin de-escalating the military build-up on the border with Pakistan, he expected the next move to come from India. "In diplomacy, they say that you should always keep the door a little open but here we are being taught a new form of diplomacy... slam the door shut and now ask the other side to open the door... why should I open the door for you? You slammed it shut, open it yourself, I didn't slam it shut for you."

Gen. Musharraf made clear many times in the course of the interview his deep sense of disappointment with what he characterised as a negative official Indian attitude towards him since September 11 which he saw as being fuelled by a calculation that the post-September 11 international context would give India an opportunity to have Pakistan "sorted out" and which was belied subsequently. He said that his own hostile references to India had been in the nature of a reaction to what he saw as a constant attempt to malign him. He particularly singled out the statements of the Union Home Minister, L.K. Advani, and the Union Defence Minister, George Fernandes, as "offensive" and "insulting". As regards the attack on Parliament on December 13, he said "that was most unfortunate... and if

also knew that there were terrorist acts being committed in Pakistan by "RAW and Indian intelligence". But mutual recrimination was not the road to take, he said. "A lot of bad has been done by both countries against each other. This is not one-sided...let's not dig into the past, let us look to the future..."

The Pakistan President also expressed his amusement at what he saw as India's "hypocrisy" in its taking the stance that it did not want mediation or facilitation by a third party in the India-Pakistan relationship. Asserting that the two countries were still at a point very close to war, given the massed capability on both sides of the border, resulting in an "explosive" situation, Gen. Musharraf pointed out that even while India kept asserting it did not want facilitation, the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, was on the phone almost everyday to the Prime Minister, A.B. Vajpayee, or to the External Affairs Minister, Jaswant Singh. "And almost every day, or every second day, he was talking to me... of course the mediatory role was played by Mr Powell..."

He also asked that if India did not want mediation, why then did Indian officials not pick up the phone and talk directly to Pakistan? "I am willing to talk but they don't talk."

Asked whether the Agra process could be picked up and resumed, the Pakistan President who expressed his appreciation of the warm and positive response he had received from the Indian people during his visit last July, said: "Yes, we would love to go back to the Agra process. Why can't we?" He reiterated that Pakistan had invited both the Prime Minister and External Affairs Minister to Islamabad, invitations which had been accepted, yet now India does "not want to play cricket with us... why should we not

play cricket with each other?" He was also critical of the Indian decision to close the airspace between the two countries, maintaining that the decision had adversely affected India's economic interests more than Pakistan's.

Gen. Musharraf who pointedly praised Mr. Vajpayee and Mr. Jaswant Singh as "very realistic and very pragmatic" in implied contrast to Mr. Advani and Mr. Fernandes said that he was hurt and disappointed by the portrayal of his handshake with Mr. Vajpayee at the SAARC summit in Kathmandu as "gimmicky and PR". He said: "Whatever I am thinking in mind and heart, I do... I thought I must shake hands with Mr. Vajpayee, I went and shook hands. I wasn't acting, I wasn't pretending... it was not showmanship."

He wanted this particular interview to contain the message to the Indian people that he was "open to peace in the region" and that he wanted "to resolve all disputes", he was "ready to discuss every issue" provided Kashmir was accepted as the main issue of contention between the two countries. The Pakistan President also said "we sincerely want friendship... in the immediate context, we need to de-escalate in the interests of both countries, in the interests of the armies of both countries." Pakistan wanted to "live in harmony" with India which ought to behave like the "elder brother" and show magnanimity to the smaller country. "I would not expect magnanimity from the smaller country because it has its honour to guard, its dignity to protect. Unfortunately here, the bigger force is expecting the smaller force to come begging and crawling to it. We are not going to crawl," he said.

Details of the interview on Pages 12, 13



The Pakistan President, Gen. Musharraf, at the interview.

— Photo: By special arrangement

anyone thinks that the Government of Pakistan is involved in that, he is talking nonsense... obviously we are not involved and we regret that this took place."

On the list of the 20 wanted terrorists handed over to Pakistan, asked whether even if not immediately legally feasible, a political gesture could be made to India by handing over some of the most visible names such as Dawood Ibrahim and the hijackers of IC 814, Gen. Musharraf pointed out that most of the names on the list had nothing to do with the December 13 attack, except for the JeM's Masood Azhar. "He is behind bars, his party is banned, his accounts are frozen, their offices are locked, what more do you want?" He added that Pakistan had asked India for more evidence on Azhar's involvement as it would be in its

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Let us look to the future, says Musharraf

By Malini Parthasarathy

THANKS TO the ban on direct flights between India and Pakistan, the route to the interview with the President of the country next door was long and circuitous, flying all the way out to Dubai to traverse the same airpath in the reverse direction all the way back across the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea, skirting Iran and Afghanistan and finally back to the subcontinent. It is the first interview to a journalist from India after the deep chill that has set in between New Delhi and Islamabad since September 11, and more pertinently, December 13. Little of that frostiness is evident in the warmth that greets you in Pakistan with officials and people alike showing no trace of the animosity that has two armies grimly confronting each other on the border.

The drive to the interview late Thursday evening takes 45 minutes as we are to meet the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, at Army House, the residence he has in his capacity as Chief of Army Staff, in the Army Cantonment area near Rawalpindi. Muralidhar Reddy, the Hindu's correspondent in Islamabad, who is accompanying me to the interview, points out as we drive on the highway to Rawalpindi that this is an area normally off limits to Indian journalists and that we are glimpsing rare terrain. At Army House, the wait is not long and Gen. Musharraf emerges, in informal attire. For someone who has been in the eye of the storm since September 11 and has found himself pitchforked to the centre of international attention, some unwelcome, he appears curiously stress-free and in fact eager to put his message across through this interview to a wider audience in India. So conscious was he of the fact that this interview represented an opening to public opinion in India that he was quick to seize upon examples that illustrated his arguments. That my own journey had taken a circuitous and time-consuming route was a point that he could not resist using in his own argument. With a gleam in his eye, he pointed to this as an example of how India is suffering more from the flight ban than Pakistan. And, when we concluded the interview, he was quick to note that in contrast to his readiness to give interviews to Indian journalists, the same was not true of the leadership in Delhi. Pakistani journalists had not been given the same access, he complained and pointed out that in giving this interview, he had chosen not to react in the same vein.

(Excerpts from the interview.)

Malini Parthasarathy: You have been seen as being so creative in tackling terrorism here internally and setting Pakistan on a new path in terms of fighting fundamentalism but why is it that the same creativity does not seem to apply to the relationship with India which is still held hostage by old issues and old themes? Is it possible at all for you to make any new gesture that can break the stalemate given that both sides have taken hard positions? Given the intractability of positions on both sides, at this moment do you see yourself being able to make any new move that can break the stalemate?

Gen. Musharraf: Well, I would like you to see the history of what happened after my visit to Agra. I would like to say that between my visit to Agra which was July last year and now... I went there with an open mind and am glad to say that I saw a very open and flexible mind from the Indian side also, from the Prime Minister's side and the Foreign Minister's side. I saw a very positive response from the media. I saw a very positive response from the intelligentsia. I saw a very positive stance from the people — who welcomed me — and I think the dialogue went very well right up to the third day when we were about to sign a Declaration. The text was even agreed till it got fouled... let us not get into the reasons but I am very clear that it was not from my side. An agreed text of the Declaration was fouled up by somebody from that end behind the scene...

Fouled up?

Yes, of course, the official reason given to me by no less than the Prime Minister of India was that the Cabinet did not approve it. It is up to you to judge whether the Cabinet was there or not there in Agra. In two hours when an agreed text was there and it was said that the Cabinet did not approve it and it was rejected. We agreed to another text again in about three-four hours, I cancelled my visit to Ajmer Sharif. We accepted that text again which was very good, accepting that the centrality of Kashmir was the main stumbling block. Again we accepted. Again the official version was, after one hour, when we were ready for the signing ceremony, that again the Cabinet has not accepted it and rejected it. Now we know what the Cabinet was. So now whatever the reason, okay it was rejected. Unfortunately, we went in a very open manner. Now we come back. Now what has happened since then, since that time and now? I would ask you a counter question: What has Pakistan done in the meantime? What has Pakistan done to furl the relationship?

May I tell you what it seems on the other side... in fact, that was the question I had in mind for you — when you came back from Agra, there was some sort of basis to believe that the dialogue could go on. But after September 11, both Governments tended to have an element of opportunism in their approach to what happened subsequently. In India, it was said that this was the time to tackle terrorism in Pakistan. In your speech on September 19, you said that you saw India as taking opportunistic advantage of the whole thing and therefore you had to take that course. By then, both India and Pakistan seemed to have reacted in a zero-sum game sort of fashion.

Yes, that happened but again if I said anything, if I said anything it was always in response to something that was coming from the other side. It was always in response to the Indian side, the Defence Minister, the Home Minister and the Prime Minister saying that they are going to punish us, they are going to come across the border, they will remove cross-border terrorism, they are going to attack us... this was what was happening. And because after 11th September they clearly started blaming that there is terrorism here in Pakistan

and that we are going to join the coalition, United States and India, and here is Pakistan which is a terrorist state and we have to sort them out. This is the kind of talk that was going on. Between July and September nothing happened. I was very quiet. In fact, I was on the contrary, let me tell you, in all my interviews so guarded. On this aspect, I did not want to malign either the Foreign Minister or the Prime Minister and I was so respectful towards them and so positive towards them in the interviews, because some people were saying all kinds of bad things, because they said why was the declaration not there, and this and that, and they were not being respectful towards them, and I used to correct them, and I used to tell them that you are talking of leaders in a country and you can't be that rude, so I was very polite... very good. Then comes 11th September and here suddenly a change takes place, where we are accused of terrorism, we are accused that whatever is happening in Afghanistan is because of Pakistan, because of what our policies have been and if they are terrorists, and if there is terrorism and Islamic or religious extre-



Musharraf speaking at a podium during an interview.

mism there, we are the source of that, and that a similar kind of environment is there in Pakistan.

This is the kind of talk that started from across. The obvious defence was, obviously it was a big challenge for us. Because United States... all this had subsequently happened in Afghanistan. So we had to take certain actions. Now imagine the tension here, on one side there is Afghanistan, on the other side United States' desire to attack them and they have a military operation there and certain demands being placed on us. And here is India on the other side, who is threatening us from the east. Now look at my predicament. What kind of a predicament I am in? There is threat all around. There is vulnerability in the west, the whole world is joining and ready to attack them and then this threatening noise from the east, our internal problems, I mean, I was in a fix. So I think the Indian leadership, I must say, with all my sincerity, it was most unfair on their part to have taken advantage, to have tried to take advantage of a political situation after September 11. They tried to take advantage because they thought if they join the coalition with the United States and we kept obstinately on the other side with Al-Qaeda and Afghanistan, that we are going to be sorted out and that would be to their advantage. Unfortunately that did not happen. And now they continued with this rhetoric... yes I had to respond. Sometimes my military urge does come in... if you see any statement of Mr. George Fernandes, Mr. Advani, these two specially, they were so offensive and they were so insulting... I wouldn't say the same about the Foreign Minister. He is diplomatic, he is a diplomat and he ought to be diplomatic...

But you know the suggestion, the implication especially since Agra, that there is a distinction being made by Pakistan portraying Mr. Vajpayee and Mr. Jaswant Singh as being the doves and Mr. Advani and the others as hawks... this is seen in India as trying to divide... implying that there is a division within the establishment...

Yes, indeed, I really think so because I have no doubts. I mean, is there a doubt in that? Look at what I have seen with my own eyes... This is not an information to me. It is my first-hand information. Now I sat with Prime Minister Vajpayee and for two days we thrashed out a Declaration. The language of it, the paragraphing of it, was discussed between me and Prime Minister Vajpayee. We then included Mr. Jaswant Singh and Mr. Sattar and the four of us

"Masood Azhar is behind bars. His party is banned. His accounts are frozen. Their offices are locked. What more do you want? Should I go and shoot him?"

agreed to a text including the wordings, including the wordings, I repeat.

What was the main issue?

The main issue was that centrality of Kashmir. My concern was that we must somehow accept that we have to discuss the Kashmir issue, not a dispute, they didn't want to call it a dispute, I said okay, call it an issue, in order to improve the relations between India and Pakistan. This was accepted by both of us.

But they said that you didn't agree to elevating terrorism and cross-border terrorism to the top of the agenda...

No, certainly not and they did not let me. Did not let you?

I wouldn't comment on that.

You should please tell us...

No, they did not. They did it initially for a minute, or I think, once this issue of cross-border terrorism was raised and I did say — Mr. Prime Minister, you don't expect me to accept cross-border terrorism. This is wrong. There is nothing going on across the border and it is not a border, it is a Line of Control and also there is no terrorism, there is a freedom struggle going on there. So what I would say is that after that, there was no word of cross-border terrorism but there was certainly that all issues will be discussed. Now they keep blaming me that I was uni-focal, I had accepted, yes all issues will be discussed.

All issues with their implications?

We would discuss all issues but the focus is on Kashmir. There were two or three sentences in one of the paras where the centrality of Kashmir was accepted. Terrorism was included in the second last paragraph... we had said that we will together resolve all issues, the first one was the issue of Kashmir, the issue of Jammu and Kashmir and terrorism, not cross-border terrorism.

That was flexible enough to accommodate different perspectives...

Yes, of course. So we had accepted. So the text was totally accepted. I went to change and come back for the signing ceremony because I was to fly off to Ajmer Sharif. So I am very clear that these two, which is the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister, accepted and there was no difference of opinion between me and them. We accepted this. Now what more can I say now? So therefore I am very clear that, whether you call them moderates or doves or whatever you may call them, I don't know what you would like to call them, but I would like to call them very realistic and very pragmatic and then there is somebody behind the scene whoever it is, and I personally think it was Mr. Advani.

Can I come now to the present?

I was trying to tell you that what I did was after that. I did respond sometimes offensively but that was because I was extremely agitated and disgusted and disappointed with this attitude that came about in spite of our positive response and in spite of their having wronged the whole thing in Agra and yet they are blaming me and Pakistan and trying to malign us. So there were some negative responses from my side also in retaliation to what they were saying. Then comes this incident of Parliament attack

December 13.

Now that was most unfortunate. Now if anyone thinks that the Government of Pakistan is involved in that, I think he is talking nonsense. Obviously we are not involved. Now we regret that this took place.

May I just ask here... initially I think you condemned it. Then I think General Rashid Qureshi here was the one who kind of dismissed it, he said that Indian intelligence agencies may have been at work. So I think the public opinion in India became a little alienated by that. There is also a genuine fear of citizens, I am talking of ordinary people who feel that there is an unsympathetic attitude on your part towards the problem of terrorism...

(Gesturing towards Gen. Qureshi seated across...) Whatever he said was actually... when somebody starts saying that it is Pa-

what would be the response? Then the response is to say no, probably it is the RAW which has got it done. ISI would be mad to do it in that environment when all that is happening. Do you think the ISI is going to carry out this stupid Parliament attack? I must say it is most inefficient of ISI to have done such a stupid kind of terrorist attack where all five got killed without achieving anything.

Even assuming most people didn't believe that, most people didn't suggest that, the real difficulty in convincing public opinion is in regard to issues like the list of 20 wanted terrorists handed over to you... you've said what you think about it but suppose you want to make a gesture of goodwill towards India... a political gesture rather than a legal approach... hand over some of the more visible offenders on that list... Dawood Ibrahim... the hijackers of IC 814, for instance? Responding to India's request politically, not necessarily legally.

Now the issue is — whenever we traded these verbal attacks with each other, after this Parliament attack, the question is: is it rational to raise it to the level of what we have got on the borders now? That you move your entire Army, Navy and Air Force against Pakistani borders. Is that the kind of response from a balanced leadership? So this is what has happened. Now, over and above that, the issue was a list of 20. Now do you think you can humiliate Pakistan, and you think you can rub our nose on the ground to submission and we are going to accept? Even if we are weaker than what we are, we will never accept it. I am never going to accept it. What kind of list? Rubbish. I will say straight and I am not going to accept it. So this kind of offensive attitude, treating another country like dirt, like as if

them is linked with that.

Masood Azhar has been named as the person who organised the attack... his name is on the list.

