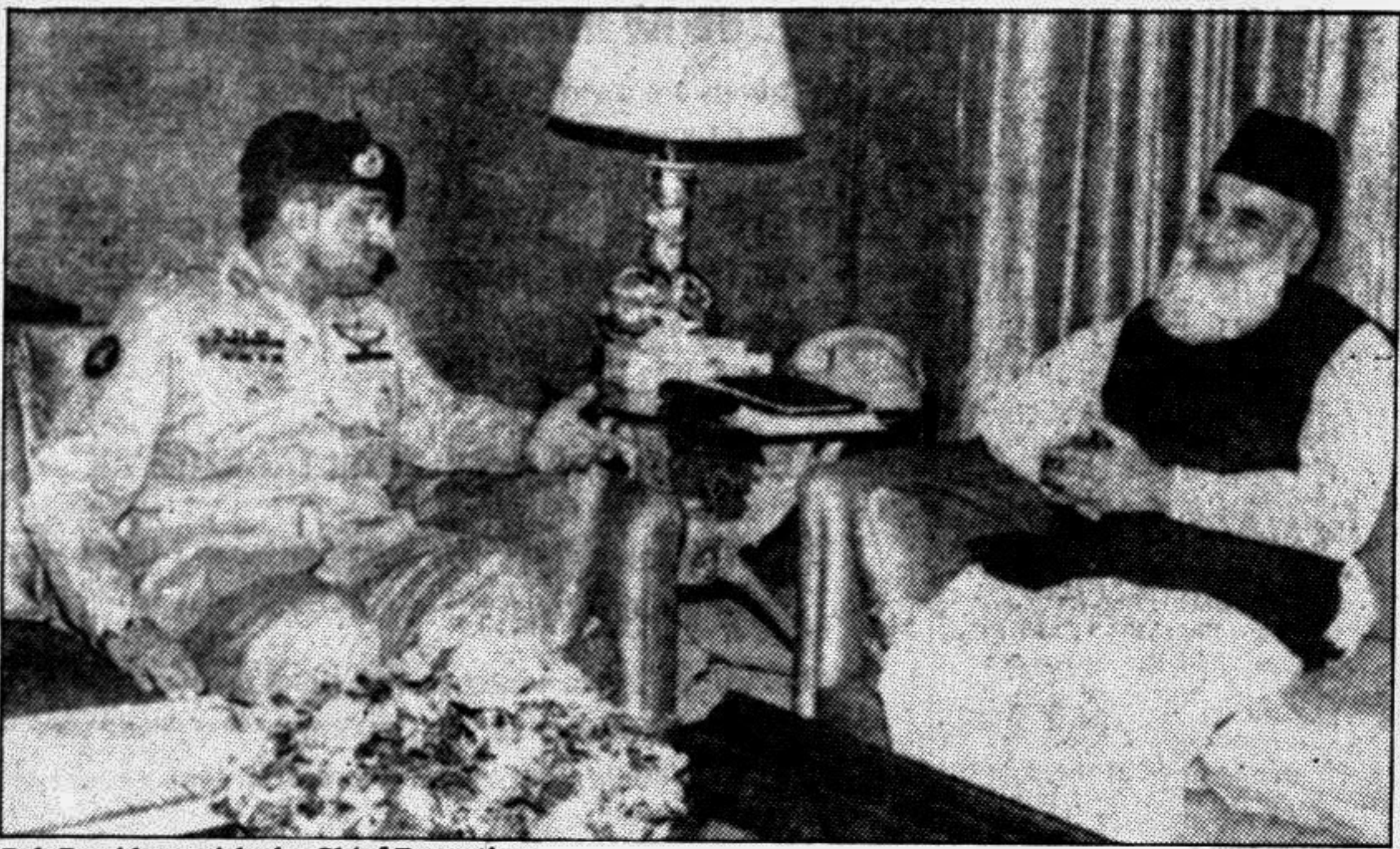


Cutting the Ice? Can Military Rescue Pakistan?

