

Who Assassinated Benazir Bhutto

Shakeel Anjum



Reproduced By:
Sani Hussain Panhwar
Member Sindh Council, PPP

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*Dedicated to
the millions, the souls of whom
withered and faith in politics diminished
with the demise of Benazir Bhutto*

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PREFACE

It was a cold, gloomy December evening when the nation was robbed of its only popular leader and that too in the most vile and violent manner. The brutal assassination of Benazir Bhutto plunged me into a deep shock, still sucking me like a mire of despondency. She was killed while cheerfully responding to the jubilant and excited crowd of supporters from the “sun roof” of her bomb-proof vehicle after addressing a successful rally in Liaquat Bagh, Rawalpindi.

It was difficult for me to believe the bitter fact even though I watched the whole thing with my own eyes. The pain was such that it left me numb. At the start of my journalistic career, I had seen how father of Benazir Bhutto was judicially murdered by a Marshal Law dictator. Even earlier, I had read and learnt from my elders about the unfortunate assassination of the first Prime Minister of Pakistan, Liaquat Ali Khan in this same place, which at that time was known as “Company Bagh”. It had never occurred to me that I would be going through the horrific experience of helplessly watching the loss of the most popular leader of the country myself.

The assassination of Benazir Bhutto affected the people, the country and the world at large. The effects of that assassination, which to me still appears as a cold blooded murder, were very well planned and immaculately executed. The after effects of the assassination are still reverberating. The country is finding it difficult to get back on the track from which it was derailed. The system has become chaotic, with the opportunists harping on every available string to draw benefit out of the tragedy.

I believe that those behind this cold blooded murder of a great political leader of international stature deeply analyzed her character and were well aware that an enthusiastic and jubilant response from the public was irresistible for her. They were aware that she was not a person who would take to a dark corner and cry foul if she was threatened, even with her life. And that was what these murderers capitalized upon and eventually succeeded.

Being a newspaper reporter, it was my professional obligation to keep monitoring, investigating and probing the events that followed. And it was during the course of all this that I got grossly disillusioned by the system. At times, I felt so deeply bogged down that I felt like giving up the profession. So intense were the emotions that I went through a behavioral change. I became aggressive. I started doubting everything and every body around me. I started having nightmares and hallucinations. Life started loosing meaning to me. The whole system seemed corrupt and bent up hiding the facts in a case which was

full of evidences and leads, which, if capitalized upon, would have led the investigators to resolve the case far more quickly and accurately.

To begin with, it was a conspicuous call that I received soon after the assassination of Benazir Bhutto from an important member of the Joint Investigation Team (JIT) formed by the then Government to probe the incident which made me suspicious about the things despite the fact that I was in a state of shock. The gentleman made me believe that he was confiding a very important piece of information regarding the death of Benazir Bhutto when he said that the real cause of death of Benazir was that she accidentally banged her head on the protruding lever of the sun roof of the vehicle as she ducked inside after the blast in panic. It was too difficult for me to swallow this piece of information that was being made available to me by a person whom I always considered to be a “credible source” in the past. I trusted him as he had a good record of providing accurate information, whenever I required. But that day, I found it difficult to trust that piece of information. And, eventually the government made the same disclosure in a hurriedly called press conference addressed by the then Director General of the National Crisis Management Cell (NCMC), Brig. (Retd) Javed Iqbal Cheema. The theory floated by the “experts” immediately came under incisive scrutiny and severe criticism from all quarters.

In the days, weeks and months to come, I followed the whole process of investigations in the most tragic political assassination of the country. As I followed the investigations, I started feeling that the facts were being deliberately pushed under the rug, the witnesses discredited, the evidences being wiped off, leads being snapped and records tampered. Those were the times when I started losing faith in the system and began doubting the sincerity of the investigators. Those were the times I started feeling that the assassination of Benazir Bhutto was not aimed at removing a politician of great acumen and intelligence but there was a much greater conspiracy being hatched to unsettle not only my country but the whole region.

Starting from the hurriedly called press briefing by the then Director General of the NCMC Brig. (Retd) Javed Iqbal Cheema, right up to the, now about to conclude, UN Investigations, I continued to follow the process of investigations at each and every step. And during this process, I frequently raised questions, which were so obvious, about the whole process of investigations and interrogations. The questions that I continued to raise in my reports published in the newspaper The News in which I am working. One of the reports even led the British High Commission in Islamabad to issue a rebuttal when I questioned the accuracy and authenticity of the working and investigations conducted by the team of experts from Scotland Yard, called by the Government of Pakistan, to investigate the matter. Only because the Scotland Yard team, instead of

investigating the facts, evidences, and the leads in the case, only focused on what was presented to them by the Pakistani investigators and put a seal of “authenticity” on the of their Pakistani counter-parts.

I was confused and perturbed. It was becoming even more difficult for me to understand the process of investigations. To me, all those appeared attempts to hide the facts instead of digging and bringing them to the fore. It was frustrating and even annoying and increasingly difficult to reconcile with what was going on.

I feel that even in the on-going investigations by the UN Commission nothing substantial is expected. They are being provided the same information and evidences that the Joint Investigation Team had come up with and authenticated by the Scotland Yard team because they are not conducting any fresh investigations or interrogating any suspects. The most important criminal case of the country’s history is bound to be wrapped up in thick files and tucked away somewhere in the archives.

It was always a perplexing factor and it still is for me as to why the investigators never bothered to include the persons whom Benazir Bhutto clearly named as the possible murderers in case she was assassinated. She was aware that there were some forces which were after her and were conspiring to eliminate her from the political scene. After the first attempt on her life in Karachi, immediately after she landed in the country, on 18th October 2007, Benazir Bhutto clearly nominated a group of persons who, she said, were working to eliminate her. Why the names of those people were not included in the First Information Report (FIR) lodged in the case? Why the FIR in the case was registered hurriedly without waiting for a complainant, logically the next, of kin, i.e. her spouse Asif Ali Zardari or her son, Bilawal (later turned Bhutto) Zardari, or any of the two daughters? Why the FIR was sealed? Why nobody ever bothered to include these people in the investigations and interrogated them for their alleged role in the assassination of Benazir Bhutto? Why much attention was not paid to the important leads that have been snapped now in the shape of assassination of some of the suspects? The ring of conspiracy deepens as Khalid Shahanshah, the personal body guard of Benazir Bhutto and two other individuals, Noorullah and Ismail Khan, linked with the Taliban leader, Baitullah Mehsood, have been silenced for ever.

It adds to my pain to live with the reality that the people, who claimed to know as to who killed Benazir Bhutto, including her spouse and the sitting President of Pakistan, Mr. Asif Ali Zardari, are still keeping mum. Asif Zardari went on record to claim that he know well as to who had “murdered” his wife, and promised to unveil the culprits. But, he is also caught in the web of silence.

At times, I feel assassination of Benazir Bhutto is part of a greater global conspiracy. The powers engaged in global political manipulations have managed such political and high profile assassinations to keep different regions in different parts of the world politically unstable. We have seen such political assassinations in the murder of US President John F. Kennedy, King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Rafiq Hariri of Lebanon, as well as the regional assassinations of Indira Gandhi, her son, Rajiv Gandhi, and the Bangladeshi leader, Mujeebur Rehinan.

And, I have this gut feeling that the assassination of Benazir Bhutto is also bound to end as yet another unresolved case, shrouded in thick layers of mystery, intrigue and the conspiracies running too deep to be unveiled.

And the sudden removal of the Director General of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) cast further dark clouds on the process, especially since the FIA had re-started the investigations in the case after the UN Commission agreed to look into the case as a “fact finding mission.” The removal followed rumors that the top FIA official had been changed only to draw a favorable verdict from the FIA investigations too.

As the blood trail of assassination was being washed and report after report of official cover-up tried to provide a shield to culprits, I decided to write this book. I have tried my best to present bare, unadulterated facts in black and white, as I know them.

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BENAZIR BHUTFO

Profile

- Benazir Bhutto was born in Karachi, Pakistan on 21st June 1953 to a prominent political family. She was the daughter of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, founder of the Pakistan People's Party and the first democratically elected premier of Pakistan and former Member of Parliament and Deputy Prime Minister of Pakistan Nusrat Bhutto. She was the eldest among her siblings, Mir Murtaza Bhutto, Mir Shahnawaz Bhutto and Sanam Bhutto.
- At the age of 16 she left her homeland to study at Harvard's Radcliffe College. After completing her undergraduate degree at Radcliffe she studied at England's Oxford University, where she was awarded a second degree in 1977. Later that year she returned to Pakistan where her father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, had been elected prime minister, but days after her arrival, the military seized the power and her father Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was imprisoned by General Zia-ul-Haq and eventually hanged on 4th April, 1979 in Rawalpindi following the controversial court rescission.
- Benazir Bhutto was also arrested many times over the following years, and was detained for three years before being permitted to leave the country in 1984. She settled in London, but along with her two brothers, she founded an underground organization to resist the military dictatorship. When her brother Mir Shahnawaz Bhutto died in 1985, she returned to Pakistan for his burial, and was again arrested for participating in anti-government rallies.
- She returned to London after her release. Martial law was lifted in Pakistan at the end of the year. Anti-Zia demonstrations resumed and Benazir Bhutto returned to Pakistan in April 1986. The public response to her return was tumultuous, and she publicly called for the resignation of Zia-ul-Haq, whose government had executed her father.
- She got married to Asif Ali Zardari in December, 1987 who was, later, elected twice as Member of National Assembly (MNA) and Senator.

- She was elected co-chairwoman of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) along with her mother, and when elections were finally held in 1988, she herself became Prime Minister and sworn in, on 2nd December, 1988. Benazir Bhutto was one of the youngest executive chiefs of state in the world. She was 35 years, 6 months and 19 days of age when she was sworn in to the highest executive office of the country. She was the first woman ever to serve as prime minister of an Islamic country, but the road that brought her to power had already led through exile, imprisonment and devastating personal tragedy. Although she was herself a devout Muslim, her reforms frequently brought her into conflict with the same religious fundamentalists who had opposed the election of a woman as Prime Minister.
- Solace still evaded her and after the turbulent days spent in rescuing the life of her father and later democracy's, she was deposed twenty months later by a stooge of the military, the then President, Ghulam Ishaq Khan. The bureaucrat-turned-politician used the controversial 8th Amendment of the Constitution to dissolve the parliament and announced fresh elections in the country.
- She returned to power and was elected the Prime Minister of the country once again after her party won the 1993 elections, but the nascent democratic dispensation faced dissolution again after three years, although the tenure was fixed for five years by the 1973 Constitution. This time she was thrown out by her own hand-picked President and once-loyal lieutenant, Sardar Farooq Ahmed Khan Leghari. He also used the infamous 8th Amendment of the Constitution that was introduced by Zia-ul-Ilah in a bid to make the resident of the Presidential palace an absolutist, armed with discretionary powers to oust any sitting elected government from office.
- At the same time, Bhutto faced constant opposition from the Islamic fundamentalist movement. Her brother Mir Murtaza Bhutto, who had been estranged from Benazir since their father's death, returned from abroad and leveled charges of corruption at Benazir's husband, Asif Ali Zardari. Mir Murtaza Bhutto died when his bodyguard became involved in a gunfight with police in Karachi. The Pakistani public was shocked by this turn of events and PPP supporters were divided over the charges against Asif Ali Zardari.
- In the next elections in 1996 her party suffered a huge defeat at the hands of the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) headed by Mian Nawaz

Sharif which had earned the favour of the military establishment. Soon after losing the elections in 1996 for the second time, Benazir Bhutto went into self imposed exile in the face of the worst victimization campaign launched against her by the PML-N government through the notorious “Ehtesab (accountability) Bureau” headed by Senator Saifur Rehman. She fought valiantly the cases that were filed against her and her spouse in the courts of law but eventually decided to leave the country and go into self-imposed exile in April, 1999. Her husband, Asif Ali Zardari was put in jail on the day when Bhutto’s government was dissolved for the second time on 6th November, 1996 and was released, after nine long years in the prison, in October 2005.

- She returned to Pakistan on 18th October, 2007, ending a nearly eight-year exile, to lead her party into the January 2008 parliamentary elections. Before her homecoming, after the long exile, she had announced that she knew that many threats would be posed to her life and the then government of General Musharaf warned her that possibility of terror strikes aimed at eliminating her existed. But she remained determined and landed at the Karachi International Airport as a rousing welcome of her supporters awaited her. Her fears materialised as her convoy, escorted by a crowd of party workers and supporters, was targeted by two suicide bombers, killing 150 people. Despite being aware of the fact that the threat to her life was genuine, she bravely brushed aside the fear, saying that this would not deter her from bringing democracy back to Pakistan.
- She survived this first assassination attempt but only a few weeks before the election, the extremists struck again. After a campaign rally in Rawalpindi, a gunman fired at her before detonating a bomb, killing himself and more than 40 bystanders. Bhutto was rushed to the hospital, but soon succumbed to injuries suffered in the attack. She died on 27th December, 2007.
- She had three children, two daughters Bakhtawar and Asifa and a son Bilawal.
- Benazir was author of two books Foreign Policy in Perspective (1978) and her autobiography, Daughter of the East (1989). Several collections of her speeches and works have been compiled which include The Way Out, Pakistan Foreign Policy, Challenges and Responses in the Post-Cold War Era, After the Cold War by Keith Philip Lepor and Lend Me Your Ears: Great Speeches in History by William Saffire.

- She has also contributed to many periodicals and books, Predictions for the Next Millennium by Kristof and Nickerson and Book of Hopes and Dreams published by Bookmaster Inc.
- She received many awards including:
- Bruno Kreisky Award of Merit in Human Rights, 1988.
- Honorary Phi Beta Kappa Award (1989), presented by Radcliff College, Harvard University.
- Highest Moroccan Award “Grand Cordon de Wissam Alaoui”.
- Highest French Award “Grand-Croix de la Legion Honneur” (1989).
- The Noel Foundation Award, 1990 (UNIFEM).
- Honorary Fellow of Royal College of Physicians 1990.
- Kushuin Honorary Award, Tokyo (1996).
- Award by the Turkish Independent Industries and Businessmen Association (MUSAID) on account of providing assistance to the people of Bosnia.
- Golden medal Dragon of Bosnia awarded by President of Bosnia (1996).
- Key to the city of Los Angeles, presented by the Mayor of Los Angeles (1995).
- Presidential Medal, Paul Nitze School of Advanced International Science (1995). Medal by University of California at Los Angeles (1995).
- Honorary Doctorate of Law, LL D Harvard University (1989).
- Honorary Doctorate of Law (Honoris Causa), University of Sindh (1994).
- Honorary Doctorate from Mindanao State University, Philippines (1995).
- Honorary Doctorate of Law (Honoris Causa), Peshawar University (1995).
- Honorary Doctorate of Economics, Gakushuin University, Tokyo (1996).

- Honorary Fellowship by Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford University, (1989).
- Honorary Fellowship by St Catherine College, University of Oxford, (1989).
- Honorary Professor of the Kyrgyz State National University (1995), Kyrgyzstan.
- Honorary Professor of Yassavi Kazakh Turkish University. Kazakh-Turkish International Language University, Kazakhstan, 1995.
- Honourable Member of OHYUKAI, Alumni Association of Gakushuin, conferred by OHYUKAI Tokyo (1996).
- 2000 Millennium Medal of Honour by American Biographical Institute, Inc in November 1998.
- American Academy Award of Achievement in London, 28th October, 2000.
- World Tolerance Award 2005 by Women World Awards in Leipzig, 29th November, 2005.
- International Woman of the Year 2006 by the prominent European Publishing House based in Dubai as part of "Emirates Woman Awards 2006".
- Nominated Chair of "Muslim Women for Human Rights and Democracy" Oslo, Norway, 7th May, 2007.
- She also delivered lectures in US Congress, world economic forum, French National Assembly (1994) and other universities.

THE RETURN OF BENAZIR BHUTTO

Euphoria and Hope

Benazir Bhutto returned to Karachi on the 18th October, 2007, after a self-imposed exile of almost eight years. Her return was keenly awaited by her party workers, leaders and common masses. The reminiscence of her past return to Pakistan was still fresh in the minds of the people and they harboured a hope for revival of democracy in the country through her. There were emotional scenes observed in the plane that brought her back to her motherland. On the plane from Dubai, supporters broke into repeated cheers and standing in the aisles and delaying the flight for nearly an hour. Bhutto walked through the cabin to greet supporters and media persons aboard the plane.

Bhutto was very excited, very happy, very proud, and a tremendous sense of responsibility engulfed her as she knew that there were hundreds of thousands of her supporters and party workers gathered outside the airport, waiting for her to set foot on the soil of the country after such a long absence. She spoke strongly about terrorism and the need to save Pakistan from extremism. "The time has come for democracy, if we want to save Pakistan, we have to have democracy," she had said on-board the home-bound plane while talking to the media. Benazir had been outspoken against militants and critical of Al-Qaeda and repeated the same comments as she flew in. She warned the terrorists were trying to take over the country and the people of Pakistan had to stop them.

Bhutto had made clear repeatedly that she was returning to Pakistan to lead her party in the parliamentary elections scheduled for January, 2008. If she could win a change in the law, she will run for prime minister for a third time, something that was legally barred through amendments by the then military ruler General Pervez Musharraf.

Through her speeches that she delivered at that time one could gather that she was aware that the people of her country were still embroiled in bread-and-butter issues. The poverty had increased and the gulf between the rich and poor had widened further. She knew that the people wanted change. They wanted a government that might listen to them, respect them and address their basic issues.

Bhutto was visibly emotional as she planted her first step on home soil after having lived the last eight years in self-imposed exile mostly in London and Dubai. She climbed down the metallic staircase to approach the tarmac, paused on the last step and prayed as friends held a copy of Holy Quran over her head. As an aide embraced her, Benazir Bhutto wiped tears from her eyes.

“The most important step – to be back on Pakistani soil, “she loudly said in emotion packed voice as cameramen swarmed around her.

Bhutto’s arrival had drawn huge crowds, perhaps 200,000 or more, who danced on the roads, in the streets, atop the buses and vans and even in the trucks which were part of probably the biggest ever public rally that the people of this cosmopolitan city had ever seen. They were emotional and jubilant as they surged forward in waves to get close to the especially designed truck on which Bhutto was riding and get a glimpse of their leader as she inched her way for hours through her home city where she had lived and wed.

Bhutto waved her hand in a characteristic manner as music blared from loudspeakers. The crowd was overwhelmingly of the working class. Many young men said they were unemployed, but had traveled hundreds of miles, paying their own way, and camping out overnight on the road to the airport to await her arrival. They had pinned their hopes on their leader for a brighter and happier future.

Not only from the width and breadth of Pakistan that people had come to Karachi to welcome their leader but those from various parts of Azad Kashmir had also traveled from the hills down to below sea level to welcome the leader. What all of them carrying the tri-color party flag and posters were aspiring for was a “change.”

The strong outpouring provided an emotional homecoming for Benazir Bhutto and political vindication of sorts for a woman twice turned out of office as prime minister, after being accused of corruption and mismanagement.

It also demonstrated that she remained a potent political force in Pakistan, even after her long absence from the scene, and marked what supporters and opponents alike agreed was a new political chapter for the nation. The enormous welcome raised the spirits of party workers and leaders and those who were once shaky and uncertain regained the confidence and already started talking of sweeping the forthcoming elections.

The opposition leader’s return was made possible after months of back-channel negotiations with Pakistan’s President, General Pervez Musharraf, over a way for

the political leaders and the military dictator to share power in a manner that may help Pakistan make a transition from the lengthy military rule to democracy. The whole process was openly termed as “a deal” by the politicians who were opposed to Bhutto’s engagement with the political team of President General Pervez Musharraf as well as fearful of her return to the political scene of the country. These parties decided to boycott the elections under General Pervez Musharraf as the president of the country.

But Bhutto’s party did not join other opposition parties in boycotting presidential elections by the national and provincial assemblies. The move allowed General Musharraf to successfully engineer his re-election as president of the country for another term of five years, though he still faced legal challenges in the Supreme Court over his eligibility. For his part, General Pervez Musharraf issued an amnesty for Bhutto and others accused of corruption in recent years, and also agreed to resign his post as Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) and serve his next term as a civilian president.

Suicide Attack & Aftermath

But unfortunately there was a deadly trap awaiting her as eagerly as her supporters. Two suicide bombers blew themselves up just seconds apart and feet from the truck carrying the returning opposition leader Bhutto, narrowly missing her but killing scores of people and bloodying her triumphant homecoming.

The explosions, caught on camera, gave off bright white flashes and set two cars ablaze. Survivors stumbled over bodies and debris in a haze of smoke. About 150 people were killed and 400 wounded in those twin-suicide attacks.

According to Rehman Malik, her security advisor at the time and close associate, Benazir Bhutto climbed down to the safety of bomb-proof portion from the open platform atop the front of the truck only ten minutes before the suicide bombers blew themselves up close to the vehicle after spending eight hours, waving to the cheering supporters and party workers.

After the twin-suicide attacks, she was hurriedly taken to Bilawal House, her home in Karachi, against the scheduled programme of the rally according to which she was first scheduled to go to the mausoleum of the father of the nation Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and address the rally.

The government had promised before Benazir Bhutto’s arrival to make best use of her resources to provide safety to the returning leader who had grave life threats. It had also asked her to delay returning. But Bhutto’s Pakistan People’s Party had fielded 2,000 of its own workers to form security cordons around their returning leader, guarding her with their numbers and preventing any vehicles

or people from getting any closer to the vehicle aboard which was the top leadership of the party.

But the bombing upon Bhutto's arrival made it clear that, deal or no deal, the country's politics remained exceedingly tense, and dangerous. The explosions only infused fresh venom into relations between the Pakistan People's Party and the government.

Condemnation & Blame

The state media reported President General Pervez Musharraf condemning the attack "in the strongest possible words, calling it a conspiracy against democracy. The Bush administration, which had been supporting General Pervez Musharraf, noted his condemnation of the attack, and the State Department also issued a statement terming the attack as "responsible seek only to foster fear and limit freedom."

Nonetheless, Bhutto's husband, Asif Ali Zardari, who decided not to accompany his wife on her historic return to the country after a long absence, was quick to point a finger at the government and announced that the Pakistan People's Party would have to rethink its understanding with the government.

He openly voiced his concerns that the government felt threatened by the power of Bhutto and he also insinuated that the intelligence agencies were behind the suicide attacks.

In an interview with a popular Pakistani news channel Zardari, while sitting in his palatial home in Dubai, openly blamed the government as he alleged that the intelligence agencies were spreading terrorism.

Earlier, Benazir Bhutto, in an interview atop the truck soon after coming out of the Karachi International Airport also voiced concerns about her security and said that she had already told General Pervez Musharraf that she suspected people in his administration and the security forces being supportive of militants and terrorism.

Benazir Bhutto was quite clear in her perception about this scourge of terrorism her country and the people were confronted with as she had been saying all along that these terrorists had some covert support from the sympathizers within the system and unless there is some thought given to that it would embolden the militants.

BB Speaks her Mind Out

Benazir Bhutto, in a news conference at the Bilawal House on 19th October 2007, the next day of double-suicide attack, announced that she would not leave the country despite being aware of the serious threats to her life.

Bhutto found it suspicious the way the street lights were switched off after sunset when her convoy was moving on the Shahrah-e-Faisal. Attempts to reach the national security adviser to have the lights restored were unsuccessful – the phone lines were apparently down. Due to the darkness, nobody could see what was going on at Shahrah-e-Faisal and demanded that this point and who was behind this must be investigated.

Bhutto averred the attack was a message sent by the enemies of democracy to all the political parties of the country. It was intended to intimidate and blackmail all the political forces and elements working for democracy and human rights. It was a warning not only to me and the PPP but to all political parties; indeed to the entire civil society.

Denying the involvement of the government, the Al-Qaeda, Taliban and Pakistani Taliban in the attack but claimed that a fourth group was involved in it. She disclosed “I had informed General Pervez Musharraf just two days before my departure from Dubai about the group,”

Bhutto, who also referred to three persons posing a threat to her life in a complaint she submitted to police in Karachi, has so far not publicly named these persons. In her complaint, Bhutto only said that police should take action against “those whose names were given to Musharraf”. But the nominated suspects have neither been questioned nor included in the investigation process by all the investigating agencies, be the national or international. Evidently, these nominated persons are being protected by some highly influence “hidden elements”.

SIG’s Technical Report

The Special Investigation Group (SIG) of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), formed specifically to counter terrorism, issued a technical report following thorough investigation after the disastrous attack on the welcome rally of Benazir Bhutto which claimed about 150 lives while over 400 people were wounded.

The investigative report into the nature of the crime submitted to the President’s and Prime Minister’s offices through the Ministry of Interior stated that “Manual Trigger Mechanism” was used in both the suicide attacks in the attempt to assassinate PPP Chairperson Benazir Bhutto on her arrival in Karachi on 18th October, 2007. Another investigative report into the incident also confirmed that

both attacks were carried out by suicide bombers and ruled out the use of remote control bombs being installed in police van or private cars.

The technical report, prepared by retired Major Shafqat Mahmood of the Special Investigation Group (SIG) of the FIA, stated:

High powered explosive materials were used with Russian devices while no grenade was used in explosion. The bomb used in the second blast was approximately 12 to 14 kg as calculated by measuring the blast effect and intensity of detonation wave while the first was less than 7 kg calculated through the same technique. Ball bearings were embedded in the explosive belt for more lethal effect on men and material. Their quantity was very high if compared with other suicide attacks carried out in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Steel ball sheets were used containing almost 2,000 steel balls. One sheet is normally used in each pocket of explosive belt, which were six in number. Pellet holes were observed on Bhutto's truck stationed about 10 feet from the epicenter.

The report hinted that the possibility of these bombs being installed in police vans or any private vehicles did not hold much water as the floors of all the three vehicles – a police van and two private cars – were intact and safe while the vehicles bore impacts from outside and not from within. To further establish the assumption that the blasts were suicide attacks, the report added:

Both the human skulls found were effected from inside, even the brain of both the scalps were completely blown out which confirms that the attacks were suicidal. The evidence was substantiated through the exit wounds found on these scalps, carrying steel-balls wounds on probably the first suicide bomber. It was evident that the scalp of the suicide bomber bore the pellet holes entering through the face and the lower jaw and exiting from the top and sides of the skull, proving that they were suicide bombers wearing suicide vests.

The second suicide bomber, after breaking into the security circle amidst chaos caused by the first blast, pulled the 'Safety Pin of Striker Sleeve' to detonate the explosive belt. The striker sleeve "MUV2" found at the crime scene substantiated the finding. The strike under the compression of spring struck the detonator, which in turn exploded the main charge wrapped around the suicide bomber in the shape of the explosive belt. The triggering mechanism used to detonate the explosive belt is mechanical and non-electric.

A high explosive was used in the attack seems very plausible as no residue was recovered at the epicenter. The Mach effect of the detonation wave caused maximum damage to the people due to the gathering. Pellets of steel balls were hurled in all directions. A definite pattern and propagation angle was observed on the metal parts of the truck and other vehicles. The pellet holes were varying in sizes from 1 inch to 2.5 inches. The different sizes of holes indicate the immensity of the detonation. It also revealed that pellets were embedded in the layers of the explosive.

It was a target killing as the movement of the truck seems to be well calculated and detailed reconnaissance was carried out by some resourceful group. The striker sleeve "MUV2" found at the crime scene has been used in many previous blasts in various parts of the country. The factory code and lot and batch embossed on the striker sleeve are identical and resemble suicide attacks carried out at the Kohat Army Mosque, Dera Ismail Khan, the Police Training School Peshawar and the Charsadda blasts, with little variation of the manufacturing year."

Crime scene analysis and evidence found at the spot revealed that the second suicide bomber was intercepted by the security guards before he blew himself up. The investigative report also made a significant revelation that the modus operandi adopted by the suicide bombers resembled the method of the Baittillah Mehsood group. So, one can gauge from this incident that both the government and Benazir were aware of the fact that she would be targeted on her return to Pakistan. There were elements who wanted to eliminate her from the scene and who set their plan rolling immediately on her arrival and never stopped till the time they got her eventually in Rawalpindi on 27th December, 2007.

DESTINY PLAYS IT'S ROLE

Threats and Fears

Benazir Bhutto knew that she would be targeted by her enemies. But she remained undeterred and continued her election campaign in various parts of the country despite repeated warnings and security alerts conveyed to her by the government. Benazir took the risks only because she held nothing more sacred and important than to bring democracy back to her country.

Benazir Bhutto reached Islamabad on the 27th October, 2007 and addressed a couple of corner meetings in support of her party candidates in Rawalpindi. She returned to Rawalpindi again on the 7th November, 2007, amidst grave threats to her life. She was scheduled to address a rally in Liaquat Bagh in Rawalpindi on 11th November against the imposition of emergency in the country. On 10th November, when she was in the federal capital, the government issued the Three-day detention order against her and confined her to Zardari House in Sector F-8/2 of Islamabad for security purposes, citing a serious threat to her life through an act of terror as being the reason behind the detention order.

She refused to accept any restrictions on her movement. Unmoved by all fears, and despite a narrow escape in the suicide attacks at the time of her arrival in Karachi, she tried to reach Liaquat Bagh in Rawalpindi on 11th November, 2007, to address a rally against the “Emergency Rule” of President General Pervez Musharraf. But the attempt was foiled by the government through an effective blockade of the whole city and by inundating the rally venue, Liaquat Bagh, after releasing water.

Defiant to the Last

In her last interaction with the people at Liaquat Bagh, Rawalpindi rally, Benazir Bhutto, in her rebellious speech, addressed the extremist elements, about an hour before her assassination on 27th December, 2007, challenging them in her speech: I will grip the extremists. You will stand shoulder to shoulder during the war against terror to save this country that is very dear to us and so will I. We will handle the radicals. We will prefer to sacrifice our lives to save Pakistan.