Masood Azhar has been named as the person who organised, okay? Now, Masood Azhar is the head of the Jaish-e-Mohammed. Right? Now we say we want evidence against him. Now what have we done against Masood Azhar? He is behind bars. His party is banned. His accounts are frozen. Their offices are locked. What more do you want? Should I go and shoot him? What more do you want? And then when I am more — give evidence, it would be in my interest to try him here. I am not going to give him before trying him here... But no evidence whatsoever. Zero evidence. So what are you talking? We have done everything against Masood Azhar.

The rest — there are people who are Pakistanis and some non-Pakistanis. Now

"Neither are we Afghanistan, nor should India think it is the United States. This is not the situation at all."

nothing to do with the Parliament. Pakistanis, we will never give any Pakistanis. We have our law. We will try them here. Now the question is on non-Pakistanis. None of them is here. And we need evidence. We need proof. Wherever they are, we would like to take action against them. But, however, I would go to the extent of saying — now why are we digging into the past? The past has not been good between the two countries and I don't want to elaborate on this. If we are talking of terrorists, people who are involved in terrorist activities in

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India, we know that the terrorist acts being carried out here in Pakistan are by RAW, by Indian intelligence. Now if we start digging into the past, a lot of bad, a lot of wrong has been done by both countries against each other and I know it for sure and I am being very frank about it. This is not one-sided. Both have been doing a lot of damage to each other and I want to close it at this. Whoever is doing it, intelligence agencies or whatever but a lot of wrong has been done by both countries. Let's not dig into the past. Let us look to the future. For heaven's sake, are we going to keep living in the past? Why can't we look forward? Why can't we think about the future?

You talk of Kargil, I will talk about Siachen, I will talk of East Pakistan. So where do we end up? So let us not talk about that. The problem is India, in its — I would like to call it — arrogance of their strength, wants to dictate terms to us. You are talking



of Kargil, why the hell should I talk of Kargil, okay I would like to talk about Siachen. So there is no end to this. We have fought wars and damaged each other. We are fighting on Siachen every day and it is the soldiers who are being killed there and I know it is more Indian soldiers dying there. I know that.

Since December, have we ever really been very close to real war? How close have we been to war?

Even now, I see closeness to war from two points, you have to gauge the intention and the capability of any opponent. When you are talking rhetoric, you have the intention but if the force is not there to convert that intention into practical action, one is safe. The moment you bring in force, you deploy forces, you develop a capability. And when the intention and capability both are there, then it is extremely explosive.

Did you come that close this time?

Yes it was on the Indian side, I must say, when the entire Air Force, entire hi-tech aircrafts of the Indian Air Force, was massed on our borders, major part of the Army including forces from the Eastern Command coming all the way from the Bangladesh-Assam area — coming all the way here and spending that kind of money, may I say, without much purpose. They had come here against us. So this is the capability being developed.

Was there ever a point when you or Mr. Vajpayee could have picked up the phone to speak to each other to defuse the situation?

No, I didn't but there is a background. Of course, the mediatory role was being played by Mr. Colin Powell. Now you keep saying — we don't want any mediation, we don't want facilitation. Let us not be hypocrites. Everyday Mr. Powell was speaking to Prime Minister Mr. Vajpayee or Jaswant Singh, one of them, I know that. And almost everyday or every second day he was talking to me. So what kind of hypocrisy is this? "We don't want facilitation". Okay, then. Then pick up the phone and let us talk. I am willing to talk but they don't talk. They don't want facilitation. Yet they are talking to Mr. Colin Powell. I really don't understand. There is too much of confusion. I don't understand. I am confused myself. What do they want? They don't want facilitation but yet they are doing it. They don't want to go to war but the troops are there. I really do not know.

Now, getting back to the capability, there was a stage when the intention was there and the capability was also there. That was a critical time which was there for a number of days I would say may be some weeks even.

Was it before your January 12 speech?

Yes I think before the January 12 speech. That was the period of maximum tension but then we saw that there was a gradual

mellowing in the rhetoric. So one could see a gradual reduction in intention but the capability remained, and the capability still remains, so therefore though the tension is slightly lesser because the intention seems to have gone down; but the capability is there. But more dangerous is that the intention can develop even tomorrow. In one hour you can change your intention. So the more dangerous part is the capability and that still remains. Capability of anything is there on both sides. Our forces are ready to meet any contingency. Therefore the situation is explosive.

There is the feeling that since Sept. 11 you seem so visibly empathetic to the United States' concern of going after terrorists, going after all people involved in terrorist activities but yet you continue to insist that Kashmir ought to be treated differently, that freedom fighters are not terrorists. On January 12, you changed

slightly to say that even for the cause of Kashmir, terrorism cannot be used. But it continues to bother the Indian people that you seem to have double standards on terrorism.

Now let us take a look at what we did. We hadn't done anything. Everything that happened after Sept. 11 and now, the tension, the escalation, everything has been done by India. Now the issue is what have we done? My speech of 12th January, now I was analysing our internal environment and I wanted to bring harmony.

I wanted to crush this extremism here. I wanted to eliminate this environment of intolerance from our society. This I had started long time back. In fact, I had banned two organisations, I think in July last year much before 11th September. But now on the 12th of January in our own national interest, let me say that whatever I have done is in our national interest.

But luckily, very fortunately, I would say this national interest of ours also coincides in certain forms with whatever Indian desires are. Now, if you see, that we thought Jaish-e-Mohammed is an organisation which is bringing a bad name to us which is involved in extremism, I told you we have banned them. We have banned Lashkar-e-Taiba. We have banned two political parties. Now all this and we have taken so much action in our internal environment to curb extremism. This was enough reason, much more than enough reason for any leadership in India to have decided to de-

"They are playing hockey, they are playing under-19 cricket but not Test cricket. Frankly, we feel that you are scared of losing."

escalate. But unfortunately they are so slow in their response. Either there is disharmony within, again, and that is why I say there is probably some disharmony within their ranks because it is a coalition and I don't know. But because of that disharmony they are unable to take concrete action fast, fast enough... and these are fleeting opportunities which come about. If you don't take advantage of that, the opportunity is gone and now they again want that I should take some action which gives them an excuse to de-escalate. Now I am saying why should I keep giving this kind of excuse and why don't they create it themselves. And why is Pakistan required to be taking actions to give them a reason to de-escalate? I would say the reason to de-escalate is enough, we have had enough, let us start going back. I think we should start talking, that is all. I think one should be strong enough to say that.

The United States seems to agree that action from you in terms of containing infiltration from across the border is necessary. Their officials have made statements... they seem to be suspending judgment as to whether the levels of infiltration from across the LOC have come down...

Now very clearly, Americans know it and I know that. They may be saying anything. I know that they know that this is indigenous — whatever is going on. Now I have been telling everyone frankly, that what India is trying to do is, there is a genuine freedom struggle going on there, there is a genuine demand by the people of Kashmir against all the atrocities that they are suffering, there are 70,000 dead, we know that there are graveyards full of them. And no NGO is allowed, no international human rights organisations are allowed. No media is allowed to go into Kashmir. So what is the secrecy?



The media is allowed.

Foreign media does not go there. Let foreign media go there. Open Kashmir up and let anyone see whether it is indigenous or not. Now what are they trying? They are trying to convert an indigenous freedom struggle into an issue of cross-border terrorism. This is what they are trying. And let me with full confidence, having now interacted with all world leaders, tell you, everyone knows that there is an indigenous freedom struggle going on. I am fully confident that everyone knows it. All countries of the world know it. Now if there is anything across the border happening, it is not being encouraged by us at all.

But I at the same time keep saying that

there is sympathy for Kashmir all what-ever is happening there because there is an Azad Kashmir here and there is Kashmiris there. There are Kashmiris all over the world, in U.K. All of them have sympathy

But there is this other consideration. If India is making some attempt at political reconciliation in Kashmir, attempting an electoral process, there are people in Pakistan such as the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen who have made threats from Lahore to the Hurriyat leaders warning them that they participate in elections, they will bleed. Is that not encouraging terrorist intimidation in Kashmir?

Now, India is trying to be clever. What kind of election? They don't want elections. They want elections to decide whether they want to be with India or not. How can you have elections in a disputed territory? Kashmir is a disputed territory. The people of Kashmir don't want to stay with India.

But should you allow terrorist organisations here to intimidate potential interlocutors such as the Hurriyat leaders, saying that if you participate in elections, you will die?

Well, nobody intends intimidating them. As I said there is a moral, political, emotional involvement from this side with the Kashmiris on that side. So anything that is going on, any change or interaction is going on between them is in line with this. So I know that the people of Kashmir themselves — we call it Indian-held Kashmir — they don't want to participate in the elections. It was clear in the last elections, there was no turnout. And we know that Army and other forces were used to make them come and force them to vote. You take the Army out, not one man will come and vote.

On Kashmir, it is a dispute but not like Palestine... the origin of the Kashmir problem is not like Palestine where the indigenous people have been displaced. Kashmir is more a question of Partition's unfinished legacy.

There are lots of similarities. Both are United Nations Security Council-recognised disputes. So is Kashmir, Kashmir is a dispute recognised by the United Nations Security Council. So we have to sit down and talk. We have to sit down and talk. There are no two ways about it. And if there is any clever manipulation, that instead of sitting down and talking, we are talking of — okay you stop cross-border terrorism and thank you very much, that is all, the whole thing is over. No, that is not over because there is that indigenous struggle that is going on. It will continue.

No, but given that Pakistan has a cer-

tain position, India has a certain position on Kashmir, and the gap is very intractable, there have been rounds and rounds and rounds trying to bridge the gap... is there anything new that you can give to break this stalemate? How do we find a meeting point?

Frankly, the meeting point is very clear. We have to start talking. I don't see any other meeting point. I just don't see any other meeting point. We have to start talking and without any pre-conditions. Let's stop damaging each other, let's resolve these disputes.

Given that you have to talk, do you see a point where you can return and pick up the Agra process? Can you go back to the Agra process, is it possible?

Yes, we would love to go back to the Agra process. Why can't we?

We have invited both the Foreign Minister and the Prime Minister. They don't want to come. They don't want to play cricket with us. What kind of relationship is this? Why should we not play cricket with each other? Why did the under-19 team play cricket with us? They played cricket with us. Your under-19 team. So what is the issue?

Frankly, it all leads to all kind of confusion in our mind that there is some kind of game in everything. There is no frankness, there is no straightforwardness. Under-19 can play, but the main team cannot play. What is this theory? I don't know. I would like to find out. They played hockey, they are playing hockey, they are playing under-19 cricket but not Test cricket. Frankly, we feel that you are scared of losing.

Is there anything that can be done to get out of this tremendous stalemate?

What we can do is to have a ceasefire again. Again there is firing on the Line of Control. Not as much as it used to be before but there is firing on the Line of Control. We can stop that firing. And we start talking. We say that okay, the borders should be manned by the United Nations — the UN-MOGIP — which is here — India will not allow them to go to the borders. We are saying that — okay, let them man the borders, let them see if cross-border terrorism is going on or not. After all who is the judge to say — yes, now cross-border terrorism has gone or it is still going on, who is to judge that? Are the Indians the judge? So let a neutral body be the judge. Let the United Nations force be the judge. Certainly we won't like the Indians to be the judge. Just like they wouldn't like us to be the judge.

Since September 11, you have been seen as putting a lot of strategic weight into the whole relationship with the United States. India too has become much more closer to the United States. We have expressed fear in India that too much reliance on the United States at the expense of developing bilateral relations with Pakistan will make us, as it will make you, much more dependent and much more weaker. Isn't it a dangerous thing for both India and Pakistan to rely more and more on the U.S. and play a zero sum game with each other? The relationship between India and Pakistan has worsened since September 11.

In theory, or idealistically, bilateralism is the best form of negotiation. Okay, if both countries are responsible enough, open-minded enough, flexible enough, all problems should be resolved bilaterally. But if

Referendum plan has court backing: Musharraf

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, MARCH 31. The Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, has asserted that the Supreme Court has given him the option to hold a referendum on his continuation as President.

In an interactive talk with a group of prominent Pakistan editors and columnists at the Chief Executive's Secretariat on Saturday night, he said a decision on whether and when the referendum would be held would be taken in the next few days.

The mainstream political parties are of the view that the Supreme Court order of early 2000, which validated the military take-over, does not empower Gen. Musharraf to go in for a referendum. Their contention is that the Supreme Court has made it clear that the Musharraf Government has no power to make any fundamental changes to the Constitution.

"I believe in taking calculated risk. I want to know whether or not the nation requires me. Referendum will tell the world that Pakistanis need me," Gen. Musharraf said. It was his belief that the time had come for the people to decide if they wanted him to continue as President.

He told the editors that he

would continue to hold the position of Chief Of Army Staff (COAS) even if the referendum was in his favour. He said while he had initiated the process of restoring 'genuine' democracy by putting in place the local government system, he would still like to keep the democratically-elected Parliament under check through the National Security Council. This was necessary to keep the holders of the three offices, President, Prime Minister and COAS, from "overshooting their powers".

"There have been instances in the past when the Presidents and Prime Ministers have tried to undermine each other to create more political rooms for themselves and in the process have damaged the democratic process and there were COASs in the past who took over the reins of the country on whimsical grounds."

He said that despite the checks and balances the elected Prime Minister would continue to be powerful. "He (the Prime Minister) would be the all powerful chief executive and neither the President nor the COAS would be allowed to interfere with his responsibilities." He reiterated that the Government would not allow former Prime Ministers,

Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, to contest the October general elections as "they plundered the country during their tenure in power".

He said if he opted for a referendum, he would ask a direct question — Do you want me to continue or not as President for the next five years. The question would have a preamble in which all the reforms he had introduced and the ones yet to be introduced would be mentioned and the pros and cons of continuity explained.

He plans to allow Pakistanis who have attained the age of 18 to cast their vote in the referendum and is considering setting up as many polling booths as possible in order to make it easier for people to vote.

Asked if he enjoyed the support of the international community on holding the referendum, Gen. Musharraf said, "no foreign country is against me. They are all with me on whatever I am doing."

He believed that the country needed him for five more years and claimed that he was very popular among the masses. "I would be very disappointed if they cast a negative vote in the referendum."

He rejected the perception of some that he was acting

under pressure from the United States. "Look, the U.S. had also put pressure on us to hand over the persons named by India in its list of 20, but I did not. The U.S. had wanted us to extradite Omar Sheikh, but I did not, I am going to hold his trial inside the country and punish him for the crime he has committed in the country."

Gen. Musharraf also sought to clarify the remarks of the Foreign Minister, Abdul Sattar, who reportedly told the *Washington Times* that Pakistan would permit U.S. troops to cross the Afghan border to track down Al-Qaeda militants.

"What the Foreign Minister had actually said was that the U.S. has so far not made any such request and if they made such a request then we will resolve it," Gen. Musharraf said. This, he said, was misconstrued by some to mean that Pakistan has already permitted the U.S. troops in Afghanistan to enter Pakistan.

He also claimed that the reports of FBI personnel assisting Pakistani security agencies in raiding and capturing terrorists in three Pakistani cities earlier this week were wrong. "The only assistance that the FBI gave us was technical".

001 004 2002

Show of democracy; remote's with General

GENERAL Pervez Musharraf wants to secure his position before holding general elections in October. To do so, he may have to follow in the footsteps of Pakistan's last military ruler, General Ziaul Haq, and hold a referendum that "elects" him to a five-year term as President. General Zia's referendum in 1984 was marred by a low turnout and a boycott by mainstream national political parties. Indications are that things will be hardly different

SPECIAL TO THE EXPRESS

HUSAIN HAQQANI



this time around.

People turn out to vote when they hope to change the status quo or to elect people who will represent their interests. In case of a referendum endorsing a military ruler there is no such incentive. Whether people vote in the referendum or not, the general already occupies the presidency. He has also decided that he will not allow the people an unlimited choice of leaders. A referendum will create a fresh crisis of political legitimacy rather than solve the existing one.