Full text (draft) of the speech of the Chief Executive of Pakistan General Pervez Musharraf, delivered on October 18, 1999 at 20:30 PST (15:30 GMT)



Pak President with the Chief Executive

ISMAILAH Ar-Rehman-Ar-Rahim

My dear countrymen, Asalam O Alaikum:

Pakistan today stands at the crossroads of its destiny — a destiny which is in our hands to make or break. Fifty-two years ago we started with a beacon of hope. Today that beacon is no more and we stand in darkness. There is despondency and hopelessness surrounding us with no light visible anywhere around. The slide down has been gradual but has rapidly accelerated in the last many years.

Today, we have reached a stage where our economy has crumbled, our credibility is lost, state institutions lie demolished, provincial disharmony has caused cracks in the federation, and people who were once brothers are now at each other's throat.

In sum, we have lost our honour, our dignity, our respect in the comity of nations. Is this the democracy our Quaid-e-Azam had envisaged? Is this the way to enter the new millennium? Let us not be despondent. I am an optimist. I have faith in the destiny of this nation; belief in its people and conviction in its future. We were not a poor nation as generally perceived.

In fact we are rich. We have fertile land that can produce three crops a year. We have abundant water to irrigate these lands and generate surplus power. We have gas, coal and vast untapped mineral resources — and above all a dynamic and industrious people. All these await mobilization. We have only to awaken, join hands and grasp our destiny.

For Allah helps those who help themselves. I present to Pakistanis, as you are aware I look over in extremely unusual circumstances — not of my making. It is unbelievable and indeed unfortunate that the few at the helm of affairs in the last government were intriguing to destroy the last institution of stability left in Pakistan by creating dissension in the ranks of the armed forces of Pakistan. And who would believe that the Chief of Army Staff, having represented Pakistan in Sri Lanka upon his return was denied landing in his own country and instead circumstances were created which would have forced our plane either to land in India or crash. Providence ultimately intervened. Praise be to Allah that the plane landed safely when barely seven minutes of fuel was left. I salute my soldiers and men for acting courageously in the supreme interest of the nation. Most of all I salute our people who stood solidly with their armed forces at that critical hour. Quite clearly, what Pakistan has experienced in the recent years has been hardly a label of democracy not the essence of it. Our people were never emancipated from the yoke of despotism. I shall not allow the people to be taken back to the era of sham democracy, but to a true one. And I promise you I will Inshallah.

My dear countrymen, The choice before us on 12th October was between saving the body that is the nation, at the cost of losing a limb — which is the Constitution, or saving the whole body. The Constitution is but a part of the nation therefore I chose to save the nation and yet took care not to sacrifice the Constitution. The Constitution has only been temporarily held in abeyance. This is not martial law, only another path towards democracy. The armed forces have no intention to stay in charge any longer than is absolutely necessary to pave the way for true democracy to flourish in Pakistan.

Ever since 12th October I have deliberated, carried out consultations and crystallized my views about the future course to be adopted. I wish to share these with you today.

My dear countrymen, our aims and objectives shall be:

- Rebuild national confidence and morale.
- Strengthen the federation, remove inter provincial disharmony and restore national cohesion.
- Revive the economy and restore investor confidence.
- Ensure law and order and dispense speedy justice.
- Depoliticise state institutions. Devolution of power to the grass roots level. Ensure swift and across the board accountability.
- Good governance is the prerequisite to achieve these objectives. In the past, our governments have ruled the people

It is time now for the government to serve the people. The government I plan to institute shall comprise:

Firstly — The President. On my request, President Rafique Tarar has very kindly agreed to stay.

Second — A National Security Council headed by the Chief Executive with six members. These members will be Chief of Naval Staff, Chief of Air Staff, a specialist each in Legal, Finance, Foreign Policy and national affairs. A think-tank of experts shall be formed as an adjunct to the National Security Council to provide institutionalised advice and input.

Third — A Cabinet of Ministers who will work under the guidance of the National Security Council.

Fourth — The Provinces to be headed by a Governor, functioning through a small provincial cabinet. All these appointments shall be made purely on the basis of professional competence, merit and reputation.

