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# A new beginning

Riaz Missen

Addressing a joint press conference in Camp David, US President George W Bush appreciated his guest's crucial role in the war against terror; he termed General Musharraf as a courageous leader and a friend of America. Appreciating the ongoing peace process in South Asia, he assured his counterpart that America would remain engaged in the region to encourage the governments of India and Pakistan to resolve their differences amicably. Pak-US relations took a fresh start after Pakistan, under the leadership of General Musharraf, agreed to play the role of a frontline state against al-Qaeda using landlocked Afghanistan as a base camp to terrorise the 'civilised' world. Not only the Bush administration believed that the said organisation was behind the 9/11 incidents, all the neighbouring countries were wary of the Taliban regime for selling jihadi ideology to their Muslim subjects. Besides semi-democratic Islamic republics of Central Asia and Iran, India, China and Russia were frightened by the rhetoric of the Taliban regime calling for independence of Muslims from the rule of infidels. On the other hand, Pakistan not only had recognised the Taliban regime but also was considered its mentor.

Pakistan took a crucial decision as it took a U-turn on its Taliban policy; it agreed to extend diplomatic and logistic support to the US forces to oust the Taliban and dismantle the al-Qaeda network in Afghanistan. General Musharraf vowed to eradicate militancy from its Pakistan. By allowing operations against al-Qaeda members, fleeing Afghanistan, he not only secured appreciation from the Western powers but also

allied nations — the UK, the US, France and Germany — that Pakistan needed their support to tackle the economic and political problems arising out of Pakistan's decision to join the coalition against terror. General Musharraf also wanted to 'inform' the developed nations of his future programmes to consolidate political, social and economic reforms in the country so that it could become a progressive and forward looking Muslim state.

Knowing well the importance of his parleys with President Bush at Camp David, General Musharraf had asked his nation to be ready for 'give and take' on the issue of Kashmir to realise the objective of peaceful coexistence with India; he also dropped

Pakistan. The half of the amount has to go to defence while the rest to the economic, technological and social uplift of the country. Though Mr. Bush has ruled out delivery of F-16s to Pakistan, he has assured that his country would take care of the security needs of its ally. Appreciating Pakistan's crucial role in the US-led war against terror, he said that his country attached great importance to Pakistan's effort to reform its education sector; he announced an exceptional package in this respect. Besides the aid package, steps will be taken to enhance bilateral trade between the two countries.

The ongoing peace process in South Asia also figured in the discussion between Mr. Bush and General Musharraf. The US president said that he felt encouraged due to the efforts of Pakistani and Indian leadership to normalise their relations. He expressed the US commitment to remain engaged with South Asia and encourage India and Pakistan to resolve their disputes, including Kashmir, through peaceful means. The US has assured its South Asian ally that it would make it sure that the security needs of Pakistan were fulfilled through the multi-purpose aid package Mr. Bush has recently announced.

The government is seeing General Musharraf's visit as success. Mr. Shaukat Aziz says the Trade and Investment Facilitation Agreement (TIFA), signed between the US and Pakistan after the meeting between the presidents of the two countries, would increase FDI inflow; it would encourage the investment not only from the US but also other developed countries.

Mr. Khurshid Kasuri

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Western powers but also alleviated Indian fears that Pakistan was being used by the jihadi elements as a base camp to launch terrorist activities inside IHK. The general's policy worked: Pakistan not only got massive economic assistance from the Western countries but also India was convinced to pull back its half a million troops from its border with Pakistan and extend its hand of friendship.

Before proceeding to the US and a number of European countries, General Pervez Musharraf complained that his country was not properly rewarded for its frontline role in the war against terror. He said that the purpose of his visit was to apprise the

a hint that Pakistan could reconsider its policy towards Israel. A few days before his foreign tour, he vowed not to let Pakistan Talibanised in a bid to dispel the impression created in the West after the passage of the Shariat Bill by the MMA-dominated NWFP Assembly. It was a deliberate effort on his side to project Pakistan as a progressive country. During his discussion with the US president, he did definitely mention hurdles arising out of his decision to join hands with the coalition against terror.

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