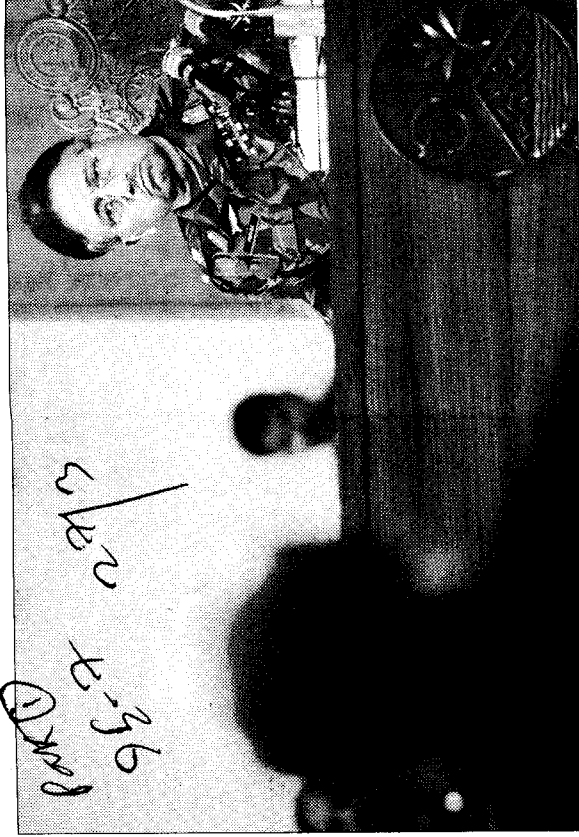
The idea of a referendum is integral to the notion of guided or controlled democracy that has been practiced in Pakistan since 1958. The country has alternated between military rule and imperfect democracy for the last four decades. Supporters of military intervention argue that the armed forces must play a role in creating the environment for true democracy. Critics say that democracy has not evolved in Pakistan because of backroom maneuvers by the so-called 'establishment' comprising the military, the civilian bureaucracy and the country's intelligence agencies.

The truth lies somewhere in between. Pakistan has not been blessed with the most competent of politicians. Their lack of vision and their failure to compromise coupled with their greed for money and power has often set the

stage for derailment of democracy in the past. But the establishment's desire to control the political process, and to prop up artificial leaders instead of dealing with genuinely elected ones, has undermined the nation's capacity to evolve its political institutions. Instead of rescuing democracy from the excesses of its incompetent practitioners, the establishment only proposes elitist solutions that a few years down the line turn into problems themselves.

The Nawaz Sharif era fully reflected the failings of the establishment as well as of Pakistan's political class. By the time General Pervez Musharraf assumed power on October 12, 1999 most Pakistanis seemed to agree that Sharif had to be removed by whatever means possible. The former prime minister had eliminated all checks on his power and his disregard for institutional governance had brought the country to the brink. The refusal of several institutions and individuals to stop Sharif in his tracks made General Musharraf's coup possible. These individuals and institutions acted merely in self-interest or were unable to gauge the severity of the harm Sharif was inflicting on the country. Either way, they are partly responsible for leading the country into the blind alley of military rule once again.

Sharif had demonstrated his authoritarian and profligate tendencies during his first tenure in power. He was allowed to win a two-thirds majority in parliament in the 1997 elections through machinations aimed against his main political rival, Benazir Bhutto. The law was not applied against him even though he was a loan defaulter as President Farooq Leghari expected his electoral success to contribute to a hung parliament that could subsequently make the President all-powerful. The opposition cooperated with Mr. Sharif in passing the thirteenth and fourteenth amendments to the constitution without much deliberation. There should have been no haste in amending the constitution and in proclaiming a 'heavy mandate' on the basis of results of an election with only 36 percent of registered voters casting their ballots. But President



Reuters

military takeover. But others, from President Leghari to General Karamat to many honourable judges, also failed to administer remedies available to them at the right time.

General Musharraf's regime represents another attempt by the "establishment" to reinvent the wheel of Pakistani politics. General Musharraf hopes to secure his power in a stage-managed referendum and then will try to guide the nation's destiny with the help of a new set of pre-selected Nawaz Sharifs. But, like the last time, the tried and tested remedy is unlikely to result in anything better than what it yielded in the past.

The mainstream political parties seem ready to confront General Musharraf's plans for controlled democracy. This would force him to seek support from the religious parties he had only recently accused of undermining Pakistan's progress. But Islamic parties (including moderate religious-political groups such as the Jamaat-e-Islami) are unlikely to endorse a general who has projected himself as a latter day Ataturk.

General Musharraf is discovering that changed ground realities make it difficult to follow the gameplans of previous military rulers. The last 15 years have seen a large number of Pakistanis participating in the political process. The mystique of power, including that of the intelligence agencies, has ended. Civilians have shared power through numerous coalitions in the past decade, increasing their exposure to state power. Four general elections have increased the people's awareness of their relevance to the process of governing. It is probably time to give up attempts to invent new forms of government and planning a politician-free future. If General Musharraf wishes to be part of the country's democratic future, let him seek election in accordance with the constitution. The PML-QA is already waiting for him to lead them.

(Husain Haqqani has served as adviser to prime ministers Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto and as Pakistan's Ambassador to Sri Lanka)

Musharraf is realising that changed ground realities make it difficult to follow the gameplans of previous military rulers. The mystique of power, including that of the intelligence agencies, has ended. It's time to give up planning for a politician-free future

considerations. The chief justice was deposed in an unprecedented coup by brother judges. The then army chief General Jehangir Karamat ignored the chief justice's appeal for protection against pressures from the ruling party.

The cases against Sharif were set aside, presumably for a day when he was no longer in power. Those who participated in the storming of the Supreme Court were acquitted for lack of evidence.

The country might not have faced the stark choice it was forced to face on the day General Musharraf assumed power if so many people had not collaborated with Sharif's fascism. A system of checks and balances can work only when those responsible for applying the checks stand their ground. Sharif systematically dismantled all checks on his power thereby paving the way for the

Leghari and the opposition made a serious error of judgment for which both — and the country — paid heavily.

Sharif was the product of General Zia's military regime, just as several leaders within the like-minded faction of the Pakistan Muslim League (styling themselves as PML-QA) are hoping to be after General Musharraf's referendum. The ousted prime minister transformed the process of accountability into a political witch-hunt. His meddling with the judiciary should have raised alarm bells but none were heard.

Instead, the honourable members of the superior judiciary chose to indulge Sharif in his quest for unbridled power. When Chief Justice Syed Sajjad Ali Shah took up cases against the then government, his fellow judges allowed personal complaints to take priority over legal necessities and national

Musharraf vows to fight terrorism

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, MARCH 23. The Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, today vowed to continue his campaign against terrorism and said his Government would leave no stone unturned till the menace of terrorism was eradicated "root and branch" from the country.

Addressing the people of Pakistan on Pakistan Day on television and radio, Gen. Musharraf said the intelligence network would be revamped and changes made in the law and order agencies to deal firmly with the extremist elements.

March 23 is observed as Pakistan Day as it was on this day in 1940 that the Muslim League adopted the resolution envisaging the creation of Pakistan. Compared to previous years, the celebration this time was low key. The continuing tension between India and Pakistan and the recent incidents of terrorism in Pakistan, including the attack on a church on Sunday, appears to have dampened the spirit of the establishment and the people.

Gen. Musharraf made a brief speech, but utilised the opportunity to focus on his Government's determination to tackle extremism. He made a passing reference to the current standoff between India and Pakistan. He said the traditional military parade was put off this year, as the Pakistan Army was de-



The Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, addressing the nation on state television in Islamabad on Saturday.— AP

ployed on the borders in view of mobilisation by Indian forces.

Stating that any "misadventure" from across the border would get a "fitting response", Gen. Musharraf reiterated Pakistan's desire to resume the dialogue with India for the resolution of all disputes, including Kashmir.

"We want peace and harmony in the region. And we want to see all issues, including the Kashmir issue, resolved. We would foil any evil efforts against our country," he declared.

Gen. Musharraf said Pakistan

favoured friendly relations with all neighbouring countries. Due to prolonged hostilities between India and Pakistan, other regional countries in South Asia too had suffered.

On the challenge posed by extremist elements, particularly since his January 12 speech, Gen. Musharraf said, "We have resolved to root out terrorism around the country and any person, if found involved in the evil activities of terrorism, would be dealt with seriously and would be given harsh and exemplary punishment."

He said Government mea-

sures alone were insufficient in dealing with the problem of terrorism. "The entire system needs basic changes. We would have to improve the performance of our intelligence agencies. Their duty is not to pass on information after the occurrence of the incident, their job is to warn before such an occurrence so that it could be checked."

The law enforcement agencies must be equipped with the latest weapons and better training, while the judiciary "will have to play a key role to correct the entire system. We must save Pakistan from terrorism and the menace of sectarianism, even if we have to pay a heavy price," he said.

Many socio-economic problems that erupted as a result of social injustice had crippled our country socially, economically and politically.

"The freedom movement that was launched was a landmark movement that took a heavy toll of lives. We all should pay heartfelt tribute to all those sacrificed for the independence of this homeland. After the independence of our country, efficient leadership was the dire need to run the newly-born State on the path of development. We hope after the general elections in October, we would have political leadership that would work to realise the goals of the founder of Pakistan" Gen. Musharraf said.

24 MAR 2002

Reach out, Musharraf

Can Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf survive? In physical terms, yes, if he is constantly protected from the militants who want to kill him. In political terms, it is suddenly looking nasty. The militants have no great popular support – but nor does he. He urgently needs to form alliances with those politicians who do, but the risk is that he may pull back within a military shell.

Harsher moves against militant groups are expected, after the lethal attack on Sunday's church service. That is just the latest in three months of mounting militant activity. Why is it getting worse? The main reason is Musharraf's drive to get rid of these radicals, itself inspired by his success in standing up to the mullahs in September, and the speed of the

To hold elections by October, the Pakistani President needs to start talking to candidates both to protect himself against the militants and to strike a rapport with whoever will be his prime minister, writes
BRONWEN MADDOX

Taliban's fall. Militants took Gen. Musharraf's 12-January, "zero tolerance" speech as a declaration of war. But more subtly, they can also sense the fracture lines in his support inside the military, growing confidence of the mullahs, and a hesitation within the government about how to deal with it.

There is no question that Gen. Musharraf suddenly faces a serious threat. The abduction of journalist

Daniel Pearl, a string of attacks on Shias in Karachi, then the church bombing in the most closely guarded area of Islamabad – this is a message that the militants can strike anywhere.

There is no suggestion that they are Afghans. They are thought to be Pakistani militants, although some may have been in Afghanistan. There may be only 500-600 radicals now active, but they clearly have the

capacity to cause a lot of trouble, not least scaring away investment from Karachi just as it has started trickling in.

There are signs, too, that five banned groups have joined together to co-ordinate attacks, and they could have 5,000 supporters between them, according to American estimates. These groups do not have widespread support. Radical mullahs, closely associated with some of these groups, failed to get crowds on the streets even when American bombing started. There are still no big demonstrations against Gen. Musharraf.

But there are new signs of defiance. Gen. Musharraf banned the use of loudspeakers to broadcast political speeches; that is ignored, in effect, by many mosques every week.

Perennial questions about the loyalty of the Intelligence services and the top military have come back with more life. Gen.

Musharraf left the USA in no doubt about his commitment to investigating Pearl's murder, but there is less confidence about the Intelligence agency. Accounts of the church bombing are muddled, despite intensive surveillance of the area. Gen. Musharraf's problem is made worse by those in his cabinet who warn against a further crackdown for fear of provoking yet more attacks. This is, they are fond of saying, the "Algeria scenario".

So far, Gen. Musharraf has taken the side of those who argue that

Pakistan is not very much like Algeria, just because of the lack of popular support for these groups. But supporters of the crackdown fear he may waver; today's meeting will be a good test of that risk.

The bigger

problem, however, is political. A military government, on its own, cannot command a political base. It needs the active, vocal support of moderate political groups. But the risk again, according to connoisseurs of Pakistan's military governments, is that Gen. Musharraf is getting locked into the "army mindset" and will not reach out to these parties.

To his credit, there is no sign that Gen. Musharraf is wobbling on his commitment to hold elections by October, the third anniversary of his coup. But he urgently needs to start talking to candidates, both to protect himself against the militants, and to strike up relations with whoever will be his prime minister.

So far, more comfortable with military crackdowns than with politics, he looks as if he is running away from this problem.

— *The Times, London.*



THE STATESMAN

7 11 2002

Musharraf wooing religious leaders

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, MARCH 19.

Confronted with the challenge from extremist elements within the country, the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, appears to have embarked on a new strategy to "woo" the leaders of religious parties and "moderate elements" within the jihadi outfits.

The Musharraf Government's decision to release leaders of all the major religious parties, detained at the height of unrest over the U.S. military action in Afghanistan in October last, and the new amnesty scheme for release of all activists of banned militant organisations against whom no cases are pending are cited as examples of the new line of thinking.

The English daily, *The News*, in a lengthy front-page report today, detailed the response of the Musharraf Government to the emerging situation, particularly in the light of the spurt in acts of sectarian violence and terror strikes on selected targets like the one on the church in Islamabad.

The News said that while waving a white flag to the religio-political groups, the Government has also extended an olive branch to the jihadi organisations, which has

largely benefitted from the amnesty scheme.

It further said that a senior Punjab police official had confirmed on Monday that no criminal charges had been brought against Masood Azhar of the Jaish-e-Muhammad or Hafiz Muhammad Saeed of the Lashkar-e-Taiba or any other top leader of the banned jihadi groups.

"In the absence of any serious charges, Maulana Masood and Hafiz Saeed can be released any day," according to a Punjab Government official, who informed that both leaders had been detained under the Maintenance of Public Order (MPO) that allows the Government to detain an individual, to maintain peace, for 90 days.

The paper said that acting on advance information, the guerilla commanders and the militant cadre of all jihadi organisations had gone into hiding before Gen. Musharraf's January 12 speech. Later, the top leadership of these groups offered themselves for arrest. They were detained in the Government-run, non-prison facilities. "This was a goodwill signal from the Government to contain the reaction from the well-armed and trained jihadi elements," it quoted a senior Punjab police official in Lahore.

THE HINDU

20 MAR 2002

Five killed in grenade attack on Pak. church

Pak ① HP-1 18/3



A policeman and a soldier walk through the debris in the main hall of the church which was attacked in Islamabad on Sunday. — AP

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, MARCH 17. In a clear challenge to the authority of the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, since his much-publicised January 12 address, terrorists struck inside a church here, killing five persons, including three foreigners, and injuring 45.

Two unidentified persons barged into a church in the diplomatic enclave and hurled grenades at those who had gathered for service. Among the dead included the wife of an American diplomat and his daughter. The impact of the explosion was so devastating that the church resembled a battlefield with bloodstains and broken pieces of wood all over.

According to police, 10 Americans, 12 Pakistanis, five Iranians, an Iraqi, an Ethiopian and a German were among the injured. Seven of the injured, admitted to a local hospital, were stated to be in a serious condition.

Sri Lankan envoy injured

The Sri Lankan Ambassador to Pakistan and former Army chief, Sirilal Veerasurya, his wife and child and the wife of a Japanese diplomat were also among those injured. Mr. Veerasurya and his family were released from the hospital after treatment for minor injuries.

The attackers appear to have deliberately chosen the Protestant church, less than a km from where the embassies, including that of the U.S., the U.K. India, Russia and China, are located. Within hours after the incident, Gen. Musharraf issued a statement condemning the attack as an act of terrorism. He said his Government would not be deterred in its pursuit of tackling the menace of extremism by such senseless acts.

The church was just a few yards from a housing society where a majority of the Indian High Commission staffers live. Tomy Mathew, staffer in the Indian mission, who was inside the church when the attack took place, managed to escape unhurt.

There were over 70 persons inside the

church when the explosion occurred. According to eyewitness accounts, the attack was carried out from different entry points of the church. Police suspect that more than two persons were involved in the incident. The attackers are believed to have hurled six grenades, out of which three went off while others were recovered live by police.

Within minutes after the attack, dozens of police surrounded the church. Ambulances rushed to the scene and rescuers scrambled to help the injured.

The Senior Superintendent of Police, Islamabad, Nasir Khan, told presspersons that "the attackers of the church may be included among the injured or dead as they had barged into the church and hurled four grenades which caused heavy casualties."

The U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan, Wendy Chamberlin, said there were lessons to be learnt from the attack. She praised Gen. Musharraf and the U.S. President, George W. Bush, for their "courageous" decision to take on the extremist elements and maintained that they were "absolutely right".

Bush "outraged"

AFP reports from Washington:

Mr. Bush today said that he was "outraged" by the bomb attack in the church in Pakistan.

"I am outraged by the terrorist attack that took place today in Islamabad against innocent civilians," he said in a statement.

Attack 'tragic': India

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 17. India today described the grenade attack on a church in Islamabad as "shocking, extremely tragic and most unfortunate". A Ministry of External Affairs spokesman said that "our hearts go out to the victims of the attack and their families".