The radical rudiments have set up a formal command in the country and the world is saying to me if you can not eliminate the fanatics then we will come to Pakistan and deal with them. Why can't we handle them in our country? Why

should a foreign country come to our country? We will handle the extremists. I will handle them.

The history of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) is full of sacrifices as my father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was martyred while my two brothers were killed. But we will not abandon the path of truth.

Political orphans tried to postpone the elections by imposing emergency in the country but failed.

She criticized the flawed policies of the government which have endangered the security. The military operation in Balochistan was fomenting unrest and despair. Innocent people were being massacred in Bajore, North Waziristan and Swat. She promised that the Pakistan People's Party will restore the country's past glory.

She also secured the oath from all the PPP candidates of Rawalpindi districts that they will never change their loyalty after winning the elections and will not use the quota of employment for their near and dear ones.

The Assassins Strike

There were no attacks on her during the two visits she paid to Rawalpindi and Islamabad in November, 2007. But, as was feared, she was assassinated in a "gun-shot and suicide attack" minutes after she addressed her last public rally in the province of the Punjab at Liaquat Bagh, Rawalpindi. A suicide bomber blew himself up near her bomb-proof jeep moments after he fired gun shots at her as the jeep cruised out of the Liaquat Bagh gate. Bullets pierced her neck and which proved as the final death blows for her.

The attacker blew himself up as guards attempted to overpower him. More than twenty eight people were killed on the spot and some hundred injured in the tragic attack. Benazir's political secretary Naheed Khan, Amin Faheem, Senator Safdar Abbasi and Khalid Shahanshah (her guard) all of whom accompanied the party chairperson in the targeted vehicle, remained safe.

The fatally wounded leader was then rushed to Rawalpindi General Hospital (RGH). But, she had died before reaching the hospital. Professor Dr Musaddiq performed the open heart surgery to resuscitate the heart but she did not respond – as she was already dead because of excessive draining of blood and lack of oxygen to the vital organs.

A faithful guard of Benazir Bhutto, who survived the attack said that the invader suddenly came in front of her Land Cruiser and started firing at her. She quickly sat down but a bullet pierced her neck. According to a surgeon at the hospital,

who was one of the doctors who carried out surgery, Benazir had two bullet injuries, one in her neck and the other in the skull.

Thousands of PPP workers and leaders thronged the hospital and waited breathlessly as the doctors made desperate attempts to save the PPP chairperson's life. Thousands of her fellow countrymen also waited anxiously hoping for her survival. All of them burst into tears and wailed bitterly when doctors pronounced her dead. The crowd of PPP workers swelled as the news of her death spread everywhere like jungle fire.

Grief and chaos engulfed the whole country. The workers staged processions, burnt tyres, blocked roads and damaged buildings and vehicles. The tragedy stunned all and sundry in Pakistan and left every one dumbfounded.

The blast was so severe that the sound was heard several kilometres away from the scene. Benazir's three-vehicle motorcade was damaged and the windowpanes of dozens of adjacent buildings were broken and a number of cars parked close to the spot were damaged. The limbs and body parts of the suicide bomber were scattered in an area of about 100 metres in and around the scene of explosion.

Police high-ups and experts of investigation and intelligence agencies, including the Special Investigation Group (SIG) of the FIA, reached the scene in the wake of the blast and collected evidence from the site. The civil armed forces were deputed as well to assist the law-enforcement agencies to maintain law and order. When the dead bodies and injured were removed, instead of cording off the crime scene for preserving vitally important evidences, that could have been picked up by the forensic experts and other investigation agencies to find important clues, the fire tenders were called in and the whole area was washed out and scrubbed.

Pistol 'Norinco' Used to Shoot Benazir Bhutto

'Norinco', a sophisticated Chinese gun was used to shoot Benazir Bhutto on December 27, 2007.

The investigation agencies engaged in examining Benazir Bhutto's assassination plot, disclosed that the conspirers provided most sophisticated weapons to the hit men to shoot Benazir Bhutto. The security agencies found a pistol from the crime scene soon after the incident.

It was 30 mm Norinco Pistol bearing lot number 311-90, manufactured in China. The weapon experts said that 'Norinco', a high powered pistol, is acknowledged in army circles for its perfect shooting and accurate hunting.

Norinco was declared as one of the most dangerous weapon and ban was imposed by 'The Gun Guy' based in USA.

History

The China North Industries Corporation (Nor In Co), official English name Norinco, manufactures vehicles (trucks, cars and motorcycles), machinery, optical-electronic products, oil field equipment, chemicals, light industrial products, explosives and blast materials, civil and military firearms and ammunition. Norinco is also involved in domestic civil construction projects.

Norinco is also known outside of China for its high-tech defense products, some of which are adaptations of Soviet equipment. Norinco produces precision strike systems, amphibious assault weapons and equipment, long-range suppression weapon systems, anti-aircraft and anti-missile systems, information and night vision products, high-effect destruction systems, fuel air bombs, anti-terrorism and antiriot equipment and small arms.

The development of the QSZ-92 pistol apparently began circa 1994. The pistol is recoil operated, locked breech and use rotating barrel locking system, in which the barrel rotates on recoil to lock and unlock itself from the slide. Apparently, it is now being adopted by the People's Liberation Army forces. QSZ-92 pistol is available in two versions: one is chambered for most common 9x19mm Parabellum ammunition (QSZ-92-9), and another is chambered for proprietary 5.8x21mm armor-piercing ammunition with bottle-necked case and pointed bullets (QSZ-92-5.8), closely resembling the Belgian 5.7x28mm format. The export variants (9mm ver) include CF-98 (nuzzle life – 3000 rds) and the NP-42 (muzzle life 10,000 rds) The later is the basic version without provisions for suppressor etc., which has so far found commercial export in Canada as well as having been adopted by the Armed Forces of Bangladesh as the Type 92 pistol, replacing at some extent the older Type 54.

Autopsy not Allowed

It is strange as to why the doctors were not allowed to carry out the autopsy of Benazir Bhutto. Who were the elements behind this decision and what did they have to gain by doing so? Perhaps the intention behind this decision was to confuse the public and the local and foreign investigators about the real cause of death and to conceal some depressing reality.

According to Ather Minallah, a leading lawyer and a member of the Board of Management of the Rawalpindi Medical College and the Rawalpindi General Hospital, The doctors feared that their initial report, which did not determine the definite cause of death, was being politically twisted. Minallah also said that

avoiding the mandatory autopsy of the deceased Benazir was a violation of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC). He also revealed that the doctors confided in him and told that though they wanted to conduct the post-mortem, but the Rawalpindi police chief had not agreed to this.

The three-page report in a one line finding on the cause of death stated: "Open head injury with depressed skull fracture, leading to cardiopulmonary arrest."

This finding was insufficient and did not say what caused the open head injury and it could have been a bullet, shrapnel or a lever of the car as only the medico-legal report, based on the autopsy, could determine whether a bullet hit the head. The following is the statement issued by Ather Minallah:

I am a member of the Board of Management of Rawalpindi Medical College and the Allied Hospitals, which includes the Rawalpindi General Hospital where Benazir Bhutto was taken after the incident on 27th December, 2007.

The doctors and the management have unequivocally informed that they have not made any statement, other than what is mentioned in the written report, which was being attributed to them by the spokesperson of the Ministry of Interior. They have also informed that without an autopsy it is not at all possible to determine as to what had caused the injury.

This statement by Ather Minallah leaves no tinge of doubt in establishing the fact that the government intended to cause confusion about the real cause of death and in this way it needed more time to drive the drift of events according to its wishes.

Saud Aziz, City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi denied the claim of Ather Minallah. Saud Aziz regarded this as contrary to the facts and vociferously defended himself by maintaining that he did not ask any doctor of Rawalpindi General Hospital (RGH) to avoid the autopsy of the deceased PPP chairperson.

It remained a highly confusing decision -- not to carry out an autopsy of the deceased leader -- which caused a decisive hindrance in establishing the cause of death. However, the team of doctors submitted a medical report.

The Medical Report

The seven-member team of surgeons, which attended Benazir Bhutto when she was brought to Emergency Department of Rawalpindi General Hospital after the fatal attack, issued a three-page medical report on the same day which turned out to be highly controversial and vague.

The report said:

On 27-12-2007 at approximately 5.35 p.m. a female patient was brought in the "Accident & Emergency" department of the Rawalpindi General Hospital. She was brought to the "Resuscitation Room" and was received by Dr. Aurangzeb Khan and Dr. Saeeda of Surgical Unit-IL This patient was identified as Benazir Bhutto.

Dr. Habib Ahmad Khan, Medical Superintendent RGH, also arrived immediately.

The condition appreciated at the time of receiving the patient was as follows:

The patient was pulse-less and was not breathing. She was markedly pale. Her pupils were fixed, dilated and non-reacting to light. A wound was present on the right temporoparietal region through which blood was trickling down and whitish material which looked like brain matter was visible in the wound. Her clothes were soaked in blood.

Immediate cardiopulmonary resuscitation was started. She was ventilated by Ambu bag and within a minute was intubated with endotracheal tube, blood mixed with secretions was noticed in the throat, that was suctioned out before intubation. External cardiac compressions were started. A cannula was passed in her right hand and intravenous fluids were pushed in. Injection adrenaline was given.

No response was seen. The patient was shifted to the emergency operation theatre while resuscitation continued.

In the operation theatre, Dr. Arshad, anesthetist, joined the team. Prof. Mussadiq Khan also joined the team at 5:50 pm. As external cardiac massage was not leading to any success, therefore, open cardiac massage was started via left antero-lateral thoracotomy. No blood was seen in the left thoracic cavity or the pericardium. There was no cardiac muscular activity seen.

Artificial assisted ventilation, internal cardiac massage and intravenous fluid resuscitation continued. She was given infra cardiac adrenaline, calcium gluconate. These drugs also with sodium bicarbonate were repeated intravenously.

Though no cardiac activity was seen but in order to treat fine ventricular fibrillation, electrical defibrillation was carried out. No cardiac response was seen.

Prof. Azam Yusuf and Dr. Qudsiya had also joined the resuscitation team.

The pupils were fixed and dilated, no evidence of any cardiac or respiratory activity was observed. The ECG showed no electrical activity.

At 6:16 pm, it was decided to stop resuscitation and the patient was declared dead. The thoracotomy wound was closed. A fractured rib due to resuscitative thoracotomy was noticed.

Prof. Arif Malik and Prof Saleem also reached by then.

Details of the wound and its surroundings:

There was a wound in the right temporoparietal region. The shape was irregularly oval, measuring about 5 x 3 cms, just above the pinna of the right ear. Edges were irregular. No surrounding wounds or blackening was seen. There was a big boggy swelling around the wound. Blood was continuously trickling down and whitish material that looked like brain matter was seen in the wound and on surrounding hair. Sharp bone edges were felt in the wound. No foreign body was felt in the wound.

The wound was not further explored. Gentle aseptic dressing was used to cover the wound.

Bleeding from both the ears was seen, more so from the right ear. A slight trickle of blood was seen from the right nostril also. Blood mixed with secretions was seen in the oral cavity also. Detailed external examination of the body did not reveal any other external injury.

X-rays of the skull AP and lateral views were done after she had been declared dead. Findings are as below:

Comminute depressed skull fracture involving right temporoparietal bone is observed with inwards-depressed fracture fragment measuring approx. 35 mm on-X-ray measurement. Depressed fracture fragment distant from intact bony skull measures 12 mm from outer to outer skull table and 12 mm from inner to inner skull table. Two to three tiny radio-densities underneath the fractured segment are observed on both projections. Associated scalp soft tissue swelling and moderate degree of

pneumocephalus is observed. Rest of the bony skull is intact. Radio-opaque dental fillings are evident.

Cause of death

Open head injury with depressed skull fracture, leading to cardiopulmonary arrest.

The letter is signed by:

Prof. Mohammad Mussadiq Khan
FACS, DABS, FCPS
RMC/Allied Hospital, Rawalpindi

Dr. Habib Ahmad Khan
Medical Superintendent
Rawalpindi General Hospital
Rawalpindi

Prof. Azam Yusuf,
FRCS, FCPS
Professor of Surgery
Head of Surgical Unit-II
Rawalpindi General Hospital
Rawalpindi

Dr. Aurangzeb Khan
FCPS
Registrar
Surgical Unit-II
Rawalpindi General Hospital
Rawalpindi

Dr. Saeeda Yasmin
Post graduate Resident Surgical Unit-II
Rawalpindi General Hospital
Rawalpindi

Dr. Qudsiya Anjum Qureshi
FCPS Anaesthetist
Rawalpindi General Hospital
Rawalpindi

Dr. Nasir Khan FCPS

Assistant Professor Radiology
Rawalpindi General Hospital
Rawalpindi.

Medical Report Rejected

In stark contradiction to the account trumpeted by officials, a confidante of assassinated leader told the media that she had observed a bullet wound in the head when she bathed Bhutto's body.

"I was actually part of the party which bathed her body before the funeral," said Sherry Rehman, Bhutto's spokeswoman and who was in the motorcade at the time of the attack. She added that there had been an entry point of the bullet from the back of her head and the exit point on the other side.

Referring to the huge amount of blood loss, she said, "We could not even wash her properly because the wound was still seeping." She expressed her bitterness at the hospital officials never giving a proper report, who, according to her account had been pressed to change their statement.

"This is ridiculous, dangerous nonsense because it is a cover-up of what actually happened."

Violence Erupts

During 48 hours, following the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, violence erupted in the country, especially in Sindh, where around 50 persons were killed and dozens were injured in different incidents. Public and private property was also damaged. Arsonists attacked and ransacked the offices of the Election Commission in nine districts of Sindh province. The anti-government elements and the forces active for destabilizing the country, also took advantage of the prevailing chaos. Taking advantage of the situation, criminal elements carried out acts of looting and arson, particularly in the province of Sindh, where judicial lock-ups had been broken, facilitating the escape of criminals and prisoners. The government took necessary measures and troops were also deployed in adversely-affected places in Sindh in aid of the Rangers and the police at the request of the provincial government.

According to the official figures presented by the spokesman of the interior ministry, in the province of Sindh alone, 170 banks had been torched and nine were damaged, 154 government offices were burnt and 15 were damaged, 34 petrol pumps were burnt and one was damaged, 348 vehicles were burnt and 23 were damaged, 71 trains/rail coaches were burnt, 18 railway stations were burnt and four were damaged, 758 shops were burnt and 58 were damaged. The other

most affected province was the Punjab while there were fewer incidents of violence and arson in the NWFP and Balochistan.

The government expressed the will to assess the losses people suffered and to take a decision thereof if the same could be compensated in some way. The interior ministry spokesman said that the deployment of the Army to control the violence was the last option and it was to be called out only when the provincial governments made a request.

International Media Smells Rat

Most of the seven-member team of surgeons which attended Benazir Bhutto when she was taken to Rawalpindi General Hospital, admitted “off the record” that the team faced immense pressure from the “invisible quarters” of the government for concealing the real medical report and actual cause of her death. A member of the doctors’ team told that a complete ban was imposed on the activities of the members of the team who took part in Bhutto’s open heart surgery, saying, “Our activities were being monitored and telephone calls were bugged during the period when the government created controversy about the cause of death of Benazir.”

The international media also took tip the issue to expose the conspiracy.

In their investigative piece published in Washington Post Foreign Service, Emily Wax and Griff Witte disclosed that the Pakistani authorities had pressed the medical personnel, who had struggled for Benazir’s life, to remain silent about what had happened in her final hour. They had also confiscated medical records of her treatment from the facility.

The doctors who were at the side of Bhutto at Rawalpindi General Hospital revealed they were under intense pressure to avoid sharing details about the nature of the injuries that the opposition leader sustained in the lethal attack.

The government took all the medical records right after Bhutto’s time of death was read out,” said a shattered doctor who talked on condition of anonymity because of the immense sensitivity of the issue. Sweating profusely and holding his head in his hands, he told in an agitated tone, “Look, we have been told by the government to stop talking. And a lot of us feel this is a disgrace.

Now, the doctors found themselves in the line of fire at the political battle over the mysterious conditions of Bhutto’s death. The government had put forth the claim that Bhutto, 54, was killed after the thrust of a suicide bombing wrought

her head to crash against the lever of the sunroof of her vehicle. Contradicting the government version, her loyalists had pointed to a video footage as conclusive proof that it was gunfire that had killed her.

Wax and Witte, in their investigative report, continue, the actual truth as to what happened has serious repercussions in Pakistan. The ability of a gunman to fire at Bhutto from close range, as alleged by her supporters and demonstrated by the video clipping, would lead to the conclusion that the flaw of government security in a city, which serves as headquarters of the Pakistani military, made her vulnerable to the gunfire of a mercenary. This, in turn, would lend credence to the claims of her supporters that the government had failed miserably in providing her with appropriate security measures.

The government faced another dilemma since if a gunman were to blame, it would raise eyebrows as to why the government had for days stubbornly argued otherwise. Suspicious of the government motives, Bhutto's supporters have resorted to a call for an international investigation as the only impartial and transparent option.

The government had repeatedly refuted allegations of efforts to hush up the matter, and some U.S. medical experts, when enquired about the official RCM's explanation of her wounds, speculated that a skull fracture and not a bullet wound killed Bhutto.

Meanwhile, the medical personnel in Rawalpindi General preferred to maintain silence at the controversial matter.

Our doctors have become caught up in this very emotional and political issue," voicing his concerns, Fayyaz Ahmed Khan, who had supervised at Rawalpindi General, said, "It's a terrible position for our medical profession to be in.

A video broadcasted on different TV channels, indicated doubt on the government's claims and appeared to support the accounts of eyewitnesses and her close aides. The footage showed a gunman and a suspected suicide bomber approaching the sport-utility vehicle of Bhutto. Moments later, the video showed gunfire and Benazir Bhutto's hair and scarf being blown back just as a bomb exploded and changed the political neap of Pakistan.

The Washington Post report maintains;

Government officials pointed accusatory fingers at Baitullah Mehsud, a pro-Taliban commander in the fractious South Waziristan, as the planner

and mastermind Bhutto's assassination. However, some analysts criticized the uncalled for hurry displayed by the government in alleging the Taliban of the mysterious assault.

In the disappearance of the American journalist Daniel Pearl, a key investigator was Jameel Yusuf who blasted the Pakistani government for its gross negligence in not sealing off and preserving the crime scene. It was moments after Benazir Bhutto was killed that workers hosed down the blood at the site before any collection of the evidence could be possible.

"When you're dealing with a murder of this nature, you need to have forensics," Yusuf said, pointing to the urgency of the requirement.

The extent of negligence could be gauged by the fact that after the passage of considerable time, several witnesses mentioned that they had till yet not been interviewed by police.

Kamran Nazir, 19, was among those badly injured by a shrapnel at the rally where Bhutto was killed. He was at Rawalpindi General, with his father at his bedside. his breathing was laboured, and the top layer of skin on his face was singed off. He expressed his shock that police had not questioned him.

"Why is no one asking me what happened? It's important to know the truth," he popped the question as his father's eyes tried hard to stop his tears.

Wax and Witte quoted PPP leader Babar Awan in their investigative report, as the truth is, there really is no investigation at all, he had seen her body immediately after the attack and witnessed two clearly defined bullet wounds.

The principal professor of surgery at the hospital who was the chief of the team of doctors, Muhammad Mussadiq Khan, was "extremely nervous, but eventually told me that Bhutto had died of a bullet wound."

Why was this man so nervous? He told me firsthand he was under pressure not to talk about how she died.

After he arrived at his home in Islamabad, Khan refused to comment, saying that he worked for a public hospital and was only trying to do his professional duties as a doctor. In various reports Khan changed his story on numerous occasions. He initially spoke about bullet wounds and later backtracked.

The Washington Post report quoted Bhuttos' medical report, which was separate from documents that doctors alleged that the authorities had confiscated, described a deep wound in Bhutto's head that was leaking brain matter.

The report said that neither a "foreign body" was found in the wound nor was an exit wound recorded. However, an X-ray of Bhutto's skull revealed that the doctors had identified "two to three tiny radio-densities." Later, Allier Minallah a board member at Rawalpindi General Hospital said in an interview that the report suggested that those were bullet fragments.

However, U.S. medical experts mentioned that it could be probable that the "radio-densities" were not bullets.

Thomas M. Scalea, physician in chief of the shock trauma centre at the University of Maryland Medical Center, said that although there was no evidence of a bullet wound, he was astonished at how the sharp thrust of Bhutto's head against an object could have caused brain damage severe enough to lead to her immediate death. Scalea said, "The whole thing strikes me as very unusual."

Fear Becomes True

The fear and apprehension that Bhutto voiced quite frequently since the first twin-suicide attack on her convoy hours after her return home at the end of the prolonged self-exile started pricking the minds of people after she was assassinated. All those memories came flooding back as people recalled vividly as to what she was saying time and again about the serious threat to her life and even named the names who she believed were conspiring to eliminate her in the most vile and violent manner. Her words that she uttered in the press conferences as well as during her speeches at the public meetings, which were part of her party election campaign, she repeatedly referred to the letter she had written to the then President Pervez Musharraf and persistently demanded of the government to provide her enough security in wake of the serious threats to her life:

On Oct 16, before returning home, I wrote a letter to Gen Musharraf in which I informed him that if anything happens to me as a result of these attacks, then I will neither nominate the Afghan Taliban, nor Al Qaeda, not even Pakistani Taliban or the fourth group. I will nominate those people who, I believe, mislead the people. I have spelt out names of such

people in the letter. I have named three people, and more, in that letter to Gen Musharraf.

In the letter, she exposed that there was a threat to her life from Pervaiz Elahi, Gul Hameed, Hassan Waseem Afzal, the former Deputy Chairman of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), and Intelligence Bureau chief Brig (Retd) Ijaz Shah.

“The modus operandi will be that selected people will be planted in the police department and posted near my house. Perhaps, commandos will be sent in the garb of a rival political party and blamed for the attack,” Bhutto wrote in her letter.

It was a story CNN’s Wolf Blitzer hoped he would never have to report – an email sent through an intermediary to him by Benazir Bhutto complaining about her security. Conditions of use: only if she were killed.

Bhutto wrote to Wolf Blitzer that if anything happened to her, “I would hold (President Pervez) Musharraf responsible.”

Wolf Blitzer received the email on 26th October, 2007, from Mark Siegel, a friend and long-time Washington spokesman for Bhutto. That was eight days after she narrowly escaped an attempt on her life on 18th October, 2007.

Benazir Bhutto wrote to Blitzer: “I have been made to feel insecure by his (Musharraf’s) minions,” that specific improvements had not been made to her security arrangements, and that the president was responsible.

Blitzer agreed to the conditions before receiving the e-mail

He called Siegel shortly after seeing it to see if there was any way he could use it on CNN, but was told firmly it could only be used if she were killed. Siegel could not say why she had insisted on those conditions.

Blitzer reported on the e-mail, noting that Bhutto had written a piece for CNN.com that mentioned her security concerns and that the American politicians had tried to intervene on her behalf to make her feel safer. “I didn’t really think that it was a story we were missing out on,” he said. “I don’t think the viewers were done any disservice by my trying to hold on to this.”

Wolf Blitzer was the only journalist sent such a message by Siegel. He also sent the e-mail to Representative Steve Israel, a New York Democrat.

Siegel never believed Bhutto's opinions had changed since she wrote the e-mail. Her message specifically mentioned she had requested four police vehicles surrounding her vehicle when travelling; Siegel observed later and presented the pictures taken after her assassination as the evidence where the required number of police vehicle, as were demanded by Bhutto were not present.

Bhutto did not necessarily believe that President Musharraf wanted her dead, but felt many people around him did, Seigal had written later in a report.

Asif Ali Zardari later contacted Siegel to remind him about the e-mail message and to make sure it got out and made public.

The Zia Remnants

Bhutto on 19th October, 2007, condemned the suicide attack on her rally in Karachi and put the blame squarely on what she termed as 'Zia remnants'. She said that before returning home, she had written to President Pervez Musharraf that more than three officials were planning suicide attacks on her. Bhutto shared this piece of information with Gen Musharraf and was confident the government would take pre-emptive measures.

Bhutto pointed the finger at government officials who she said were sympathetic to the militants and were abusing their powers to advance their cause. She did not identify them at the time but said she had named the names in a letter to the government. It was not clear if she was implicating the officials directly or accusing them of dragging their feet on her warning.

Aides close to Bhutto said that one of those named in the letter was Ijaz Shah, the director general of the Intelligence Bureau, another of the country's intelligence agencies and a close associate of General Musharraf.

Bhutto also has named four well-known persons, including Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Parvez Elahi and former ISI chief Hamid Gul, as those who pose a threat to her life in a letter to President Pervez Musharraf.

Intriguingly none of the nominated suspects have been questioned or included in the investigation process by all the investigating agencies, be the national or international. Evidently, these nominated persons are being protected by some highly influence "hidden elements".

INVESTIGATIONS

JIT Constituted

Shortly after the tragic assassination that rattled the whole nation, violent protests engulfed the country. The investigations into this act of terrorism were initiated by the government. A high level Joint Investigation Team (JIT) headed by Additional Inspector General of Police, Punjab, Chaudhry Abdul Majid, was constituted on the same day which formally started an investigation into the suicide bombing episode on 28th December, 2008.

The investigation team constituted by the then Inspector General of the Punjab Police Al-u-nad Naseem, comprised Additional IG Punjab Chaudhry Abdul Majid (Chairman), DIG Mushtaq Sukhaira, SP (Investigation) Tahir Ayub Khan and SP Waqar Chauhan.

The team along with City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi, Saud Aziz visited the scene on 28th December, 2007 (next day of her assassination) and reviewed the situation. All the evidence collected from the occurrence after the suicide bombing by the investigating agencies, were handed over to the team.

According to Saud Aziz, the face of the suicide bomber had been reconstructed and sent to National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) for identification. While commenting upon the gruesome tragedy, he claimed that it was not a security lapse because Bhutto left the premises safely. He was of the view that as she drove out of the Liaquat Bagh, after addressing the rally, a DSP on duty asked the driver of Benazir's vehicle to leave the premises immediately, but he slowed down the Land Cruiser in a mob.

The investigation team continued to probe and the occasional findings were released frequently by the spokesman of the interior ministry. During one of such press conferences, the spokesman, retired Brigadier Javed Iqbal Cheema, offered that the government was ready to exhume Benazir Bhutto's body to conduct a post-mortem if such a request came from the Pakistan People's Party leadership. The government was maintaining that the autopsy was not allowed by the PPP leadership, whereas as claimed by Athar Minhallah, a renowned lawyer and member of the board of Rawalpindi General Hospital, the police chief on behalf of the government prohibited the doctors to do so.

The government clarified its position that the law enforcement agencies were put on a state of high alert to deal with the anti-state elements and arsonists. The government would use full force and the might of law to quell the countrywide spate of violence that erupted in the wake of assassination of Bhutto. The federal and provincial governments not to allow this state of affairs to continue and to take firm action against anyone found involved in destructive activities anywhere in the country.

Mysterious Factors

During the investigation, certain revelations were made and some disturbing incidents occurred, which to a certain extent led to some conclusion, but overall the chances of reaching any reliable outcome remained bleak.

The chances of Benazir Bhutto's assassination remaining unresolved, like other high-profile murder cases in the country's chequered history, appeared to be high but the investigators probing the case seemed to have untangled the mystery and it was hoped that the progress being made might still take them to some conclusive outcome.

People privy to the proceedings and progress in the investigations also hinted that the unravelling of the mystery shrouding the shocking crime could lead to startling revelations, if ever made public, with serious political implications.

Some of the leads that were obtained from the entangled evidence, both physical as well as circumstantial, pointed to certain personalities but according to a member of the Joint Investigation Team (JIT), any disclosure might cause extremely serious repercussions.

The Joint Investigation Team was in possession of highly sensitive information that their investigations had led them to and they had strong reason to believe that any premature exposure of that information would open up a Pandora's Box that would be difficult to handle. They didn't want to take a bite that they would find difficult to chew in the end. So they were patient for a while before making any conclusive assertions.

However, there had been stages in the course of the investigation, where they felt that it was almost impossible to proceed any further.

Certain points have already been widely discussed in the public, and one of these is the "elimination" of two very important persons whose statements would have been extremely useful for the investigators.

One is the death of Nahid Bhutto, a cousin of the late Benazir Bhutto, in a road accident near Hyderabad on her way to Karachi from Naudero, less than a week after the tragic assassination of the then-PPP Chairperson.

Reliable sources said that while cousin Nahid Bhutto was busy talking to somebody in Australia over telephone from the Naudero House in Larkana after the burial of Benazir Bhutto, she is believed to have touched upon something sensitive, overheard by somebody present there but without her knowledge.

As soon as she realised the presence of the other person, Nahid quickly wrapped up her conversation, saying she would discuss the matter on her arrival in Karachi the next day. She never arrived in Karachi as intended.

She was killed in a road accident near Hyderabad while going to Karachi. Who was the person present in the room from where Nahid Bhutto was making the phone call was an important question for the investigators. Sources claimed the suspects were too powerful to be made part of the investigations. So, there was a stumbling block being confronted by the investigators, at that point at least.

A second hurdle to the probe is the assassination of Khalid Shahanshah, the personal bodyguard of Benazir Bhutto and a key eyewitness to the tragedy. Circles close to Bhutto insisted Khalid Shahanshah, who had deep connections with the underworld, was “specially deputed” as personal bodyguard of Bhutto when she decided to return to the country from her prolonged self-exile on October 18, 2007.

He stayed close to Bhutto wherever she went after her return and was always in the back of the vehicle that Benazir Bhutto rode during her election campaign. It would be significant to recall that his behaviour of Khalid Shahanshah on the stage the day Bhutto delivered her last speech at Liaquat Bagh had been questioned. But, the issue was tactfully hushed up.

The investigators believe that he was in possession of important facts concerning the assassination of the 54-yearold leader. Shahanshab’s murder was part of a larger scheme to silence anybody who could become a source of vital information that would help resolve the mystery shrouding the assassination.