The revival of the economy is critical. Our economy is in deep trouble and revolutionary steps are needed to put it back on track. The Pakistani people were subjected to betrayal of trust. Their hard-earned money was frozen or taxed in violation of State commitments. We need to restore this trust. To revitalize our economy in addition to measures like recovery of the looted national wealth — a task that will be ruthlessly pursued, I am identifying policy guidelines. Some of which are:

Rebuilding of investors' confidence through stability and consistency in economic policies, and economic security.

The objective is to encourage the local investors, overseas Pakistanis and foreign investors.

Increase domestic savings. Carry out pragmatic tax reforms.

Turn around the state enterprises towards profitability. Boost agriculture and revive industry.

Strict austerity measures. The next aspect is accountability. Lack of accountability has resulted in corruption of horrendous proportions, threatening the very basis of our society. The term 'ehesab' has been abused to an extent that it has lost its meaning. There is thus a need to re-establish faith in the process of accountability.

The process of accountability is being directed especially towards those guilty of plundering and looting the national wealth and tax evaders. It is also directed towards loan defaulters and those who have had their loans re-scheduled or condoned. The process of accountability will be transparent to the public to see. My advice to the guilty is to return voluntarily national wealth, bank loans and pay their taxes before the hand of law forces them to do so with penalty. As a last chance I urge all defaulters to come forth and settle their debts within a period of four weeks, after which their names will be published and the law will take its due course. They owe this to Pakistan and I expect their spirit of patriotism to guide them.

Cementing the Federation is very vital. This will be achieved through devolution of power, from the centre to the provinces and from the provincial to the local government as actually enshrined in the constitution.

Media forms an integral part of statehood in this era of information. I have great regard and respect for the media; I trust it to play a positive and constructive role. I am a firm believer in the freedom of the press and am even considering liberalising the policy on the establishment of private television and radio channels.

And now a few words on exploitation of religion. Islam teaches tolerance not hatred, universal brotherhood and not enmity, peace and not violence, progress and not bigotry. I have great respect for the Ulema and expect them to come forth and present Islam in its true light. I urge them to curb elements which are exploiting religion for vested interests and bringing a bad name to our faith. I would like to reassure our minorities that they enjoy full rights and protection as equal citizens in the letter and spirit of true Islam.

I wish to reassure the international community that there is no change in our foreign policy. We will continue to honour international obligations and commitments, as in the past. It will remain our constant endeavour to promote peace and stability in our region. We would like to maintain our abiding policy of friendship and co-operation with all countries. The strengthening of brotherly ties with the Islamic countries will be a central pillar of our foreign policy. We shall continue our efforts to achieve a just and peaceful solution in Afghanistan. We wish to see a truly representative government in Kabul. We will maintain and further reinforce our traditional and time tested friendship and co-operation with China. We attach the highest importance to our friendly relations with all major powers, especially the United States. Here I would like to mention two key areas of our external relations: International security and disarmament and our relations with India. Pakistan has always been alive to international non-proliferation concerns. Last year, we were compelled to respond to India's nuclear tests in order to restore strategic balance in the interest of our national security and regional peace and stability.

In the new nuclear environment in South Asia, we believe that both Pakistan and India have to exercise utmost restraint and responsibility. We owe it to our people and also to the world. I wish to assure the world community that while preserving its vital security interests Pakistan will continue to pursue a policy of nuclear and missile restraint and sensitivity to global non-proliferation and disarmament objectives.

As for relations with India, let me at the out-set congratulate Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee on assumption of office as the Prime Minister of India. I welcome his offer for friendly relations and positively reciprocate. At the turn of the century, South Asia stands at a crucial juncture of its history. 20th Century saw our transition to independence but the region has unfortunately remained mired in conflicts and economic deprivation.

Together Pakistan and India can change this scenario. For this objective both must sincerely work towards resolving their problems, especially the core issue of Jammu and Kashmir. The people of Kashmir have made great sacrifices for the achievement of their rights and to them by the United Nations. We shall continue our unflinching moral, political and diplomatic support to our Kashmiri brethren in their struggle to achieve their right of self-determination.