THE HINDU

18/3

12-1 Pak. amnesty for arrested militants

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, MARCH 8. Pakistan has announced a general amnesty for the arrested activists of five banned militant outfits against whom no criminal charges are pending.

Participating in a live Radio Forum broadcast, the Pakistan Interior Minister, Moinuddin Haider, said the amnesty would be applicable to those activists of banned religious or political groups who were ready to give a written undertaking saying they would not associate themselves with the groups.

"The Government will not

take any further action against those activists of the banned groups who were arrested but had no criminal charges or FIR registered against them." The provinces were preparing lists of such activists and they would be released soon.

The decision should be seen against the backdrop of the Government's difficulties in proceeding against the activists.

Ever since the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, made his January 12 speech making clear his Government's intention of cracking down on the terrorists, the Pakistani au-

thorities have picked up over 2000 activists belonging to various religious and militant outfits.

However, they have been finding it difficult to sustain the arrests. In the last few weeks, the courts in different provinces have let off some activists on the ground that the establishment has not been able to provide concrete proof against them.

Last week, the Lahore High Court directed the Punjab provincial Government to produce the relevant records of all the militants detained.

Warning those who were be-

hind acts of sectarian violence, Lt. Gen. (retd.) Haider said no effort would be spared to restore the supremacy of law. "We will continue our jehad (holy war) against such elements," he said

Referring to the killing of *The Wall Street Journal* reporter, Daniel Pearl, the Minister said investigations were on and those responsible were yet to be arrested. He admitted that the Pakistani police did not have the requisite expertise to deal with cyber crime, which had been unearthed only after the kidnapping of the journalist.

THE HINDU

Pak amnesty for detained radicals

Islamabad, March 8 (Reuters): Pakistan will grant amnesty to possibly hundreds of detained members of banned radical and militant Islamic groups, provided they first sign a written pledge to have no further contact with their groups, official media reported.

Pakistan rounded up more than 2,000 Islamic radicals in January following the banning by President Pervez Musharraf of five headline groups, including two blamed by India for a bloody December attack on its parliament.

"The government will not take any further action against those activists of the banned groups who were arrested but had no criminal charges...registered against them," APP quoted interior minister Moynuddin Haider as saying on a radio show late yesterday.

Haider added authorities in

Pakistan's four provinces were preparing lists of those who could be released on a written undertaking that they would sever links with their banned parties or groups.

Pakistan has long been grappling with sectarian violence between now-banned headline groups from the rival Sunni and

Shia sects of Islam, and been under fire from India for policies seen to support militant Islamic groups fighting New Delhi's rule in Kashmir.

The attack on the Indian parliament sparked the mobilisation of up to a million troops along the nuclear-armed neighbours' border, raising fears of

full-scale war. Haider said the crackdown against sectarian groups would continue, while other suspected militants who avoided January's dragnet were still being hunted.

Around 600 people from sectarian groups accused of murder were awaiting trial and hearings would begin once a new sys-

tem of anti-terrorist courts was in place.

"We are fully determined to stamp out this menace," Haider said. Haider said earlier this week that a rash of sectarian attacks showed banned radical and militant Islamic groups had failed to heed government warnings and would face stern action.

Police say at least two people have been killed in suspected sectarian attacks in Pakistan this week. A Shia doctor was assassinated in Karachi on Monday, while today gunmen riding a motorcycle shot dead a Shia religious leader in the central city of Multan. Late last month, gunmen burst into a Shia mosque in Rawalpindi, near Islamabad, killing 11 worshippers and wounding 14 others.

Shias make up about 15 per cent of the population in Pakistan, an overwhelmingly Sunni country.

Islamabad to advance clock by one hour

Islamabad, March 8 (PTI): Pakistan is all set to advance its clock by an hour for this year's summer on a trial basis to test the dual daylight saving system from next month as well as to save electricity, officials here said.

Under the new system Pakistan would advance its clock by one hour in summer and revert to the present timings during winter. The system will be adopted on a trial basis and would be continued if it received a good response from the public, the director general of Pakistan's meteorological department, Qamar-uz-Zaman Chaudhary said.

At present over 73 high altitude countries were following different time systems for different seasons, he said on PTV, including Iran, Iraq and Syria.

Rehina Gul, senior joint secretary, Cabinet division said the system would be followed for summer from the first weekend of April.

She said it was decided to try the new system as sun rises early as well as sets late during the summer months in Pakistan. This would be beneficial for officegoers and provide an opportunity for more recreational activities.

Pervez set to show Sattar the door

Pramit Pal Chaudhuri
New Delhi, March 6

GENERAL PERVEZ Musharraf is set to replace his foreign minister, Abdul Sattar, in the next few weeks. The two leading candidates, say sources, are the veteran diplomat Shahryar Khan and Pakistan's ambassador to the US Maleeha Lodhi.

Sattar's exit was confirmed earlier this week when Pakistan's permanent mission to the United Nations recommended his name as the next chairman of the UN subcommittee on human rights. Sources say the note, sent to the subcommittee's coordinator, Bahrain, said Sattar would soon be a "private citizen."

The Pakistani media has speculated about Sattar's being removed for several months. Though Musharraf appointed him foreign minister soon after his 1998 coup, he tended to treat him as a ministerial afterthought.

Last year Musharraf failed to



ABDUL SATTAR

tell Sattar of his plans to appoint himself President while Sattar was on an official visit to Washington.

The foreign minister first heard of Musharraf's decision when he walked into a meeting with an angry Senator Joe Biden. Biden, as well as senior US officials, refused to believe Sattar was ignorant and accused

him of "insulting the United States." Sattar later confided he had been "purple with embarrassment."

But Sattar's anti-Indian credentials were useful to Musharraf. Musharraf would have two main reasons to replace him.

One, say observers, is that Musharraf is angling to put Benazir Bhutto as Prime Minister and Sattar is seen as being far too close to the Muslim League and the Jamaat i Islami.

Two, Musharraf wants to signal a less harsh policy towards India to both New Delhi and Washington.

Says J N Dixit, Khan's Indian counterpart when he was Pakistani foreign secretary, "Shahryar would be more balanced and mature in his expression." Shahryar also has strong links with India: he is a member of Bhopal royalty.

Dixit says Lodhi's views on India are more "ambiguous." But, say others, Lodhi is seen as media-savvy and popular in Washington.

Nuclear assets safe: Pak.

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, MARCH 4. Pakistan has said that its nuclear assets were safe and there was no evidence to suggest that they could fall into unauthorised hands.

There has been fresh concern following a report in the *Washington Post*, quoting the CIA Director, George Tenet, as having told the U.S. President, George Bush, that Pakistan's nuclear programme was more "deeply compromised" than the Government was willing to concede.

Maleeha Lodhi, Pakistan's Ambassador to the U.S., told the CNN, in an interview on Sunday, that there was no truth in the speculation. She said Pakistan had an "impeccable" record in ensuring foolproof nuclear security.

She was questioned on concerns expressed in the *Washington Post* report. She told the television channel that the speculation needed to be balanced by the "reality on the ground".

Dr. Lodhi said there was not a "shred of evidence" to support the view that Pakistan's nuclear assets were not safe. The country had made sure that there was absolutely no "unauthorised access" to its nuclear materials or to any of its assets and facilities.

She also denied another front-page report in the paper that Pakistan's nuclear scientist, Bashiruddin Mahmood, may have passed on nuclear know-how to the terrorist mastermind, Osama bin Laden. The Pakistan Government had detained Mr. Mahmood, along

with another retired nuclear scientist for questioning after the U.S. action on Afghanistan.

Dr. Lodhi said Mr. Mahmood had "nothing to do" with Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme and had no knowledge he could pass on to anybody. He was a "junior" official who never was involved with nuclear weapons or their production.

Asked about her reaction to the disclosure in the report that Mr. Mahmood had failed half a dozen polygraph tests, she said she was not aware of the "specifics" but could say confidently that Pakistani authorities were determined to "get to the bottom" of the affair. Whatever stuff had been found in Afghanistan since the removal of the Taliban regime suggested that while the Al-Qaeda may have been in desperate search of nuclear weapons or materials, it had "failed in that quest." This

also had been the conclusion the *New York Times* had reached in a report published over a week ago.

Dr. Lodhi said the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) which kept a record of the loss or disappearance of nuclear materials worldwide, had recorded 515 such incidents since 1993-94, not one of which was related to Pakistan. It confirmed Pakistan's "impeccable" security regime and its effectiveness.

She dismissed as baseless allegations that there were elements in the ISI which may follow their own agendas and may not even have kept the Pakistan President "up to speed". She said there was far too much speculation in the press on the role of the ISI. The ISI was an "arm of the Government" and once a decision was made, the ISI simply carried it out.

Pak. scientist met Osama

ISLAMABAD, MARCH 4. A former Pakistan nuclear scientist suspected of links with Islamic extremists met Osama bin Laden twice in Afghanistan but did not reveal nuclear secrets, the man's son said today.

Sultan Bashiruddin Mahmood, who worked for Pakistan's Atomic Energy Commission until his retirement in 1999, did not even tell his family about meeting Osama, his son, Dr. Asim Mehmood, said. The family learned about the meetings, which occurred in 2000 and 2001, only after Pakis-

tan security agencies detained Mr. Mehmood in October to investigate possible ties with Al-Qaeda network and its efforts to obtain nuclear technology.

The U.S. officials have long been suspicious of Mr. Mehmood's contacts with Osama, according to Pakistani authorities who spoke on condition of anonymity.

When he retired, Mr. Mehmood was the director of the Khoshab nuclear reactor, a heavy water and natural uranium research reactor in Punjab Province. _ AP

THE HINDU

5 MAR 2002

Pak. clarifies on Omar extradition

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

tourist in India in 1994.

ISLAMABAD, MARCH 4. Pakistan today maintained that the question of extradition of Omar Sheikh, the prime accused in the Daniel Pearl abduction case, to the United States would be considered in the light of the "findings" of the investigation.

A spokesman of the Pakistan Foreign Office said here authorities were engaged in vigorous investigation into the abduction and the subsequent murder of the *Wall Street Journal* reporter.

He said the investigation would determine whether Omar Sheikh alone or he, along with others, needs to be brought to trial. The clarification by the spokesman comes amidst growing pressure on Pakistan for extradition of Omar Sheikh in connection with the Pearl case as well as another case related to kidnapping an American

Last week, the U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan, Wendy Chamberlain, had called on the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, and formally sought extradition of Omar Sheikh.

23 Indians share half a crore rupees in raffle

DUBAI, MARCH 4. It was their day for a group of 23 Indian expatriates who pooled money to buy a raffle ticket in the Toyota Lexus mega draw held here as part of the ongoing Dubai shopping festival.

Krishnan Prasanna, store assistant, was woken up by his friends at midnight to be told that he had won the raffle. Each person will get Rs. 2.4 lakh. _ PTI

THE HINDU

Pak frees pro-Taliban leader

Associated Press

LAHORE, Feb. 28. — A Pakistani court today freed a pro-Taliban leader of the Jamaat-e-Islami on bail after a four-month detention.

Qazi Hussain Ahmad accused General Pervez Musharraf of aiding USA in the war against Afghanistan. Ahmad had organised violent protest rallies after Pakistan decided to support the US-led coalition against Osama bin Laden and his Taliban allies.

Mosque attack arrests: Pakistani police today said they had detained 58 Islamic activists in first detentions over an attack on a mosque in which 11 Shi'ite Muslim worshippers died, adds Reuters from Islamabad.

Police said they rounded up the activists across central Punjab province, in a sweep that signals President Gen Pervez Musharraf aim to move against Islamic extremists blamed for stoking tensions in neighbouring India and the murder of US reporter Daniel Pearl.

Police said most of the activists were detained in southern Punjab, a hotbed of sectarian strife between minority Shi'ite extremists and majority Sunni Muslims.

THE STATESMAN

Pak. ready ^{not}
to negotiate
extradition treaty

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, FEB. 26. Pakistan says it is prepared to negotiate an extradition treaty with India as and when the two countries resume dialogue to resolve all outstanding differences, including Kashmir. ^{PARKU}

Responding to a specific question on the demand made by India for extradition of 20 persons, the Pakistan Foreign Minister, Abdul Sattar, told the Pakistan daily, *Pakistan Observer*, in an interview that there was no connection with the Indian Parliament attack on December 13 and the list forwarded by New Delhi.

The Minister termed the list of 20 criminals and terrorists handed over by India "fictitious" on the ground that it contained names of persons who had been involved in crimes long before the December 13 attack.

Mr. Sattar told the daily that a treaty could be negotiated between the two countries under which neither country would provide refuge to criminals.

THE HINDU

27 FEB 2002

FOCUS ON MADRASAS ALONG NEPAL BORDER

Pakistani bank under scanner

Sanjay Singh in New Delhi

Feb. 20. — A report about the Pakistan-based Habib Bank expanding its network in areas adjoining the Indo-Nepal border, including Biratnagar and Krishnanagar, after becoming a partner of the Nepalese Himalaya Bank has put the Intelligence agencies on alert.

They suspect that money to set up mosques and madrasas, some of which are breeding ground of fundamentalists, is being channelled through Habib Bank, the Jeddah-based Islamic Development Bank and some Indians settled in West Asia.

About 343 mosques, 330 madrasas and 17 mosque-cum-madrasas within 10 km of the border on either side have received huge funds from some Islamic countries, including Saudi Arabia, Iran, Kuwait, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Quite a few of these mosques and madrasas are in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and Sikkim. An Intelligence report said the managers and ulemas of these madrasas and mosques maintained close links with the

Kathmandu missions of the donor countries.

Intelligence sources said officials of the Pakistani embassy had been visiting Nepal's Terai region to strengthen Islamic institutions and distribute funds to

New strategy

NEW DELHI, Feb. 20. — Intensified vigil along the border and strong international opinion against terrorism may have forced the ISI to renew the alliance between gangsters and jihadi groups. Police said that since the ultras were not being able to enter India like before, the ISI had found it convenient to spread terror through gangsters. — SNS

Details on page 6

them. Attempts are constantly being made by pro-Pakistan elements in Nepal to ensure a demographic subversion in the Terai to facilitate operations by fundamentalist groups such as the Pak-JEI, Motamar-al-Hadis, JEI-H and Islamic Chhatra Shibir of Bangladesh. Members of these groups are very active in fuelling

anti-India sentiments. Muslim leaders, Tabligh Jamaat teams and pro-Pak Nepalese leaders, too, frequently visit the madrasas and mosques in the region.

The information was shared with Nepalese officials during the recent home secretary-level talks between the two countries. The officials agreed to exchange Intelligence and also discussed ways of taking joint measures to curb such activities.

The Intelligence report said there had been a constant and significant growth of Muslim population in all the border districts. According to the last Census report, the growth rate of the Muslim population in the 10 border districts of Uttar Pradesh was much higher than the community's national growth rate (32.76 per cent).

In parts of Udham Singh Nagar (Uttaranchal) and Darjeeling, the Muslim population has risen by more than 50 per cent. This is because of the influx of Bangladeshis and migration of Muslims from other parts of the country, including J&K.

Identity checks on India-Nepal border, page 6

Pak raises freedom struggle bogey

Mubashir Zaidi &
Udayan Namboodiri
Islamabad/New Delhi, February 5

PRESIDENT GENERAL Pervez Musharraf today effectively put paid to all hopes of an early resolution to the Indo-Pak stand-off and resumption of dialogue.

Addressing the joint session of Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir's Assembly in Muzaffarabad on 'Kashmir Solidarity Day,' the General expressed disappointment at the "cynical Indian reaction" to the hand of reconciliation stretched forward by him. Pakistan would defend every inch of its soil with all means at its disposal if war was imposed on it, Musharraf warned.

"Let it be very clear to all those in India, who talk of aggression against Pakistan, that we shall guard our sovereignty, our honour, our dignity very jealously. If war is imposed on Pakistan we will defend every inch of our soil with all means at our disposal and with the last

Hurriyat won't contest

THE HURRIYAT Conference has decided against participating in the Assembly elections. A statement issued by the 23-party amalgam said nobody from the alliance would participate in any such exercise aimed at running the administrative affairs of Jammu and Kashmir. **PTI**

drop of our blood. Let there be no underestimations of our resolve in this regard," he said.

In New Delhi, the External Affairs Ministry deplored the speech. Spokesperson Nirupama Rao said: "Regrettably General Musharraf has reverted to time worn and untenable positions on terrorism. Comments about the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir amount to interference in our internal affairs. We reject them outright".