Another very interesting aspect that surfaced during the investigations was the late-night meeting of the head of the Inter Service Intelligence (ISI), General Nadeem Taj, with Ms Bhutto. The gentleman came to meet Bhutto at around 1:30 a.m. on the night of December 26 (early hours of December the 27th) and went straight into the meeting, also attended by Rehman Malik, then security advisor to the former premier.

During the discussions, the spy chief categorically warned Bhutto not to go to Liaquat Bagh to address the rally as he possessed “credible information” that there would be an assassination attempt on her life during the public meeting.

Benazir Bhutto was on the horns of a dilemma for some moments but Rehman Malik forcefully refused to take that advice. He (Rehman Malik) told the gentleman: ‘Benazir cannot sit in confinement. She is a leader and she has to address tomorrow’s rally because that is very important. Upon hearing this General Nadeem Taj left.

Senator Rehman Malik, the sitting Federal Minister of Interior and at that time the Security Advisor to Ms Bhutto confirmed that the then-ISI chief, Lt-Gen Nadeem Taj, met Benazir Bhutto on the eve of the tragedy (in fact in the wee hours of Dec. 27 at around 1:30 am) and warned her about the threat to her life and advised her not to attend the rally.

“Yes. The meeting did take place. I was part of the meeting. The discussion remained confined to political matters. The issue of any life threat to Benazir or concerns about her security during the next morning’s public rally in Liaquat Bagh, Rawalpindi, did not figure in the meeting,” he asserted.

After the rally was over, Bhutto boarded her vehicle. She asked Makhdoom Amin Fahim, who always sat on the right-hand side of Benazir Bhutto, to exchange seats with her political secretary Naheed Khan. Amin Fahim obliged without uttering a word.

Immediately, after taking her seat in the vehicle, a Toyota Land Cruiser jeep provided by a very influential property developer of the country, Bhutto asked Naheed Khan to contact Nawaz Sharif, as she came to know about an attack on his rally on the Islamabad Highway. Some people were reportedly killed in the assault. While Naheed Khan was dialling Sharif’s number on her cell phone, a crowd came in front of the vehicle and prevented it from moving any further.

By the time Naheed Khan had almost dialed Sharif’s number and was waiting for the call to be connected on her Blackberry cell phone, Bhutto placed her palm on the telephone and told her to call him later. Then she stood up to emerge from the sunroof of the jeep to wave to the cheering crowd.

She had hardly started waving when the assassin fired at her at least three times. Evidently, two bullets hit her on the side of her head, slightly above the temple. As she slumped back inside the vehicle and as soon as she hit the seat, a suicide

bomber blew himself up. Collapsing inside the vehicle, she fell in the lap of Naheed Khan, away from Makhdoom Amin Fahim, who was sitting on her left hand side.

Senator Dr. Safdar Abbasi, the spouse of Naheed Khan, sitting in the backseat of the vehicle, immediately checked Ms Bhutto's pulse, as she lay motionless in the lap of Naheed Khan. He was horrified because there was no sign of life. He knew she had died instantly, before falling in the lap of Naheed Khan. However, to prevent panic, he told Naheed Khan to press the wound hard to prevent loss of blood. The fellow knew fully well that his leader had already been dead.

Another intriguing factor was the early departure of the vehicle used by Rehman Malik, Senator Babar Awan and Farhatullah Babar along with a couple of bodyguards. In the past, this vehicle had always tailed Benazir's car, never leaving enough space that might allow another vehicle to come in between. But on that particular day, they abandoned Benazir and dashed towards Islamabad. Even when they were informed of the blast (suicide attack), Rehman Malik told the driver to keep driving towards F-8, informing the others present in the vehicle that Benazir was okay and that she was following in her vehicle.

It was only after reaching the Zardari House in F-8 that Babar Awan and Farhatullah Babar came to know of the real situation and returned to the Rawalpindi General Hospital. But Rehman Malik stayed back at the Zardari House.

Later, Rehman Malik claimed that he did go to the RGH first and then to Zardari House in Islamabad. He said that when he reached the hospital, he saw people crying. "I saw Naheed Khan in the arms of another lady, crying her heart out. I could not take any more and returned to Islamabad," Rehman Malik said.

Surprisingly enough, when the tragedy happened, there was no other vehicle either in front of Benazir's jeep or behind it. The vehicle that was supposed to follow her jeep had already abandoned her. There was no police escort in front of her vehicle to clear the way, something that enabled the people to come in front of the vehicle, forcing the driver to stop.

The driver of Benazir's vehicle – though panic-stricken – kept his senses and continued to drive the badly damaged vehicle. But after about a kilometre's drive, near the entrance to the Committee Chowk underpass, they found Sherry Rehman's vehicle parked on the curb, with only the driver behind the wheel, waiting for other occupants. They quickly shifted the injured, or by then dead Benazir, in that vehicle and dashed to the General Hospital.

Meanwhile, three VVIP women of the party were seen madly running towards the Rawalpindi Press Club, carrying their sandals in hands in a bid to escape from the scene. One of them later turned up at the General Hospital, looking shocked and dazed and mourning the death of her leader.

The Malicious FIR

The intention of the establishment can be judged from the case registered regarding the assassination of Benazir Bhutto that station house officer (SHO) of City police station (concerned police station) hurriedly registered the case at 8.20 pm on the direction of his bosses, soon after hosing down the crime scene, illogically, without waiting any written complaint from the leadership of the party.

According to the initial police account: "After finishing her speech, Benazir Bhutto and the other leaders of PPP amongst them, most notably, Naheed Khan rode a white Land Cruiser which sped out of the Liaqat Hall Gate to the Liaqat Road.

Jubilant at finding her self-exiled leader among themselves, a large group of workers of PPP surrounded the vehicle and started raising slogans.

Police hold that their security team headed by the then DSP City Circle, Syed Ishtiaq Hussain started clearing the crowd that had gathered around the Land Cruiser while Bhutto stood up the sunroof to wave at her supporters. At that very instant, the assailant fired at Bhutto and then blew himself up, badly injuring her.

She was immediately driven to RGH but had succumbed to the fatal injuries. The suicide attack left another 18 people dead whose names were mentioned by the police authorities."

According to the viewpoint of the police, the suicide bomber died immediately while the parts of his body were scattered at the venue. Many were injured including PPP activists and security personnel present at the rally. Numerous vehicles including Bhutto's Cruiser were badly damaged too.

Nothing better illustrates the intrigue of the "establishment" in trying to provide a safety valve to the planners, perpetrators and assassins of the murder plot than the FIR which was registered in the jurisdiction of City police station, Rawalpindi. Surprisingly, the complainant in this case has been identified as the police authorities themselves. Definitely, the police cannot take refuge behind the argument that no representative of the slain leader could act as complainant in this case in the presence of all these people who were able and willing to pursue

the case as complainant. Benazir leaves behind a large family including her spouse, children, sister and other close relatives. Then there is her remarkable legacy in the form of the political leadership of PPP whose loyalty she commanded as its life-time Chairperson.

The fact worthy of notice is that police officials had been alleged of complicity in the murder, and riot on unfounded grounds since they had hosed down the crime scene within minutes of the assassination in an apparent attempt to destroy evidence. Considering this, the role of police needs to be subject to neutral scrutiny and investigation. Instead, they became the “complainant” and hence a perfect example of the accused becoming the plaintiff. A plausible reason for this anomaly is the endeavor by the law-enforcers to secure their colleagues from any charges and subsequent implication in the murder trial.

The list of flaws does not end here. The express mention of those accused in an offence is generally the requirement of an FIR. However, in the FIR of this high-profile assassination of an international statesperson, not a single accused has been pinpointed. This happened in spite of the fact that Bhutto had identified the potential assassins and the high-ups knew these names. A long list of those killed and injured has been provided but ironically, the main list (that of the accused) is missing. The deliberate omission of the names of the principal accused in the FIR although they had been disclosed by Bhutto, points to a conspiracy to shield the plotters.

The FIR registered in the jurisdiction of City police station did not contain any details of the crime scene that could demonstrate a conscious effort on the part of police authorities to record the actual happenings at the murder spot. It was full of mistakes which help a keen observer gauge the negligence of police in reporting the facts and circumstances of the assassination. It mentioned Sherry Rehman fallaciously as Personal Secretary to Bhutto although she was the Secretary Information of PPP at that time. This kind of mistake shows the extent of attention attached by the police to the process of investigation and recording of facts of crime scene.

The malicious activities established that the “Establishment” conspired to murder and then to avoid any responsibility. It succeeded in both its ends.

Demand of FIR Against Rehman Malik Ignored

Chaudhary Muhammad Aslam who had once served as Protocol Officer to Benazir Bhutto and now is a members of the PPP Federal Council has formally sought registration of murder case of Bhutto’s assassination against former President Pervez Musharraf, Interior Minister Rehman Malik, Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Babar Awan, former Chief Minister Punjab

Pervaiz Ellahi, former IB Chief Syed Ijaz Hussain Shah, former Secretary Interior Syed Kamal Shah and eight other high rank police and administration officers.

Aslam, who was standing on Bhutto's jeep at the time of the tragic incident and sustained severe injuries as well, submitted a four-page complaint to the CPO Rawalpindi requesting for lodging of an FIR against the persons mentioned in his application. This application was officially received by the CPO office with diary number 1497 endorsed on it.

Importantly Aslam also accused Lt. Gen. retd Hamad Nawaz the then Interior Minister, Brig Javed Iqbal Cheema, Irfan Ellahi, Saud Aziz, Yaseen Farooq and Khurram Shahzad of direct or indirect involvement in the conspiracy to kill Bhutto.

Following is the text of the complaint.

"The applicant remained Protocol Officer to Benazir Bhutto since 10th April 1986 till 27th December 2007 covering Punjab, NWFP and Azad Jammu & Kashmir. The applicant is also a victim of the blast and an eyewitness to the event when security In-charge Mr. Rehman Malik and Mr. Babar Awan left the blast scene along with BB's security taking away her bullet-proof Mercedes car which was supposed to follow Benazir Bhutto's convoy and to be used in emergency situation.

The applicant saw how Benazir Bhutto was left alone among the shooters who first shot some air fires and subsequently at Bhutto. I-Ier Dupata (hear scarf) with hair raised by a fraction in the air after she was hit by a bullet. I saw her going down into the vehicle. The bullet was followed by a blast and I witnessed Taugeer Qaira, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Hakim falling down on road with dozens of others.

That the applicant saw the death of international leader like Benazir Bhutto very closely on December 27, 2007 at Liaquat Bagh, Rawalpindi. The following culprits were involved in planning, preparing and executing the conspiracy with the connivance of hidden hands.

Pervez Musharraf (head of criminal conspiracy against Benazir Bhutto) and the then President of Pakistan holding the command of all forces and was also nominated in an email to a USA Senator/ Journalist by Bhutto after a telephonic conversation with Pervez Musharraf in which Musharraf intimated her that your (Benazir Bhutto) security depends on your behaviour towards me (president of Pakistan). He also had personal grudge with Bhutto family as written in his book (In the line of fire).

Syed Ijaz Hussain Shah Director General Intelligence Bureau, a major conspirator of this assassination, was hand in glove with General Pervez Musharaf and others as mentioned in letters written by Benazir Bhutto herself.

Chaudhary Pervaiz Ellahi ex-Chief Minister of Punjab having grudges towards Bhutto family and also was nominated in various letters and emails by Bhutto to a USA Senator/Journalist.

Lt. Gen (Retired) Hamid Nawaz Federal Minister for Interior during the interim government narrated a strange and bogus story while replying to a question of journalist that why the crime scene was washed on 27-12-2007 said that crows and vultures were hovering over the crime scene, although it was all at 6 pm on an end-December evening. He played a major role in executing the criminal conspiracy.

Syed Kamal Shah former Secretary Interior did not provide proper security and Jammers. Despite many requests even before 18th October 2007 and for 27th December 2007 at Liaqat Bagh, Rawalpindi for the protection of Benazir Bhutto he failed to provide any noticeable security. He even failed to provide security for a function organised specifically for the Chief Justice of Pakistan on 17th July 2007 in Islamabad Bar Council where eighteen PPP workers were murdered and dozens were seriously injured when a suicide bomber hit the crowd standing outside the district courts to welcome the Chief Justice.

Brig. Javed Iqbal Cheema, the then Spokesmen of Interior Minister, with his ever changing statements appeared on media more than often to deceive the nation. His motive was nothing but to hide the aforementioned criminal conspiracy.

Saud Aziz, the then CPO Rawalpindi is responsible for not providing proper security and for altering the route of Bhutto's convoy which was sketched in the security plan of PPP. The original route plan was via College Road through Gawalmandi to Sadar and then via Airport to Islamabad but Bhutto's convoy was forced to move towards the Murree Road an altogether changed route. He with the connivance of other conspirators also contributed a lot to execute the conspiracy.

Yaseen Farooq SP Security Rawalpindi who ordered the police officials on duty to park their vehicles on College Road forcing the convoy of Bhutto to move towards the Murree Road so played a major role in executing the conspiracy.

Khuram Shehzad Superintendent Police Rawal Town Rawalpindi ordered the rescue operators to wash the crime scene without securing the incriminating

weapons used to murdering Bhutto and others. This was narrated by a doctor of rescue on a television channel. His order contributed to the plot.

Rehman Malik, who was In-charge/Advisor to security of Bhutto, along with Baber Awan forced Khizer, the driver of spare Mercedes car, to open the lock of the bullet proof car meant to be used in emergency. Both of them took the Mercedes car forcibly and ran away with security without waiting for the vehicle of Bhutto. They reached Zardari house after playing a major role for executing the criminal conspiracy.

Baber Awan has a major criminal role for hatching the conspiracy as he forced the driver of Mercedes car of Bhutto with the support of Rehman Malik to move the car and sat on a seat, always reserved for Farahat Ullah Baber, and ran away from the scene leaving Bhutto's vehicle alone. He played a pivotal role in changing the route Bhutto's convoy of returning to Zardari House Islamabad. Thus with the support of Rehman Malik, Awan played his part in executing the criminal conspiracy which was hatched in Pakistan and financed by International conspirators.

That I being an eye witness to Bhutto's assassination have relevant evidences. Please register the case to initiate the inquiry/investigation, arrest the culprits and brought them before a competent court of law for their trial accordingly".

Mentioning the reasons of delay in filing an application to register the case against the above mentioned characters, the complainant penned down that he was waiting for any positive development from the federal and provincial governments in this regard particularly relating to the steps taken by the federal government now being run by PPP, Bhutto's own party, which had suggested to conduct the investigation from a United Nation commission. The United Nation Commission announced the terms of reference as follows.

It is a fact finding mission for determining the facts and circumstances of the assassination of Bhutto and it has been agreed between the government of Pakistan and the United Nation that the duties of determining criminal responsibility of perpetrators of assassination remain with the Pakistan authorities. The team will not be empowered to launch criminal proceedings.

Under the circumstances mentioned above, it is therefore, requested to you to register an FIR against Pervez Musharraf, Syed Ijaz Hussain Shah, Pervez Ellahi, Lt. Gen (retd) Hamid Nawaz, Syed Kamal Shah. Brig Javed Iqbal Cheema, Irfan Ellahi, Saud Aziz, Yaseen Farooq, Khurram Shahzad, Rehman Malik, Baber Awan and other culprits behind the scene of conspiracy either within Pakistan or

abroad who played their role to execute the killing of Bhutto and take them to gallows to lessen the agonies of nation .”

TWIST IN THE CASE THE CONSPIRACY

Lever-hit Controversy Created

During the investigations, the interior ministry had gathered credible evidence indicating the involvement of al-Qaeda and major terrorist groups in various terrorist activities in the country. Meanwhile, government, through the administration of Rawalpindi General Hospital created a controversy regarding the cause of Benazir Bhutto's death which diverted the attention of the public, investigators and media persons from the course of the investigation.

The people involved in the Benazir murder conspiracy, stirred up a controversy that Bhutto was killed as a result of her head hitting against a lever of the sunroof of the bullet proof vehicle as she tried to duck back to the safety of the vehicle when the shooting started. The Joint Investigation Team put all of its efforts and powers to prove that she was killed by her own mistake.

Initially, interior ministry had held that the death was caused by a bullet or shrapnel wound, but a day later, in a clear departure from the established version, stated that Bhutto died from a skull fracture suffered when she fell into the car as a result of the gunfire or the blast and dashed her head into a sunroof latch.

Bhutto's family and party figures insisted that the government was obstinately lying, and that she had died from gunshot wounds.

Various footages showed a gunman firing a pistol toward her just seconds before a bomb detonated as she left the rally.

The dramatic U-turn on the sunroof claims had only heightened speculations as to the actual cause of Bhutto's death.

Intelligence agencies started investigation into the controversy created by the administration of the Rawalpindi General Hospital (RGH) about the cause of the Bhutto's death. The administration had declared that she did not receive bullet or pellet injuries.

The agencies also submitted a preliminary report to the authorities, terming the way of treatment and the medical report as suspicious. The report also hinted at the involvement of some political figures through a top administrative officer of the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS).

The report, quoting medical report by a team of surgeons, said, "There is a significant difference between the diameter of the lever of the sunroof and the head wound," adding that the surgeon claimed that the shape of the head wound was irregularly oval, measuring 5x4 cm showing irregular edges, while the size of the hook was not symmetrical to the wound size.

The intelligence agencies, during the investigation, indicated the name of a political figure through an administrative officer of the PIMS, who was said to be a close relative of the political figures. The PIMS officer remained with the surgeon and also arranged the controversial press conference of Dr Musaddiq.

A surgeon included in the team that took care of Benazir, disclosed that she sustained two bullet injuries – one in the temporal parietal region and the other in her neck. He claimed that Benazir was handed over alive to under-training doctors, PGs (postgraduates) when she was taken to the Rawalpindi General Hospital (RGH) while top surgeons were already present in the hospital. The surgeon, who witnessed the shocking episode, said that Benazir expired during the "external cardiac massage" and her pupils dilated.

The surgeon, Dr Musaddiq Khan, later, opened her chest for "internal cardiac massage" after giving her incision. There was a need to incise her chest after the dilation of her pupils. The cause of the death was excessive bleeding and vascular injuries of the brain. But Dr Musaddiq Khan refused to say anything on record about the controversy.

This indicates that he had issued this controversial statement at the beck and call of some political elements who wanted to cast dubious shadows on the overall investigation.

Meanwhile Asif Zardari, the co-chairman of the party, had recorded a video before the burial of Benazir, to produce it before the foreign investigators as evidence that Benazir received two wounds.

The spokesman of interior ministry also made the similar controversial revelation about the cause of death which made the ongoing investigation process more suspicious and dubious.

Interior ministry spokesman Brig. (R) Javed Iqbal Cheema made this statement that the suicide attacker, who blew himself up near the vehicle of Bhutto while she was leaving Liaquat Bagh after addressing a rally, was an al-Qaeda operative belonging to Baitullah Mehsud's group.

"The suicide bomber was positioned on the left side of the vehicle. When she was waving to the crowd, three shots were fired. Then there was a blast as the bomber blew himself up. With the pressure of the shockwave, Benazir Bhutto fell while trying to tug downwards into the vehicle. When she was tugging down and was thrown by the force of shockwave of the explosion, unfortunately one of the levers on the left side of the sunroof hit her on her right side which caused a fracture in her skull that caused her death.

Since the suicide bomber was on the left, the entire vehicle was damaged from the left side. There was no harm on the right side. Consequently, if any bullet, any pellet or any splinter had hit Benazir Bhutto it should have hit her.

The findings of the Medical Board and the doctors who had carried out her examination say that there was no projectile found inside her skull or inside her throat. So, according to him there was no bullet that hit Benazir Bhutto. There was no splinter or pellet that hit her.

She was on the hit list of al-Qaeda. We have intelligence intercepts indicating that al-Qaeda leader Baitullah Mehsud is behind her assassination. We just have an intelligence intercept that was recorded this morning in which Baitullah Mehsud congratulated his people for carrying out this cowardly act. We have irrefutable evidence that al-Qaeda, its network and its cohorts are trying to destabilise Pakistan which is in the forefront of the global war against terrorism. They are systematically targeting our state institutions in order to destabilise the country," he asserted.

Two assassination attempts on the president, besides seven other assassination attempts that were foiled or aborted. Former Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz was targeted. Former interior minister Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao was targeted twice by the suicide bombers and army's installations and commanders were attacked. There were suicide attacks close to the General Headquarters and next to the residence of the Chief of General Staff Committee (CGSC), suicide bombers also attacked two buses of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), they also attacked a bus carrying

children of the air force people at Kamra. So, according to him now the same brand of terrorists had struck again.

The attack on Bhutto on her homecoming was also made by the same brand of al-Qaeda and the Taliban terrorists led by Baitullah Mehsud.”

The spokesman provided journalists the transcript of the interception of Mehsud’s telephone conversation with another person.

Following is the transcript of the intercept recorded by the intelligence agencies, giving the conversation of militant commander Baitullah Mehsud and another person:

Maulvi Sahab (unknown person): *Assalam-o-Alaikum.*

Ameer Sahab (Baitullah Mahsud): *Walaikum Salam.*

Maulvi Sahab: *Ameer Sahib how are you?*

Ameer Sahab: *It’s all right.*

Maulvi Sahab: *Congratulations. I just arrived in the night.*

Ameer Sahab: *Congratulations to you as well. Were they our people?*

Maulvi Sahab: *They were ours there. Ameer Sahab: Who were there?*

Maulvi Sahab: *There was Saeed, the other was that of al-Badar’s Bilal and Ikramullah.*

Ameer Sahab: *All three did this?*

Maulvi Sahab: *It was done by Ikramullah and Bilal.*

Ameer Sahab: *Then thanks for the greetings.*

Maulvi Sahab: *Where are you? I want to meet you.*

Ameer Sahab: *I am in Makeen (in South Waziristan). Come over. I am at Anwar Shah’s house.*

Maulvi Sahab: *All right. I am coming.*

Ameer Sahab: *Do not inform at their homes for the time being (probably to inform the families of the two attackers).*

Maulvi Sahab: *All right.*

Ameer Sahab: *Done a great job. 'They were brave boys who killed her.*

Maulvi Sahab: *Masha Allah. I will give you the details when I will come over.*

Ameer Sahab: *I will wait for you. Congratulations. Once again congratulations.*

Maulvi Sahab: *Thank you for the greetings.*

Ameer Sahab: *Any service (you need)?*

Maulvi Sahab: *Thank you very much.*

Ameer Sahab: *Assalam-o-Alaikum!*

Maulvi sahib: *Walaikum-us-Salam.*

This was clearly like giving a tilt to the entire case, shifting the responsibility of the crime upon already notorious terrorist organisations. It would be striking to compare these versions of the tragedy with the statement issued by then President of Pakistan, Pervez Musharraf.

Why lever Controversy was Created?

To defuse the politically charged atmosphere in the country wherein the top leader of the most popular party was assassinated and elections were just round the corner, the people at the helm of affairs felt that the PPP was bound to sweep the polls. The prospects were unacceptable to those in power at the time and to cloud the minds of general public a series of moves were made to create controversy over the assassination of Bhutto. All those moves were aimed at depriving the PPP of the sympathy vote following the assassination of Bhutto because public have become heavily tilted towards the PPP in wake of what they believed was martyrdom! One of the first moves was to create the 'lever hit' controversy, with an objective to create doubts amongst general public and deprive the PPP of the sympathy vote in the upcoming elections was one of many such attempts. And to strengthen this controversy the government of the time spent millions of dollars by inviting a team of experts from the Scotland

Yard of UK, confining their scope of work to scan and authenticate the investigations already conducted by the local police and intelligence agencies.

BAITULLAH MEHSUD CATCHES FOCUS

Baitullah Denied

Militant commander Baitullah Mehsud (late), accused of masterminding the suicide attack that killed former prime minister and PPP chairperson Benazir Bhutto in Rawalpindi on December 27, 2007, rejected the allegations as baseless. "We are equally grieved by the tragic death of Benazir Bhutto and extend our sympathies to her family and party workers in this hour of grief," said Maulvi Omar, a spokesman for Baitullah Mehsud and his Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, a conglomerate of all the militant organisations operating in tribal areas as well as the settled districts of the NWFP. Baitullah Mehsud, central leader of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, was accused by the Interior Ministry Spokesman Brig (retd.) Javed Iqbal Cheema of sending the suicide bomber who blew himself up near the vehicle of Benazir Bhutto outside the Liaquat Bagh in Rawalpindi.

Maulvi Omar, who made a call to different newspaper offices from an undisclosed location, on December 28, said Baitullah Mehsud, while sensing the gravity of the allegations levelled against him, convened an emergency meeting of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan Shura comprising senior militant commanders at a secret place somewhere between South and North Waziristan tribal region to clarify his position. "Why on earth would we kill her? We had no enmity with her and more importantly she had done no wrong to us," Maulvi Omar said while quoting Baitullah Mehsud as telling the Shura meeting.

He said that it was against the teachings of Islam and Shariah as well as the centuries old rich traditions of the tribal people not to harm a woman and added that the government allegations against the militant commander were part of face-saving moves it had resorted to ever since the incident took place.

"By blaming us for the murder of an important political leader like Benazir Bhutto, the government is in fact misguiding the world. Planning such actions is simply beyond our imagination," he claimed.

"We want to assure the Pakistan People's Party leaders and its workers that we can't even think of killing their leader. We are with them in this hour of grief and sorrow," claimed the militants' spokesman.

He alleged that the government was attempting to portray the tribal areas as centres of terrorists so as to earn dollars from, what he termed as, Western masters. "This is why they keep the tribal belt in continuous grip of violence." Accusing the secret agencies for the crime, he said the modus operandi and precision of the strike revealed that the gruesome act was committed by professional hands. It may be recalled here that Baitullah Mehsud was also accused of threatening Benazir Bhutto with suicide attacks upon her arrival in Pakistan that he later denied. The militant commander at that time said he had never thought of such an attack as he knew that it would kill innocent people.

Maulvi Omar said they had time and again disowned the statement attributed to Baitullah Mehsud regarding the suicide attacks on Benazir Bhutto upon her return from abroad, but lamented that certain people conveniently ignored the same to promote their interests.

Intelligence Agencies Confirm Baitullah's Involvement

What investigation agencies say, is that Baitullah Mehsud clarified his position in Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) meeting that TTP was not involved in the assassination of Benazir Bhutto. He was quoted as being telling a "Shura meeting" that it was against their tradition to attack and kill a woman.

People engaged in investigation of Benazir's killing case have credible evidences, established that Baitullah Mehsud was, indeed, part of the conspiracy to assassinate Benazir Bhutto in his personal capacity. He may not have used the TTP for the purpose but it was he who was part of the plan and provided the suicide bomber and the assassins with lethal weapons that launched this fatal attack on Bhutto outside Liaquat Bagh, Rawalpindi.

The Government's Stance

The government accused the Baitullah Mehsud group of the assassination though it was denied. About the denial by a spokesman of Baitullah Mehsud in the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, the government said that no criminal ever accepted the responsibility of a crime that he had committed, saving.

Why should he accept that he has done it? It doesn't suit him. There is nobody else who has the capability to recruit and carry out such kinds of suicide attacks except for those people."

Commenting on the authenticity of the audio intercept of Baitullah Mehsud, the government claimed, possessing of the "voice signatures" of Baitullah Mehsud to verify the authenticity of the message.

The government disclosed that the country's political leadership was under threat. "We have credible intelligence on that. The president of the country is under threat. Nawaz Sharif, Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi, Maulana Fazlur Rehman, Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao, Sheikh Rashid and Amir Muqam are under threat from the terrorists. We are surely going to provide security to them in accordance with our resources."

Government's Standpoint Confronted

PPP spokesman, Farhatullali Babar, appeared suspicious as he labeled the story of involvement of al-Qaeda or Baitullah Mehsud as a "planted story," fabricated by the government to "divert attention."

Michael Hayden, CIA Director told the Washington Post that the former Prime Minister was slain dead by mercenaries allied to Baitullah Mehsud. But the head of American spy agency did not reveal the sources of his information.

Controversy still surrounds the circumstances of the killing and mystery shrouds the causation.

CIA Director Michael Hayden publicly supported the official view of the Pakistani government.

He was of the view the murder formed part of an "organised campaign" that included suicide bombings and other assaults on Pakistani leaders.

Hayden said, the same forces were responsible for a new surge in violence sweeping across Pakistan which was undermining the stability of President Pervez Musharraf's government.

"You've got this nexus now that probably was always there in latency but is now active: a nexus between al-Qaeda and various extremist and separatist groups," Hayden said. He made it clear that these rogue elements intended to inflict harm to the state of Pakistan.

The primary suspects in the plot were the foreign and Pakistani militants who considered Bhutto as a Westernised heretic and an American agent and had reiterated their resolve to kill her.

But accusations were also levelled at the force which was alleged to be in hot bed with the Islamists since the Soviet proxy war and had been an effective tool for successive Pakistani leaders to crush dissenting voices.

Bhutto uncovered that after the attack that she had received a letter, signed by someone who claimed to be an associate of al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden, threatening to slaughter her like a goat. She also accused the government of not providing her with adequate security, and hinted at their complicity in the Karachi attack.

Benazir Bhutto indicated that she had reasons more to fear from the unidentified players of a power structure that she described as allies of the “forces of militancy”.

Commentators hold that President Musharraf was unlikely to have ordered her murder, however, elements in the intelligence service feared losing power if she became the premier. The ISI included some Islamists who had braced radicalism while managing the American-sponsored onslaught against the Soviets in Afghanistan and were ideologically opposed to her. Saudi Arabia was also thought to have reservations on Bhutto as too secular and Westernised and favoured Nawaz Sharif, her chief political rival.

Pakistan continued to be the tinderbox following Bhutto’s death on as she left a rally for an election in which she was expected to become prime minister. The government tried to blame militant groups connected to the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, which regarded Bhutto rise to power as having potentially devastating impact.

Bhutto had blamed rogue elements in the ISI for a suicide bombing that killed 140 people at a rally shortly after her return in October.