India must honour the UN resolutions and its own commitment to the people of Kashmir. It must also end its repression of the Kashmiri people and respect their fundamental human rights. Pakistan would welcome result-oriented dialogue with India. While our armed forces are fully equipped and ready to defend our national sovereignty and territorial integrity, it is our desire that the situation on our border with India and on the Line of Control should remain calm and peaceful. I take this opportunity to announce a unilateral military de-escalation on our side and initiate the borders with India and initiate the borders with India in the recent past. I hope this step would serve as a meaningful confidence building measure.

My dear countrymen, to conclude my address let me say that, we have hit rock bottom. We have no choice but to rise, and rise we will, Inshallah. Our actions shall Inshallah speak louder than words. Therefore, my countrymen let us rise to the occasion and seize the opportunity.

Before I close I would like to give you a personal commitment. I hereby undertake to declare my tax returns and my assets to be documented, and open for public scrutiny.

And now I would like to share a prayer that I wrote for myself.

O Allah I promise my nation sincerity, honesty, integrity and unflinching loyalty. Give me the vision to see and perceive the truth from the false. The wisdom to comprehend the problem and find its solution. The courage to do justice and the and the strength to do right.

May Allah be with us all. Aameen

Pakistan Painsdabad.

Courtesy: The Dawn of Pakistan

After two and half years of misrule, the democratic dictatorship of Mr Nawaz Sharif has fallen. Its fall is as steep as was its rise. Ironically, this was the regime that was swept to power with an unprecedented mandate, yet in governance it provided to the country was worse than that of its predecessors. Mr Sharif became the most powerful prime minister in the history of Pakistan because of the extraordinary majority he gained in the 1997 elections that was further consolidated after the repeal of the 8th amendment. The people of Pakistan had given him an overwhelming vote, hoping that he would provide them with better governance, improve the economy and establish the rule of law. Instead of working for achieving these goals, we witnessed the worst form of cronyism and greed for gaining more and more powers. Indeed, it has been the worst form of tyranny under the facade of democracy.

With nearly a three-fourths majority in the National Assembly and having the 8th Amendment repealed, he started unnecessary confrontation with other institutions of the state. But it appears that his lust for unbridled power was insatiable. To start with, he subjugated the Parliament that was the source of his authority through the 14th Amendment. He fought with the President who was instrumental in bringing him to power and ultimately succeeded in his removal. He removed the Chief Justice of Pakistan who, together with the president, had paved the way for the induction of his government through a process that can be termed a judicial coup. He fought with his political allies such as the ANP and the MQM which had stood by him during the days of his adversity.

He persecuted the opposition through a discriminatory process of ehtesab, while exempting himself and his party entirely from similar scrutiny. He meddled in the affairs of the armed forces and removed the naval chief as well as the army chief. He had virtually transformed the federal structure of government to a unitary form by total usurpation of provincial autonomy. The provinces were made subservient to the will of the prime minister, more specifically in the case of Sindh. He removed his own party's government in Sindh and instituted totally unconstitutional federal rule that had continued for over a year while the elected assembly remained under virtual suspension. He removed the governor of Sindh, a man with a reputation for integrity and objectivity, and replaced him with his own adviser.

The adviser was allowed to exercise all the powers of the chief minister as well as the inherent powers of the provincial assembly such as authorization of the budget, which was presented at a press conference in flagrant disregard of the provisions of the Constitution.

The adviser to the PM went ahead to appoint his own advisers who were given powers of the provincial ministers in complete violation of the Constitution and rules of business; and together with them, they were on the path of robbing this rich as well as the most bankrupt province. Even after the removal of the President, the chief justice and the army chief, Mr Sharif's lust for absolute power was far from satisfied. His aim was to get unlimited powers through the Shariat Bill which could not be passed for lack of a two-thirds majority in the Senate. He was keeping an eye on the forthcoming Senate elections in March 2000 to get the required two-thirds majority to get the Shariat Bill approved. This would have resulted in a complete transformation of the Constitution and the system of government, turning the country into a kingdom and Mr Sharif as its sovereign. The last hurdle for attaining this ambition, it seems, was to make the Pakistan army subservient, which had started to create some problems subsequent to the humiliating episode of Kargil. This was proposed to be done by dividing the army and appointing a loyalist as the army chief.