"We had rather hoped that Gener-

al Musharraf would utilise this opportunity to reaffirm his commitment to end cross-border terrorism. His formulations, unfortunately, have reverted to yesterday's cliché's confirming the apprehensions voiced earlier by us." Incidentally, Musharraf today became the first Pakistani head of Government to visit Muzaffarabad on 'Kashmir Solidarity Day'.

Indian observers feel the Pakistani establishment was more belligerent today than on any 'Kashmir Solidarity Day' ever before.

"Instead of responding positively to the hand of reconciliation extended by me, the Indian leadership has continued with its threatening noises. India persists with its massive deployment of troops and military assets along our borders, which has brought the two countries to a position of eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation. This is brinkmanship at its most dangerous," the Pakistan President said.

See also report on Page 7

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Pak military courts to try terrorists

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD, Jan. 31. — The Pakistani President, General Pervez Musharraf, tonight promulgated an Ordinance to establish quasi-military courts to try those accused in terrorism cases.

According to the Amendment to the Anti-Terrorism Act of 1997, Special Courts, which henceforth would be called Anti-Terrorism Courts, would comprise a judge nominated by a high court, a first class judicial magistrate and a military official of the Pakistani army of the rank of Lt Colonel or above appointed by the federal government.

The three members will constitute an Anti-Terrorism Court for trial of the scheduled offences under this Ordinance.

In case of difference of opinion amongst members of the court, majority decision shall prevail, the Ordinance said.

The court would function up to November this year, it said.

Another significant feature of

the Ordinance was that joint investigation teams to be constituted for investigations have to file reports within seven days of taking over cases.

The Ordinance followed criticism that the Special Courts comprising civil judicial officials made little progress as they were

either corrupt or afraid of taking stern action against those charged with terrorism offences.

Pakistan's powerful corps commanders conference headed by Gen Musharraf today discussed the latest diplomatic and military moves being made between India and Pakistan in the border stand-off and the defence preparedness of the troops on

both sides.

Mr Brajesh Mishra will meet the Pakistani foreign minister, Mr Abdul Sattar, during a three-day security conference to be held in Munich from tomorrow, SNS adds from New Delhi.

This is the first such high-level meeting between the two estranged neighbours since the Kathmandu Saarc summit earlier this month.

'Pak charge ridiculous'

NEW DELHI, Jan. 31. — India today reacted with contempt to suggestions from Gen Musharraf's spokesman of an "Indian link" to the kidnapping of Daniel Pearl, a *Wall Street Journal* reporter. "This is one more unfortunate instance of the imagination of the Pakistani military spokesman running riot," said the foreign office spokesperson — SNS

Another report on page 6

THE STATESMAN



Mumbai-based *WSJ* reporter
Daniel Pearl. (AFP)

Pak claims headway in *WSJ* scribe abduction

Karachi, Jan. 29 (Reuters): Pakistani police said today they have made some progress in their hunt for missing and presumed kidnapped US reporter Daniel Pearl and hope to find some important clues soon, but they gave no details.

When he disappeared in Karachi last week, Pearl, was trying to contact Islamic militant groups linked to Osama bin Laden. "We have made some initial success... The investigation is still going on, we've made some headway," said a senior police official in Karachi. "We are hopeful that the findings will lead us to some major clues."

He said various government agencies were coordinating closely and the search for the missing *Wall Street Journal* reporter was being monitored by the country's "highest authority". The foreign ministry said it had no idea who was behind the abduction.

A senior police official in Rawalpindi, near Islamabad, said police raided a house yesterday belonging to a man alleged to have links to bin Laden's al Qaida network. The man, who had met Pearl before he went missing, was not at home.

India concern

India today said it was concerned about the welfare of Daniel Pearl and that it was in close touch with his family in Mumbai. Pearl's wife has rushed to Karachi amid concerns for his safety following a widely published photograph showing the scribe in chains with a gun pointed to his head.

THE TELEGRAPH

28 JAN 2002

E-mail trail leads to Pak hunt for militants

back ①
51-6
Agencies 29/1

KARACHI, Jan. 28. — While Pakistani and US media received an e-mail yesterday saying the Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl had been kidnapped by a group calling itself "The National Movement for the Restoration of Pakistani Sovereignty", Pakistani police speaking on condition of anonymity, told the Associated Press, they believe the scribe was kidnapped by Harkat-ul-Mujahideen.

Officially though, the police said today they were checking possible links to militant Islamic groups, but still had no idea about his whereabouts.

The e-mail said Pearl, kidnaped from Karachi last Wednesday, was being kept in "inhumane" conditions to protest against US treatment of Taliban and Al Qaida prisoners being held in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

"We are looking for this group; it is relatively unknown to



The above photograph of kidnapped reporter Daniel Pearl with a gun held to his head was sent on e-mail to the *New York Times* on Sunday. — AP/PTI

us," the police said. "We cannot rule out the possibility that this may be linked to some Islamic

militant group."

The e-mail, which accused Pearl (38) of working for the US Central Intelligence Agency, included four photographs of Pearl, including one with his wrists chained and a pistol pointed at his head.

Both the WSJ and CIA have said Pearl never worked for the agency.

The US Embassy in Islamabad said it did not know anything about the group claiming the kidnap. "We remain concerned for his safety and continue to coordinate closely with Pakistani authorities," the Embassy said.

The WSJ sister paper *The Asian Wall Street Journal* today appealed for Pearl's immediate release on humanitarian grounds. The police in Lahore said Pearl, based in Mumbai, had been trying to interview the head of Al-Fuqhera, a Sunni Muslim group believed to have close connections with the Al-Qaida regarding the alleged shoe-bomber Richard Reid.

THE STATESMAN

Rally blasts Musharraf

57-8

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Pak (1)

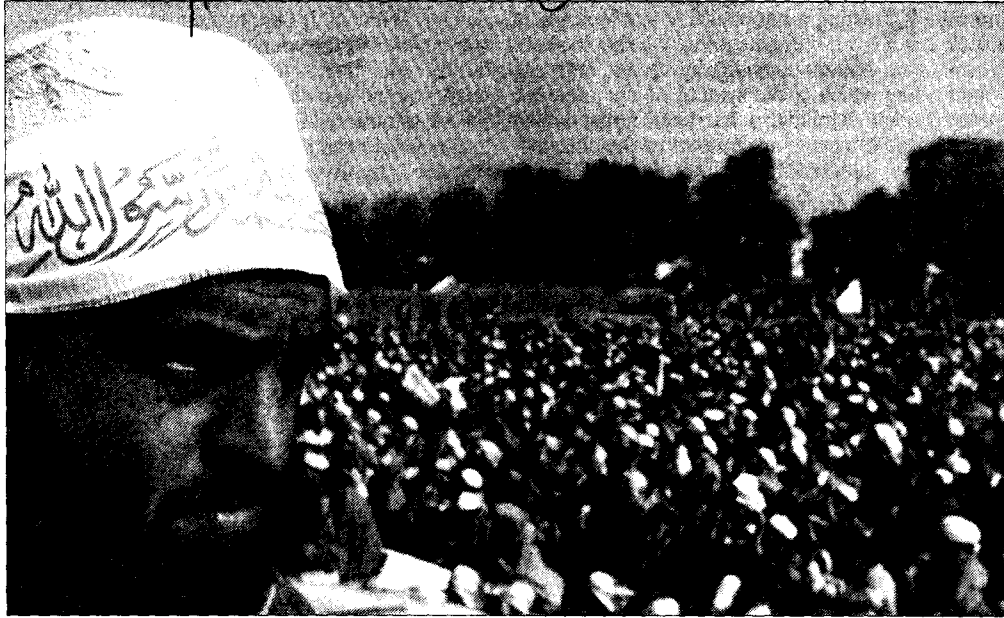
Associated Press

PESHAWAR, Jan. 27. — Branding President Pervez Musharraf a traitor for siding with USA in its war against terrorism, an alliance of hardline Islamic groups today vowed to resist what they called the growing US influence in the Islamic nation.

About 5,000 supporters of the Afghan Defence Council — an alliance of 35 Islamic groups and militant organisations — waved white Taliban flags and chanted anti-government and anti-US slogans in this northern border city.

"Friends of Americans are traitors" and "jihad against America will continue," they shouted as dozens of policemen in riot gear watched.

In a speech to his supporters, Sami-ul Haq, head of the alliance, said Pakistan "has been made an American colony" by Gen Musharraf. "It is a matter of great shame that even our airports are being handed over to Americans," Haq said.



A participant at a pro-Taliban rally in Peshawar on Sunday. — AP/PTI

US troops are using several Pakistani airports and airspace for operations in Afghanistan since the start of Operation Enduring Freedom in early October

2001. Earlier this week, the government allowed coalition forces to use Karachi's international airport, the biggest in the country. The decision has been vehe-

mently criticised by the pro-Taliban Islamic groups. Haq accused the President of tarnishing Pakistan's Islamic identity and vowed that Muslims would resist his

secular policies.

Gen. Musharraf has launched a nationwide crackdown on extremist Islamic groups and is trying to regulate and reform thousands of religious schools - accused of fanning religious extremism. Earlier this month, he outlawed two Islamic guerrilla groups and three sectarian organisations in an attempt to curb the rampant religious violence in Pakistan. The groups were charged by India for the 13 December attack on its Parliament.

While the General's steps are being hailed by the international community and liberal Pakistani Muslims, the religious groups are outraged. But the Islamic groups do not enjoy large following in this predominantly Muslim nation of 140 million people and pose little threat to him.

Haq, who lost his own seat in the last elections held in 1997, said the defeat of the Taliban should not depress the Pakistani Islamic groups. "This defeat would pave the way for a greater victory for Muslims," he said.

THE STATESMAN

28 JAN 2002

Part ①

Progress in Pakistan

no. 8 26/1

EVEN WHEN things are as bad between India and Pakistan as now, it is not without a touch of sentimentality that most Indians view even faint signs of progress in the internal affairs of the consanguine neighbour. Unlike the international community, while Indians are not unduly impressed with Pervez Musharraf's January 12 speech, several of the general's subsequent announcements concerning elections deserve to be evaluated in a more generous light. The first positive news is that elections may be held in October. While one can never know with a military regime, the mere reiteration of this can potentially set the tone for a more cheerful outlook so far as the domestic affairs of Pakistan are concerned.

By far the most welcome element in the poll-related announcement is the scrapping of communal electorates and the return, after 15 years or so, to the system in which every voter is treated as an equal citizen, irrespective of religion. Given Pakistan's constitutional status as an Islamic republic and its jurisprudence tilted in favour of Muslim males, republicanism still eludes the nation. But, at least, the ghettoisation of the minori-

ties may be expected to be ameliorated with the passing of the new order. Communal electorates were the norm in British India, intended to keep people of diverse faiths politically apart. A similar race-oriented system was in place under the apartheid regime in South Africa.

Unfortunately, the value of the good work done by the Pakistan authorities in this area is to an extent undermined by the order that only those with a graduate degree will have a vote. This is a retrograde step. Reminiscent of Ayub Khan's 'basic democracy', it takes away the vote from most Pakistanis. Quite possibly, General Musharraf calculates that, unlike educated sections, humbler folk may not queue up to back his political schemes. The measure is also likely to wipe out the *madrassa*-trained *jehadi* and *mullah* constituency from the rolls. The government has also promised to allow the entry of private TV. This is a healthy step, although this too may be designed to keep the liberal elements in good humour. The more positive of the above steps may also have been taken with an eye on the 'Washington constituency', now closely monitoring what goes on inside Pakistan.

THE HINDU

26 JAN 2002

Musharraf's declarations to combat militancy are yet to pass the test of sincerity

War paint against terrorism

BY BENAZIR BHUTTO

FOR THE second time during General Pervez Musharraf's tenure as Pakistan's chief of army staff, his men confront their Indian counterparts over a potentially nuclear conflict. The first confrontation took place in spring 1999. Then Kashmiri militants seized the Kargil heights in the disputed Siachin area triggering a near war.

This time round, Kashmiri militants attempted bombing the Indian Parliament. The attack on Parliament was staged after the war against terror began last September. Then the United States demanded of the Taliban to hand over Osama bin Laden. Similarly, India demands of Pakistan the handing over of 20 militants.

Once again Islamabad's military regime is caught between a rock and a hard place. In a bid to defuse an all out war, General Musharraf publicly admitted a policy reappraisal this January. A leader who presided over the rise of private militias and militants since he seized power three years back, came on television to declare a war against theocratic politics.

In his effort to prevent war, the general did two things. First, he announced an internal crackdown on some militant groups. Second, he dealt with external affairs devolving on India-Pakistan relations.

The promise to crack down on internal militants was described as 'historic' and 'path-breaking'. It could turn out to be neither. The general announced the reversal of an ill-conceived policy adopted by his military predecessor, General Zia-ul-Haq. It was a policy his regime continued since seizing power in 1999. Its abandonment did not come when the war against terror began last September. It came under an Indian and US ultimatum following the Indian Parliament attack and the threat by India to sort out the militants on its own.

In the extreme example, it is akin to Mullah Omar appearing on television, following the allied bombardment, to repudiate theocracy in exchange for avoiding conflict — and continuing in power. There was little talk about responsibility or accountability of actions for past policies that brought the country to the difficult pass. The result is cynicism as well as the continued threat of war. The troops continue to face each other even as diplomats rush between capitals to avert it.

The reversal of policy came across as the combination of heavy Anglo-American-Indian pressure in the post-September



FOREVER READING BETWEEN THE LINES: At a newspaper stand in Islamabad

11 environment. It didn't come when the Pakistani democratic forces asked the military regime to distance itself from militant groups. Instead those forces were, and continue to be, ignored and persecuted.

The conclusion by leading democrats, therefore, is that, in the absence of the foreign pressure, the military regime will continue backing militancy and theocracy. The fear is that it could return to backing it once the world temperature cools. After all, the unilateral withdrawal from Kargil in 1999 failed to halt the re-eruption of tension in December 2002.

In overtly repudiating theocracy, the military regime took measures, literally, from the manifesto and agenda of the democratic forces. But it faltered in aping the democratic forces. It continued to single them out for persecution. More tellingly, it insisted on relying on the same federal, provincial and institutional set-ups that are the architecture on which the theocratic structure was built.

This disconnection between stated policy and the governmental edifice raises questions regarding the declarations the general made under the gun held to his head of an India-Pakistan conflagration. What happens when the gun is lifted is yet to be seen.

The declarations of combating militancy and the crackdown against militants are yet to pass the test of sincerity. Not one head has rolled for past policies presently repudiated. Moreover, *madrasas* can be passed from one favoured group to another. Supporters can also defect from one banished group to a non-banished one.

The real test for the military regime

comes in ridding the theocratic structure set in place since 1999 which permitted the flourishing of militias and militants at the expense of the political process and representative political leaders. The declarations of conversion from theocrat to moderate are cosmetic until the prerequisites of a democratic culture are met. The entire civil structure is groaning under the weight of military supervision.

The overt declarations by the Musharraf regime, irrespective of its covert intentions, mark the amazing victory of the ideas of the democratic forces. It is a watershed in the history of Pakistan when the policies of the establishment are publicly repudiated as wrong by the establishment itself. Those policies are non-sustainable in the new world climate of the 21st century.

During the Cold War, the Pakistani establishment patronised the religious parties. They promoted them in the world community as the anti-Soviet, anti-atheistic force to counter communism. The establishment supported the Muslim brotherhood with dictatorship while democrats were marginalised.

But from the ashes of the murder of democracy in 1977 with the hanging of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto rose the sun of democracy in 1988. Its rays brought forth the rebirth of the plant of freedom and free market. The democratic order born that year demonstrated that democracy and development go hand in hand. The high growths, high revenues, high investments achieved under democracy remained unmatched under 'controlled democracy' as well as outright dictatorship.

Moreover, the remarkable rise of the democratic polity coincided with the rise of women leaders in the Muslim world. This rise demonstrated that Muslim masses wanted to join the rest of the world community in overcoming prejudice and building a society where each individual could prosper on the basis of equality. The democratic period provided the comparatively most stable regional security environment.

It also proclaimed the birth of a philosophy that challenged the notion that stability could be based on the pillars of tyranny. The crackdown against militants in Afghanistan heralds the approach of a new era. That new era is now forcing itself on Islamabad, irrespective of whether the rulers are ready for it or not.