Government Takes U-Turn

Subsequently, in a dramatic U-turn, the Pakistan government “apologised” for claiming that former premier Benazir Bhutto died of a skull fracture after dashing the sunroof of her car during a suicide attack.

Hamid Nawaz Khan, the Caretaker Interior Minister pleaded the media and the masses to “forgive and ignore” the comments of the ministry’s spokesman. The version had been vehemently rebutted by Pakistan People’s Party as “pack of lies” and led to hue and cry at home and abroad.

Hamid tendered the apology during a briefing for Pakistani newspaper editors. Later, the Caretaker Prime Minister, Mohammedmian Soomro conducted a meeting, which was attended by the foreign, interior and information ministers and senior officials, to discuss the situation and said:

“Media lambasted the government for its non-serious attitude towards the tragedy, specially the statement that Bhutto had died by hitting the lever and not (due to) a bullet or shrapnel.”

SCOTLAND YARD'S INTRIGUING ROLE

Musharraf Invites Scotland Yard

The PPP leaders from the outset have been vociferously demanding investigations into Benazir Bhutto's assassination through an independent UN commission. However, the Musharraf government was eager on just inviting the Scotland Yard detectives.

Ironically, in this regard some senior PPP leaders expressed their satisfaction and rejected Musharraf's offer for such a probe and insisted on the inquiry of the heinous crime through an independent UN commission

PPP Rejected Musharraf's Offer

Vice Chairman PPP, Makhdoom Amin Fahim, rejecting Musharraf's decision of investigating Benazir Bhutto's murder case by Scotland Yard, said the inquiry into her assassination should be conducted by a UN commission and not by Scotland Yard. Perhaps he had doubts about the intentions of the government and knew that these investigations would only strengthen the stand adopted by the government or would further confound the already unsolved situation.

He said while talking to the media on January the 3rd, 2008, "PPP's Central Executive Committee meeting held in Naudero on the 1st of January decided that a UN Commission should conduct the inquiry into Benazir Bhutto's assassination and not the Scotland Yard".

He said the government should have sought the services of foreign investigators following the October 18th incident in Karachi as was demanded by Benazir.

Rejecting the government's decision to allow the Scotland Yard to assist Pakistani investigation authorities in probing into the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, the PPP reiterated its demand for a probe through a UN commission in the pattern of the investigation carried out for the former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

PPP leader Senator Babar Awan and party media coordinators Nazir Dhoki and Captain (R) Syed Wasif Arshad, "We reject Musharraf's announcement of allowing Scotland Yard to assist Pakistan for probing into the Shahadat

(martyrdom) of Benazir Bhutto as we have no faith in the government-formed inquiry committee, which has destroyed all evidences on the spot so we will provide all evidence only to the UN constituted inquiry commission.”

They, not only showed the rejection of the Musharraf government’s decision to invite Scotland Yard experts for conducting an investigation, but also accuse it of hiding the main culprits.

Syed Wasif said, PPP would accept the findings of the investigation which would be conducted by the UN team. He said for this purpose the party would continue building up pressure at local and international levels to bring the real faces behind the assassination of Benazir Bhutto before the nation.

Ibne Mohammad Rizvi, a close aide of Bhutto said: “The government was busy in ‘save the culprits mission’ and that was why they washed out all evidence at the spot within two hours after the assassination of Benazir Bhutto.”

This statement if viewed carefully showed that the PPP leaders have some idea of the culprits of the case. And if the culprits were terrorists then there was no reason for the government to hide their true faces.

The statement is also hinting at other elements or seems to be an effort to politicise the whole tragedy. It means, neither the government nor the leadership of the PPP, are in possession of some very important information and that the government is indicating the militants as culprits.

It also indicates that the PPP leader is killing two birds with one stone by accusing the government and also by levelling charges against its political rivals. The real criminal is perhaps having the last laugh.

Scotland Yard Comes Despite Opposition

Anyhow, the Scotland Yard investigators reached Pakistan on 4th January, 2008 to probe into the murder. While starting their probe they spent almost three hours at the crime scene on Liaquat Road.

The five-member Scotland Yard team was accompanied by two officials from the British High Commission in Islamabad and was assisted by the “investigation team” constituted by Pakistan’s interior ministry.

The Scotland Yard team, headed by Detective Superintendent Mr. John, asked the local investigators to reconstruct the crime scene. They visited the stage from where Bhutto addressed the last rally and observed the surrounding area and the buildings.

They frequently consulted different maps and diagrams of the crime scene and even inspected the shrapnel and pellet marks on the surrounding walls caused by the explosive detonated by the suicide bomber.

They quizzed the members of the local investigation team about the positions of the shooter and the suicide bomber.

When the Scotland Yard team asked for the chemical examination reports and other evidence collected by the local investigators from the crime scene, they were told that the results of the chemical examiners as well as the DNA tests were still awaited and would be furnished once the same were received.

Throughout this almost three-hour process of “inspection of the crime scene” the whole area remained cordoned off and nobody was allowed to enter the place including media personnel.

After completing the inspection of the crime scene, the Scotland Yard team as well as the local investigators, went to the office of the City Police Officer (CPO) where they had a detailed meeting lasting for about one hour. The Additional Inspector-General of the CID (Crime Investigation Department) Abdul Majeed, who was heading the Pakistani side of investigators, once again briefed the Scotland Yard team in detail and answered a number of questions raised by the visiting detectives.

Later on, in the afternoon, the two sides of investigators also visited the CIA Staff Police Station where the vehicle of Bhutto was parked. They conducted a detailed inspection of the bullet and bomb-proof Land Cruiser jeep in detail.

Earlier, during the morning of the same day, the Pakistani investigation team was reshuffled. Commandant, Special Investigation Group (SIG) of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Liaquat Ali Khan, was withdrawn from the team and was replaced by SSP Khalid Qureshi, also of the SIG in FIA. Another senior official of the SIG in the FIA included in the investigation team was Major (Retired) Shafqat Mehmood, who was also a forensic expert.

Now the Pakistani side, led by Additional IG (CIA) Abdul Majeed, comprised DIG Mushtaq Sukhera, SP Investigation Tahir Ayub, and SP City Waqar Chauhan, besides the two members from the SIG of the FIA.

In the meeting it was decided that the visiting Scotland Yard team would focus on finding out “how the incident took place, what sort of explosive was used, the cause of Benazir Bhutto’s death and also on who the assassin(s) might be.”

In this connection the Scotland Yard team was to be provided with all the data and evidence collected by the local investigation team as well as access to the statements of the eye-witnesses already recorded by the police.

The forensic experts in the Scotland Yard team were also allowed to inspect the evidence collected by the Pakistani authorities.

The Scotland Yard team was to be extended all possible assistance to reconstruct the scene of the crime in parts as and when required to facilitate them in analysing the situation and arriving at their conclusions.

The Scotland Yard team along with the Pakistani team of investigators continued the probe.

Pakistani Investigators show Incompetence

The Scotland Yard team of detectives also called on President Pervez Musharraf. It was learnt that the visitors, who arrived from London at the request of the Government of Pakistan on January the 4th, had decided to take a day off after spending fire hectic days in the field.

Meanwhile, the Pakistani members of the team engaged with Scotland Yard to probe into various aspects of the assassination, were left in an embarrassing situation when the leader of the team expressed his inability to present any conclusion the detectives had reached, till that time.

A situation emerged while a presentation was being given to the visitors from the UK in which a slide show, comprising various photographs taken from the scene of the incident, was being made.

It surprised everyone when the leader of the Pakistani side, Additional Inspector-General, Abdul Majeed, instead of putting forth the conclusions the Pakistani experts had reached about the explosive, forensics and DNA tests, sought the help of the Yard in determining these basic facts about the case.

He urged the Yard experts to help the Pakistani investigators reach some conclusions on these basic elements in the investigations of the incident, something which cast very serious doubts about their capabilities as well as their claims of solving various such complex cases in the past. He sought the help of

the Yard experts in determining the type/nature of the explosive, the complexities of forensic evidences and the DNA tests!

Earlier in the day, the joint Pakistan-Scotland Yard team met Professor Dr. Mussadiq, the Principal of Rawalpindi Medical College, who attended on Bhutto when she was taken to the Rawalpindi General Hospital (RGH) after the attack, as well as some other doctors and the members of the paramedic staff.

The team interviewed with the doctors and the paramedic staff that lasted well over an hour but expressed their inability to disclose as to what points were raised by the Scotland Yard detectives and what answers they got.

The joint team visited all the three hospitals: the RGH, the DIHQ (District Headquarters Hospital) and the Combined Military Hospital (CMH). The Scotland Yard detectives also minutely inspected the shoes worn by Bhutto on the day. Then they attended the “presentation” in which pictures of the crime scene were presented to them on the screen with the help of a projector.

What Scotland Yard Found?

By keeping all the aforementioned questions out of the purview of the Scotland Yard detectives, it is evident that the government doesn't want the team to unfold the larger conspiracy behind the assassination of the two-time prime minister of Pakistan Benazir Bhutto. It seems that by inviting a foreign team for investigation the government is trying to kill two birds with one stone. On one hand, the government was portraying its innocence and sincerity by letting a foreign team in and thereby striving to silence those demanding an international investigation into the murder and on the other, by limiting the purview of the investigating team to some superficial issues, those who actually hatched the conspiracy are being saved.

Later on, three new experts from Scotland Yard also joined the investigations to unveil the cause of death Ms Bhutto, as well as to expose the elements behind her assassination.

The new Scotland Yard experts, who joined the team that arrived on 4th January, 2008, had the credentials of being photography experts. These experts remained busy taking pictures of the crime scene.

It was a long day for the Rawalpindi Police which accompanied the Scotland Yard experts once again where they spent hours taking 3-D (three dimensional) pictures/images and probing different nooks and corners afresh.

After a detailed and exhaustive inspection of the crime scene the team visited the Rawalpindi General Hospital (RGH), where Bhutto was taken after the blast, and also inspected the “Operation Theatre” the “Emergency Ward” and the room where her body was temporarily kept after being pronounced dead by the doctors.

They also had a meeting with the doctors who attended Benazir Bhutto after she was brought to the hospital and dwelt upon various details mentioned in the medical reports and the X-rays of the slain PPP chairperson.

However; as they still remained strictly inaccessible to the media since their arrival, there was hardly any chance to have their point of view or opinion if they had formed any.

After re-visiting the crime scene, where they once again took a lot of photographs, they went to the City Police Officer’s (CPO) office where they remained closeted in a detailed meeting and were assumed to be discussing different aspects of the case.

There was a lot of anxious speculation circulating regarding a “headway” made by the foreign experts in the case but generally it is believed that the Scotland Yard team was facing a lot of difficulties because the crime scene was washed away immediately after the incident and there was hardly any meaningful evidence available to them to form the basis of their investigation.

The joint teams of the Pakistan Police and the Scotland Yard experts remained “entangled in the crime scene” and were unable to grab any lead that could have led them to make any headway for further investigations.

They had not initiated interviewing the witnesses as yet and even though they intended to contact the leadership of the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP), especially those who were accompanying Ms Bhutto at the time of the tragic incident, they had not made any such move as yet.

The Rawalpindi Police sources said the Scotland Yard experts were meticulously reviewing each and every bit and piece of evidence that they were able to lay their hands upon and were in constant consultations with their local counterparts.

They had been reviewing the bulk of video footage of the incident collected from various sources, at times going “frame-by-frame”. They had been scanning all sorts of evidence collected by the local investigators (Rawalpindi Police)

immediately after the incident besides what they were able to get hold of by themselves. But they seemed to be far from reaching any conclusions.

The Scotland Yard team members also arranged a demonstration of the vehicle at their own to assess the actual situation under which Bhutto was attacked.

The team, through the demonstration, worked out to assess the situation, and the distance between the vehicle and the attackers.

The Yard detectives also visited the District Headquarters Hospital (DHQ) where, in the mortuary they examined the parts of an unidentified body, a victim of the bomb blast. They also made a video footage.

Parameters Set for Scotland Yard

It is obvious that the Scotland Yard team was invited to probe into the case after all the important clues and evidence that might lead them to some reliable conclusion had been washed away. The government also limited their scope by restricting their investigation to certain areas that might not lead to any controversial findings.

The authorities barred the Pakistani intelligence and investigating agencies from providing any sort of information to the Scotland Yard team probing the assassination of a twice elected former Prime Minister.

Nobody -- individual or team -- engaged in the investigation of the assassination was allowed to meet or exchange views regarding the investigation with Scotland Yard.

The ban was to limit the purview of the foreign investigators on interrogating only the cause of death of the PPP chairperson. The Scotland Yard detectives were restrained on 39 points leaving them only to disclose the cause of BB's death. The points are as follows:

- Reconstruction of the crime scene
- Search of the crime scene
- Search of the vehicle
- Epicentre of the blast
- Angle of fire
- Trajectory of fire
- Line of fire

- Bullet mark
- Entry and exit points
- Distance travelled by the bullet
- Calibre of the weapon
- Inspection of the pistol
- Inspection of the fired case (empty)
- Laboratory reports of the fired case and pistol
- Analysis of the pistol recovered,
- Size of the pellets
- Pellet trajectory
- Preposition of pellets
- Wave of blast travel
- Type of explosive
- Quantity of explosive
- Residue of explosive for laboratory test
- Search of surrounding areas to find any kind of sniper fire
- Observation of the post
- Venue of the rally
- Security arrangements
- Inner cordon of BB's security
- Outer cordon
- Security arrangements for the departure of the VIP (BB)
- Interview with police personnel deployed for BB's security
- Time of occurrence,
- Time of shifting/ arrival in RGH
- Interview with the doctors involved in BB's treatment
- Independent verification of X-Rays
- Independent verification of the medical report

- Interrogation of the other riders of the jeep including Makhdoom Amin Fahim, Naheed Khan, Sherry Rehman and the driver of the vehicle.
- Interrogation of all police officials concerned
- Interrogation of the eyewitnesses.

The Yarder's Complaint

It was discovered that the Yard team, roaming in and around the crime scene for 14 days lodged a written complaint with the President of Pakistan grumbling that no investigating or intelligence agency was helping them getting a clue that might lead to a conclusion.

The letter was sent to President Musharraf almost certainly on January the 10th, demanding help from different categories of information from the investigating agencies, which collected the evidences from the crime scene soon after the incident and prepared their reports regarding the mechanism used in the terrorist act to eliminate BB.

Clandestinely, the authorities, engaged in supervising the process of investigation of the assassination, have barred the Pakistani intelligence and investigating agencies for providing any sort of information to the Yard team, including about the networking of radicals.

The officials engaged in the investigation, hinting at the foreign investigator's complaint, "The Punjab Police team led by Additional Inspector General of Police, CID, Abdul Majid is getting aside day by day, leaving the foreign detectives alone."

They also claimed that "The Scotland Yard has not yet collected any kind of evidence helping them to head towards the clue due to the lack of cooperation by the Pakistani investigating and intelligence agencies."

They were of the view that the Presidency, taking notice of the complaint, had asked the relevant investigation and intelligence agencies to provide information to the foreign investigators.

The Scotland Yard detectives could not get direct evidence from the "washed out" epicenter and depending upon the photos and videos of the "reconstructed crime scene" did not get any conclusion from the "photo therapy."

The foreign detectives could not even take themselves out of the crime scene nor could they make progress in any direction. They could do nothing without getting direct assistance from the Pakistani investigators and intelligence agencies. The local investigators provided some basic clues to the foreign investigators heading towards the assassins after the direction from the Presidency.

To add more to the confusion, the Pakistani investigators could not extend any tangible support to the Scotland Yard detectives.

Meanwhile, the outer cordon of security of the foreign team was beefed up after the increasing incidents of suicide bombings and personnel of the special security group were included in the outer cordon too.

Why was the crime scene washed away within 79 minutes of the occurrence of the tragedy?

By dwelling analytically on the above points the same intriguing questions will reverberate in the reader's mind:

British High Commission Reacts

However, the UK government swiftly opposed the view that Pakistani investigating agencies did not extend help to the Scotland Yard detectives. The British government denied its detectives had written a letter to the president. The Brits maintained that the Scotland Yard team was more than satisfied with the host country's help.

Aiden Liddle, the then head of the Press & Public Affairs Section of the British High Commission in Islamabad, said the members of the Scotland Yard team were more than satisfied and thankful for the cooperation they received from the Pakistani authorities, particularly the Punjab police.

Aiden in fact termed the report as absolutely baseless. Following is the text of the British High Commission official's rejoinder:

"The Scotland Yard team have received nothing but exemplary hospitality and cooperation since they arrived in Pakistan: almost their first meeting after reaching Islamabad, on the 5th of January was with the President himself, who assured them that they would receive the full cooperation of the Pakistani authorities and this commitment has been honoured at every turn. I can assure you categorically that the letter referred to in Mr. Anjum's article does not exist, that no such complaint or protest has been made in any way, and that the Scotland Yard team is more than satisfied with the information, the help and the

access that it has been given. The team is very upset that the excellent working relationship they had with the Punjab Police and particularly the AIG, Mr. Abdul Majid, has been called into question in such a way. I am extremely disappointed at the standard of journalism displayed in Mr. Anjum's article, which is not worthy of a quality newspaper like The News. It is a basic tenet of journalistic ethics that all parties referred to in an article are given the chance to comment; no attempt was made to get in touch with me or the Scotland Yard team, and I presume that Mr Anjum was similarly not offered the right of reply. This is particularly important when a story is based entirely on one anonymous source, as this one was. Mr. Anjum only had to call me at the High Commission or on my cell phone to ask if the story was true as your other journalists do. I am sure that you will make sure this happens with all stories connected to the Scotland Yard team in particular, and the British High Commission in general, in the future."

Meanwhile, John MacBrayne, Detective Superintendent of the New Scotland Yard team, sent the following letter to Additional Inspector General Abdul Majid: "Regarding our earlier telephone conversation I have now had the opportunity to read the 19th January edition of The News, I have read the article on page 1 entitled "UK team reports no cooperation". I have particularly noted the claims within the article that on 10th January the New Scotland Yard team made a written complaint to the President's office. I would like to reassure you that no such letter has ever been written and we have not made any complaint. Furthermore, I have been entirely satisfied with the cooperation provided by you and your team. As you know, we are returning to London tomorrow and hope to come back to Islamabad and report our findings in the near future. I would also like to reassure you that throughout our stay in Pakistan we have given no media briefings and this will remain the case."

Scotland Yard Finally Endorsed JIT Findings

Finally, when the Scotland Yard report was made public on 8th January 2008. It had nothing new compared to what was already known.

The Scotland Yard detectives, in their report to the Pakistan government confirmed the JIT findings. The Scotland yard report said: the former prime minister Benazir Bhutto's death was caused by a fatal head injury that she received when her head banged against the vehicle's escape hatch, due to the force of the suicide bomb blast.

The death was not caused by a bullet, said the report, which the Scotland Yard presented to the interior ministry. Detective Superintendent John MacBrayne signed its executive summary.

Additional IG (CID), Punjab, Chaudhary Abdul Majid, the head of the joint investigation team (JIT) investigating Benazir Bhutto's assassination, distributed the copies of the report to the media.

Dr. Nathaniel Cary, said in his report:

The only tenable cause for the rapidly fatal head injury in this case is that it occurred as the result of impact due to the effects of the bomb-blast. In my opinion, Benazir Bhutto died as a result of a severe head injury sustained as a consequence of the bomb-blast and due to head impact somewhere in the escape hatch of the vehicle.

A lone attacker fired shots at Bhutto before detonating explosives at her election campaign rally at Liaquat Bagh, Rawalpindi, on 27th December, 2007.

It said that in essence, all the evidence indicated that one suspect fired the shots before detonating an improvised explosive device. The blast caused a violent collision between her head and the escape hatch area of the vehicle, causing a severe and fatal head injury.

To analyze the evidence they had collected, the British detectives went back to England. They had spent more than two weeks in Pakistan in January and had come to Pakistan on the invitation of President Pervez Musharraf.

The report said

The team's task was complicated by the lack of an extended and detailed search of the crime scene, the absence of an autopsy, and the absence of recognised body recovery and victim identification processes. However, the evidence that is available is sufficient for reliable conclusions to be drawn.

Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) immediately rejected the report and claimed its leader died from bullet injuries.

The text of the executive summary of the report is as follows:

On the 27th December 2007, Benazir Bhutto, the leader of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), died as a result of being attacked in Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

Following discussions between the Prime Minister and President Musharraf, it was agreed that officers from the Metropolitan Police Counter- Terrorism Command (S015) should support the investigation

into Ms Bhutto's death. The primary focus of the Scotland Yard team was to assist the Pakistani authorities in establishing the cause and circumstances of Ms Bhutto's death.

The wider investigation to establish culpability has remained entirely a matter for the Pakistani authorities. The S015 team was led by a Detective Superintendent Senior Investigating Officer, and comprised two forensic experts, an expert in analysing and assessing video media and an experienced investigating officer. The team arrived in Pakistan on 4th January 2008 and spent two and a half weeks conducting extensive enquiries. During the course of their work, the team were joined by other specialists from the United Kingdom.

The UK team were given extensive support and co-operation by the Pakistani authorities, Ms Bhutto's family, and senior officials from Ms Bhutto's party.

The task of establishing exactly what happened was complicated by the lack of an extended and detailed search of the crime scene, the absence of an autopsy, and the absence of recognised body recovery and victim identification processes. Nevertheless, the evidence that is available is sufficient for reliable conclusions to be drawn.

Within the overall objective, a particular focus has been placed on establishing the actual cause of death, and whether there were one or more attackers in the immediate vicinity of Ms Bhutto.

The Cause of Death

Considerable reliance has been placed upon the X-Rays taken at Rawalpindi General Hospital following Ms Bhutto's death. Given their importance, the x-rays have been independently verified as being of Ms Bhutto by comparison with her dental X-Rays. Additionally, a valuable insight was gained from the accounts given by the medical staff involved in her treatment, and from those members of Ms Bhutto's family who washed her body before burial.

Ms Bhutto's only apparent injury was a major trauma to the right side of the head. The UK experts all exclude this injury being an entry or exit wound as a result of gunshot. The only X-Ray records, taken after her death, were of Ms Bhutto's head. However, the possibility of a bullet wound to her mid or lower trunk can reasonably be excluded. This is based upon the protection afforded by the armoured vehicle in which she

was traveling at the time of the attack, and the accounts of her family and hospital staff who examined her.

The limited X-Ray material, the absence of a full post mortem examination and CT scan, have meant that the UK Home Office pathologist, Dr Nathaniel Cary, who has been consulted in this case, is unable categorically to exclude the possibility of there being a gunshot wound to the upper trunk or neck. However when his findings are put alongside the accounts of those who had close contact with Ms Bhutto's body, the available evidence suggests that there was no gunshot injury. Importantly, Dr Cary excludes the possibility of a bullet to the neck or upper trunk as being a relevant factor in the actual cause of death, when set against the nature and extent of her head injury.

Dr. Cary states in his report:

- the only tenable cause for the rapidly fatal head injury in this case is that it occurred as the result of impact due to the effects of the bomb-blast.
- in my opinion Benazir Bhutto died as a result of a severe head injury sustained as a consequence of the bomb-blast and due to head impact somewhere in the escape hatch of the vehicle.

Given the severity of the injury to Ms Bhutto's head, the prospect that she inadvertently hit her head whilst ducking down into the vehicle can be excluded as a reasonable possibility.

High explosives of the type typically used in this sort of device, detonate at a velocity between 6000 and 9000 metres per second. This means that when considering the explosive quantities and distances involved, such an explosion would generate significantly more force than would be necessary to provoke the consequences as occurred in this case.

It is also important to comment upon the construction of the vehicle. It was fitted with B6 grade armour and designed to withstand gunfire and bomb-blast. It is an unfortunate and misleading aspect of this case that the roof escape hatch has frequently been referred to as a sunroof. It is not. It is designed and intended to be used solely as a means of escape. It has a solid lip with a depth of 9cm.

Ms Bhutto's injury is entirely consistent with her head impacting upon the lip of the escape hatch. Detailed analysis of the media footage provides supporting evidence. Ms Bhutto's head did not completely disappear

from view until 0.6 seconds before the blast. She can be seen moving forward and to the right as she ducked down into the vehicle. Whilst her exact head position at the time of the detonation can never be ascertained, the overwhelming conclusion must be that she did not succeed in getting her head entirely below the lip of the escape hatch when the explosion occurred.

How Many People were Involved in the Immediate Attack?

There has been speculation that two individuals were directly involved in the attack. The suggestion has been that one suspect fired shots, and a second detonated the bomb. All the available evidence points toward the person who fired shots and the person who detonated the explosives being one and the same person.

- Body parts from only one individual remain unidentified. Expert opinion provides strong evidence that they originate from the suicide bomber.
- Analysis of the media footage places the gunman at the rear of the vehicle and looking down immediately before the explosion. The footage does not show the presence of any other potential bomber.
- This footage when considered alongside the findings of the forensic explosive expert, that the bombing suspect was within 1 to 2 metres of the vehicle towards its rear and with no person or other obstruction between him and the vehicle, strongly suggests that the bomber and gunman were at the same position. It is virtually inconceivable that anyone who was where the gunman can clearly be seen on the media footage, could have survived the blast and escaped.

The inevitable conclusion is that there was one attacker in the immediate vicinity of the vehicle in which Bhutto was traveling.

In essence, all the evidence indicates that one suspect has fired the shots before detonating an improvised explosive device. At the time of the attack this person was standing close to the rear of Bhutto's vehicle. The blast caused a violent collision between her head and the escape hatch area of the vehicle, causing a severe and fatal head injury.

John MacBrayne QPM
Detective Superintendent
Counter Terrorism Command
1st February 2008

Yarders' Did 'The Job'

It was general believe that it was abundantly clear that the Scotland Yard team was engaged only to verify or challenge the facts already presented in the report submitted by the JIT on the basis of the available evidence. They were not permitted to expand their investigations beyond what was available in the report presented to them by the local investigators. So, the Scotland Yard team did exactly what was expected of them when they simply announced that the conclusions reached by the JIT were correct on the basis of the facts and evidences on which they had worked!

But all this had only complicated the whole affair further and suspicions in the minds of people continued gaining stronger that somebody somewhere was busy pulling the strings to hide the facts and to hide the facts the person or persons is/are striving hard to prove that Bhutto's death was not an act of terror but an accident! People openly voiced their suspicions and even mock the report compiled by the JIT in this regard but there was hardly anybody who would come out openly and say that the JIT conducted their investigations under some hidden pressure as well as they were being prevented from investigating in the right direction by those forces by eliminating the basic evidences and preventing a proper post mortem to determine as to what actually hit Bhutto in the head. Even a number of medical doctors claim that a proper post mortem and inspection of the wound would have revealed if it was a bullet that hit her in the head of the rooftop exit door liver because the bullet would have left its footprints on the wound.

Yarders' Findings Disbelieve

The investigators then presented formal reports to Bhutto's husband, Asif Ali Zardari; now President of Pakistan and cochairman of her Pakistan Peoples Party, and her 19-year-old son, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, an undergrad student at Oxford University.

Initially, the Scotland Yard remain tight-lipped and refrained from commenting on the Bhutto report until it had been made public on 8th February, 2008.

Scotland Yard's report was presented just days before the parliamentary elections in Pakistan scheduled on Feb. 18, 2008.

The findings were greeted with extensive disbelief, especially from Bhutto's die-hard loyalists who alleged the involvement of the government in her death. Their rage was specially targeted at Musharraf and the leading politician Pervez Elahi, the Chief Minister of the Punjab province.

PPP supporters clung hard to their conviction that she was shot dead, a belief shared by the people who accompanied Bhutto on her fateful journey after her vehicle was sprayed with bullets as her vehicle sped out of the political rally in Rawalpindi.

Her cold-blooded murder inflamed the already volatile political scenario as the coming days witnessed violent protests, vandalism and rioting all across the country. Musharraf had extended invitation to a team of Scotland Yard forensic experts to aid the local investigators in early January to ventilate public grievances and to “import” credibility to the investigations murder plot.

The British investigators were too remote from a smooth sailing due to the cleanup of the crime scene and refusal by Zardari to allow an exhumation.

Among the potential pieces of evidence available to investigators, was an X-ray of Bhutto’s fractured skull taken by the medical technicians at Rawalpindi General Hospital. Also, investigators deliberated over hundreds of cell-phone images taken by the people at the scene.

The contradictory versions of the significant events put forward by the Pakistani government lent more primacy and indeed, complexity to the question of circumstances of the death of Bhutto who had been standing in an open-roofed vehicle at the time of the attack.

Later official account insisted, amidst cries of foul play, that she had died of a skull fracture caused when her head smashed into a lever on her sunroof of her vehicle as she was thrust back into the Landcruiser immediately after the roaring blast.

While the authorities in Islamabad were preparing to receive the findings, the government announced that it had apprehended two additional suspects from Rawalpindi, a city about seven miles from the capital that is home to the army’s headquarters. The government refrained from giving other details as the Interior Ministry only mentioned their names.

Although the officials acclaimed the arrests as important breakthrough, yet they did not specify the role they believed those arrested played in Bhutto’s death.

The government categorically denied reports that one of those arrested was the brother of the man who was reportedly the suicide bomber. The officials considered Baitullah Mehsud, the al-Qaeda linked militant leader of South Waziristan as one of the prime suspects in the assassination case.

The authorities later arrested a teenager from the North-West Frontier Province in connection with the case and then made another arrest. Both suspects were under investigation, according to the interior ministry.

Ambiguous Report

The report is very much in consonance with the conspiracy created earlier that confused even the cause of Benazir Bhutto's death.

Their investigation was bound to be incomplete as they had a very narrow scope of area to work upon. It seemed to be just an eyewash to detract the foreign media and anxious public at home -- if analysed carefully. As there was no end available to the complex web of events the Scotland Yard team was unable to unearth any startling revelation.