Mr Sharif messed up the economy continuously, consistently and relentlessly. The wounds inflicted on the economy are so deep that it may take years of confidence-building measures to undo their harmful effects. Starting with several economic packages for revival of the economy that were never implemented, the confidence of the business and markets started eroding. During this period, we saw enormous rise in tax evasion and reduction in tax collection. The portfolio of defaulted loans has risen by nearly 100 per cent. This obviously was the natural consequence of having a government of defaulters for the defaulters.

The losses of public sector enterprises like WAPDA, KESC, PIAC, Pakistan Steel, Pakistan Railways, etc., rose to over Rs 150 billion during this period, while the provincial governments, especially the three smaller provinces, have been pushed to bankruptcy. The mishandling of the IPPs and other foreign investors, freezing of foreign currency accounts and arbitrary changes in economic policies, together with the discriminatory and one-sided accountability process, has led to continual erosion in investor confidence.

As a result, the three major sources of foreign currency inflows — foreign currency accounts, workers remittances and foreign investment — that provided nearly \$ 5 billion per annum to the country and enabled it to meet its annual debt-servicing cost of about the same level, have substantially disappeared. Consequently, Pakistan today is practically insolvent and totally dependent on the international financial institutions such as the IMF, World Bank and Asian Development Bank. Its external account sustainability is contingent on the continued support and blessings of the G-7 countries for not only the rescheduling of its external debt of over \$ 33 billion, but also for more loans to keep it afloat.

The country's risk rating by the two international rating agencies has been downgraded to such a low level that it cannot borrow from the commercial market. The rescheduling arrangement that was agreed with the Paris Club with the support of the IMF, when the IMF's stalled ESAF programme of \$ 1.6 billion was revived in December 1998, has still not been put in place.

While the Paris and London Clubs had agreed to reschedule their debt, the issue of Eurobonds, with the condition of comparable treatment, is still unresolved. Even more important for the effectiveness of the rescheduling arrangement is the continuing support of the IMF, which is far from pleased with the pace and the manner of implementation of reforms agreed in the Project Framework Paper that was signed last December. We have seen that our ex-finance minister had to fly to Washington twice to get the \$280 million tranche released from the IMF, but despite several statements and claims by Mr Ishaq Dar that the tranche will be released in September (later changed to October), this did not materialize.

While the finance minister was making false claims and misinforming the IFIs as well as the public, the prime minister was busy conceiving and implementing financially suicidal mega-schemes that made little economic sense such as the PM's housing project worth Rs 500 billion and motorways. Practically all the institutions and organizations have been filled with hand-picked cronies because of their qualities of sycophancy and personal loyalty leading to waste, inefficiency and corruption involving billions of rupees.

Industry and commerce are dying, and Pakistan is gradually losing its competitive advantage, even in its traditionally strong sectors such as textiles as evident from its dwindling exports. Agriculture has also lost its traditional buoyancy as a result of a continuing rise in the prices of inputs, falling yields and prices of the agricultural products. Of the many crises that the country is faced with, the crisis of a big cotton crop, low international prices, and unless properly handled, the unresolved tussle between the growers, ginners and spinners about the regulation of cotton prices could prove to be most disastrous.

There are clear signals that the IMF and the World Bank are not satisfied with the pace and the stop-and-go approach in the implementation of the reforms. Amongst other conditions, they want the IPP issue to be resolved and the petroleum prices to be increased immediately for the release of \$280 million. Needless to point out, the tranche of \$ 280 million is absolutely vital for Pakistan, because on it depends the rescheduling of over \$ 5.5 billion by the Paris and London Clubs.

The majority of the people of Pakistan remain impoverished; and they continue to suffer the pains of unemployment, inflation and lawlessness. They are increasingly disillusioned with their politicians as well as all the institutions of the state, including the criminal and civil justice system that has deteriorated to an abysmal level. They are so disillusioned that they feel that no change could be worse than their present state. So they always welcome change, though more often change has brought greater suffering and misfortune.