The parameters of the new era are built on the edifice and philosophy of democratic principles. Pakistan is the second largest Muslim country. Its democratisation impacts on the larger Muslim world where questions are being asked about solutions that can breed an environment conducive to a diverse world united by common goals.

Given the larger battle in the Muslim world, a military regime with generals bedecked in brass simply sends the wrong messages. The message of a military dictatorship is one the Muslim youth increasingly repudiate as the digital revolution shatters old patterns.

The democrats stoically faced the theocrats in upholding the banner of freedom and human rights during past decades. In its defiance, the democratic forces laid the culture that enables Pakistan today — should it will — to make a retreat from theocracy. That option was not open to Afghanistan when the Taliban crushed all rivals. Change there came through brute force.

Change in Pakistan can come through peaceful means if the Pakistani establishment sincerely abandons theocracy for democracy. It is still reluctant to do so. Such reluctance could suddenly evaporate as it did in the case of the Taliban embrace and the apparent theocratic retreat.

For Washington, London and New Delhi, active players in the present regional environment, negotiating with the elected representatives of the people builds a more enduring edifice of regional security. It brings people together on a common platform.

The writer is a former Prime Minister of Pakistan

26 JAN 2002

Isolated protests against Pak. crackdown on jihadi outfits

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, JAN. 21. The first rumblings of protest since the Pakistan Government intensified its crackdown on jihadi and militant outfits last week have been heard from the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP).

However, the protest is considered an isolated incident and not a reflection of the ground realities. Political and diplomatic observers believe that considering the nature and extent of the crackdown, the Musharraf Government has done a remarkable job in keeping the jihadi elements under check.

According to reports from Peshawar, supporters of the banned Islamic group, Tehrik Nifaz Shariat-e-Mohammedi (TNSM), held a protest demonstration against the detention of its leaders and cadres. The protest turned violent when a group of the demonstrators threw stones at police in Dir. The TNSM chief has been accused of leading hundreds of Pakistanis to Afghanistan to fight along with the Taliban militia.

Barring this there has hardly been any opposition to the crackdown by the Government against the extremist religious and militant outfits. There are indications that the measures unveiled by Gen. Musharraf have been widely welcomed.

Meanwhile, reports in the local media suggest that the Government is considering releasing the activists arrested for their alleged affiliation to sectarian and jihadi outfits on submission of affidavits that they would dissociate them-

selves from the outlawed outfits forever.

The reports said that the Jamat-e-Islami and the JUI (F) have assured the Government that they would not take to the streets if their leaders were released. The Government is believed to have told them that if they agreed to support the Government's actions and electoral reforms, their leaders would be freed.

'Army, ISI culpable'

In a related development, Maulana Fazlur Rehman, the chief of his own faction of the JUI, has said that the army and the ISI had been responsible for evils in Pakistan. In an interview to a weekly, *Takbeer* he has said that the army and the ISI had been involved in each and every affair of the country and could not escape responsibility.

Asked why some of the religious groups, Islamic movements and jihadi outfits have been involved in armed attacks on different countries and provoking the people, which is contrary to the Constitution, Fazlur Rehman said, "if this attitude is unconstitutional then we should clear the position. If Soviet Union invades Afghanistan, we send Mujahideen from here. We provide camps to Mujahideen coming from there. Religious parties are given the task of preparing youth for jihad. They are trained in a jihadi culture and army continues to encourage them. The State encourages them. At that time, it was not unconstitutional.

"For the last 20 years, we have been doing all this. We have got a

generation, which knows nothing except jihad. Were the Army and the ISI not involved in this? Whether the issue is Taliban or Afghanistan, the Army and the ISI have been linked with these issues," he told the weekly.

We will implement what Musharraf has said: Qazi

NEW DELHI, JAN. 21. Pakistan today said the "huge steps" outlined by the President, Pervez Musharraf, to address India's "primary concerns" would be implemented. It also favoured the resumption of a "self-sustained" dialogue between the two countries.

Pakistan's High Commissioner in India, Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, said the two countries were "on the brink of a historic opportunity" and this "opportunity should not be wasted".

Addressing the "India Today Conclave" here, he said "it is important for India and Pakistan to address each other's concerns."

Mr. Qazi said Gen. Musharraf's "historic" January 12 address was aimed at a "revolution in Pakistan" and "it is a huge step by Pakistan to address what you (India) have said are your primary concerns." "We will implement" what Gen. Musharraf has said, he asserted asking India to "take time to assess it" and see whether it was "just rhetoric" or would be "followed up by substance." "Don't doubt the sincerity (of Gen. Musharraf)... Your concerns are being addressed. You will see its impact." — PTI

THE HINDU

22 JAN 2002

Pakistan and Hurriyat

What happens when the jihad is over?

It is curious that there should be crackdown on the Hurriyat just hours after Pervez Musharraf's speech. One doesn't know what could have provoked such sudden action, but the authorities may have been anticipating trouble, what kind nobody knows. Maybe something to do with the Pakistani ban on the Lashkar-e-Toiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammad, but then these group, in spite of Syed Ali Shah Geelani's lamentation over the ban, have little or nothing to do with the Hurriyat and practice a different kind of militancy. However, it would be interesting to speculate on what Musharraf's speech might mean to the Hurriyat which remains the most strident anti-Indian political voice in Kashmir. First of all, it is not at all certain that the promised crackdown, within Pakistan, on elements engaged in terrorist activities, "internally and externally", will reduce the violence in Kashmir. Depends on the extent to which Musharraf can get the ISI to fall in line with his plans.

The distinction between freedom struggle and terrorism is retained, perhaps in favour of promoting existing outfits with a preponderant Kashmiri character, such as the Hizbul Mujahideen, and maybe new ones under a suitable disguise. We have already noted the alacrity with which the Lashkar shifted its headquarters to Muzaffarabad in POK, in an obvious attempt to forge a new, more Kashmiri identity for itself, in the aftermath of the assault on Afghanistan.

The exact nature of the relationship between the Hurriyat and the militant outfits is not clear. For instance, some of its leaders announced a ceasefire some time back, an idea which was rejected by the United Jihad Council, the militant conglomerate directly related to the Hurriyat. The absence of a political process marginalises it almost completely, since it also remains unwilling to contest elections. Will the hypothetical elimination of foreign jihadis from the stage of militancy in Kashmir bring some of the initiative back to politics and to the Hurriyat? India sees Pakistan as its principal interlocutor in Kashmir, treats the Hurriyat to be of no consequence as long as it does not give proof of its popular support through elections. The elimination may create the space for a more political agitation in which the Hurriyat can play a role, but also the Hurriyat benefited indirectly from jihadi activity, by presenting itself as a more moderate representative of Kashmiris, one that could be talked to.

In any case, ever since the beginning of the campaign in Afghanistan, the Hurriyat has been painfully aware that the line between what they call a freedom struggle and what the international community sees as terrorism was under erosion and that the latter could turn its sights upon what was being done in Kashmir by the likes of the Lashkar and the Jaish. Which is why they tried, in vain, to stop a bandh called in protest against the American action in Afghanistan and said Pakistan was right in supporting the coalition. But, which is also why Geelani, of the pro-Pakistan Jamaat, defended Osama bin Laden so vigorously. Also, disgrace of Pakistan's exit from Afghanistan has prompted some Kashmiri leaders to float a conglomerate parallel to the Hurriyat, too tainted by its association with Islamabad. After Musharraf's speech, it should be clear to the Hurriyat that Indian pressure is working and that the international focus on terrorism has begun touching the margins of the Kashmir issue, via Pakistan, may shift to the centre and require them to redefine their stance vis-a-vis the violence in the valley and their own future course of action.

THE STATESMAN

19 JAN 2002

Pak minorities cheer reforms

FROM ZEESHAN HAIDER

Islamabad, Jan. 18 (Reuters): "The good old days are back", was the delighted response of Christian Sebastian Anthony to a decision by Pakistan's government to bring minorities back into mainstream politics.

The military government said this week that, for the first time in 16 years, Pakistan's 140 million people would all vote for the same candidates when President Pervez Musharraf restores democracy with parliamentary elections to be held by October.

"Musharraf has become a hero of at least the Christian community of Pakistan, if not the others," said Anthony, a sales manager with a cellular phone company. He spoke in between delighted calls to friends and relatives to celebrate the reform.

The separate voting system is a legacy of military ruler General Zia-ul-Haq, who introduced it in 1985 as part of an Islamisation campaign from 1977 until his death in a plane crash in 1988.

The system meant minorities could not vote for mainstream parties and were in effect sidelined politically. They have long been demanding an end to the discrimination.

Anthony said a large number of Christians and members of other minorities had left Pakistan for the West after Zia enforced discriminatory laws.

Dalpat Sonaria, a Hindu social worker in Karachi, said the decision would be good for the whole country. "I have nothing to do with politics, but I can only say it is for the good of the country," Sonaria said.

Minorities, who often complain of discrimination at the hands of religious extremists, say the end of the separate voting system makes non-Muslims feel more secure. "Minorities can now join a mainstream political party and can better safeguard their interests instead of re-

maining a separate entity under the separate electorate," said Shehzad Raj, a Christian working with a non-government organisation.

But a possible drawback is that a non-Muslim candidate is unlikely ever to get enough Muslim votes to win a seat. Raj dismissed that concern, saying it would be better for minority people to have members from the majority Muslim community looking after their interests.

"It does not matter. It is more valuable for us that members of the majority community struggle for our rights," he said.

Musharraf's landmark decision is most likely to benefit the politician he wants to keep out of politics — former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.

Musharraf has ruled out any political role for Bhutto, head of Pakistan People's Party, who has been in self-imposed exile since a 1998 conviction on corruption charges. She denies any wrongdoing.

"We have traditionally been voting for the People's Party. My grandfather was an ardent support of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto," Anthony said of Benazir's father, toppled in 1977 and later executed by Zia-ul-Haq.

One political commentator said the new system would hurt the right-wing, religious parties and give them cause to think.

"The joint electorate will be a loss to the right-wing parties but at the national level it will provide an opportunity to these parties to ponder the reasons that kept the minorities away from them," Ata-ul-Haq Qasmi said in the *Jang* newspaper.

Hardline Islamic groups, which have long advocated a separate electorate for non-Muslims, have been severely weakened recently by a campaign launched by Musharraf to purge society of religious extremism and build a modern, progressive Muslim state.

THE TELEGRAPH

19 JAN 2002

LoC as border not acceptable to Musharraf

Pak Prez shows comforting card to the Ulemas

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 18 JANUARY

Our Political Bureau
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GENERAL PERVEZ Musharraf went public on Friday with his disappointment over the refusal of India to pull back its troops from the border while ruling out the recognition of the Line of Control as border for a solution to the J&K dispute.

An agency report quoted the General as saying that acceptance of Line of Control as border couldn't solve the dispute. "It cannot be the solution to the problem. We have fought four wars over LoC," the report quoted the General telling a Lebanese journalist.

He was also critical of India for sending out, what he called, "fluctuating signals." The General said: "There is fluctuation in the signals, we are receiving from New Delhi. They are not consistent in their statements." The rejection of the idea of converting the LoC into the border doesn't come as a surprise as the General was not expected to extend his 180 degree turn on Taliban to J&K as well. The difference between the two cases was underscored by the General himself in his much-talked-about speech where he sought to squash speculation of any turnaround on J&K by his "Kashmir runs in our blood" declaration. While it can be argued that the display of determination may have been necessitated by the refusal of India to pull back its troops till its pre-conditions for de-escalation were met, the General's "no" does underline the problem in attempting fresh approaches for resolving the J&K dispute. The General who had quoted Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee to signal that he was equally willing to "jettison the traditional mindset" merely repeated his Agra formulation.

"The first step should be the resumption of peaceful dialogue. Second should be to accept Kashmir as a central issue. The third is to negate any solution which is not accepted to both the countries and the fourth is to apply the remains of solution and solve it according to the wishes of Kashmiris," he said.

His refusal to consider upgradation of the LoC as a possible solution comes at a time when there has been renewed speculation that the US may nudge the two neighbours into granting de jure effect to the de facto reality. The General's complaint of inconsistency against India reflects the disappointment that the expectation of an early roll-back is yet to come to pass. By refusing to relieve the border of the unprecedented presence of battle-ready troops till the General made good his words, India has tried to ensure that the Pakistani president doesn't get off the hook so easily.

To neutralize any impression that India may have extracted concessions from Islamabad while offering little in return, the General thought it fit to declare that Pakistan would teach a lesson to anyone who forces war on it. "We want peace. We do not want war unnecessarily. But if war is thrust upon us, it will be met with force and we will teach them a lesson. I am fully satisfied with the capability and preparedness of our armed forces," he told his Lebanese interviewer.

He also, denied the suggestion that the crackdown on the terrorist groups was at the instance of India. "What I did is not showing anything to India but I did it for the supreme national interest of Pakistan," he said.

GENERAL PERVEZ Musharraf, who is at the receiving end following demands from the West and India to act against the jihadi crowd, on Friday tried to contain the pressure from within by telling the Ulemas that he will not abandon their Kashmir cause.

Although the General took care not to offend the sensibilities of his handlers in the West and stayed clear of promising continued support for their militant version of Islam, he told the Ulemas that his administration will be mindful of their interests. "Please leave the Kashmir issue to me. We are going to deal with it. Have faith in me and leave it to me," the General told Islamic religious leaders in Islamabad.

It may be recalled that the General, in his address to the nation on last Saturday, sought to draw a distinction between state-sponsored jihad and the jihad undertaken by the Ulemas/madrasas. He had quoted Prophet Mohammad to ram in his point that Pakistani society should prefer jihad-e-akbar (jihad by the state) to jihad-e-asghar (jihad by sword). His argument was that jihad falls in the jurisdiction of the state and individuals or people outside the state have no right to declare jihad. Although there could be little receptivity for the distinction that the General tried to draw in his address, his plea to the Ulemas today is a clear expression of the pressure on him from within as well as from the West and India. There has been little comfort for the General as the West has been goading him to do more and India has ruled out any rolling back of its troops from the border till he meets New Delhi's demands.

Within Pakistan, the signs appear to be ominous as the jihadis incited by the Ulemas have said that they will continue with their fight against India.

The General, who has a tough task at hand, today attempted to appease the Ulemas when he said that his recent actions are merely aimed at eradicating extremism. This is unlikely to ease pressure on his government as the Ulema considers Islamism as a legitimate cause.

In his speech, the General tried to keep the Ulemas by his side by employing his usual bellicosity. He launched a verbal assault on India and asked the Indian leadership to keep off the internal affairs of Pakistan. During his speech, Musharraf outlined the steps being taken by India to mobilise its troops at the borders, as well as keeping its Air Force and Navy ready for action. "Our forces are also fully alert and ready," he said, adding Pakistan was not going to bank on someone to help it in times of war. "We have to fight ourselves and we are ready," he added.

Musharraf said Pakistan faced both internal and external threats. In order to face the external threat, the country had to tackle internal threat to prevent the enemy from taking advantage of the situation. "We are for peace. But if war is thrust on us, we will reply with full force and all our might," he said in his speech, which was interrupted few times by clerics who complained about harassment from police during the ongoing crackdown against militants as well as steps being taken to regulate the activities at mosques.



MUSHARRAF: WINSOME

Pakistan's Ataturk

Fine Words but Maintain Vigil

By K SUBRAHMANYAM

GENERAL Musharraf's speech of January 12, 2002 only validates the assessment in these columns on September 22, 2001 that as a result of the developments following 9/11, Pakistan would have to undergo a radical transformation as a result of the war against terrorism. General Musharraf's address of which 40 minutes were devoted to describing the pervasiveness and intensity of the afflictions of extremist and terrorist cults in the Pakistani society and polity highlights that next to Talibanised Afghanistan, Pakistan is the battleground in the war against terrorism.

In these columns, it has been urged that Pakistan had to be purged of fundamentalism just as Germany was denazified and Japan was demilitarised. While General Musharraf may have opted to be an ally of the coalition against terrorism, he has now admitted that his polity and society are sick and need to be cured. That is to be welcomed as it is necessary for a patient to admit his illness before treatment can begin. One has to give due credit to the moral courage displayed by General Musharraf.