The nature of the crime was multidimensional. It was not only an act of terrorism but it also an act of political murder. As the incident had international dimensions as well, it was essential to put an officially endorsed version into the mouths of the Yard detectives.

After the Scotland Yard report and its immediate rejection by the PPP leadership, the government was in a better position to present a denouement of the complete tragedy. The series of startling revelations and confessions were presented by the official spokesmen who very skillfully hanged the albatross around the necks of the militant groups.

Any type of investigation, whether by the government or the Scotland Yard detectives, appears to offer a solution to the questions that have no answers. And so far the people are still sceptical about certain basic points.

The inquiry of the Scotland Yard team finished without any reliable outcome. Rather it confirmed the stance already adopted by the government which further added confusion to the cause of Bhutto's death. However, now it was time for the government to make further developments in this regard and to complete its investigation resting the blame of the killing on some terrorist outfit with all the plausible evidences.

Why only 15 pieces of evidence were handed over to the Scotland Yard team among the total 22 collected from the crime scene.

FIA Expert Rejects JIT Report

A notified key member in the investigations following Benazir Bhutto's assassination, Major (Retd) Shafqat, an explosive expert, who was part of the

joint investigation team (JIT), representing special investigation group (SIG) of FIA, refused to buy the arguments and evidence presented by the JIT.

He was in absolute disagreement with the findings of the initial investigations of both the Joint Investigations Team (JIT) as well as the report prepared and presented by the investigation team from the Scotland Yard, which came to investigate the assassination of Bhutto at least three months later.

The basic argument of Maj (Retd) Shafqat was that the ascertainment of Bhutto's death was based on the 'radiological report', comprising of X-Ray and the external examination of the wound and those engaged for the purpose never paid any attention to look closely enough to find any evidence of the footprints of the presence of firearms.

Maj (Retd) Shafqat, himself a forensic expert having no parallel in the subcontinent with a vast practical experience in his field, raised basic questions in the course of investigations and openly expressed his dissatisfaction with the procedure adopted to probe the tragic incident. He is on record for having not only voiced his concerns but submitting those in 'black and white' to the concerned authorities. However, his objections and observations were not only overlooked but were left out of the main report because had those been included the whole scene of investigations would have changed.

The ignorance of his findings and assertions in the case dearly cost when the whole scenario of the crime was changed and the basic factors were left out or obscured to the extent that those appeared unimportant.

But it is abundantly evident that the people handling the investigations apparently deliberately ignored the findings of Maj (Retd) Shafqat, something which seems to be aimed at misleading or manipulating the investigations, clearly showing a malafide intent to either hush up the things or to mislead and misguide the whole process that would have ended up unearthing the plot and unveiling the culprits behind the tragedy, which changed the whole political scene not only within the country but the sub-continent and the world at large.

It was indeed intriguing that the JIT flatly refused to include the findings of Maj (Retd) Shafqat in the report that it prepared to submit to the higher authorities. However, this never deterred the officer from preparing a comprehensive investigation report of his own which not only contradicted but clearly negated the findings of the report prepared by the JIT.

Desperate to make the facts clear Maj (Retd) Shafqat submitted the report prepared by him about the incident directly to the superior authorities in the JIT

but instead of making those findings as part of the JIT comprehensive report his assertions and findings were forwarded to the people who were being viewed as becoming the centre of power in the upcoming government. And very conveniently those people first put the report prepared by Maj (Retd) Shafqat on a back burner during the course of investigations and subsequently got rid of the document all together.

However, Maj (Retd) Shafqat is still alive and has all those answers to a number of very vital questions in the investigations in his heart. He has been receiving very serious threats to his life but being a trained counter terrorism officer and well aware of the perilous conditions that he has put himself into, he is on his guards to protect his own life and guarding these secrets. He is shy of talking openly to the media but he has scribbled down his findings as well as his fears and tucked all those away so that in case he himself may face a tragedy the facts should not go waste and the facts should come to the fore.

It is interesting that the questions that Maj (Retd) Shafqat had raised may appear or sound of elementary nature but those are important and vital for carrying forward any sort of investigations in any such incident.

His basic question as to why the doctors who carried out the physical investigations of Ms Bhutto's wounds never pressed for a comprehensive forensic investigations holds the key in the investigations. Had that point cleared by the doctors who conducted the external and physical inspection before announcing demise of Bhutto would have saved all the embarrassment that the government faced when the Interior Ministry spokesman gave an emphatic announcement that Ms Bhutto died because she hit her head with the protruding latch of the sunroof of the vehicle!

Had a forensic test carried out by the medicos that would have cleared the whole situation and the government would have launched the investigations in the right directions right from the beginning instead of taking a wrong bait and following the wrong leads.

This false information regarding Bhutto hitting her head against the lever of the sunroof while trying to duck following the firing followed by suicide bombing incident completely changed the whole perspective of investigations.

Maj (Retd) Shafqat raised another four basic questions in his report. He was highly skeptical as to why the Scotland Yard team made the report of the Radiologist as the basis of their findings instead of looking into the forensic evidence available.

Secondly, he was skeptical about the working of the Scotland Yard team, which changed the position of the vehicle of Bhutto when they re-created the whole scene and even changed the epicenter of the suicide blast. He expressed his suspicions that the Scotland Yard manipulated the whole scene only to substantiate the point being projected by the government that she died of an accidental hit to the lever of the sunroof of the vehicle and not because of a bullet fired by a firearm.

Thirdly, he has proven in his report that Bhutto never suffered the impact of the blast and she had already dropped inside the vehicle when the suicide bomber blew himself up. Maj (Retd) Shafqat Mahmood has proved scientifically that had Bhutto been affected by the impact of the blast caused by blowing up of the suicide bomber she would not have crumpled on her right side inside the vehicle. Another intriguing point is that the Joint Investigation Team (JIT) never thought it fit to include Maj (Retd) Shafqat Mahmood's in the process of investigations. However, the officer, being the 'Explosive Expert' in the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) he continued to work independently but within the framework of his official duties and wrote his own report about the whole incident. But the Joint Investigation Team (JIT) somehow remained reluctant to include him amongst its ranks despite the fact that he was a notified member of the JIT, thus leaving out his report, which he prepared in his own capacity as the 'Explosive Expert' of the FIA. The JIT not only covered up his report but even did not bother to have his signature on the conclusive report that it submitted because Maj (Retd) Shafqat Mahmood openly said that he was going to write a 'note of dissent' and mention his own findings based on the investigations that he carried out as an 'Explosive Expert' of the FIA in the incident.

Maj (Retd) Shafqat Mahmood had even pointed out in his report that after the Karachi twin suicide attack on Ms Bhutto's convoy the assassins decided to include other militant groups in their efforts to eliminate her. He has clearly pointed out that the footprints of at least two more militant groups other than the TTP of Baitullah Mehsood, *i.e.* Lashkare-Jhangvi and Jaish-e-Mohammad were abundantly noticed in the later attempts on Bhutto's life and they finally succeeded in their plan outside Liaquat Bagh on that fateful day.

Now, viewing the whole situation in which all the links between the conspirators and the assassins have been wiped away and the leads have been left dangling loose it has become almost impossible for any individual to name either the conspirators or the actual assassins who deprived the country of a great political leader through such extreme act of violence. But, at the same time, it is not so hard to make a hypothetical conclusion and that clearly indicates as to who could have been behind this bloody assassination plan through which they not only got

their target eventually but on the way they killed over a hundred innocent people in Karachi and Rawalpindi and maimed hundreds more.

The Unanswered Questions

A number of controversial questions still remain unanswered and if addressed, these could provide some clue to the conspiracy behind the high profile murder of Bhutto. Most important of these questions are:

Why the police personnel were not deployed on the rooftops of the building located in front of the outer gate of Liaquat Bagh at Liaquat Road to counter any possible sniper firing although such deployment was the practice and not exception on such occasions?

Who was in charge of the outer cordon of security deputed for BB's protection? Is it true that the security of the outer cordon was entrusted to a DSP (Deputy Superintendent of Police) who was the son of the personal driver of dictator General Zia-ul-Haq, and who was inducted in the Punjab Police as an ASI (Assistant Sub-Inspector) with the special favour of Zia during his regime?

Why an unconcerned surgeon named Dr. Mussadaq, who had nothing to do with Rawalpindi General Hospital, rushed to the RGH along with his irrelevant team of doctors without any invitation? Why wasn't a neurosurgeon called to look into the case?

Why was the epicenter washed out to destroy the evidence at the scene of the crime within 79 minutes of the occurrence and who was the SP supervising the "washout" plan?

Why wasn't BB taken to the District Headquarters Hospital which is not more than one kilometre away from the crime scene and was instead taken to the Rawalpindi General Hospital (RGH), situated at a distance of three to four kilometres from the crime scene and where she reached 24 minutes after the occurrence. And was there any vehicle which created hurdles on the way of BB's vehicle heading for the RGH?

A central character whose dubious role has as yet been not subject to any inspection is, the then SSP Operations of Rawalpindi, the city where Bhutto breathed her last. He coordinated the security arrangements for the slain leader on the fateful day with Rehman Malik, the Chief Security Advisor of the slain leader.

Insider accounts suggest that his hands are soiled with the blood of the assassinated Bhutto. He had removed the security cordon from the stage on the

pretext of shifting the security personnel for provision of security for Mian Nawaz Sharif at another venue. Could the displacement of security personnel from such a high-risk spot be justified at any cost? Was he so naive as to be ignorant about the standard operating procedures in ensuring the security of a person who was twice elected by the people of Pakistan to be their Prime Minister?

At the eleventh hour, he changed the route which eventually led Bhutto's car into the ambush where she was killed. Was it a genuine requirement or a malicious act aimed at exposing Bhutto to grave risks?

Yasin Farooq has been blamed and his name explicitly mentioned in a widely publicised news conference for the commission of these purportedly criminal activities. No probe till yet has been undertaken to ascertain the authenticity or otherwise of these allegations.

Although numerous questions have been raised as to his negligence or complicity in the assassination, he is till the time of writing this book, the SSP Operations of Rawalpindi. Why is this done in utter disregard to the tragic incident? Has this been done by those involved in the murder to mislead the UN team as was done earlier by him while coordinating with the Scotland Yard?

The above analysis leads to the high probability of Farooq having the clues which will lead to Bhutto's killers. If so, it gives rise to the logical conclusion that was an FIR to be lodged against him and interrogation conducted, it would reveal the conspirators and killers.

THE DENOUEMENT

Intelligence Agencies Dub It A 'Joint Venture'

Then the intelligence agencies dubbed the assassination of the two-time premier as a joint venture of two terrorist outfits.

The mastermind of the assassination used the expertise of Baitullah Mehsud and Jaish-e-Muhammad for the assassination of Bhutto.

They explained: "Our intelligence and investigation agencies have the capability to make a headway into the terrorist outfits as well as the hidden hand, if any, involved in the assassination, following the various questions spawned during the course of the investigation but left unrequited.

However, the mystery of the unanswered questions will be probed at a later stage of the investigation.

Then an explosive secret inquiry report – the first of its kind so far was released into the assassination of Benazir Bhutto. The report revealed that the sophisticated expertise of different religious extremist groups was "pooled" and used to eliminate the former prime minister, after a series of rehearsals at the scene of her murder with the active collaboration of some hidden but powerful hands in Islamabad.

The resources and technology of these groups were pooled after the enemies of Bhutto learned their own lessons from the failed attempt on her life in Karachi on October the 18th, 2007. After repeated rehearsals of the attack outside the Liaquat Bagh and long deliberations, these groups decided to adopt a "zero tolerance" theory to eliminate the PPP chairperson.

The secret official report, categorically rejecting the aspect that Benazir sustained a lever injury causing her death, made a startling revelation that her skull was cracked instantly, as a result of a 50 Newton Force of a bullet -- usually required to break the skull. A lever could, in no way, create the required force, especially, from a distance of six to eight inches from her head. And no human tissue, fibre or blood stain, was found on the handle of the armour-plated sunroof even with the use of a powerful magnifying glass.

“The height of Benazir Bhutto’s vehicle was six feet and eight inches and the distance from the seat to the roof of the vehicle was three and a half feet and the height of the armour plates was 21 inches. And the total distance from the seat – where BB was standing barefooted – was five feet and three inches, and the distance between Bhutto’s head and the hook stayed six to eight inches.”

The investigators disclosed that Bhutto had instantly fallen inside the car after being hit by the bullet. Otherwise, had she been out of the sunroof, her head might have been blown up and found somewhere else, as was the case of the bomber.

The bullet attack was followed by an explosive blast of three to five kilogram intensity and it was wrong to assume that she had died after hitting her head against the sunroof of her car or that splinter of the bomb struck her head. The investigators have also found one big bullet-hole in the scarf of Benazir Bhutto which, without a doubt, established the fact that she died of a gunshot.

Benazir died instantly because of graze wounds of the bullets which hit her head from the side and the bullet too has been recovered from a distance, at a nearby traffic signboard.

A top agency in its preliminary report concluded that the deadly attack on Bhutto was a sort of “joint venture” type phenomenon – the first of its kind since suicide bombings started in Pakistan. The officials who investigated the murder opined that this joint venture was executed with the help of a banned Jihadi organisation which provided the suicide bombers, while the other group based in Waziristan provided the technology to blow Bhutto, after they were made to form an alliance with the blessings of certain anti-BB elements within some official quarters.

According to an investigative agency, which has been investigating the previous suicide attacks on the high profile personalities of Pakistan, this was the first time that its top investigators had found an involvement of different groups who carried out bombings unlike the past exercise when only one particular group used to launch such attacks and accept the responsibility.

But, this time, according to the investigators, a plan was hatched to “pool” the expertise and resources of all the groups who deal in suicide bombings to ensure the comprehensive elimination of Bhutto. These investigators were said to have also reached the conclusion that these groups were brought under “one umbrella” after they learned their lessons from the failed attempt on her life in Karachi on 18th October, 2007.

This report rejected all the previous theories floated to justify the causes of Bhutto's death and triggered a new debate in the country about the elements, both official and unofficial, involved in eliminating the former Prime Minister.

The investigators were raising their fingers at Baitullah Mehsud and a banned Jihadi organisation, initially held responsible for the killing of Bhutto.

According to the inquiry report the inspection of the fired case indicates that it was fired fresh as no corrosion and metal damage was observed on it. Visible ejection marks were noticed on the body of the fired case. Cap percussion was found struck by the striker of pistol at the base of the cartridge case. Moreover, propellant (GP) traces were also quite visible inside the fired case. It was 30 mm SAA with lot no. 311-90 and manufactured in China. The 30 mm pistol 'Norinco' of China found by the police from the crime scene also substantiated the evidence.

From the epicenter, a line of fire was established with laser beam technology and an effort was made to locate the trajectory of fire along with hit marks. In the line of fire, two separate bullet entry points were located. The first hit mark was observed on a metallised billboard at a distance of 147 feet with entry and exit points. The second hit mark was observed but with a high angled trajectory at a distance of 147 feet. Resultantly, a window pane was broken, whereas no other glass has been broken up at this distance due to the effects of the blast etc. If any other bullet was fired then there was a likely chance it might have hit the target. However, the medical report provided by the authorities does not substantiate our evidence. As per the report there was a wound in the right temporoparietal region measuring about 5x 3 cm just above the pima of the right ear. This wound has caused a depressed skull fracture on the right temporoparietal bone measuring approximately 35 mm. The team of concerned doctors discussed the probable cause of wound and the intensity of jerk to break the skull. The team unanimously agreed that high kinetic energy, as generated by some foreign body, could cause such a type of injury. If the wound is analysed, the size of the wound is small if compared with the damage. If the variables of momentum are evaluated which are: Momentum = mass x velocity."

It was even revealed that the mass of the object which struck the head of the victim was small but it had broken the skull. About 50 Newton force is required to break the skull of a haired head. The other variable is only velocity, therefore, the probable result is derived that some very high velocity object had struck the head of the victim on the right side. However, the suicide bomber struck the vehicle on the rear left side where there is no injury as per the medical report. Most probably, the victim had moved her head towards the right and exposed it

to the line of fire. In the light of the medical report no surrounding wounds or blackening was seen which apparently indicates that the face or the body of victim was not exposed to the blast.

Ignoring the security threat to her life, Benazir came out of the sunroof of the vehicle. Apparently, it is the time when security is more vulnerable and has gaps and dents. Taking advantage of this security lapse, the suspected suicide bomber joined the crowd and tried to reach her vehicle. When the vehicle reached Liaquat Road, just 69 feet from the VIP gate of Liaquat Bagh, suspected assassins fired at her with a pistol. Consequently, she fell down inside the vehicle.

The height of the vehicle is about seven feet. The sunroof from the seat is about three feet. It means that the victim was exposed in the air almost two to three feet with no protection in the rear and front. The shooter was standing just eight to ten feet from the victim as the length of the vehicle is just 15.4 feet. Moreover, the killer apparently fired two to three bullets. This scenario provides a very good chance to hit the victim.

Within a fraction of second, a blast occurred, just eight to ten feet away from the victim. The brunt of the blast was faced by the rear left side of the bullet proof vehicle. The intensity of the blast is calculated to be about three to five kg of a high explosive. The shock front generated by such a type and quality of explosive will strike the right side of the victim just like a hammer with a blow of more than one ton which could have broken the neck and converted the head into pieces. However, all these injuries were not mentioned in the medical report of the victim. It is therefore more apparent that at the time of the blast the victim was rightly tugged down into the vehicle. The triggering mechanism seems to be manual. However, no evidence was recovered from the crime scene to substantiate it.

The suicide bomber used approximately a three to five kg explosive as calculated by measuring the intensity of detonation and the blast wave. The explosive seems to be of good quality.

This terrorist attack seems to be unprecedented if we review the modus operandi. For the first time, the suicide bomber used a pistol to shoot down the victim prior to the detonation of the explosive jacket. The area was presumably well rehearsed with a resolve to assassinate the former prime minister. This was the 43rd suicide attack of the year 2007 whereas in only one other instance, a suicide bomber was carrying a 30 bore (7.63 mm) pistol while he attempted to attack a PTS Sargodha on the 2nd of August 2007 but failed although he managed to kill two police officials with his pistol but his explosive jacket misfired due to short circuit.

It was astonishing to note that the blast occurred at about 5.11 p.m. whereas the VIP victim was shifted to the hospital around 5:35 p.m. while the hospital is just three to five kilometres away from the epicenter. This had caused loss of blood as noticed during the inspection of the VIP's vehicle where a pool of blood was stagnant on the seat underneath the sunroof. The most alarming thing is that the VIP victim was shifted to the hospital in the same damaged vehicle which came under the blast instead of evacuation through ambulance with a doctor.

It is the 43rd suicide attack in the country in the year 2007. The last month of the year is at the top of list in which eight suicide incidents occurred followed by seven incidents which happened in the month of July 2007. The intensity of the suicide bombings increased manifold after the Lal Masjid episode and 34 suicide attacks occurred all over the country which started from Swat on the 12th July 2007 for the first time.

The modus operandi and triggering mechanism used in 15 suicide bombings is manual and mechanical by using the Striker Sleeve MUV-2 with same lot number and factory code except little variation of manufacturing year. It is a clear indicator that the same terrorist group is involved in almost all these incidents.

If we view this last investigation report by the government that held the terrorist organisations responsible for this tragedy, we discover that the government itself wanted to give a final denouement of the entire plot. They restricted the Scotland Yard team only to establishing the cause.

The circumstances under which the team conducted the investigations and the investigation report that was released after their departure shows the U-turn taken by the government. It was obvious that if the Scotland team had given the report contrary to the government stand it would have clearly revealed the inability and insincerity of the government and might have uncovered some depressing reality. If the government had not issued this decisive report which gives a final verdict on the investigation it would have been difficult to silence the increasing protests by the PPP leadership and would have given more room to speculations and doubts.

ALL LEADS SNAPPED

The Conspirators Follow the Plan

The investigators look at this as yet another important lead snapped!

The most important link in which two persons – Nasrullah and Ismail Khan – said to be involved in the assassination attempt on Benazir Bhutto outside Liaquat Bagh in Rawalpindi on December 27, 2007, were eliminated according to the plan.

Nasrullah and Ismail Khan were said to be mediators between the conspirators and Baitullah Mehsud and they were deputed to execute the plan of Bhutto's assassination and to monitor the activities of the shooters and suicide bombers and manage their mobility till her execution.

After the successful assassination of Bhutto both these persons fled to South Waziristan by early morning the next day. However, the forces who are out to put a blanked cover over the whole investigations could not afford to let those two survive as well.

As the investigators, probing the case seriously, were closing down on these important links the forces which were out to wipe out any evidence in the case were moving a step ahead of them. Arrangements were made to eliminate the two, identified as Nasrullah and Ismail Khan, in South Waziristan. Eventually, those after them, intercepted the two at a security check post in South Waziristan and opened fire at them while they were travelling in a vehicle. Both of them died on the spot and with their death another important lead in the course of investigations to unravel the mystery of Ms Bhutto's assassination was eliminated.

The officials in the intelligence agencies trying desperately to unveil the culprits behind Bhutto's assassination, believe that had they had the opportunity to lay their hands on even one of these two persons killed in South Waziristan, they would have been able to tie up various links that have been left dangling loose because of their elimination.

The assassination of Khalid Shahanshah also deprived the investigators of a source who would have revealed a lot of facts behind Ms Bhutto's assassination.

Khalid Shahanshah was the man who, on the instructions of his masters, masterminded the conspiracy to eliminate Benazir Bhutto when she started seriously contemplating her return to country on October 18, 2007. It was Khalid Shahanshah who brokered a deal with the militant commander from South Waziristan, Baitullah Mehsood, to eliminate Bhutto during the election campaign that she was leading for the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) as the Chairperson. So, when she eventually landed in Karachi on October 18, 2007 the assassins were already ready to execute the plot hatched by Khalid Shahanshah and the men provided by the militant commander Baitullah Mehsood. Following the deal Baitullah Mehsood appointed a person Amir Hamza, the head of Markaz-e-Taliban in South Waziristan to carry out the task. Amir Hamza engaged another person, Sher Zaman, the main handler of suicide bombers which were provided to Taliban and told him to select some highly committed suicide bombers who should not be deterred of any circumstances and must succeed. Meanwhile, Baitullah Mehsood sent one person, Aitzaz Shah, a student of 'Madrassa Tajweed-ul-Qura'an' located in Mansehra in the NWFP, to Amir Hamza for training. Amir Hamza trained Aitzaz Shah and handed him over to Sher Zaman also under which five different groups of assassins were formed to accomplish the task.

At this stage Sher Zaman formed different groups to carry out the task. One of the groups comprising of at least five persons went to Karachi many days ahead of Bhutto's return, accompanied by Sher Zaman himself to make preparations.

Meanwhile, there was one of the biggest cash dacoity the city of Karachi had happened. The dacoity was committed by the same group of Taliban which was waiting for Benazir Bhutto to eliminate her. The group looted Rs 150 million from a bank's cash van in the jurisdiction of Preddy Police Station in Karachi.

The Karachi-based group of Taliban told Sher Zaman that the cash was looted for the Amir (Baitullah Mehsood) who needed the money at that time urgently. They also told Sher Zaman that one of their colleague was already arrested by the Karachi Police and the city was 'hot' at that time and asked them to return because following the cash dacoity, police and the intelligence agencies were sniffing all over the city.

The group returned to South Waziristan to their 'markaz' and lied low. However, after around one month they again went back to Karachi and started preparing for the mission to kill Ms Bhutto soon after she may come out of the airport.

After the failure in Karachi to assassinate Bhutto, Baitullah Mehsood called Sher Zaman, Aitzaz Shah and Deen Mohammad, a person belonging to Karachi, and told them about Ms Bhutto's next schedule of public rallies, especially in the

NWFP. Bhutto addressed a rally in Peshawar. There was a still created when a young boy, aged around 16 years, was caught by the police for carrying some explosives. However, apparently the main assassins who went to Peshawar failed to break the security barrier and continued to follow her.

Bhutto's next rally was scheduled to be held in Pubbi (Newshehra). There also these assassins, following Bhutto, could not break the security cordon and two suicide attackers were arrested outside the rally ground after the public meeting was going on and Benazir Bhutto was sitting on the stage to address a large.

After these reports from the NWFP, Benazir Bhutto abandoned her scheduled rallies in the NWFP and decided to return to Islamabad. She was scheduled to address her last rally at the historic Liaquat Bagh in Rawalpindi and that would have concluded her election campaign and she was scheduled to return to Sindh. This made the conspirators even more desperate and seeing the Liaquat Bagh rally as the last chance the most comprehensive assassination plan was chalked out in which at least five assassins were deputed to fulfil the task. The assassins even engaged Khalid Shahanshah to ensure that this last attempt should not fail at any cost.

The nine-member group of assassins, including the suicide bombers, shooters and their handlers included in the assassination chore. The task leader Sher Zaman, Aitzaz Shah and Rashid Turrabi were belonging to Shabqadar near Peshawar, Saeed (the suicide bomber from South Waziristan, and Said Ikram (the shooter, also from South Waziristan) Husnain Gul and Razaqat, both belonging to Rawalpindi and were assigned to work as facilitators in addition to Ismail Khan and Nasrullah. Husnain Gul and Razaqat took the members of the group around the venue of the rally, showed them every possible way carrying out the attack as well as the exit routes after the attack. They even had a shadow practice of the attack a day before the rally at the spot.

On the fateful day Sher Zaman brought Saeed, the suicide bomber and shooter, from the hideout where he was kept and was being prepared for the attack and the whole group had a meeting.

As the PPP workers and activists started gathering at Liaquat Bagh, the venue of the rally, the group also mingled with the crowd. Aitzaz Shah and Rashid Turrabi were assigned to enter the Liaquat Bagh but because of the very tight security they could not enter and they went towards the Murree Road.

Meanwhile, Khalid Shahanshah continued to give hints and signals to the assassins and even signalled to them that they have to hit her above chest because Benazir was wearing a bullet-proof jacket as well. But the tight security

and vigilance by the police as well as the PPP workers and activists a shooting attempt to kill Bhutto could not take place.

After Benazir Bhutto safely stepped off the stage at the end of the rally, the assassins, divided into three groups, spread out outside the Liaquat Bagh and seemed to have given up the attempt. However, the planners were not ready to call off the operation and they continued to monitor the situation closely.

The group comprising of Saeed, and Said Ikram being supervised by Nasrullah, who were present outside the exit gate, remained close to Bhutto's vehicle because Nasrullah had decided whether they get a chance to target Bhutto or not, they were to go ahead with the suicide bombing.

But they did get their chance. As Bhutto's convey took the right turn instead of following the earlier agreed upon security plan according to which her convoy was supposed to take the Gawal Mandi route to reach the Mall Road and return to Islamabad via Kashmir Highway, Saeed, the suicide bomber, was immediately signalled to get close to Bhutto's vehicle and blow himself up.

And Saeed got the best of opportunity when suddenly Bhutto emerged from the roof-top exit of the bomb-proof vehicle to waive to the cheering crowd. Saeed, who, by that time had got very close to Bhutto's vehicle first drew out his pistol and fired three shots at Benazir Bhutto, apparently the second bullet caught her, as she turned her face towards right. The bullet hit her slightly above her right ear, never penetrating in her skull but broke the bone and damaged the membrane containing the brain, causing instant death.

Immediately after firing the shooter Saeed also blew himself up, causing another 28 deaths of innocent PPP workers.

As soon as Benazir Bhutto's death was confirmed, Nasrullah called Baitullah Mehsood on phone and informed him about the success of the mission. The conversation was intercepted by the intelligence agencies which was later also produced by the Interior Ministry spokesman, Brig (Retd) Javed Iqbal Cheema, at a press conference that he addressed.

After the attack the rest of the group, eight persons, gathered at the hideout arranged by Husnain Gul and Razaqat, the two local facilitators. From there Aitzaz Shah, instead of going to his hometown Mansehra, went to Dera Ismail Khan, Rashid Turabi went back to Shabqadar, while Sher Zaman, Nasrullah and the other two rushed to South Waziristan.

After the success of the mission now the mastermind behind the whole conspiracy immediately put the second phase of the mission in operation. The first move was to wash off the scene of the crime to destroy any evidence that could be collected from the spot of the crime.

It was indeed the most shocking thing done by the Rawalpindi Police, especially by the officer who was supposed to protect and preserve the crime scene to help the investigators to collect evidence from the crime scene. Instead of cordoning off the area and preserving the crime scene the officer, seemingly, ordered to bring the fire tenders and wash off the whole scene, something which arouse suspicion in even common man's mind.

This first act following the assassination of Benazir Bhutto instantly made everybody concerned suspicious. Bhutto's assassination was a high profile international tragedy and yet no attempt was made to preserve the crime scene. On the contrary the crime scene was washed and scrubbed and opened for normal traffic within 70 minutes of the happening of the crime! As against this the road in front of the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad where the suicide attack took place on September 20, 2008, the road passing in front of the hotel still remains blocked for normal traffic!

Khalid Shahanshah's Wana Connections

The involvement of Khalid Shahansha in the assassination of Benazir Bhutto became obvious when thousands of people witnessed his suspicious activities while standing behind Bhutto during her address to the public meeting at Liaquat Bagh, Rawalpindi, as he kept indicating some one that BB was wearing bullet proof jacket, hit her above her neck.

In January, 2007 the suspicious activities of Khalid Shahanshah had become quite noticeable. He was reported to be visiting North Waziristan, the lawless and insurgency hit tribal area bordering Afghanistan.

The investigation agencies probing the assassination of Bhutto had also claimed that they had unearthed links between Khalid Shahanshah and the two main executors of the assassination plan of Bhutto from the Tribal Areas, Noorullah and Ismail Khan.

It is also possible that it was during those incursions to North Waziristan that Khalid Shahanshah finalised the assassination deal with Baitullah Mehsud in 2007. So, by the time Benazir Bhutto decided to return to the country, the assassination plan was well in place and the operatives were out to get BB at all cost. They haunted her wherever she moved and eventually succeeded in Rawalpindi.