With the proclamation of a Provisional Constitutional Order and suspension of substantive part of the Constitution, the country is practically under martial law. The uncertainty that permeates the present set-up, its objectives and timeframe is even more unsettling. Although the initial response of the international community, especially of the major powers, to the removal of Mr Sharif's government is somewhat muted because of endless misdeeds, they would want the country to be put back on the path of democracy swiftly. The new regime has to come up with a framework of governance that is not only acceptable to the Supreme Court of Pakistan, but also inspires confidence amongst the people as well as the international community, especially the G-7 and IFIs. Also, it has to prepare a strategic economic programme, with clearly defined objectives, to rescue Pakistan out of the dire straits caused by the 31 months of misrule of the previous government and the cumulative misgovernance of the past 52 years.

By such a programme, it is not being suggested that the military should remain in government for an indefinite period to implement this programme for reviving the economy. On the contrary, the tenure of this regime should not be for more than a year, during which it can prepare a strategic plan and start its implementation, leaving its continuity for the elected government to ensure.

Concomitantly, the government must announce the timeframe for the revival of the free, fair and impartial manner. The military government must announce immediately

by Syed Asad Ali Shah

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that it will honour all commitments and agreements made by the previous government, not only with the IMF and other IFIs but also with all other parties — to create an environment of trust. Amongst other things, it has to implement the programme agreed with the IMF in the PFF signed last December. This is the minimum that the regime must do to send the right signals to the international community to mitigate the effect of growing uncertainty.

The issue of accountability is of utmost importance. This has to be done in a totally impartial and transparent manner with a view to catching those who have robbed the nation wantonly but have remained untouched. To inspire public confidence in the accountability process, the people associated with it must be above board, unlike our previous chief of the Ehtesab Bureau, who himself was one of the biggest defaulters of a nationalized commercial bank to the tune of one billion rupees. The primary objective of accountability should be to establish a system that provides an effective check on the future governments to preclude the misuse of authority for personal gain. Effective steps must also be taken to improve transparency in decision-making and curb corruption that gobbles up a big chunk of the GDP. For this purpose, all those who are at the helm must declare their net asset when they take office and continue to do so on a yearly basis. Such returns must be open to public scrutiny. New initiatives are needed to recover defaulted bank loans, curb tax evasion and enhance efficiency and effectiveness of the administration to improve governance.

The challenges that lie ahead are of phenomenal magnitude. But the most important test for the new government would be the kind of people it associates with. Perhaps the only advice one can give to the new government is that a lot will depend on the honesty, objectivity, sincerity of purpose, and professional competence of the people who are associated in formulating and implementing the policies. This reminds one of the golden words of wisdom "the only thing which is more important than the ability is the ability to recognize the ability."

The success of the new set-up and its policies will depend mainly on the people that are associated in the task of preparing the agenda, the process of policy formulation and governance. This means that it requires not only sincere and competent leadership with foresight and acumen, but also an excellent team to accomplish the defined objectives. In the final analysis, good governance depends on how (or what) you choose between the two Cs of cronyism and competence.

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A Vajpayee Show Again

The national task before the political class is to reinvent the Indian polity to enable the democratic system to address the unfinished agenda for an egalitarian social order... Vajpayee must now ensure that the polity is not distracted from its democratic moorings. Harish Khare writes on the new-look of Indian parliament.

Above all, the country has been spared the drama of the Opposition forces trying to manoeuvre their way around the controversial political presence of Mrs. Sonia Gandhi. To the extent the 1999 campaign was deliberately converted into a "Vajpayee versus Sonia" face-off, the final outcome endows Mr. Vajpayee with a much larger stature than he had after the 1998 elections.

This is particularly relevant in dealing with the allies. It is true that during the course of the campaign Mr. Vajpayee permitted partisanship of a rather shallow type to overwhelm his pronouncements and comments; his campaign was at times so decidedly unrelenting that it cast its shadow on the reputation of "statesman" that has been built for him. But unlike as the 1998 vote, this time the BJP's allies themselves sought the votes in Mr. Vajpayee's name. Be it the Akali Dal in Punjab or the Trinamul Congress in West Bengal or Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, each one of these important allies sought the voter's blessing by invoking Mr. Vajpayee's name. For these allies, his name was the name to counter Mrs. Gandhi's presumed appeal; it is, of course, an altogether different matter that the Vajpayee name did not spell out magic in Punjab or Karnataka or Uttar Pradesh in the same manner as it did in Bihar or Tamil Nadu or Andhra Pradesh.