He has timed his speech well. There is a general impression that it was related to defusing the tension caused by the mobilisation of forces by both sides on the border. That may no doubt be a major reason. It is also related to other factors. Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar appear to have slipped into Pakistan along with a number of their followers. The US, therefore, has to shift its focus from Afghanistan to Pakistan with further increase in forces in that country. Second, the Pakistanis taken prisoner in Afghanistan are being interrogated by the Americans.

General Musharraf, in his speech, has admitted to thousands of Pakistanis being misled into being massacred in Afghanistan. Many of them fought under Pakistani army officers. Therefore, General Musharraf will shortly be compelled to start a purge in the Pakistani army and the Inter-Services Intelligence wing. That was why 40 minutes of his speech were devoted to giving graphic details of the grip of extremism and terrorism in his country over the last several years. These cults predate the Taliban and, in fact, spawned it.

This is just the first instalment of reforms. He has only banned a few terrorist organisations, not all. Everyone knows that these

banned organisations change their names at will. He may be thinking of proceeding step by step after gauging the reaction of the extremist and terrorist elements to his moves. It is clear now that the catastrophic predictions about popular anger to his joining the anti-terror alliance and making available facilities to the US forces were exaggerated. As the general mentioned, even the thousands of Pakistani casualties in the war in Afghanistan had not led to any violent reactions. Therefore, General Musharraf may well be right in assessing that the majority of Pakistanis are with him.

This is not only true of Pakistan but also all other Islamic countries. The demonstrations died down after the first few days in most of them. In the South Asian nations, barring the Iranian revolution, there has not been a popular uprising in the last 50 years. Even the Khilafat, a more emotive issue than the general's proposed

IN BRIEF

- Musharraf must be given credit for his moral courage
- But the real issue is whether he can deliver the goods
- His Kashmir rhetoric need not be taken at face value
- Until Musharraf consolidates, India must keep up its guard

reforms, did not trigger off a massive movement in spite of Gandhi's efforts. In these circumstances, General Musharraf has every chance of playing a Kemal Ataturk in Pakistan. He has the additional advantage of having the backing of the sole superpower and the rest of the international community.

But given the size of his task, the dimensions of which were evident in his indictment of the state of affairs in his country, he will need time and a lot of economic support. He can expect both these from the international community provided he pursues vigorously his plans to make Pakistan a moderate Islamic state with appropriate benchmarks for reforms linked to economic aid. The issue is whether he can deliver. While Pakistanis boast of the discipline of their army, the harsh fact is from General Akbar Khan in 1949 to General Abbani in 1996, there have been a number of coup attempts by second and third level officers. Till now they have been unsuccessful. Therefore, General Musharraf

may have to act fast to weed out 'Islamist' generals from the army and initiate a major programme of re-education of the army.

General Musharraf, even while renouncing terrorism for the Kashmir cause, has repeated his usual formula on the Kashmir issue. He talks of Kashmir being in the Pakistani blood. The Pashtuns of Afghanistan and Pakistan share their ethnicity. Yet, given the circumstances, Pakistanis are prepared to accept the realities in Afghanistan. So General Musharraf's Kashmir rhetoric need not be taken at face value. When Pakistan becomes a moderate Islamic state and Pakistanis change their mindset, they are bound to view Kashmir in a new light and understand that their addiction to Kashmir is only a consequence of their extremism rooted in the two-nation theory and cult of terrorism. When General Musharraf sets out to reform Pakistan and purge it of extremism and terrorism, he has to go back to Jinnah and Mohammed Iqbal.

Apart from the risks to General Musharraf, there are also possibilities of jihadi elements triggering off a war between Pakistan and India by committing a terrorist outrage of an unprecedented scale in India. Foreign minister Jaswant Singh has assured that the government of India would be alert. The Pakistani government knows which jihadi groups are functioning in India and the ISI is in telephonic contact with them. It is not difficult for the general to prove his bona fides and initiate action by recalling all the jihadis operating in India. Where they anticipate a major outrage in India, they can pass on the word to Indian authorities. Prime minister Benazir Bhutto shared information about Khalistani terrorists with India in 1989-90. In this respect, the US is in a position to play the role of a communication channel between India and Pakistan. The US can also help India in augmenting its counter-terrorism intelligence collection capabilities.

Till the situation stabilises in Pakistan and General Musharraf is able to consolidate his position and suppress effectively all hostile jihadi elements and it becomes clear that his reforms will go through, India cannot afford to let down its guard and redeploy its forces. This is a period of immense uncertainties for the Pakistani ruler, the army and society. We should remain on maximum vigil.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

15 JAN 2002

militants regroup; 1,600 arrested

raising money from their new bases.

They also have moved some public outreach offices to Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir (PoK), where they expect the government to tolerate them as long as they keep a low profile.

"We will fight," the Lashkar-e-Taiyaba spokesman said over the phone today. "If the Indians have the guts, let them stop us in Kashmir," the spokesman said.

A LeT follower said members would keep in touch via e-mail, Internet bulletin boards and electronic paging, as well as SMS on their mobile phones.

At Kandahar airport, the US Marines have banned Pakistani journalists from attending the daily briefings and have declared them a "security risk". The decision taken by the higher US authorities, was conveyed to Pakistani mediapersons at the main airport gate by Major Chris Hughes, *The Daily Nation* has said. Major Hughes said: "A ban has been put on the entry of Pakistani scribes at Kandahar

Top Pak Army officer in China

BEIJING, Jan. 14. — Amid the tense military stand-off between India and Pakistan, a top Pakistani military commander arrived here today for "regular consultations" with the Chinese top military brass.

Pakistan's chairman of the joint chiefs of staff committee, Gen Muhammad Aziz Khan, ranking next only to President Gen Pervez Musharraf and vice chief of Army Gen Muhammad Yousuf arrived here and held talks with Chinese military officials.

— PTI

airport area as we continue to receive threats."

Pakistan detained hundreds of activists from banned Islamic groups in a nationwide weekend crackdown and sealed their offices, officials said today.

The detentions came before

and after the televised address by the military ruler General Pervez Musharraf on Saturday.

An interior ministry official said some 1,100 activists from five outlawed groups had been detained since Saturday in the continuing crackdown, and around 390 offices were sealed.

"We have detained almost all the activists from banned groups, but their leadership has gone underground...we will capture them also" the official, who declined to be identified, said.

Media reports and figures compiled from police sources around Pakistan suggest the actual number of detentions may be as high as 1,600, with most held under a British colonial-era maintenance of public order law, enabling authorities to hold people for up to three months.

In his address to the nation, Gen Musharraf said sectarian violence must end and Pakistan could not be used as a springboard for militant attacks in other countries.

The five groups targeted were

banned Sunni group Sipha-e-Sahaba, the Shiite Tehrik-e-Jafria Party, the pro-Taliban Tehrik-e-Nifaz-Shariat Mohammedi (TNSM) and pro-Kashmiri groups Jaish-e-Mohammad and Lashkar-e-Taiyaba. Late tonight the Lashkar office in Islamabad was sealed.

The banned groups, which joined two others outlawed last August, reacted with dismay. Some said they would change their names while others threatened legal action.

A LeT spokesperson said, "The most unfortunate thing was that police raided houses of Kashmiri martyrs, they are harassing their families. We had already announced to shift Lashkar from Pakistan to PoK. We were in the middle of our shifting when the government cracked down on us," he said.

He added that around a dozen of those detained belonged to the LeT's non-militant wing, Jamaat-al-Dawah, which offers free Islamic instruction in Pakistan.



A police officer stands guard in front of the sealed office of a militant outfit. In Rawalpindi on Monday. — AP/PTI

9-10 AT HOME 14/1

The address to the nation by the president of Pakistan, Mr Pervez Musharraf, is imbued with deep significance. Arguably, it is the most important speech in the history of Pakistan since Mohammad Ali Jinnah spoke to the Pakistan constituent assembly on August 11, 1947. Jinnah had spelt out what Pakistan stands for, or should stand for. Pakistan has been derailed from his profoundly secular vision: subsequent governments, elected and military, have allowed state policy to be hijacked by religion; *mullahs* have dictated to heads of state; the voice from the minaret has prevailed over statesmanship. Mr Musharraf has utilized the crisis produced by the war against terrorism in Afghanistan as an opportunity to essay a project of reform. It is easy to deride his speech as the outcome of pressure from Washington, but what needs to be applauded is the courage that Mr Musharraf has shown by directly confronting the hold that fanatics and militants had come to exercise over Pakistani politics and society. He has rallied to convert a position of weakness into a position of strength. He has condemned the process through which militant fundamentalists have corrupted both the spirit and the letter of Islam. He has said that the sword of *jihad* must be directed against hunger, poverty, illiteracy and intolerance. He did not deny the Islamic inheritance of Pakistan, but underlined the need to use that inheritance to place Pakistan on the path to modernity.

The modernist thrust of Mr Musharraf's speech was evident also in his emphasis on the state as the agency of social and political change in Pakistan. This might seem like an anachronism in the age of the minimalist state, but it must be remembered that Mr Musharraf is trying to undo many years of history. The state, in such a situation, must act as a surrogate for a civil society which is at best embryonic. Thus, Mr Musharraf has appealed to religious leaders not to make pronouncements over international affairs, this should be the state's preserve. Similarly, he has said that mosques should be treated as sacred places where politics and sectarian strife have no place. He has placed the *madrasahs* under the regulation of the state. Most important, he has come down hard on militant fundamentalists by prohibiting any kind of terrorist activity. This statement of intent has been strengthened by bans and arrests. These might appear to be small steps, but in Pakistan it is a giant stride. In one stroke, Mr Musharraf has set apart religious faith and state policy. Mr Musharraf has evoked the vision of an Islamic welfare state. He has projected himself to be a statesman of promise; it is to be hoped that he does not descend to become a politician of promises.

THE TELEGRAPH

14 JAN 2002

Musharraf's speech wins acclaim in Pak media

By K.J.M. Varma

ISLAMABAD: President Pervez Musharraf's slapping a ban on Lashkar-e-Toiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed and three other militant outfits and his decision to remove the jihadi option out of the Kashmir issue by renouncing terrorism won critical acclaim in the Pakistan media on Sunday.

Gen Musharraf's hour-long speech on Saturday night and highlights of the announcement specially to clamp a ban on the five militant outfits and his turnaround of sorts on the Kashmir issue by renouncing terrorism were widely published on the front pages of almost all dailies with special comments.

Describing the address as not a speech of a lifetime but a resolute, front page article, *The Nation* said Gen Musharraf's condemnation, in sequence, of the September 11, October 1 (Srinagar assembly) and December 13 attacks was about as close as he will come to something

approaching an admission of guilt, not of these particular events, but of previous ones.

This highly disguised admission is itself as close as he will come to a promise that further activities will not be backed by Pakistan. Of course, he did not deal with the tricky business of what is terrorism, and what a legitimate act of violence in a freedom struggle. Freedom fighters do not operate by the Geneva conventions, and in effect, this means that the tap has been turned off for the indigenous Kashmiri jihadi outfits, while the Pakistani outfits are probably being leashed, it said.

The News in its editorial described General Musharraf's speech as a bold and straight talk. He minced no words in making it clear that Pakistan had too long been exploited in the name of Islam, it said.

Pakistan has always publicly

maintained that its support to the Kashmiri struggle was limited to political, diplomatic and moral backing, but everyone knew that it was a little more than that, and in recent years, the Pakistani pretence has worn a little thin, *The Nation* newspaper said.

However, the President also made it clear that he was not going to accept public humiliation, as India seems intent on achieving, and he intended to be taken at his word, not treated with contempt as unreliable and untrustworthy. His demand that the international community pressure on India to accept neutral monitors of human rights abuses in Kashmir was probably lip-service rather than anything on which Pakistan can do anything concrete.

An editorial in the same paper described the speech as a line in the sand saying that at last Gen

Musharraf has drawn the line in the sand: this far but no further.

It said to the relief of the nation Gen Musharraf offered talks with India with a changed mindset, but refused to accept the dictation from India over handing of the 20 wanted criminals and terrorists.

His reaction to the international pressure on Pakistan also showed his courage; instead of sounding defensive, he turned tables by asking the international community to play its role in bringing India to the negotiating table to resolve the Kashmir issue, it said. This was the speech that was supposed to avert the threat of war.

On the subject of Kashmir and India, Gen Musharraf has made some very assertive and definite points, it said, adding he would not compromise on the Kashmir issue while giving a categorical assurance not to permit any organisation to perpetuate terrorism in garb of the Kashmir cause. (PTI)



Gen. Musharraf

THE TIMES OF INDIA

THE TIMES OF INDIA

14 JAN 2002

14 JAN 2002

Almost an admission of guilt: Pak media

Islamabad, January 13

PRÉSIDENT PERVEZ Musharraf's slapping a ban on the Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad and three other militant outfits and his decision to remove the jihadi option out of the Kashmir issue by renouncing terrorism won critical acclaim in the Pakistani media today.

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Pakistan. Of course, he did not deal with the tricky business of differentiating between terrorism and the legitimate act of violence in a freedom struggle. Freedom fighters do not operate by the Geneva conventions, and in effect, this means that the tap has been turned off for the indigentous Kashmiri jihadi outfits, while the Pakistani outfits are probably being leashed, it said.

The News in its editorial described Musharraf's speech as bold and straight talk. He minced no words and made it clear that Pakistan had too long been exploited in the name of Islam, it said.

Pakistan has always publicly

maintained that its support to the Kashmiri struggle was limited to political, diplomatic and moral backing, but everyone knew that it was a little more than that, and in recent years, the Pakistani pretence has worn a little thin, *The Nation* newspaper said.

However, the President also made clear that he was not going to accept public humiliation, as India seems intent on achieving, and he intended to be taken at his word, not treated with contempt as unreliable and untrustworthy.

His demand that the international community pressurise India to accept neutral monitors of

human rights abuses in Kashmir was probably lip service rather than anything on which Pakistan can do anything concrete.

An editorial in the same paper described said that at last Musharraf has drawn the line in the sand: saying that Pakistan can go this far and no further.

It said that to the relief of the nation Musharraf offered talks with India with a changed mindset, but refused to accept the dictation from India over handing of the 20 wanted criminals and terrorists.

His reaction to the international pressure on Pakistan also showed backbone; instead of

sounding defensive when he turned tables by asking the international community to play its role in bringing India to the negotiating table to resolve the Kashmir issue, it said.

The News said that Musharraf asked the direct question: "Are we to make Pakistan a theocratic state, or are we to make Pakistan an Islamic welfare state?" His words were accompanied by action, it said, adding that he banned five outfits rounded up over 500 activists of the groups.

On the subject of Kashmir and India, Musharraf has made some very assertive and definite points, it said adding he would

not compromise on the Kashmir issue while giving categorical assurance not to permit any organisation to perpetuate terrorism in the garb of the Kashmir cause.

This new strategy of Musharraf has to produce some results as the world now has to understand that he means business eliminating terrorism but also wants an end to the Indian blackmail. The world has now to ensure that India understands the new reality and removes the gun from Musharraf's head and starts a dialogue to resolve the 50-year-old dispute, it said.

PTI

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

JAN 2002

Can Musharraf make it stick ^{part 1}

PAKISTAN'S PRESIDENT, Pervez Musharraf, is confronted with a monumental task in riding Pakistan of the militant elements with a pan-Islamic agenda. His Government's attempts to tackle the problem can be categorised in three phases.

The first phase pertains to the period before the terror strikes on American cities. The second phase post-September 11 and the third after the December 13 attack on the Indian Parliament.

Phase I: October 17, 1999. In his first speech to the nation, Gen. Musharraf promises to ensure law and order and pleads with the clergy to present Islam in true light. It is followed by a programme aimed at collection of an estimated 1.2 million unlicensed weapons. June 2000 to July 2001. Ban on forcible collection of funds in the name of 'jihad' and public display of weapons. Ordinance for establishment of model religious schools with a syllabus which is a blend of Islamic and modern subjects. Proposal for compulsory registration of seminaries and survey to document their source of funding and foreigners on the rolls. August 14, 2001. In his address to nation on Independence Day, Gen. Musharraf bans two sectarian outfits and puts another on a watch list.

Phase II: September 11 to December 13. Extends support to the U.S.-led coalition against terrorism. Replaces the ISI chief known for his pro-Taliban leanings and supercedes three senior Generals involved in the Kashmir policy. Orders arrest of leaders of three major religious leaders (including Jamaat-e-Islami and Jamaat-Uelama-Islami) for inciting people to protest against Government support to the U.S. against the Taliban and Osama bin Laden. They continue to be behind the bars. Follows the example of the U.S. and freezes assets and accounts of Pakistan-based organisations operating in Afghanistan. Two former nuclear scientists accused of helping Osama arrested and interrogated.