According to people in the close circles of Bhutto, Khalid Shahanshah, who had some deep connections with the underworld, was specially deputed as the personal bodyguard of Bhutto when she decided to return to the country after her prolonged self exile on 18th October, 2007.

He stuck close to Bhutto wherever she went after her return and always was in the back of the same vehicle that Bhutto rode during her election campaign all over the country. It may be recalled that his behaviour on the stage on the day when Bhutto delivered her last speech at Liaquat Bagh was already questioned but the issue was tactfully hushed up.

Several investigators believe that he was in knowledge of some very important facts concerning the assassination. His own assassination was part of a greater scheme to silence anybody who could become a source in making some vital revelations that would have helped resolve the mystery shrouding the assassination of Bhutto.

The horrendous slaying of Benazir Bhutto, the two-time Prime Minister of this hapless country, in Rawalpindi on the 27th of December 2007, is still an unsolved mystery, and her own successors are pulling every cosmetic rabbit out of their grinning bags. One also wonders as what wonder, the United Nations team will accomplish, after all these months.

Now that the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) is in power it is intriguing as to why the government has not made any effort to re-investigate the case. As a journalist working for The News, I contacted a number of individuals engaged at different levels of investigations in the case and some of whom are still quietly working on it. They said that the case could be resolved only if there was a sincere will to resolve it and if there was a resolve to catch the culprits behind the most unfortunate assassination in the country's history.

These people also confided that there was ample evidence available which points an accusing finger towards the players who had some key role in the assassination of BB. But nobody can dare make any such demand to unveil those elements because all were hovering around the person holding the most powerful office of the country.

Commenting further these people say: "There is ample evidence available that can lead the investigators to the mastermind behind the whole plan. These evidences are scattered in bits and pieces and are not hidden. What is required is to only collect these scattered pieces of puzzle and put them together, which will

easily complete the picture, exposing all those involved in this conspiracy, not only against a person, but against the nation.

“However, we have to keep in mind that the forces who want to keep the facts under a tightly guarded wrap will never allow any such move. The assassination of one of the major players involved in the whole conspiracy in Karachi some time back has effectively sent out a strong warning to others and none will be willing to volunteer to reveal the facts.

Shahanshah Eliminated

Khalid Shahanshah (Khalid Ali alias Shahanshah, son of Ghulam Rasool), deployed for personal security of slain leader Benazir Bhutto who later became a key suspect in her assassination, was gunned down outside his residence in Defence Area of Khyaban-e-Bukhari on 22 July, 2008 in PPP government.

Unidentified car-riding gunmen were waiting outside his residence and showered Shahanshah with bullets as he was waiting for the gate of his home to open after he returned from the Bilawal House. He was killed on the spot. The guards posted at the house of Khalid Shahanshah also returned the fire and some bullets also hit the attackers’ car.

The attackers escaped in a white car (GS-3909). The police recovered the car used in the incident near Sultan Masjid, Defence, and it turned out that the vehicle was carrying fake registration number plates. The investigators, during the inspection of the murder site, found 20 empty cartridges of SMGs (small machine guns) and over 15 shells of .222 Rifles.

After the incident, conspiracy theories about the murder surfaced with investigators claiming that it was a target killing.

Investigators claimed, about 32 FIRs were lodged against Khalid Shahanshah in different heinous offences at various police stations. He was attached with criminal gangs during his youth and befriended underworld don Shoaib Khan but after the murder of Ibrahim Bhooloo, a business partner of Shoaib, Shahanshah developed differences with Shoaib and left his group.

The people engaged in investigation of Shahanshah murder case, believed that some hidden hands might be involved in the killing, as SMGs were usually used by professional killers. Investigators believe that those who assassinated Benazir Bhutto might have carried out the murder to eliminate the evidence against them.

THE SUSPECTS

The Pricking Doubts

Such is the astounding apathy and indifference of the President Asif Ali Zardari – led political dispensation towards Benazir Bhutto’s murder case that despite the lapse of two years and even with the reign of power in the PPP hands, the assassins of Bhutto are still at large.

All though it sound un believable, the police have not moved even an inch to find the clue of this high profile murder as the heirs of the great leaders have notice to press on the issue.

The apprehensions and doubts pricking the minds of general public in general and the die-hard workers of the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) about the facts behind the assassination of Benazir Bhutto are gaining more and more strength with each passing day and the recent development have only strengthened all those apprehensions.

Hardly anybody seems satisfied with the course of investigations conducted so far aimed at unravelling the mystery surrounding the unfortunate assassination of Benazir Bhutto and the dubious role played by a number of characters who are connected, one way or the other, with the assassination of Bhutto.

Even more irritating as well as intriguing factor is that hardly any serious attempt has been made towards unveiling those persons, groups or elements behind this assassination of a leader that had drastically changed the course of politics not only in this country but the whole region and had even global affects too.

People are still guessing and making their own assessments and opinions about the factors and characters that deprived this country, the region and even the whole world a leader of great stature at a time when she had reached the zenith of her political career after a long, painful struggle during which she lost her father and two brothers who also fell victims to political assassinations.

People are seriously concerned as to why no serious effort is being made to unveil the conspirators, operators and actors of the gory act in the history of political assassinations in the country.

Even the decision by the Government of Pakistan to seek the help of an independent mission from the United Nations (UN) for conducting an inquiry into the assassination of Bhutto had hardly pacified the frayed emotions and strong suspicions that are nurturing in the minds of people regarding unscrambling this mesh of deeply entangled mass of facts, events and the subsequent actions so deeply shrouding this mystery of BB's assassination.

People in general and the PPP workers are still not ready to believe whatever has come out of the investigations conducted by the joint investigation team as well as those carried out by different agencies at their own or even the one conducted by Scotland Yard of the UK.

Most of the people may be keeping their mum but there are many still around who are vocal in voicing their doubts about all those inquiries and investigations. Not only that, they have their own theories and are even making their own conclusions from the facts that they themselves saw or the ones which they have gathered from different sources and have very strong reasons to believe those to be true.

There are definitely some very perplexing and very basic factors which create doubts in the minds of people. The people may not be speaking out loud that they do not believe all these inquiries or investigations conducted so far by the state or foreign agencies but they are keeping their feelings tucked away in their hearts and minds as their conscience keeps pricking them over the loss of their great leader.

People are still skeptical about certain basic questions as to why the crime scene was washed off in such hurry after the incident? People are still in serious doubts as to why the return route of Bhutto's convoy after the rally was changed without any intimation to even the police escort that was supposed to be accompanying her vehicle on her way back to Islamabad? Who actually were among that group of people who blocked the way of Bhutto's vehicle as soon as she boarded and was on her way back to Islamabad? What made Ms Bhutto to emerge from the sunroof of the vehicle while she had already addressed the rally and waived them bye at the end of the rally and even before boarding the vehicle? Why Khalid Shahshah, the special security man, said to be deputed by Asif Ali Zardari, the spouse of Ms Bhutto and now the President of Pakistan, was quick to jump inside the back of the vehicle and shut the back door whereas in the past he had always stood on the footboard in the back of the vehicle till the time it is safely out of any sort of crowd and on the way at the usual speed? Why he was assassinated and who was behind his assassination?

There is a general feeling among the concerned quarters as well as general public that the investigations being conducted by certain agencies, which were seriously trying to unravel this mystery and reach the culprits behind inflicting this tragedy on the nation, has become stuck because the leads on which they were working aggressively have been snapped.

For example, the investigators were actively pursuing the dubious role of Khalid Shahanshah, the security man, claiming that he was deputed by Asif Ali Zardari personally for the security of Bhutto.

The investigators were probing the unusual behaviour and acts of Khalid Shahanshah on that particular day, some of which were even shown by various private TV channels covering the event live when he was standing very close to Bhutto as she was addressing the rally.

The pollsters were also probing as to why Khalid Shahanshah, who in the past had always stood on the footboard of the vehicle in the back till the time, the vehicle was safely out of the crowd and had picked up normal speed. But on that fateful day Khalid Shahanshah was seen as the first one to open the rear door and jump in the vehicle and closed the door even while it was stationary, stuck in the crowd. This act also pricked the minds of the investigators as it indicates that Khalid Shahanshah might be knowing as to what was going to happen shortly after he secured himself inside the bomb-proof vehicle.

Eventually Khalid Shahanshah was killed in mysterious circumstances during the secret investigation.

Another snapped lead in the case was the death of Nahid Bhutto, a cousin of Benazir Bhutto, near Nawabshah while she was returning from Larkana to Karachi only a few days after the burial of Bhutto.

There are strong suspicions in the minds of people that Nahid Bhutto was in knowledge of some very important and sensitive information that she came to know about when she was in Larkana for the funeral of Bhutto and she shared that information on telephone with her sister in Australia.

This death, which a large number of people in the PPP and some investigators probing the case still believe, was a result of a conspiracy and was planned to eliminate her with an objective to prevent her sharing the information she had got hold of with anybody else.

Very few people are aware of this factor in the case but those who know have very strong suspicion of foul play in the accident in which Nahid Bhutto lost her

life. Some sources said that she stopped talking abruptly when she was conversing with her sister in Australia as she suspected somebody was eavesdropping on her and she told her sister in Australia that she would talk in detail after reaching her home in Karachi. She left soon after for Karachi but never reached there as her vehicle met an accident near Nawabshah in which she died!

The investigators look at this as yet another important lead snapped!

Mumtaz Bhutto accuses Zardari

The elements and the characters behind Benazir Bhutto's assassinations, about which people were quietly talking but were not ready to say openly were finally uttered by Sardar Mumtaz Ali Bhutto, cousin of late Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and the uncle of Benazir Bhutto, in a public meeting when he said that (President) Asif Ali Zardari had separated from Benazir Bhutto 10 years ago and he rushed to Pakistan carrying a 'fake will' to take over all her wealth as well as her political inheritance in the shape of Pakistan People's Party (PPP). Mumtaz Bhutto did not mince his words when he leveled these accusations against (President) Asif Ali Zardari and even vowed vengeance. He also raised the same questions which have been pricking the minds of tens of millions of people throughout the country as to what is holding Asif Ali Zardari, now the President of the country, to unveil the people and the forces behind Benazir Bhutto's assassination and why he is not bringing them to justice in accordance with the wishes of the people of the country.

Sardar Mumtaz Bhutto, the former Chief Minister of the Sindh province, who also held the portfolio of a Federal Minister in the government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, had been quiet for a long time and had drifted in political oblivion since his cousin's hanging by the military dictator Gen Ziaul Haq. But in the public rally that he addressed in Rato Dero in Sindh, he sounded outraged over the assassination of his niece, though throughout her political struggle he remained a silent opponent of hers. He openly said in the public meeting that her (Benazir Bhutto's) husband was involved in the conspiracy to eliminate her.

All the things that Mumtaz Bhutto said in the public rally held at Rato Dero on that day about involvement of (President) Asif Ali Zardari in the conspiracy aimed at eliminating Benazir Bhutto were widely talked about amidst the public circles and even made the basis for turning Asif Ali Zardari the most unpopular President of the country.

Zardari Factor

A significant element in the assassination of Benazir Bhutto is that general public widely hold her spouse, now President Asif Ali Zardari him self as a suspect

behind the murder of his wife! There was a loud outcry from public soon after the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, openly blaming Zardari as the man who was aware and was part of the conspiracy to eliminate his wife and the most popular political leader of the country from the national political scene. Public suspicions were based on many factors. He was suspected mainly because he made certain inductions in the security of Benazir Bhutto even before she left Dubai for Pakistan on October 18, 2007. He appointed Khalid Shahanshah, a man well known for his mafia connections, as her personal bodyguard who shadowed her each and every step. Second was his visible lack of interest in following the investigation process in the case which made people even more suspicious about his role. Third, he never clarified the claims made by the administration and the police that he asked for not conducting autopsy, a basic requirement in such a case. Had there been an autopsy a number of questions which have gone unanswered during the process of investigations could have been clarified had an autopsy been conducted. Wheals within wheels were evidenced as the than Rawalpindi Police Chief told the media that he had suggested that an autopsy be done but had been resisted by none. Other than Benazir Bhutto's husband, Asif Ali Zardari, now the President of Pakistan. Fourth is his silence over his own public assertions that he is very well aware of the culprits behind the assassination of his wife, the two-time Prime Minister of the country and the most popular political leader of the country. He is on record for having said it more than once that he knows the murderers of Benazir Bhutto and always said that he would made the facts and the names of those culprits 'very soon'. Even after becoming the co-chairperson of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) after the demise of Benazir Bhutto and even after occupying the Presidency for almost 16 months, he has yet not come out with the facts and the information that he claims he has in his possession which clearly expose those behind the assassination of Benazir Bhutto. Sixth, he never raised any objection over Scotland Yard team conducting a 'fact finding' inquiry instead of fresh investigations to unveil the culprits or the mandate of UN Commission' which again is engaged in a 'fact finding mission' instead of conducting actual inquiry to unveil the facts and reach the culprits.

Fifth is his recent reprimand of the Sindh Provincial Government which nominated the former Chief Minister of the Punjab, Chaudhry Pervez Elahi and other suspects, in an FIR as culprits behind the assassination of Benazir Bhutto.

Since he took over the Chairmanship of the PPP and later became the President of the country, he never even once raised the issue of taking up the process of investigation in the assassination of his wife in the meetings that he had chaired as the Chairperson of the party of as the President of the Country. All he always has to say is the rhetoric of 'democracy is best revenge' in answer to questions

and demands voiced for unveiling the culprits and the forces behind assassination of Benazir Bhutto.

All these factors have grossly disillusioned the die-hard PPP leaders, workers and supporters who believe that Asif Zardari was not only aware of the conspiracy to eliminate Benazir Bhutto but was part of it.

Many loyalists of Benazir Bhutto were exasperated that the current leadership including President Asif Ali Zardari, seemed uninterested in Uncovering the mystery of Benazir assassination.

The popular sentiments of the PPP workers still remain to see conspirators behind the assassination of Benazir Bhutto should be unearthed and brought to justice. It is a popular opinion amongst the PPP workers that her spouse, Asif Ali Zardari, was behind her assassination and he benefited most by reaching the luxurious confines of the highest office in the country. “ – He (Zardari) got elected on her name – this is the least he should have done”. The PPP workers expressed their anger as, “since our leader assassinated, he (Asif Ali Zardari) has done nothing but exploits her name and blood.

Which he is selling like a merchandise both, nationally and internationally to live in lavish while doing nothing to reach the necks of those that he (Zardari) has claimed knowing have killed our leader. All this further strengthen our suspicious that he himself is behind to conspiracy to eliminate Benazir Bhutto and deprive of the country, the nation the country, the region and the whole world a brilliant politician”

“It is our right to know who killed Benazir. We paid back our loan to her spilled blood by voting for her party. In return, the least this government can do is to make public the murderers,” said “What is keeping the government from getting to the bottom of the mystery?”

It was widely believed that her PPP harvested benefits from a sympathy wave that landed Zardari to Presidency.

Her assassination caused ripple shocks around the world, particularly because that was the second attempts on her life. As she returned to Pakistan on October 18, after exile of nine years, her motorcade was blasted by two bombs that left more than 130 people, most of whom were Bhutto’s fans, dead.

Archetypal to other high-profile assassinations in Pakistan, the real facts were obscured by conspiracy theories that led nowhere, though the usual suspect has always been the real rulers.

Rehman Malik Refutes

Rehman Malik, response of a question of the author about his alleged involvement in assassination of Benazir Bhutto, strongly denying the allegation, said that opponents were leveling such allegations against him. "You have no evidence to prove the contention", he said and added, "This is perception that I fled from the scene as the terrorism occurred". He termed it absolutely baseless saying that he was a few yards ahead of BB's vehicle. He said that investigation was started besides UN Commission investigation, adding that the reality would be exposed soon. The interior minister said that three-member UN Commission questioned him for 45 minutes and he clarified their questions.

Rehman Malik said that there were no police at Liaquat Road as he came out of the Jalsa Gah to monitor the security measures, adding that as he asked the DSP on duty, he told him that the force have been shifted to Islamabad Highway where Nawaz Sharif's rally was attacked.

"I was not responsible for physical protection of Benazir Bhutto because I was deputed for keeping liaison with government", he clarified adding that Maj. Imtiaz was responsible for physical protection of BB.

"You yourself have made the issue controversial in your question. Still, I am ready to talk on this. Not amongst you, I roam around among the masses too. You said as to what is the allegation against me. That I ran away from there in my vehicle. OK. The case was registered and now it is almost finalized. Now the sister, with whom I spent 10 years and the enemies who continued to conspire since the first day, right from day one. But the thing is that what evidence you have got for this thing. At that time two bomb blasts occurred in the country. First day I was with her. I stayed with her. If I was involved in the conspiracy then what I was doing with her? In Liaquat Bagh I was only five feet ahead of her vehicle. Had I gone there to die? Wanted to kill myself by hatching conspiracy. The thing is that these enemies, to put a wrap on their conspiracies they implicated me. They submitted all sorts of complaints_ The time will come when the truth will prevail. I have even prayed that if I had to die then at least let the killers of my sister be punished before me (my eyes). And I will prove, by the wish of God. We are not far away from the killers by the wish of God. The way we have been carrying on the investigations. We have not sat idle the whole year. We are investigating. We have tracked down the people. The UN Commission is investigating. And I have presented myself before the Commission ahead of everyone and told them to start investigations from me. Ask questions from me. Now that you have asked the question so I have to give the answer. For 45 minutes they questioned me. And also questioned as to how I got out of there. I showed (them) the video. I told them that when we came out from there with

(Benazir Bhutto) then the black vehicle was mine. Benazir Bhutto's orders what that when I (she) sit in the vehicle then the second escort in which I was also included, should sit in the other vehicle. (We) went to that vehicle. Babar Awan, I, General Tauqeer Zia, Farhatullah Babar and the driver. When we were at the stage there we have received in the information that this incident, that there was firing when Nawaz Sharif was going, I wrote a slip and requested not to make any announcement so that there should not be any panic.

A few minutes before the rally concluded I came down from the stage to review the security (arrangements). There one DSP Ishtiaq was present but the rest of the force had disappeared. I asked the DSP as to what could be the reason, he complained that Safdar Abbasi had picked up a confrontation with him and had even grabbed him by the collar (of the uniform), so I am leaving as a protest. I pleaded outside (with him) to cool down the issue. He told me that they were sending the force to the spot where this incident of firing on Nawaz Sharif had occurred. It told him that you can do that by sending the force from the (Police) Lines too so why the security has been removed from here. I was still talking when BB came down (from the stage) and as you have seen the video footage, Benazir Bhutto signalled towards Babar Awan who had sat in the other vehicle in which we were to sit. I went to the black vehicle. I was in the middle, on the right side were General (Retd.) Tauqeer Zia and then Babar Awan. Farhatullah Babar was in the front. When we sat (in the vehicle) there was one vehicle ahead of us as it is visible in the video. As soon as we moved out I said to Babar Awan that May Allah be merciful, there should not be any crowd in the VIP movement. I was feeling the fear. We were just talking about this when the crowd came in front (of the vehicle). A vehicle of police was visible ahead and behind were we. People were steel peering inside the vehicle, chanting slogans. Not tell, was I myself not present there. People say that Rehman Malik was not present there. I was along with (Benazir Bhutto) on October 18 too.

Secondly, I was the security Adviser. It was my responsibility to review security as security adviser. Mohtarma said that she was basically against the National Security Adviser that (I) give the post of Security Adviser. It was my job to maintain coordination between the Government of Pakistan and the Pakistan Peoples' Party. Whatever correspondence of Mohtarma was to be done, I used to do that. It is on record that I wrote 25 letters to the government, the answer to which are also available that I have provided to the Commission.

Basically, for physical protection it was Major (Retd) Imtiaz. There were two names, one was Khawaja Sahab who was SP (Superintendent of Police) and one Maj (Retd) Imtiaz. Mohtarma approved the name of Maj (Retd) Imtiaz.

Basically, the physical protection was the responsibility of the police officer or being a former Prime Minister of Pakistan, the Cabinet rule, the security was the responsibility of the Government of Pakistan. And in September it was written that security would be enhanced and jammers would also be provided. But nothing was provided. The things that were to be provided, those were not given and for the fourth time Benazir Bhutto addressed rallies all over Pakistan. I was not accompanying in all the rallies. She gave me the task to organize the 'youth team' and this record is also available that to organize this 'Youth team' I was touring city after city. Bhutto also made me the member of the ECC but I made a request that I may be given the task of organizing the youth. She accepted my request so that I could come into the limelight. First one incident was reported about the failure of jammers. There was not present. I was not present at many a places. I used to go where I was required. Now as this rally was in Rawalpindi-Islamabad, so I went there.

So, leveling this allegation that Rehman Malik ran away taking his vehicle from the scene. Now this is on record. All those who carried out this act (action), who are in the front, they are people of Baitullah Mehsood. Look at every thing where there is any evidence available. We will not spare.

This what you said that my enemies are (targeting) me. They will continue to do so. And I would like to clarify one that that the lie has no bases. It is easy to level an allegation but it was very difficult to prove one and especially against the person who has remained with Mohtarma throughout such a long struggle. She was more then a sister to me. I feel ashamed of those people who can think this way and can level such allegations.

That video footage also proves my innocence. They are also leveling allegation against my other friends too, like Babar Awan, that he was also involved in the conspiracy. I think you must step outside and ask all the five persons if this is a fact or not.

Earlier on first assassination anniversary of BB, Rehman Malik expressed his point of view when asked:

When asked whether the then ISI Chief, Lt-General Nadeem Taj met Benazir Bhutto on the eve of the tragedy (in fact early morning of the same day at around 1:30 am) and told her about the threat to her life and advised her not to attend the rally. Rehman Malik, who was operating as the Chief Security Adviser of BB as she was travelling all over the country in connection with her party's election campaign, told 'The News' that the meeting between the then ISI Chief and BB was held. "Yes. The meeting did took place. I myself was part of the meeting. The discussion remained confined to political matters. The issue of any life threat

to Benazir Bhutto or concerns about her security during the next morning's public rally (in Liaquat Bagh, Rawalpindi) did not figure in the meeting," Rehman Malik said.

When asked as to why Benazir Bhutto's vehicle took the right turn instead of left, towards "Gawal Mandi" Rawalpindi, which was in accordance with the actual "security plan", Rehman Malik said that it was not in his knowledge as to why BB's vehicle took the right turn instead of following the original security plan.

But it is intriguing that the vehicle in which Rehman Malik was riding along with Senator Babar Awan, the sitting Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, and the Spokesman for BB, ex-Senator Farhatullah Babar, was ahead of BB's vehicle. This vehicle, in which Rehman Malik was riding was also used as the 'pilot' or 'escort vehicle' for BB wherever she went during the election campaign throughout the country.

Rehman Malik admitted that his vehicle was ahead of Bhutto's vehicle and further ahead was a police escort van. So, it is pretty hard to believe that he was not aware if BB's vehicle was going to make a wrong move. In fact, all indicators show that if it was a wrong decision to take right turn instead of going towards the left and follow the 'agreed upon' security plan, then one has every reason to believe that the 'wrong' was prompted either by those sitting in the 'Police Escort Van' or, if not Rehman Malik, then somebody else sitting in the vehicle occupied by Rehman Malik!

When asked as to why he did not go straight to the Rawalpindi General Hospital and why he dashed towards 'Zardari House' in Islamabad, Rehman Malik claimed that he did go to the hospital first.

"When I reached the hospital I saw people hugging each other and crying. I saw Nahid Khan in the arms of another lady, crying her heart out. I could not take any more and I returned to Islamabad".

Suspicious Reopening the Case

The government, for face saving, reopened Benazir Bhutto's assassination case and directed the federal investigation agency (FIA) to reinvestigate the December, 27, 2007 tragedy, in the last week of August, 2008, as the first investigation remained inconclusive because Joint Investigation Team (JIT) headed by Chaudhary Abdul Majeed, Additional IG, Punjab Police and Scotland Yard didn't take into account the findings of the FIA officials who were part of the JIT in their report. The decision of reopening the case about a month after the UN's Commission started working on Bhutto's assassination case.

On the other side, the government changed the chief of FIA, probably, to get the desired investigation outcomes.

The FIA, following the government's direction, requested anti terrorism court (ATC-I) to withhold the trial and allow the agency to complete its reinvestigation. As a result the trial of the accused Aitzaz Shah, Sher Zanian, Abdul Rasheed, Rafaqat Hussain and Hasnain Gul was stopped as was requested by the FIA, asking the court to give it time to conclude its probe.

The ATC, accepting the FIA's request on October 3, 2009, directed the FIA to complete their investigation into the Benazir Bhutto assassination case by October 17, 2009 and submit the report to the court. But the FIA failed to complete the investigations within the given time.

Plan Execution

The plan to execute Bhutto and cover up the tracks of the hidden hands behind execution was put into operation and continued without any break during all those times wherein three governments changed in the country. All the three governments, the PML-Q, the Interim Government and now the PPP government, continued to cover up country's most vile assassination.

The 'execution plan' started on October 18, 2007 when the PML-Q was in power. The failure in the first attempt did not deterred those who had planned her assassination as she was continuously haunted. The PML-Q government failed to reach the culprits or find any trace of the 'hidden hands' behind those attacks till the time they made way for the interim government headed in the center by the then Senate Chairman, Mohamadmian Soomro. During the interim government set up Bhutto continued to face threats to her life and continually kept pointing out the forces, even nominated individuals, but the law enforcing as well as intelligence agencies failed to pick up any solid leads to unveil the force or forces which were out to take Bhutto's life. In fact the interim government set up quietly encouraged those forces by taking cosmetic measures for Bhutto's safety and at the same time never initiating any serious investigations into the attempts on her life and the threats to her life that she kept pointing. These hidden forces became so powerful that even when the PPP eventually came into power as a result of the general elections they continued to protect those who were categorically pointed out and nominated by Bhutto during her life!

After the success of 'assassination plan', the second part was put into operation and that was to eliminate those who were in knowledge or in possession of any evidence that could have led to any serious disclosure of those who were behind the murder of Bhutto.

The first elimination was that of Ms Nahid Bhutto, cousin of Bhutto, who somehow got hold of some credible shred of evidence against those who were behind Bhutto's murder. She was apparently killed in a road accident near Nawabshah, when she was on her way back to Karachi from Larkana after attending the funeral of Bhutto. It was on January 2, 2008 and the interim government set was in place at the time.

Second was the elimination of Khalid Shahanshah, who, after the murder of Bhutto was quietly made the 'Security Incharge' of Bilawal House in Karachi to keep him away from media exposure. However, as the media had already started speculating heavily about his possible involvement in the assassination of Bhutto. Shahanshah was gunned down at the main gate of his home when he was returning from Bilawal House on July 22, 2008. The PPP government was in place at the time.

This was the elimination of Ismail Khan and Nasrullah, murdered in Northern Areas and both the individuals were part of Bhutto's murder conspiracy.

Finally, Baitullah Mehsud, the TTP chief, who was widely believed to be responsible for Bhutto's murder, was killed in a drone attack by the US!

UNITED NATIONS ROLE

UN Commission Arrives

United Nation's independent Commission reached Pakistan and started working on 16th July, 2009.

According to an estimate, the investigation into the assassination of Benazir Bhutto could cost the national exchequer of Pakistan up to \$100 million and consume up to 14 months.

Pakistan had assured the United Nations that it would provide all the funds required to probe the assassination that the assurance was given by the Foreign Minister, Shah Mahmood Qureshi during a meeting with UN officials.

The commission would report to both the Government of Pakistan and UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon. Pakistan did not ask for the involvement of UN Security Council in the investigation.

Had an investigation been sought by the UN Security Council, it would have been sponsored by the world body, like the investigation into the murder of former Prime Minister of Lebanon, Rafik Harriri which has so far cost \$350 million.

The real purpose of the commission, as mentioned by the government of Pakistan, it would identify all culprits, perpetrators, organisers and financiers behind the December 27 assassination.

Broad understanding on the nature of the commission, its funding mechanism and composition was reached with clear understanding that it would have access to all relevant information to arrive at concrete conclusions.

Now, amidst these circumstances, an independent UN commission to probing the assassination of Benazir Bhutto but what this independent UN Commission can do to start with it to launch their probe by including all those who, in any way, have any link with the case.

To start with, this independent UN Commission was allowed to approach the former President of Pakistan, General (Retd) Pervez Musharraf, for a comprehensive interview on the issue. He could be asked as to why he insisted upon inviting a team from the Scotland Yard to investigate the assassination of Benazir Bhutto against the will of the PPP leadership. The former President could also be asked as to what is his opinion regarding so many speculations and allegations that are being levelled against him for his involvement in Bhutto's assassination.

The Commission should also have an interaction with President Asif Ali Zardari, the spouse of the assassinated Bhutto, as to why he never acted against the people whom he himself had been nominating as being behind the murder of his wife. He is on record for having repeatedly said that he knows well as to who are behind the assassination of Bhutto. So, it would be quite pertinent if the UN Commission may ask him to reveal all those facts and name the people about whom he knows for being behind this tragedy.

The Commission should thoroughly interrogate the sitting Interior Minister Rehman Malik and interview in detail on the issue.

Although, the Commission has questioned SSP-Operations (Senior Superintendent of Police (Operations), Yaseen Farooq, but he should be intensively interrogated to get any clue about the hidden hands active behind the scene. The UN investigators had a detailed interview with the then SSP Operations (Senior Superintendent of Police (Operations),

Yaseen Farooq as to why he was in such extreme hurry to wash the crime scene and on whose instructions he did that. In all probability he did so on some one's instructions because being a senior officer and holding the important portfolio of 'Investigations' in the Rawalpindi Police he must be very well aware as to how important it is to preserve the crime scene after such an incident and can not take such a foolish step that even a junior officer engaged in investigation process would never recommend.