In fact, even those Congress(I) leaders who have not done so well are attributing their defeat to the Vajpayee factor; the Andhra Pradesh Congress(I) leaders, who have received the drubbing of a lifetime, are talking the loudest of the "Vajpayee factor" while Mrs. Sheila Dixit, Chief Minister of Delhi, has talked of the "Kargil" effect.

However, there are limits to the "Vajpayee factor". While the ruling arrangement in New Delhi would be less precariously perched than it was earlier, there is no getting away from the fact that a coalition is a coalition and that in a 24-member coalition any one or two allies, small or big, can create an atmosphere of crisis and instability. The first warning, though subtle, came from Punjab. Its Chief Minister has issued a statement thanking the people of the country for reposing faith in the leadership of Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, as also in the National Democratic Alliance and for giving a befitting reply to those who had tried to create conditions of instability in the country by pulling down the Vajpayee Government.

is relieved at the absence of a temperamental Ms. Jayalalitha, there is no absence of "tempers" in the new cast of coalition partners.

More than that, even Mr. Vajpayee's most ardent supporters must have experienced a sense of disquiet at the presence of Mr. Om Prakash Chautala, Mr. Nareish Aggarwal and Mr. V. Ramamurthy at the first group photograph of the National Democratic Alliance. And to the extent, the 1999 campaign was fought not on any great, overarching principles or policies — it was merely to prevent the foreigner Mrs. Gandhi from coming to power — it is only natural that the alliance partners would want a share in the patronage pie. Somehow a way would have to be found to accommodate persons such as Mr. Ram Vilas Paswan and Mr. Sharad Yadav, who know the importance of their leverage back in Bihar. In six months, there will be an Assembly election in Bihar, and that would become the first test of the political cohesiveness of the "Vajpayee-led alliance".

To that extent the Janata Dal (United) could be relied upon to become the source of first trouble for the new government.

However, while Mr. Vajpayee deals with the vexatious problem of having to match ministerial portfolios with the oversized egos of the members of his new team, his political wisdom would be put to test in Maharashtra where a hung As-

sembly has made the government formation a rather delicate task. The Prime Minister would predictably come under pressure from the Shiv Sena and the BJP to use the ever-so-slight leverage of the Centre to tilt the balance of political equations in favour of the Shiv Sena-BJP combine in the matter of formation of the Government. It remains to be seen when the Centre uses its leverage to nudge the Governor, Dr. P. C.

Alexander, to use his discretion in a particular manner. It will be up to the Prime Minister to set the tone for his government in the next few weeks. In his first pronouncement, he struck a note of reconciliation. "The clear message of the verdict of 1999 is that the people are looking forward to a stable polity to ensure rapid socio-economic development. It is now the responsibility of the Government as well as Opposition to honour this mandate."

The onus for producing an ambience of dynamics rests with the Prime Minister. The reason is simple. Mr. Vajpayee has come to be surrounded by extremely partisan minds, those who wallow in narrow-mindedness and vindictiveness. The great danger is that these partisans can choose to interpret the 1999 verdict as an endorsement of their partisanship and consequently may be tempted to hijack the Vajpayee Prime Ministership. In his post-victory statement, Mr. Vajpayee notes "I would like to thank the people for reposing faith in the National Democratic Alliance and our friendly parties. The mandate of 1999 reflects the maturity and wisdom of the voter. For the first time since 1984, a clear majority has been given to a contender."

Mr. Vajpayee is entitled to put this interpretation on the vote, but he ought to be mindful of the mistakes that in 1984, he had encouraged in its recipients. The national task before the political class is to reinvent the Indian polity to enable the democratic system to address the unfinished agenda for an egalitarian social order. All these years, Mr. Vajpayee has been blissfully unagitated about the challenge of this commitment; the least he can do now is to ensure that the polity is not distracted from its democratic moorings.

Courtesy: The Dawn of Pakistan.

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By arrangement with The Hindu of India