Phase III: December 13 onwards. Freezes assets of Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad. Arrests leaders of the two militant outfits along with hundreds of their cadres and their offices are shut down in different parts of Pakistan. Orders ISI to withdraw support to Pakistan-based militant outfits engaged in Kashmir and announces a national committee on Kashmir under the chairmanship of the former PoK Prime Minister and President, Sardar Qayyum Khan, known for his moderate views.

In a joint press meet with the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, Gen. Musharraf announces that Pakistan denounces terrorism in all forms and manifestations and unveils a 'whole-some plan' to tackle extremism. He also promises to look into the list of 20 wanted persons given by New Delhi.

It is not only a gigantic but also a very complicated task for anyone in Pakis-



Donations for the Lashkar-e-Taiba in Peshawar

Cracking down on the jihadis is a gigantic task for Pervez Musharraf, writes B. Muralidhar Reddy.

tan. No doubt Pakistan was born as a Muslim nation with Islam as its ideology. But what the founding father of Pakistan had envisaged was a 'modern, progressive and liberal' Islamic country. As several contemporary historians testify it was one, at least in the first two and half decades of its existence, notwithstanding the complete feudal character of the society.

Religious extremism, bigotry and intolerance surfaced first in the mid-1970s under the stewardship of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. His decision to give in to the demand of the religious parties and name the Ahmadi sect as a minority was the starting point. And ever since it has been one downhill journey for Pakistan.

Zia-ul-Haq played a significant role

in giving it momentum through his programme of Islamisation. The process he set in motion became irreversible, with every successive civilian and military government thereafter pandering to the religious zealots for their own partisan ends. The power wielded by the religious parties is in total contrast to their following among the people. Barring the 1970 election, fought under extraordinary circumstances, all the religious parties in Pakistan put together have never managed to poll even five per cent of the popular vote! And yet year after year they dictated the national agenda and the rulers merrily danced to their tunes.

At the end of the cold war (marked by withdrawal of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan and its subsequent disin-

tegration) Pakistan society was inundated with lakhs of sophisticated guns and thousands of youngsters trained in warfare. They were made to believe that it was their jihad that led to the collapse of the superpower.

The warriors were on the lookout for yet another cause in the name of Islam and what better than Kashmir. The establishment in Pakistan turned a blind eye as the country witnessed a mushrooming of militant outfits espousing the cause of Kashmir. The entry of foreign organisations into the Kashmir Valley changed the very complexion of the fight being carried on by outfits such as the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen whose cadres were mostly Kashmiris. Among the important Pakistan based militant outfits that began dominating the Kashmir valley were the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen and LeT. By 1993, the so-called 'guests' began dictating to the hosts and Pakistan began orchestrating the militant campaign in the Valley with the help of its proxies.

Involvement in Afghanistan also affected Pakistani society in a major way. The kalashnikov and drug culture transformed the very fabric of society. Sectarian and ethnic terrorism raised its head like never before.

The civilian governments that came to power after the demise of Zia-ul-Haq never came to grips with sectarian and ethnic strife. They were afraid of their nuisance value and the threat they could pose to their own stability. As a result, they thrived and prospered with every passing year.

Gen. Musharraf was conscious of the havoc caused by these outfits when he took over as the Chief Executive of the country after a bloodless coup. But even his Government never went beyond pronouncements and cosmetic steps to contain them.

Part of the problem was the Musharraf regime did not want to touch those engaged in Kashmir and earn the wrath of them for 'harming the Kashmir cause'. After all, 'safeguarding the Kashmir' was one of the reasons cited by Gen. Musharraf in support of the decision to back the Americans in Afghanistan.

But then December 13 happened. With mounting international pressure and the two nuclear powers on the brink of a war, Gen. Musharraf has little option but to re-think the strategy of his Government on Kashmir.

The enormity of the task Gen. Musharraf faces in cleaning up at home can be gauged from the simple fact that there are an estimated 12 lakh unlicensed kalashnikovs in Pakistan. No one has an idea of the number of religious seminaries. The estimates vary from 15,000 to 40,000. Some of them definitely fall in the category of 'jihad factories'. If international community in general and India in particular wants to extend a helping hand to Pakistan's President in dealing with militancy, it will have to also push for an early resolution of the Kashmir problem.

THE HINDU

13 JAN 2002

Pak mulls ban on sectarian groups

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD/TOKYO Jan. 11. — Ahead of a much awaited speech of Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf, a government minister has hinted at banning religious extremists and sectarian groups and imposing curbs against outfits raising funds for Jihad.

In Japan, the government today clamped down on the financial transactions of Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiyaba and two other suspected terrorist groups as part of its efforts to freeze assets used to fund terrorism.

Pakistan's federal religious minister Mr Mehmud Ahmed Ghazi said that as per the new policy to be outlined by his government, "all those groups or individuals who are killing each other in the name of Islam and by declaring others as infidels and were sitting in judgement on others, were religious extremists."

Mr Ghazi, one of the senior ministers of Musharraf's cabinet, was quoted by the Dawn as saying that in Kashmir there "is purely an indigenous struggle to which Pakistan is providing moral and diplomatic support. But no one has the right to undertake jihadi activities in the name of Kashmir's freedom".

"Moral and material support to Kashmir refugees is okay but beyond that if some individuals are promoting activities against the stated policy of the government, they cannot be condoned," he said.

The minister claimed that there was no Pakistani organisation engaged in jihad across the borders. "If some one (is) raising funds for such an activity, he is not doing any good to the country."

In Japan authorities have imposed controls on transactions involving Lashkar-e-Taiyaba, Hamas-Izz al-Din al-Qassem and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, a statement issued jointly by Japan's foreign, finance and economy ministries.

Japan has restricted the transactions of a total of 12 organisations and individuals suspected of terrorist activities and another 293 believed to have ties to Afghanistan's Taliban militia, the statement said.

In October, the Japanese government announced that it had frozen three Taliban bank accounts in Japan holding about \$ 6,00,000. Another 28 accounts amounting to about 18 million yen (about \$ 1,36,000) were frozen because they were suspected of being connected to the Taliban.

THE STATESMAN

12 JAN 2002

Pak. army top brass review situation

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By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, JAN. 8. Amidst growing pressure from the United States to crack down on the jihadi elements and create a conducive atmosphere for talks with India, the Pakistan military top brass met at the General Headquarters in Rawalpindi and reviewed the overall situation.

Presided over by the President and Chief of Army Staff, Pervez Musharraf, the daylong conference deliberated on the military preparedness to respond to "any and all conceivable types of aggression that could be launched by Indian forces."

While the official statement put out by the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) said the discussions were mainly confined to the situation arising out of the tension on the border and the foreign trips of Gen. Musharraf, including his visit to Kathmandu for the SAARC Summit, it is inconceivable that the top brass did not debate on the crackdown on jihadis.

Ever since he took over the reins of Pakistan in October 1999, Gen. Musharraf has always made it a point to consult the Core Commanders of the military

on all matters of national importance and governance.

The conference comes close on the heels of the statement by the United States President, George W. Bush, asking the Musharraf Government to crack down on the militant groups within Pakistan and the promise made by Gen. Musharraf in his joint press conference with the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, on Monday night to unveil a plan on the subject.

It can be presumed that the conference reviewed the progress of the ongoing campaign to reign in the jihadi outfits. In the coming days Gen. Musharraf would have to decide on some crucial issues such as a ban on some of the militant and sectarian outfits.

The statement said that Gen. Musharraf told the commanders that defence of the country was a sacred duty and the Pakistan army was capable of meeting all types of challenges.

"Pakistanis are a responsible and peace-loving nation but let there be no illusion that in case of any aggression we will respond with complete national will and resolve." Corps Commanders and Principal Staff Officers attended the conference.

THE HINDU

09 JAN 2002

Pak widens crackdown

FROM ZEESHAN HAIDER

Islamabad, Jan. 5 (Reuters): Police rounded up around 200 Islamic militants across Pakistan early today.

Policemen raided mosques, houses and militant bases in early morning sweeps, picking up some activists at prayer, government and militant group officials said.

More than 200 members of the extreme Sunni Muslim group, Sipah-e-Sahaba, were detained in overnight raids in Sindh and Punjab, the group's central secretary-general, Khadim Hussain Dhalon, said.

"They detained our people in mosques during dawn prayers," he said, adding that as many as 300 members of the group had been rounded up in the last three days.

The Sipah-e-Sahaba has been accused of involvement in frequent outbreaks of sectarian violence across Pakistan, their attack usually focused on Shi'ite mosques. "We have asked our workers to go underground," Dhalon said.

Police sources put the number of people detained at 200, although a foreign ministry spokesman later put the number of detain-

ees at more than 100 in the past several days.

Some of the detained activists are sympathetic to groups fighting in Kashmir and blamed by New Delhi for the December 13 attack on Parliament.

Pakistani officials said more clashes erupted today between Indian and Pakistani troops in Kashmir.

One man was killed and one wounded by mortar fire in Rawalakot district, police said. "It was unprovoked fire from the Indian side," an officer said.

Foreign ministry spokesman Aziz Ahmed Khan told at a news briefing that authorities had apprehended more than 100 people in the past few days in connection with "incendiary statements and related activities".

"Certainly, the government will continue to see that no individual or group is allowed to disrupt law," he added.

An interior ministry official said: "It is a continuing process. Our crackdown on religious extremists and terrorists will continue."

The activists detained today, mainly from the Sipah-e-Sahaba, were apprehended in

cities across the central Punjab province and in southern Sindh, police sources said.

"We will continue to support the Kashmiri struggle whether the government supports it or not," a spokesman said.

The government, however, denied that the crackdown on militant groups was launched because of pressure from India, or because of the US war on terrorism, which Pakistan backs.

Officials said the militants have been detained, and many of their offices closed down, for internal security reasons.

US anti-terror chief tour

W. Taylor, chief of the US counter-terrorism department, would arrive in Pakistan next week to discuss measures to combat terrorism.

Taylor would hold talks with President Pervez Musharraf, interior minister Moinuddin Haider and other senior officials on issues relating to combating terrorism in Pakistan, a newspaper report said here today.

He is expected to suggest proposals, apart from offering US cooperation to Pakistan in this regard.

THE TELEGRAPH

26 JAN 2002

Musharraf lands a delayed punch

HT Correspondent
Kathmandu, January 4

A SUBTLE diplomatic revenge. No, a deliberate attempt to eliminate an inevitable encounter with the arch-enemy. Conspiracy theories abounded as General Pervez Musharraf disembarked from a Chinese South West Airlines jet at Tribhuvan Airport at 3.25 pm today — over five hours late — forcing the cancellation of the Summit's inauguration slated at 2.30 pm.

The Summit will now begin tomorrow at 11 am.

The unexpected cancellation led to much hair-splitting over the need for the Nagarkot retreat scheduled tomorrow. The South Asian leaders are to spend more than four hours without aides at the Himalaya Club that offers a breathtaking view of the Everest. No official word was available till late afternoon on the fate of the retreat, which could lead to interesting possibilities out of an inevitable Vajpayee-Musharraf informal talk.

Most conspiracy theorists held that the delay was not

unavoidable. Chengdu, from where the Pakistani President's aircraft (provided by his Chinese hosts) took off, was reportedly enveloped in fog. That's the official line. Questions that hang in that fog are: why did Musharraf want to cut it so fine as to leave minimum allowance for poor visibility to prevent him reaching Kathmandu on time?

Was he making a point to the other leaders on how the Indian airspace ban forced him to take the arduous detour? Or was it his way of hitting back at Jaswant Singh's choice of the Saarc venue to present evidence of Pakistan's hand in terror?

News about Musharraf's delayed take-off from Chengdu, three hours' flying time from Kathmandu, was in circulation all morning. That the inauguration ceremony would have to be put off by a few hours was taken as a given, but few anticipated a postponement. Finally, around 3 pm, the official Saarc spokesman cited "special reasons" to announce that the inauguration had been put off till tomorrow.

A huge media contingent was present at the airport for sound

bytes from the Pakistani leader when he finally landed. Asked if he would officially request Atal Bihari Vajpayee for a meeting on the sidelines of the Summit, he said: "I can't say anything about it. It's not a question of a request. Dialogues cannot be one-sided. There should be willingness on both sides for talks."

India was prompt in its rebuff. "The atmosphere is not conducive for such a dialogue now," said External Affairs Ministry spokeswoman Nirupama Rao. "Pakistan is well aware of India's position in this regard and the need for the creation of a climate conducive for this. We are yet to see satisfactory responses from Pakistan."

Vajpayee spent the morning in consultations with the Presidents of Maldives and Sri Lanka and the Chairman of the Bhutanese Council of Ministers. After a quiet lunch at Soaltee, he rested for a while before another round of meetings, his first with Khaleda Zia. Later tonight, he attended the banquet hosted by King Gyanendra, where he and Musharraf were seen standing far apart.

Crackdown on jihadi outfits continues

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, JAN. 3. Continuing its crackdown on activists of jihadi outfits, the Pakistan Government is believed to have detained 100 more cadres of various extremist organisations.

Indications are that the number of those detained in the last few days has crossed 300. Most of the detentions are from the province of Sindh. According to the Pakistani media the Karachi police along with other law-enforcing agencies arrested 100 activists belonging to the Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad and Sipah-e-Shahad and sealed six offices in the city.

The papers have said that the offices of the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen and Harkat-al-Jihad-e-Islami have also been sealed and their fundraising campaign has been ended. Police officials in plain cloths have been deployed outside the sealed offices.

Cases have also been registered against four Imams of mosques in Karachi on charges of delivering inflammatory speeches. Four other Imams have been arrested for their connections with the Jamat-ud-Dawa. Police are said to have raided offices of the LeT, JeM and the Harkat in Chishtian and arrested a number of activists apart from sealing offices and seizing their literature.

The papers have said that lists of students of religious seminaries

and their affiliation with religious and jihadi outfits are being prepared for taking further action against them.

Meanwhile the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) today welcomed the move by India and Pakistan to renew an agreement that prevents both countries from attacking each other's nuclear installations and facilities.

BJP chief wants Pak. to prove bona fides

By Our Special Correspondent

HYDERABAD, JAN. 3. The BJP president, Jana Krishnamurthy, said Pakistan's bonafides as a partner in the global fight against terrorism could not be trusted unless it took concrete steps to ban terrorist outfits, arrest their leaders and hand over them to India for trial.

Talking to reporters here today, Mr. Krishnamurthy rejected Pakistan's demand that India furnish evidence on the ground that enough proof was already available. He asserted that India's cautious approach has started telling Pakistan which had shifted its earlier stand that the December 13 attack on Parliament was 'stage-managed'. "Neither India nor Pakistan is standing trial before the International Court of Justice. All the five terrorists were Pakistan nationals who belonged to terrorists outfits based in that country," he said.

Former Lashkar chief arrested

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, DEC. 31. Reeling under international pressure, the Indian diplomatic offensive and military moves, Pakistan today announced that it had arrested the chief of the parent body of the Lashkar-e-Taiba, Prof. Hafeez Mohammad Saeed.

The Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman, Mr. Aziz Ahmed Khan, who confirmed Prof. Saeed's arrest, was, however, quick to add that he had been detained under the Maintenance of Public Order (MPO) for delivering provocative speeches and disturbing law and order. This was part of the Government's efforts to crack down on extremist elements.

The arrest of Prof. Saeed, how-



ever, undoubtedly marks a major shift in the attitude of the Musharraf Government towards the jihadi outfits and the jihadi culture in Pakistan. Just a few days ago, such an action would have been unthinkable.

Islamabad has been at pains to emphasise that Prof. Saeed's arrest has nothing to do with the international pressure on it and the Indian demand in connection with the December 13 Parliament attack, but there are few takers for the explanation.

With the arrest of Prof. Saeed, the military Government has detained the top leaders of both the organisations — the Lashkar and the Jaish-e-Mohammad — charged by India for their involvement in the December 13 Parliament attack. The JeM chief, Maulana Masood Azar, was picked up last week by police.

Prof. Saeed quit as chief of the Lashkar a week ago and appointed a Kashmiri face to head the outfit.

Privately, senior officials in the Government concede that Pakistan had been forced to take cognisance of the international pressure to crackdown on the private armies in the name of Islam.