The Independent UN Commission also included the then District Nazim of Rawalpindi, Javid Akhlaq, a Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid) man, the then ruling party. Being the administrative head the District Nazim was the in-charge of 'fire brigade' and that would have moved only on his directions or with his approval. It could be asked from him whether he acted at his own or followed instructions from somebody to send the fire brigade tankers to wash away the crime scene.

The Independent UN Commission should also have a thorough interaction with, not only the Joint Investigation Team (JIT) set up by the Government of Pakistan but also have an interaction with the Scotland Yard team, which came to Pakistan to investigate the tragedy.

There were clear remarks by Bhutto after the Karachi twin suicide attack on her convoy that the then Chief Minister of the Punjab, Chaudhry Pervez Elahi, the then Chief Minister of Sindh, Arbab Rahirn, the then Chief of Intelligence Bureau (IB) Brig (Retd) Ejaz Shah, and the former ISI Chief, Gen (Retd) Hameed Gul would be responsible in case she was assassinated.

What the UN Commission have found out from these interviews and had they really grilled these persons nominated by Bhutto?

What UN Commission Can Accomplish

After coming to power, the PPP government fulfilled one of the promises it made with the public that after coming into power, an inquiry by the UN appointed commission will be conducted to undo the mystery, shrouded Bhutto's assassination. But, much disappointment and shock prevailed among the PPP workers as well as the general public as the government confined the function of UN Commission to the 'fact finding' and there was no mention of probing the case with an objective to unveil the assassins. While, the 'fact finding' had already conducted by the JIT and Scotland Yard team and for that the nation will pay 100 million US dollars to UN Commission, apparently, for doing nothing.

What this UN Commission would be able to accomplish? If it worked within the same parameters in which the Scotland Yard team worked, it would hardly be able to unveil any new dimensions in the case or draw any conclusions different from those already reached by the JIT as well as the Scotland Yard.

But, at the same time it is also very clear that this would not be the kind of investigation the UN conducted in the assassination of the former President of Lebanon, Rafiq alHirari, who was killed in a bomb blast attack on his motorcade. In the Rafiq Al-Hariri case, all the evidence and the crime scene was strictly preserved for inspection by the UN investigators but in Bhutto's case there will be no such evidences available to them.

This was not clear whether this UN Commission would be allowed to investigate the people who were nominated by Bhutto herself as her possible assassins before her return to Pakistan. If the claim by Mr. Wolf that Bhutto mentioned all these names in a message to him through e-mail is correct then the UN Commission should be starting their investigations by interviewing all the individuals as prime suspects including the former President Gen (Retd) Pervez

Musharraf, the two former Chief Ministers, Chaudhry Pervez Ilahi of the Punjab and Arbab Rahim of Sindh in addition to the former Director-General of the Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) and a strong opponent of Bhutto, Gen (Retd) Hamid Gul.

This was not explained from any quarter in the government whether the UN Commission, constituted by the UN Secretary-General on the request of the Government of Pakistan and for which the Government of Pakistan will bear all the expenses, amounting to US\$ 100 millions, obviously from an already under strain national exchequer, would be free to include the important eye-witnesses.

And on top of all that, has the UN Commission also properly interrogated the spouse of Bhutto and now the sitting President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari, who has more than once said that he knew the people behind the assassination of his wife and the most popular political leader of the country. He has said this in public rallies as well. So, it would be intriguing if the UN Commission constituted to probe Bhutto's death has missed him out in their probe. However, there were hardly any indications if the UN Commission has questioned Zardari who was holding back a cache of information that can shed light on the people or the forces behind Bhutto's assassination.

This was also not clear as to what would be the 'starting point' for the UN Commission to initiate their investigations? If they are to start their probe from the reports that have already been prepared by the JIT or the one submitted by the Scotland Yard of the United Kingdom, they could hardly make any headway as there is no physical evidence left to probe.

So, in face of all these factors, it remained a point to ponder upon as to where from this UN Commission will start its probe, what sort of evidence would be put before it, whom it has interviewed or investigated and the most important was as to what has the mandate of this UN Commission. Whether they have acted on the same lines that the detectives from the Scotland Yard worked or have they pick up their own course of action in the investigation to try and reach the people and the forces behind the assassination of Bhutto.

Has UN Commission be able to act accordingly, in these circumstances when doubts are scattered every where and the doubts, even, lead to the 'closest' people of Benazir Bhutto.

Who will provide valid and real evidences to the commission? Would the commission accept the concocted evidences?

The first and foremost thing that strikes the mind is that the assassination of the Benazir Bhutto had already been planned by some very powerful group or by a conglomerate comprising various forces that regarded Bhutto as a grave threat to their interests. It may be the Jihadi outfits who have always considered her a formidable challenge and were desperate to eliminate her. Another possibility hints at the organized consortium of political forces bent against her. Other possible suspects include the military dictatorship manipulating the secret agencies or those elements close to her who wanted to reap the fruit of her legacy or the evil nexus of all these elements mentioned above. The range of potential plotters extends from those threatened by her life to those who could be the beneficiaries.

These elements after eliminating her, first tried to create chaos regarding the cause of her death and laid all the responsibility on her. This messed up state of affairs provided them with more time to remove any proof or eliminate key people who could unravel the mystery. The denial of autopsy made the whole situation even more complex and the investigation just remained focused on the cause of death for a long time. These elements also compelled the administration of the Rawalpindi General Hospital to give a medical report consistent with the viewpoint of the government.

After encountering failure in establishing the chain of causation of death in a mere accident, greeting strong opposition and outright rejection of this stand by the PPP leadership, and eventually realising the ludicrousness of this stand, the government investigation team admitted that the cause of death was gun shots. The Scotland Yard team also issued the report which was according to the initial stand adopted by the Government of Pakistan. Finally, they laid all the responsibility on the ostensibly credible and convenient target which could be acceptable to the common masses and international media. However, to its utter distaste, the government found that it was not easy to deceive everyone by constructing a seemingly credible murder plot framed in the larger framework of the international war against terrorism.

It is hoped that the United Nation investigation team would consider all these facts before it while investigating this heinous crime that has deprived the people of Pakistan from a liberator and the world from a statesman and intellectual of global stature.

The Inadequate Role of UN Commission

The people also asked questions. And the questions are hard-hitting. Not many would disagree that the death of Benazir Bhutto is a mystery. Is it planned and intended to remain a secret? Many assert so.

The mandate of the high-g geared investigative commission is limited to finding the cause of death. PPP workers and BB sympathizers were openly expressing their dissatisfaction with this narrow aim. They hold that they do not want any repetition of the controversy over what caused the death-- the hook, gunshot or the blast. A futile debate will once again obscure the attempt to point out the actual offenders and give rise to heated debate over pointless details.

Many view it as a government-orchestrated drama (or negligence) which will bear no outcome except affirming what has been already been "disclosed" by Scotland Yard, another foreign body which came amidst much noise but left without any whimper. The only difference is that this time, the party headed by Benazir is in power but of no consolation to the die-hard supporters of PPP.

"The Mush-government hosed down the evidence at the crime scene, the PPP-led government is washing down the investigation." A leader of the PPP believes. On the other hand, some are concerned that 100 million US dollars from national exchequer will be spent at an exercise in waste. "We want to know who killed her. The President says that he knows them but does not tell the nation. How can the UN do something which the President of Pakistan cannot dare? It's useless," a hardcore PPP supporter who attended many rallies of BB, says.

Many were raising fingers at the very independence of the Commission. Its funding by the Government will be the key factor that will allow the government to influence the scope, process and indirectly, the findings of the investigation.

"This is the government that has still far not even lodged the FIR of Benazir's assassination. Now its officials will coordinate with the UN investigators. This is self-explanatory." PPP supporters contended.

Earlier, parameters of investigation by Scotland Yard had been demarcated secretly by the government under Mussharraf. If this precedent is followed and the Commission is forced to work under the parameters defined by the state authorities, this will again lead to findings not acceptable to the public at large.

Every investigation moves from the crime scene to the criminals. The probe into the assassination of Benazir is unique in the sense that it is confined to finding the facts and cause of murder. The FIR registered in the jurisdiction of City police station, Rawalpindi only mentioned the initial events. The Scotland Yard only pointed at the cause of murder. The scope of UN Commission was also limited to fact-finding. Why has there been no attempt to unearth the murderers.

Considering that the UN Commission enjoys global reputation and respect and the probe in the assassination of Benazir is replete with mysterious gaps, the

biggest challenge before it was to resolve these contradictions. The masses are concerned and suspicious. Mere tag of “international body” will not remove their doubts.

Doubts Being Cast on UN Probe!

Just like it was the case of a probe conducted by the Scotland Yard of the United Kingdom in Bhutto’s assassination apprehensions of their work being curtailed to a specific sphere were feared and eventually proved true, similar doubts were cast towards the probe by the three-member UN Commission appointed to unravel the mystery shrouding her killing.

The Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, Abdullah Hussain Haroon, voiced his concerns over denying access to the UN Commission to some important personalities connected and even nominated by Bhutto in her letter. He categorically said that the UN Commission is not being provided access to three important characters of the case, *i.e.* former President General (Retd) Pervez Musharraf, the former Chief Minister of the Punjab, Chaudhry Pervez Ellahi and the former Chief of the Intelligence Bureau, country’s premier civil intelligence agency, Ijaz Shah.

He expressed apprehensions that this denial to the UN Commission to have access to these three personalities is hindering the UN Commission in finalizing their report, which they were supposed to submit by December 2009.

This was the similar situation that was confronted by the Scotland Yard team where the investigators from the UK’s premier intelligence agency were barred from having access to the people whom Bhutto nominated clearly and categorically in her last letter as well as the e-mail message she sent to the CNN reporter, Wolf Blitzer through her confidante, Mark Siegel. Evidently, the Scotland Yard team decided to compromise and follow the parameters defined by the Pakistani authorities to work within and at the end only substantiated what the local investigators have concluded. Most intriguing was the denial to the UN Commission to have access to the former Chief Minister of the Punjab, Chaudhry Pervez Elahi. The PPP government in Sindh province even tried to lodge an FIR against the former Punjab Chief Minister but were snubbed by none other than President Zardari himself, ensuring immunity for him.

The other person nominated by Bhutto was the former IB Chief, Ejaz Shah, who somehow has managed to sneak out of the country and is living in some part of Australia, where he can not be accessed by the UN Commission unless and until the Government of Pakistan intervene, which it is not doing! The UN Commission has repeatedly demanded of the Pakistan Government to help them

have access to him for an interview but their request is being pushed under the carpet.

And of all the most important is the former President, General (Retd) Pervez Musharraf, who is globe trotting, lecturing in renowned universities and institutions and enjoying his life without any fear!

Now the pattern of preventing the investigators to have access to these three important players, believed to be part of the brutal conspiracy behind assassination of Bhutto carries similar features.

The time from when the investigation in the assassination of Bhutto started the Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) government was in power. And that was the first attempt at her life immediately after she returned to motherland on October 18, 2007. After she escaped the assassination attempt in the twin-suicide attacks on her convoy, Bhutto wrote the letter to the then President, Gen Pervez Musharraf, clearly expressing her apprehensions about the forces who were out to assassinate her. However, the government surreptitiously refrained from activating the government machinery to discover the forces that were out to eliminate her from the national political scene.

And when Bhutto was eventually assassinated outside Liaquat Bagh on December 27, 2007 there was the interim government set up in place. The government of the day was bitterly criticized for washing away important evidence from the crime scene almost immediately after the terror strike, something which made the basis for all sorts of conspiracy theories and cast long shadows of doubts over the procedure. It was evident that there were certain hidden hands or disguised forces that were determined to prevent the investigations going in the right direction. A lot of chaos and confusion was created soon after the assassination of Bhutto when the crime scene was washed away, the doctors at the RGI-I came up with confusing medical reports, no postmortem was conducted, the spokesman for the Interior Ministry tried to push a strange theory down media's throat, and even the people who were very close to Bhutto continued to act strangely, giving contradictory statements over important matters in the case.

The same pattern continued and the investigators were denied access to some very important players, widely believed to be behind the conspiracy to assassinate Bhutto. Same hidden forces and manipulative hands kept fiddling with the process of investigations, stealthily maneuvering the procedures and practices, quietly protecting those who were specifically nominated by Bhutto in her letter and e-mail message!

And when the PPP eventually came into power and Bhutto's spouse became the President of the country and her die-hard supporters occupied all the top slots in the government machinery, even amongst the ranks of bureaucracy, the most powerful force in the country, the same hidden hands continued to operate and prevent the investigators have access to the three individuals nominated specifically by Bhutto as to be responsible if she was assassinated! A glimpse of these hidden hands or forces was exposed when President Zardari put his foot down to save the Punjab Chief Minister, Chaudhry Pervez Elahi, when the Sindh Government tried to lodge an FIR against him for his involvement behind Bhutto's assassination but were prevented to do so! The famous quote of Zardari i.e. 'Democracy is the best revenge' was made basis to let Chaudhry Pervez Elahi being left off the hook!

Similarly, why the sitting government, which owes all it had to be in power now, was reluctant to help UN Commission have access to the former President General (Retd) Pervez Musharraf and the former IB Chief, Ejaz Shah, for questioning and clarifying the questions, which are still going unanswered?

However, it is evident that the UN Commission appointed to probe Bhutto's assassination is not ready to be guided as was the Scotland Yard team. The UN Commission, at its own met with the former President Gen (Retd) Pervez Musharraf in London but the Government of Pakistan was not instrumental or helpful in arranging that meeting.

Which are these hidden hands, the stealth forces, which are so powerful that they have managed to manipulate the three governments and prevent the investigators from moving in the right direction? And, all the more important, if according to President Zardari 'Democracy is the best revenge' then why cough up a whopping amount of US\$ 100 million of public money to a Commission, which is destined to fail!

Eventually, Commission got hold of a suspect

The UN Commission eventually got hold of the former IB Chief Brig (Retd) Ejaz Shah, reportedly in Lahore, and had an opportunity to question him regarding certain issues arising out of Bhutto's assassination. What the UN Commission gathered out of that meeting is yet to be known but it was believed that the members of the UN Commission questioned the former IB Chief, the premier civilian intelligence agency, about the role he could have played in bringing together the elements, which eventually contributed towards 'elimination' of Bhutto from the political scene.

What answers the former IB Chief might have put forth the UN Commission are yet to be known but it was learnt that the members of the UN Commission were

straight forward and ruthless. in their questioning and demanded straight answers to the straight questions. And at the end the UN Commission was not very satisfied with what they got! The question of involvement of direct or indirect involvement of al-Qaeda behind Bhutto's assassination remained shrouded in mystery. A link between Omar Saeed Sheikh, the man still behind the bars for his involvement in the murder of the US Journalist, the 'Wall Street Journal' Reporter, Daniel Pearl, and the former IB Chief, Brig (Retd) Ejaz Shah, remained a perplexing factor.

Similar was the question about the involvement of Qari Saifullah Akhtar, the explosive expert, believed to be closely linked with al-Qaeda, in assassination of Bhutto at Liaquat Bagh. Bhutto has been candid in her assertion when she mentioned the name of Qari Saifullah as the person who could be behind the attempts on her life in her book, which was published after her death. Qari Saifullah Akhtar is said to have close links with the former IB Chief, Brig (Retd) Ejaz Shah. The former IB chief is not forthcoming to clear his position about his links with Omar Saeed Sheikh, the main suspect in Daniel Pearl murder case, nor he has acceded to the links with the Ameer of Harkarul Jahadul Islami (HUJI), Qari Saifullah Akhtar, but the fact remain that there are clear evidences available that the former IB Chief was associated with these two persons and through them their networks, which operated under their directions.

The UN Commission investigating the assassination of Bhutto might have talked to the former IB Chief and spoken about his close links with the two individuals but evidently they have failed to make a tangible contact between the former IB Chief and the two individuals, heading two separate extremist religious organizations.

It still remain a secret as to what the UN Commission has gathered out of its meeting with Brig (Retd) Ejaz Shah, the former IB Chief but there were some intriguing points that one would expect the UN Commission to reveal in its report whenever it is going to submit one. The fact that Brig (Retd) Ejaz Shah, the former IB Chief, is one of the three persons nominated by Bhutto in her letter to the then President General Pervez Musharraf, as to be held responsible if she was ever assassinated, remain an intriguing point to ponder upon.

The Commission interviewed Army and ISI Chiefs

The UN Commission succeeded in having access to the top officials of the Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI), Lt-Gen Ahmed Shuja Pasha and even the Pakistan Army Chief, General Ashfaq Parvez Kiyani before they left for New York. This development had hvo-pronged impact. First, this meeting with the head of the 1St, Lt-Gen Ahmed Shuja Pasha, brought about a sense of confidence amongst the minds of people, who had always been suspicious about ISI's role in the

whole affair, and a hope emerged that the UN Commission report would have credibility while the meeting of the UN Commission with the Pakistan Army Chief, Gen Pervez Ashfaq Kiyani, further cemented this confidence. The assertions that these meetings with the top military brass took place when the Army Chief, Gen Kiyani took the initiative and himself made an offer to meet the UN Commission cleared many minds which were earlier clouded by all sorts of apprehensions and suspicions that the Army, as an institution, is a sacred cow and can't be touched! However, still the fact that the UN Commission members had a meeting with the sitting chief of the ISI and not the one who was heading the institution at the time of assassination of Ms Bhutto, will continue to prick the minds of those who have been following the developments in this tragedy from the beginning. The sitting ISI Chief would obviously have defended the institution he is heading and is hardly likely to have made any revelations! Still, the two meetings have paved the way for future such interactions with the top military brass. At the same time it was an intelligent move on part of the Pakistan Army Chief, Gen Kiyani, to volunteer to the Government to let the UN Commission have access to the persons whom they may wish to meet and interview in connection with the probe into Ms Bhutto's assassination because too much finger wagging against Pakistan Army had been going on in this matter as well as in many more issues, particularly the meddling of the ISI into national politics. These meetings also brought the UN Commission a lot of respect because in the past both the Scotland Yard team as well as the Joint Investigation Team (JIT) had failed to have any sort of such meetings or contact with the Army. In fact, neither the Scotland Yard team nor the JIT could pick up enough courage to demand such meetings when they were engaged in the probe into tragedy!

The JIT, throughout the investigation process never once tried to approach the ISI or for that matter anybody in the Pakistan Army to answer the questions about their role in the assassination of Bhutto because they were too tamed. And the Scotland Yard team came with the clear understanding that they would work within the parameters set for them and that was to authenticate the report already submitted by the JIT! The move to invite the Scotland Yard was nothing but to get an 'Authenticity Certificate' for what the JIT had already concluded, an utter waste of time, money and even an attempt to hide the facts in the tragedy!

DISTRAUGHT NAHEED KHAN

Dwells Upon the Tragedy

"I am still in a state of shock resulting out of the tragedy when Ms Bhutto fell in my lap and died there and then. I was screaming: 'BB, open your eyes, please say something!' But she did not even utter a word and died quietly. She upheld her father's tradition and laid down her life with dignity and honour. I still feel her presence around me. Her voice still rings in my ears. 'Naheed! Where are you?' I stir up and look around, but she is not there.

"She used to share every thought with me. She never went anywhere without me. She always tried her best to keep me by her side. But she did not share death with me! Why she did not share death with me? Why has she left me alone? At times when she had to go on special visits on her own, I always used to wait for her return, anxiously. But now this is a never ending wait," a tearful Naheed Khan said as her voice gradually faded away in subdued sobs.

She started again after a pause: "She was very happy when she came out (of Liaquat Bagh) at the end of the rally. She seemed overwhelmed by the warmth and affection of the crowd towards her and felt like never parting with them. She repeatedly waved to the cheering crowd. When I greeted her on the success of the rally when she stepped down, she hugged me warmly and kissed my cheek joyously. 'Naheed, this is all because of you,' she whispered in my ear. Safdar (Abbasi) who was standing right behind us said, 'BB you are giving all credit to Naheed, give us some as well.' BB smiled and said: 'No, all credit goes to Naheed this time.'

"We took our seats in the vehicle. BB asked me to sit on her right hand side while Makhdoom Amin Fahim took his seat on her left hand side. She was very happy. Her emotions were reflecting on her face. As soon as she settled in her seat she asked me to connect to Mian (Nawaz Sharif) Sahab saying, 'I have heard that there was firing at his rally and some of his workers have died'. Oblivious of my surroundings I started punching Mian (Nawaz Sharif) Sahab's number on my (cell) phone. As soon as the connection was made, our vehicle had already reached the Liaquat Road and some people carrying PPP flags and posters of BB's photo came in front of the vehicle and started thumping the vehicle. BB put her palm on the phone and said: 'Wait a while, let me wave to the crowd first.' It

was not even in my dreams that BB would rise so suddenly. All of a sudden she raised herself through the sun-roof and started waving to the crowd. Safdar (Abbasi) was raising 'Jeay Bhutto' slogans on the hand-held microphone and I, absolutely unaware of any threat, was watching the emotions of the people when all of a sudden I heard the gun shots and I felt something falling in my lap. I looked down and to my horror BB was there in my lap and blood was bursting out of her head. So much blood that my dupatta (headscarf), clothes and even the seat of the vehicle, all were in a pool of blood. And then there was a big blast and all around there were dead bodies of our workers lying out there. I was screaming BB's name again and again --- unable to make any sense as to what was going on. Everybody seemed senseless. Safdar shouted, asking me to press BB's wound with my hand to stop more blood from flowing out. But the wound was so big that blood continued to pour out --- Safdar checked the pulse and without saying a word he seemed panicky because he knew that BB was already dead. Makhdoom Amin Fahim was screaming, asking to move the vehicle and reach the hospital --- the tyres of the vehicle had burst and it was running on the metallic rims. The driver, to his best of abilities was trying to drive towards the Rawalpindi General Hospital --- a time came when the driver said that it (the vehicle) can no longer move forward. Now we had no way left. Meanwhile, Sherry Rehman's vehicle came from behind but Sherry was not in the vehicle. We stopped the vehicle, shifted BB into that and moved on. During all this the traffic police officials also realised that BB was hurt and they immediately provided an escort, making way for our vehicle to reach the hospital. The inexperienced doctors present there tried their best to provide health care. There was no senior doctor or surgeon present there. At the same time they called in Dr Mussadiq and other senior doctors. Open heart surgery was conducted --- but nothing came out. BB was declared dead! All hopes were gone --- it was like doomsday --- we were deprived of a mother, a sister and a popular leader.

"No. The wound in the head of BB was not a small one. It was so big that her brain fragments poured out," Naheed Khan responded to a question.

"As to where the leads indicate as to who could be the murderer of BB, it is not such a big secret. BB, before her assassination, had pointed out five individuals including Pervaiz Elahi, Arbab Rahim, IB Chief Ejaz Shah, former ISI chief retired General Hameed Gul while about Pervez Musharraf she had mentioned him in her e-mail to Wolf Blitzer. Has there been any action against these people? "About these threats BB had written a letter to Musharraf as well in which she had clearly stated that in case of her death he would be held responsible. How that letter disappeared from the Presidency?"

"BB never hinted at any such threats with his close aides."

Naheed, recollecting her moments, spent with Ms. Bhutto, said, “BB asked me to come over to Dubai on the 16th (October) to share some information. When I reached there, BB told me that a head of a friendly country has informed me that on reaching Karachi there will be a serious attack on our rally in which I may lose my life even. The head of the friendly country has advised me to be careful and also asked the Pakistan government to make proper security arrangements. He even advised me to postpone my return. BB told me – ‘I have decided to go. The next day when we were boarding the plane to return to Pakistan, BB was sitting beside me, a phone call from a very important person came from Pakistan, whose name I don’t want to disclose. I received the call as BB was talking to somebody else. I told the man that BB is still not out of the lounge and please call after 10 minutes. Meanwhile, she will arrive in the plane. I told BB about the phone call. She said, you did well by not letting him talk to me because he wanted to terrify me and prevent me from returning to my country. After 10 minutes the call came again. I told him that BB was still in the lounge and has not entered the plane. At that time the plane had already started taxiing and after a while the phone was switched off. It turned out to be true what BB had said and there was a suicide attack on her rally leading to the death and injuries to hundreds. As soon as she reached home after the attack on her rally she told me that she wanted to talk to the media. She was very sad on the death of the workers but was not afraid. Even after such a serious incident there were no signs of fear on her face.

“Even the senior most members of the party had a lot of respect for her and would openly show that. A night before coming to Islamabad she had a meeting with party leaders in Bilawal House in which Aftab Shabaan Mirani was also present. She sat very late in the meeting and remained engaged in consultations. Then suddenly she told the participants (of the meeting) that they can leave now. Usually, after saying this BB always used to head for her bedroom. But that night she remained sitting there. On seeing her keeping her seat, other people also remained sitting. After a while BB repeated what she had earlier said. ‘I have said that you people can go.’ On this Aftab Shabaan Mirani said ‘BB, how we can leave while you are sitting (here).’ So, BB said, ‘I am also going, you please go too’. Everybody stood up. I was also about to leave the room but she asked me to stay. ‘I need to talk to you. You come with me,’ she said.

When everybody left (the room), BB quit her seat and said ‘come let us go out in the lawn and talk.’ We came out on the lawn and all those people were also present there. BB said ‘you people are still around. You have not left?’ One of them said ‘you are awake, so how can we leave.’ BB told them, ‘you should go. There is nothing to be worried about. I just need to talk to Naheed about something.’ All those people left then BB said to me ‘we have to go to Sehwan Sharif right away and nobody needs to be informed.’ I said BB at this hour of the

night only two of us women and such a long journey. How we can do that?' BB said, 'don't worry, nothing will happen. You just get the car out and I will come after changing.' BB went inside and I quietly called Zulfikar Mirza. He was asleep. I told him to get as many security guards who were at his disposal and bring them to Bilawal House immediately. Anyhow, we left for Sehwan Sharif in two vehicles after midnight and reached Sehwan Sharif early in the morning. There again the security issue surfaced when all of a sudden a big crowd gathered around BB when they noticed her among them and BB, without any security, remained with them. However, BB went inside the shrine, paid her respects, offered Fateha and then we returned to Karachi. So, it was almost 11 hours she travelled by road on the night of the nightmarish incident of the twin-suicide attack on her rally.

"She was a very brave leader indeed. Even after the horrific incident of Karachi she was roaming around without any care. I never saw any reflection of fear on her face. She always used to quote the famous sayings of Hazrat Ali (Karam Allah Wajho): 'One day of life of a lion is better than a hundred years' life of a jackal.'

"Similarly, during the Pabbi rally near Peshawar, the security informed us that two suicide bombers had been arrested and told us to request BB to cut short her speech and end the rally quickly. I quietly passed on this information received from the security officials in the ear of BB. BB told me to ask all other speakers who were to speak in the rally to cut short their speeches. The leaders followed BB's instructions but she spoke for 90 minutes on that day instead of her usual 60 minutes. She kept repeating that she cannot be deterred by the threats of bombings and separated from the masses. Even during the visit to Malakand she frequently took to her feet and emerged from the sun-roof of the vehicle to wave to the cheering crowds.

Even during the visit to Quetta she threw caution to the wind while passing through a narrow street and asked to stop the vehicle, stepped out, bought apples and started distributing those among the people. On this I, as well as Safdar Abbasi, requested BB to be careful of her security and avoid such things. On this BB told us 'you have always been a source of strength to me. It seems that you are tired now. So, what we should do is that you go home and I also quit politics and take to home, spend a peaceful life.' At that time I saw the confidence and bravery of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto reflecting in her. Even after being encircled by such serious threats she was absolutely fearless. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto always had this confidence in them that life belongs to God Almighty and they have a commitment with the people. After that we could never pick up the courage to say even a word about security threats to BB."

In the case of Benazir Bhutto's assassination, it is also important to point out here that the washing of the crime scene, removal of vehicles from the scene and the loss of her dupatta (headscarf) are more criminal acts than are considered.

SIMILITUDE: BB AND HARIRI'S ASSASSINATION

Important issues

There are stark similarities in the Lebanese investigation of Rafiq Hariri's assassination and the Pakistani. But in the case of Pakistan no one from the Pakistan security apparatus has been found involved or arrested although Benazir continuously levelled charges against them, where as in Lebanon, the heads of the security apparatus were found linked and have been arrested following the establishment of the Commission.

Strangely in both cases, the Muslim groups were closely associated with the murder inquiry. In case of Lebanon, people claimed responsibility and the video tape found in which the suicide bomber claimed that he will do it. In case of Pakistan, the Government of Pakistan has blamed the fundamentalists and interestingly they have rejected the accusation. It is important to consider that the UN IIC in Lebanon found that the video tape and the claim of a fundamentalist group is actually a farce. What will happen in Pakistan, it remains to be seen?

The President of Pakistan, the former Chief of the IB and the personalities nominated by Benazir in her "book" or in her famous "letter to President", or the "email of Benazir to Mark Siegel" are surely to be interviewed by the investigators of the proposed Commission.

The implications for access to records of the IB, the MI and the ISI are also worth considering in this regard, as the UN Resolution (1595) that established the Commission for Lebanon provides:

"The Commission shall enjoy freedom of movement throughout the Lebanese territory, including access to all sites and facilities that the Commission deems relevant to the inquiry"

Therefore, it will be difficult for the Government of Pakistan to deny access to these sensitive places.

Abstract from Hariri Report

The Crime

On 14 February 2005 at approximately 1250 hrs, the former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri left the Nejmeh Square in Beirut going back to the

Kuraytem Palace. He traveled in a motorcade comprising of 6 cars, together with his security detail and Member of Parliament, Bassel Fleyhan. When the motorcade passed the St. George Hotel at Minae Al-Hosn Street a huge explosion occurred and resulted in the death of Mr. Hariri and others.

Shortly after the blast, the Director of Al-Jazeera TV in Beirut received a telephone call from a man who stated that the Nasra and Jihad Group in Greater Syria claimed responsibility for the assassination of Mr. Hariri. This message was broadcast shortly thereafter.

The Investigation

Primary Military Investigative Judge Rasheed Mezher was responsible for the crime investigation during the period from 14 to 21 February 2005. At 1700 hrs, Judge Mezher summoned a meeting with all the involved bodies, both from the Internal Security Forces and the Military, comprising in total 10 officers. The representatives from the Internal Security Forces during the meeting were:

General Aouar as the acting Commander of the Judicial Police and Head of the Forensic Unit, General Mulach as acting Commander of the Beirut Police Force, General Salah Eid as the responsible person for the blast site and Lieutenant Colonel Fouad Othman in the capacity of the Head of the Information Division.

When Judge Mezher left the function of Investigative Judge, 21 February 2005, no sustainable results had been achieved in the investigation except that he took the decision to request assistance from Switzerland regarding a forensic expert team to assist the Lebanese authorities in the investigation. It is interesting to note that government of Pakistan also requested the United Kingdom for providing assistance in determination of cause of death in Ms Benazir Bhutto's case.

The file was handed over to the new Investigative Judge, Judge Abou Arraj. Judge Abou Arraj was Investigative Judge for the investigation from 22 February to 23 March 2005. In his opinion, all the initial investigative measures had been performed in a professional and accurate way. He was surprised at the removal of the motorcade cars. Again it must be pointed out that in case of murder of Benazir Bhutto, the crime scene was washed and vehicles were also removed immediately after the incident.

On 23 March 2005, Judge Abou Arraj stepped down from the post of Investigative Judge. The reason for this was the tense political atmosphere at this particular time: a lot of mistrust was being directed towards the Lebanese judiciary and criticism being leveled at the manner of the investigation.

Judge Abou Arraj was replaced by Investigative Judge Elias Eid, who as of October 2005, was still in charge of the investigation.

Internal Security Force

On 14 February 2005, General Ali Al-Hajj was the Head of the Internal Security Forces (ISF). He was promoted to the post in November 2004, allegedly appointed by the Syrians; however he stepped down from the post during spring 2005 in the aftermath of the blast that killed Mr. Hariri. In case of Pakistan, the counterpart of ISF is the Intelligence bureau (IB) and after the Benazir's murder, no body stepped down where as the Director General IB at that time was specially accused by Benazir for his dubious role in the previous bombing on his rally in Karachi.

Military Intelligence

On 14 February 2005, General Raymond Azar was the Head of Military Intelligence. He was promoted to the post in December 1998 and stepped down during spring 2005 in the aftermath of the blast that killed Mr. Hariri.

Surete Generale

On 14 February 2005, Brigadier General Jamil Al-Sayyed was the I-Lead of the Surete Generale. He was promoted to the post in December 1998 and stepped down during spring 2005 in the aftermath of the blast that killed Mr. Hariri. Interestingly in case of Pakistan, no body stepped down in Pakistan on this failure from Interior Ministry/Home department of Punjab.

Swiss Forensic Report

After having conducted all the analysis and discussions of the facts we have collected, we came to the conclusion that it was most likely an explosion above ground. According to this finding we estimate an amount of 1000kg of high explosive. The unconfirmed and preliminary results of the analysis of a soil sample of the crater showed Trinitrotoluene (TNT) as explosive charge".

Rifi Report

In March 2005, the present Head of the ISF, General Ashraf Rifi, prepared a report on the initial measures undertaken by the competent Lebanese authorities on the scene of the crime, which was submitted to the UN Fact Finding Mission. The report concluded (excerpt):

In spite of all the measures taken, these were, unfortunately, not up to the level that would save the face of these organs. These measures were flawed. Therefore, the Minister of Interior and Municipalities issued a memorandum 137/(sad)2, dated 25 February 2005, instructing the General Inspectorate of the Internal Security Forces to investigate the deeds and actions. Based on the results, he

suggested the dismissal of the General, Chief of Beirut Police and the General, Chief of the Judicial Police. In case of Pakistan, No such report for dismissal of officers involved in security has been made in our country.

The following controversial elements were recorded:

1. The body of Zahi Abu Rujaili, a Lebanese citizen, was found on 15 March 2005. According to the medical examiner, the victim had survived the explosion for approximately 12 hours.
2. The body of one of the victims was found by coincidence 8 days after the explosion.
3. The body of Abdel-Hameed Ghalayeeni, a Lebanese citizen, was found 16 days after the explosion by his family and not the judicial or civil defense officers.
4. The fate of Farhan Ahmad Al-Issa is still unknown, he is still missing. It is feared that finding his body would constitute yet another scandal.

While, in the case of Benazir Bhutto's assassination, it is also important to point out here that the washing of crime scene, removal of vehicles from the scene and the loss of dupatta of Benazir are more criminal acts than those reported in the Lebanon report.

A few hours after the explosion took place, around 2300 hrs, major evidence was removed from the crime scene. The convoy cars of the late former Prime Minister were transferred to Helou Barracks under the pretext of preserving them although what was left of the cars did not justify their preservation except for their value as criminal evidence because they were the target of the explosion. In case of Pakistan, where the scene was washed and the cars removed on the pretext of worsening law and order.

On the other hand, in the Hariri case, this was not the only instance bearing proof of the tampering with the crime scene. A BMW car that was not part of the convoy was also removed whereas focus should have been on not removing any cars and maintaining them the way they rested after the explosion in order to determine how the crime was committed.

5. A bulldozer was introduced into the crime scene on the day of the explosion, 14 February 2005, in the evening for no justifiable reason. As

soon as the Minister of Interior and Municipalities got knowledge of it, he gave orders to retrieve it and preserve the crime scene as it was.

Decision to remove motorcade vehicles

The decision to fill the crater at the crime scene, to remove the motorcade vehicles and to re-open the street on the day after the blast, is confusing, assuming that there was a collective will to perform a professional crime scene examination in order to track down the perpetrators and bring them to justice.

In a meeting with UNIIC on 1 June 2005, General Rifi stated that the person who gave the order to get a bulldozer or bulldozers to the crime scene to fill the hole caused by the explosion etc. was General Mustapha Hamdan, who at the time of the incident was the Commander of President Lahoud's security detail and therefore by Lebanese law had nothing to do with issues related to crime scene investigation.

Lebanese Investigation: Ahmad Abu Adass

At approximately 1411 hrs on 14 February 2005, barely an hour after the explosion, Leila Bassam of Reuters received an anonymous telephone call from a man with an accent that was not Lebanese but which she could not identify. In case of Pakistan, Ministry of Interior aired a tape in which fingers were pointed at Baitullah Mehsud. According to Ms. Bassam, as soon as she answered the call, the man directing her to "write this down", told her to be quiet, and then read the following statement in classical Arabic:

"We, al nasra wal-jihad fee bilad Al-Sham, declare that we have meted out due punishment to the infidel Rafik Hariri so that he may be an example to others."

Mr. Ghassan Ben Jeddou, the Beirut Bureau chief of AlJazeera, recalls receiving four telephone calls that day related to the same claim of responsibility. In the first telephone call, a man whom Mr. Ben Jeddou described as speaking poor Arabic in an African, Afghan or Pakistani accent, claimed that Al-Nasra wal Jihad was responsible for Mr. Hariri's execution by a suicide bomb. Shortly thereafter, Al-Jazeera informed the public about this claim of responsibility. In case of Pakistan, Malay i Omar, spokesman of Baitullah Mehsud also denied any role in murder of Benazir Bhutto.

Al-Jazeera next received a call from another anonymous person claiming to be from the same group, this time a fluent Arabic speaker, who explained where Ben Jeddou and his colleagues could locate a videocassette containing further information about the assassination -- namely, in a tree near the ESCWA building in downtown Beirut -- and directing them to fetch the tape within 15 minutes. Mr. Ben Jeddou sent a colleague to locate the videocassette. Eventually,

a white envelope containing a type-written detailed statement and a videocassette was found. After more calls from the same group asking why the tape had not yet been aired, Al-Jazeera aired the footage later that afternoon.

The Commission's Investigation

Overview

UNIIC was declared operational by the Secretary General on 16 June 2005.

From 16 June to 6 October 2005, 244 witness statements, 293 investigator's notes and 22 suspect statements have been issued. A number of searches have been conducted and 453 crime scene exhibits have been seized. A total of 16,711 pages of documents have been produced. Thirty investigators from 17 different nations have been involved in the UNIIC investigative measures, as well as external experts.

The vast majority of senior officials in the involved Lebanese authorities were interviewed to clarify the allotment of competencies, chains-of-command, and their extent of involvement, as well as decisions taken (or which were neglected).

Conclusion:

There is probable cause to believe that the decision to assassinate former Prime Minister, Rafik Hariri, could not have been taken without the approval of top ranked Syrian security official and could not have been further organized without the collusion of their counterparts in the Lebanese security services.

Hariri telephone wire-tapping

Conclusion:

Through the constant wire-tapping of Mr. Hariri's telephone lines, the Syrian and Lebanese security and intelligence services were kept informed of his movements and contacts.

After The Crime

Analysis and Evaluation

On 30 August 2005, the Lebanese authorities arrested and detained four high level officials of the Lebanese security and intelligence apparatus, pursuant to arrest warrants issued by the Lebanese Prosecutor General based on recommendations from UNIIC that there was probable cause to arrest and detain them for conspiracy to commit murder in connection with the assassination of Rafik Hariri. The individuals arrested were General Jameel Al-Sayyed, former director general the Surete Generale ; General Ali Al-Hajj, former head of the ISF; General Raymond Azar, former head of military intelligence; and General Mustapha Hamdan, Commander of the Republican Guard Brigade.

This is the most important aspect as this could also happen in case of Pakistan. Interestingly all were heads of key apparatus of security agencies of Lebanon.

Abu Addas

Conclusion:

There is no evidence that Mr. Abu Adass belonged to the group al nasra wal-jihad fee bilad Al-Sham as claimed in the Al-Jazeera videotape, nor even that such a group has ever existed or does exist now. There are no indications (other than the videotape) that he drove a truck containing the bomb that killed Hariri. The evidence does show that it is likely that Mr. Abu Adass left his home on 16 January 2005 and was taken, voluntarily or not, to Syria, where he has since disappeared. There is a chance that in case of Pakistan this may also hold true and Baitullah Mehsud may also be found innocent and fingers may go towards the security apparatus of Pakistan.

Telephone Analysis

In total, the Commission requested information on approximately 2,235 subscribers and obtained telephone connection data for approximately 70,195 telephone calls. In the short time period of four months more than 400 persons have been interviewed, 60,000 documents reviewed, several suspects identified, and some main leads established. Yet, the investigation is not complete. In case of Pakistan, all the mobile companies records in Pakistan also await the same scrutiny.

Important Fact

All the above information has been taken from the first report of the International independent Investigation Commission.

There were ten reports submitted by the International Independent Investigation Commission. The tenth report was submitted on 28th March, 2008. After this report the COMMISSION is in a transition stage to Tribunal. Security Council Resolution 1757(2007) established the Special Tribunal for Lebanon.

Main Issues:

There are stark similarities in the Lebanese investigation and the Pakistani investigation as highlighted in the "Comments" above. Although in case of Pakistan no one from Pakistan security apparatus has been found involved or arrested although Benazir continuously leveled charges against them, where as in Lebanon, the heads of security apparatus were found linked and have been arrested following the establishment of the Commission.

Strangely in both cases, the Muslim groups were closely associated with the murder inquiry. In case of Lebanon, people claimed responsibility and the video

tape was found in which the suicide bomber claimed that he will do it. In case of Pakistan, the government of Pakistan blamed the fundamentalists and interestingly they rejected the accusation. It is important to consider that the UN IIC in Lebanon found that the video tape and the claim of a fundamentalist group is actually a farce. What will happen in Pakistan, it remains to be seen?

The President of Pakistan, the former Chief of IB and the personalities nominated by Benazir in his "book" or in his famous "letter to President", or the "email of Benazir to Mark Siegel" are surely to be interviewed by the investigators of the proposed Commission.

The implications for access to records of IB, MI and ISI are also worth consideration in this regard, as the UN Resolution (1595) that established the Commission for Lebanon provides:

"The Commission shall enjoy freedom of movement throughout the Lebanese territory, including access to all sites and facilities that the Commission deems relevant to the inquiry"

Therefore, it will be difficult for government of Pakistan to deny access to these sensitive places.

A paradox as it may seem but the strange travesty of events bears that everybody knows who assassinated BB including Asif Ali Zardari -- as he announced in a public meeting in Naudero on the occasion of first death anniversary of BB on December the 27th 2008.

In this book I have tried to shed light on her mysterious murder and have tried to fathom the process of investigation in an attempt to unveil the real faces behind her assassination.

THE INTERNATIONAL MEDIA KICKS UP THE DIRT

Benazir Bhutto enjoyed global reputation as a political luminary. Her assassination had international significance coupled with its vital link to the war against terror and its probe through the detectives of Scotland Yard which illustrated its importance for the international community and media. The murder and the subsequent investigations were extensively covered by the international media who dwelt in detail regarding the various stages of the cause of death and the elements suspected to be involved in this tragic incident. The analysis made by these reports is also summarized below so that it might guide the reader in arriving at a concrete conclusion.

- The Times of India in its report said, the rally of Benazir Bhutto was thundered by a blast after she had just addressed her jubilant supporters in the Rawalpindi. The attack took place as she was leaving the venue. Initially, police reports suggested that one or more assassins fired at the bullet-proof white Toyota Land Cruiser of Bhutto as she was just about to drive off after the rally had ended. This was followed by a suicide bomber detonating a bomb next to her vehicle. "As Bhutto was standing through her vehicle's sunroof to wave at the public," according to Getty Images photographer John Moore, "she fell back inside after two gunshots." The Times of India also released an amateur footage that showed the assassin firing four gun shots at Bhutto before the blast.

After the incident, an unconscious Bhutto was driven to the Rawalpindi General Hospital at 17:35 local time, where a team of doctors headed by Rawalpindi Medical College Principal Mohammad Musaddiq Khan made efforts to resuscitate her, performing a "left anterolateral thoracotomy for open cardiac massage". In 1951, the professor's father, Dr. Sadiq Khan had likewise tried to save Liaquat Ali Khan after he was assassinated in the same park and rushed to the same hospital. At first, Peoples Party spokesman, Farhatullah Babar declared that Bhutto's life was safe; however, she was pronounced dead at 18:16 local time.

- CNN reported that Bhutto's cause of death had witnessed a heated discussion. This debate has underlying motives directed at attempts to

define Bhutto's legacy: perhaps Bhutto would be a celebrated martyr if she died by gunshot, but not if she fell victim to death by hitting her head following a bomb blast.

- The Globe and Mail commented that the arguments raised against death by gunshot were motivated by attempt to deter criticism that she had not been provided with adequate security.

Preliminary, reports based on the information of Interior Ministry stated that a gunshot wound to the neck had proved fatal. Rehman Malik, a security advisor for Pakistan Peoples Party, affirmed that the assassin opened fire as Bhutto left the rally and that before he detonated the explosives he had been wearing, he hit her in the neck and chest. Javed Cheema, the then spokesman for Interior Ministry, briefed the media that her injuries were caused either by the bullet shot or from pellets packed into the detonated bomb that served as shrapnel

Ambiguity surrounded the cause of Bhutto's death as The Times online reported on 28th December the announcement of the Interior Ministry who now attributed the cause of Bhutto's death to a neck fracture sustained when she ducked or fell into her vehicle and hit the sunroof catch immediately after the gunshots. Later, they retracted and reported her cause of death due to a skull fracture.

"Bhutto was killed when she tried to duck back into the vehicle, and the shock waves from the blast knocked her head into a lever attached to the sunroof, fracturing her skull," the ministry elaborated, according to Associated Press. Contrary to the official account of the hospital, the ministry refuted reports that Bhutto had suffered any gunshot or shrapnel injuries and asserted that all gunshots had escaped her.

- In a report published by Dawn, PPP leader, Farhatullah Babar, unequivocally rejected claims that an accident had cost Bhutto her life. Farooq Naik, Bhutto's lawyer and a senior official in the Pakistan Peoples Party, flouted the report as "baseless" and "a pack of lies." He supported the view that the actual cause of death was two bullets piercing Bhutto in the abdomen and the head.

An anonymous Toyota official rejected the very notion that she could have even hit the lever based on its location in the car

- AP quoted Mohammad Mussadiq Khan, head of the team of doctors who treated Bhutto at Rawalpindi General Hospital, talking to The News

International, described severe and depressed skull fractures, oval in overall shape, on the right side of Bhutto's head.

One member of the team of doctors, on condition of anonymity, revealed that the authorities confiscated Bhutto's medical records immediately after her death and prevented doctors from talking to media at all.

- Trying to explore the cause of death, CNN reported that on the 31st December, Athar Minallah of the Rawalpindi General Hospital released a statement (described as "clinical notes") duly signed by seven members of the team involved in Bhutto's treatment at RGH.

However, none of these doctors were pathologists and had not performed a formal autopsy. The statement first narrates the course of treatment, from the hurried arrival of Bhutto at the hospital until the formal declaration of her death. The second component of the statement details the head wound and notes that "detailed external examination of the body did not reveal any other external injury." X-rays of the head wound were taken and interpreted too. In concluding part, the eventual cause of death was attributed to "open head injury with depressed skull fracture, leading to cardiopulmonary arrest."

- Pointing out serious flaws in the investigation process, The Washington Post reported that the crime scene was washed before any forensic examination was completed and no formal autopsy was conducted before burial. Doctors had sought permission to perform an autopsy, but it was categorically denied by the chief of police of Rawalpindi, the city where the murder had taken place.

- BBC quoted Brigadier Cheema as claiming "We gave you absolute facts ... corroborated by the doctors' report," and that the government would allow her body to be exhumed.

Later, Asif Ali Zardari, Bhutto's husband confirmed that he had denied a request for an autopsy citing fears of the increased likelihood that the report would be manipulated.

Pakistan's Interior Ministry, on 1st of January 2008, retracted its earlier assertion that Bhutto had died from hitting her head on the sunroof latch. Its spokesman adopted an apologetic stance and exercising caution, held that the ministry would wait for forensic investigations before arriving at and making public a conclusive statement as to the cause of death.

- Meanwhile, CNN quoted a report released by the Pakistan Peoples Party as saying that Benazir Bhutto died of injuries sustained from a laser beam shot. The report which had been signed by seven doctors and Senator Dr Babar Awan, disclosed that, "there were two to three tiny radio densities under each fractured segments on both projections which were in fact invisible electromagnetic radiations."
- However, according to the New York Times, on the 8th of February 2008, investigators from Scotland Yard concluded that Benazir Bhutto had died after hitting her head as she was tossed by the force of a suicide blast and not by an assassin's bullet. "Head Injury Killed Bhutto," the report proclaimed.

In the report, UK Home Office pathologist, Dr. Nathaniel Cary, did not rule out the possibility of a gunshot wound to her head or trunk while asserting that "the only tenable cause for the rapidly fatal head injury in this case is that it occurred as the result of impact due to the effects of the bomb-blast."

The Pakistani government and the Scotland Yard were on the same page on this count as the findings were consistent with the explanation rendered by the former as to the cause of Bhutto's assassination. The contention of the authorities had been greeted with utter disbelief by Ms. Bhutto's supporters, the medical experts and the masses.

On 27th December, Al-Qaeda commander, Mustafa Abu al-Yazid , reportedly claimed responsibility for the assassination, announcing boastfully, on several news outlets, "We terminated the most precious American asset which vowed to defeat the mujahideen." In his statement to the media, he revealed that the second-in-command in al-Qaeda hierarchy, Ayman al-Zawahiri had ordered the killing in October 2007.

Asia Times Online also reported that it had received a claim of responsibility from al-Yazid by telephone. U.S. intelligence officials have held that they cannot confirm al-Yazid's claim, nonetheless, American analysts acknowledged that al-Qaeda was a likely or even prime suspect. On the other hand, the Interior Ministry of Pakistan asserted that they had proof that al-Qaeda was behind the assassination, stating "that the suicide bomber belonged to Lashkar-eJhangvi – an al Qaeda-linked militant group that the government has blamed for hundreds of killings."

The ministry also claimed to have intercepted a statement by Baitullah Mehsud, an Al-Qaeda connected warlord, in which he felicitated his followers for the success in carrying out the assassination. On 29th

December a Mehsud spokesman spoke to Associated Press and forcefully denied the involvement of Mehsud in the assassination. He asserted, "Tribal people have their own customs. We don't strike women. It is a conspiracy by the government, the military and the intelligence agencies." The PPP regarded the story as concocted and also found in the government's accusation of Mehsud an effort to divert from the central focus. "The story that al-Qaida or Baitullah Mehsud did it appears to us to be a planted story, an incorrect story, because they want to divert the attention," argued Farhatullah Babar, a spokesman for Bhutto's party, rebuking the official viewpoint.

On 18th January CIA Director Michael Hayden acknowledged the responsibility of Mehsud and his network.

- The Times reported commentators as suggesting that the assassination might have been undertaken by elements within the government or Inter-Services Intelligence. Bhutto, in a letter to Musharraf written on the 16th of October 2007, had explicitly identified four kingpins involved in an alleged plot to kill her. These included the then Intelligence Bureau (IB) Chief Ijaz Shah, former Chief Minister of Punjab Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi, former chief minister of Sindh, Arbab Ghulam Rahim, and the former ISI chief, Hamid Gul.

The British newspaper highlighted the possibility that elements within the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence in collusion with Islamists might have master minded the killing, though it ruled out the possibility that Musharraf could have ordered the assassination. Posthumous publication of emails of Bhutto in October 2007 revealed her saying that the responsibility of her death would rest with Musharraf if she were killed because the government under Musharraf was not providing her with adequate security. Soon after the killing, many of her supporters were convinced that the Musharraf government was involved in the murder.

- The 30th December issue of Scotland on Sunday quoted MI5 sources as saying that factions of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence could have perpetrated the assassination. Bhutto had anticipated that three close allies of President Musharraf were all out to kill her. She had expressed her apprehension to the Foreign Secretary of Britain, David Miliband, in a secret email written weeks before her death.

The fears materialized when the twice-elected Prime Minister of Pakistan was killed in a gun and suicide bomb blast at a political rally in Rawalpindi. A party security advisor communicated that the self-exiled

opposition leader was shot in the neck and chest as she got into her vehicle to leave the rally, before the gunman blew himself up.

Initially, the police and BB's security supervisor 1Zehman Malik reported that Benazir Bhutto was safe, but later a party representative told the media that she had been hurt and was undergoing surgery.

Babar Awan, Bhutto's lawyer, finally announced "The surgeons have confirmed that she has been martyred."

After the assassination, her rival and erstwhile opposition leader, Nawaz Sharif, vowed openly to "fight your war from now on" and condoled her supporters outside the hospital and declared that he shared the grief of the entire nation.

While some wailed as they burst into tears, many gave vent to their rage by smashing the glass door at the main entrance of the emergency unit of the hospital. A Benazirloyalist berated his fate and loudly thumped his chest with a PPP flag wrapped around his head.

This was not the first time that Bhutto, who had been mobilizing supporters ahead of general elections, had been targeted by terrorists since her homecoming from her eight-year self-imposed exile..

As she victoriously paraded through Karachi in October with her huge band of supporters, bombers had attacked her cavalcade, leading to the death of at least 130 people.

She alleged that remnants of Pakistan's military dictator, Mohammed Zia ul-Haq, had masterminded the assault.

Ms Bhutto, who had advanced degrees from the prestigious universities of Oxford and Harvard, became the first female Prime Minister of a Muslim country when she emerged at the helm of affairs in Pakistan in 1988.

The United States which regards Pakistan as the key ally in the U.S.-led "war on terror" immediately condemned her murder.

- The infuriated Farzana Raja of Pakistan People's Party told CNN, in an outburst of anger at the government's "total security lapse, calling the government's explanation, "a pack of lies."

The Interior Ministry of Pakistan informed CEO-TV that the suicide bomber belonged to Lashkar-e-Jhangvi -- an al Qaeda-linked banned militant outfit that the government blamed for hundreds of targeted killings.

In a funeral attended by emotionally charged loyalists, Bhutto was laid to rest at her ancestral home of Garhi-Khuda Baksh after violent protests erupted across Pakistan following her death.

Before the procession finally reached the Bhutto family's mausoleum, multitude of people in the surrounding streets almost brought it to a standstill.

The sea of her grieving supporters crushed up against the flag-draped coffin, with occasional minor scuffles. In the hours before Bhutto's funeral started, riots erupted across the country, with at least nine people killed and banks, train stations and cars set ablaze.

Benazir's family -- her husband Asif Ali Zardari and three children -- accompanied the body aboard an Air Force C-130 plane to Sukkur and traveled by bus from there to Larkana and on to Garhi-Khuda Baksh.

CNN reported, quoting Bhutto that she would blame Musharraf if she were murdered. Two months earlier to her death, the former Prime Minister of Pakistan had stated in an email to her U.S. advisor and long time friend, saying that if she were killed, Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf would bear partial blame.

She referred to his government's refusal of her request for additional security arrangements following the October suicide bombing that had targeted her upon her subsequent return to Pakistan from exile.

She expressed her positive expectations to Mark Siegel, her U.S. spokesman, lobbyist and friend, "Nothing will, God willing happen."

"Just wanted you to know if it does in addition to the names in my letter to Musharraf of October the 6th, I would hold Musharraf responsible. I have been made to feel insecure by his minions and there is no way what is happening in terms of stopping me from taking private cars or using tinted windows or giving jammers or four police mobiles to cover all sides could happen without him." She added.

She had sent the e-mail on October the 26th, eight days after the suicide bombing in Karachi that led to heavy casualties. Siegel forwarded it to CNN's Wolf Blitzer, instructing him not to report it unless Bhutto met her tragic fate.

Just before her much anticipated return to Pakistan after eight years of self-imposed exile, Bhutto had told CNN she was aware of the threats posed to her life and alleged that that some of the threats emanated from people who occupied "high positions" in the power corridors. She came out with the fact that she had conveyed her fears to the knowledge of Musharraf through a letter, ostensibly referring to the one she mentions in her e-mail to Siegel.

In a public address, she pointed at four groups she believed threatened her and her cause the most -- the Taliban in Pakistan, the Taliban in Afghanistan, al Qaeda and a suicide team from Karachi that she did not describe.

After the Karachi bombing, she alleged the rogue elements in the government and security services of trying to kill her and asked Musharraf for "basic security," which included vehicles with tinted windows and private guards besides police guards. The request was reiterated in a letter written to Musharraf by three U.S. senators.

According to her American friend, Bhutto regarded the October 18 bombing "very suspicious" and was consequently concerned at the lack of security she had upon her arrival in Karachi. Siegel accused the Pakistani authorities of not taking concrete steps to investigate the assassination attempt and of refusing Bhutto's request for Scotland Yard and the FBI to aid in the investigation.

Bhutto and her spouse had asked for jammers to impede the detonation of bombs, special vehicles with tinted windows and four police vehicles to always escort her.

"She basically asked for all that was required for someone of the standing of a former prime minister. All of that was denied to her. ... She got some police protection, but it was sporadic and erratic." An obviously disoriented Siegel told the CNN's "The Situation Room."

Bhutto was concerned that as the January elections became imminent, the problem was worsening.

At the time of the October suicide bombing, in a rally memorable due to her symbolic moves, Bhutto was riding in a truck from Karachi's airport to the tomb of Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the founding father of Pakistan. Luckily, just few moments before the blast that rocked the rally, she had shifted from the roof to

inside of the armed bulletproof vehicle and therefore, destined to be secure from any tragic eventuality.

Remarking on the security measures, CNN's Dan Rivers who was at that time in Karachi, covering her return to Pakistan at the time, expressed his dissatisfaction at what appeared "loose security" to him. Substantiating his concerns, he told that his crew was able to walk up to the side of her vehicle without any kind of enquiry by the authorities.

On the other hand, Durrani, Pakistan's ambassador to the U.S insisted that the security provided to Bhutto was impeccable.

"There were, I think a sea of security people," he recalled. "She was surrounded by police vehicles. And had it not been one of the police vehicles which took the blast in Karachi, unfortunately she would have died there."

"There was a bubble around her of security. The PPP (Pakistan People's Party, Bhutto's party) insisted that they have their own private loyalists around. They were there too. And there were about 7,800 to 8,000 security people deployed just for that," Durrani added.

"That is more security than anybody deploys anywhere in the world."

"She was moving almost in a sea of humanity," Durrani stated, in an obvious reference to the magnanimity of the task of safeguarding the populist leader, "No system in the world can protect you against that."

Bhutto "is not a security person," he maintained. "She's a politician. I think the Government of Pakistan provided her all the security that was necessary. You tell me -- the way she was hit, she would have been hit with tinted windows or without, or without the IED ... so it's just a blame game."

Bhutto admitted that after the October attack, the police allowed her to use a helicopter for the trip from the airport, but she refused, saying instead, that she always wanted to be in close proximity to her people. She stressed afterwards that she did not regret that decision.

"She believed in democracy, and she believed in speaking to the people," Siegel eulogized, "It's not reckless to go out and touch the people. Don't blame the victim for the crime."

Blitzer noted that Bhutto was shot down while standing out of her vehicle's sunroof. Many considered it a reckless move, particularly after the fateful October incident.

- John Moore, Getty Images senior staff photographer, who covered the scene of her murder, told CNN he was left in awe at Bhutto's actions, considering the earlier suicide attempt at her life. He related that the attendance at the rally had trimmed to a size smaller than expected, and the people he spoke with told that they "were just afraid to come out, for the simple reason that they all remembered what happened in Karachi."

Siegel became sentimental as he told Blitzer that Bhutto was "the bravest person I ever knew. ... She knew that there were risks coming back, but those risks were important, she thought, for the fight for democracy."

According to a report published in a paper from New Delhi, "Mystery shrouded the death of former Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto." Pakistan's Interior Minister, Hamid Nawaz, in an amazing revelation on Friday divulged that Bhutto did not die of bullet wounds and that a head injury had cost her life. Seven doctors from the Rawalpindi General Hospital – where the leader was rushed immediately after the attack – held that that they had witnessed no bullet marks on Bhutto's body.

The medical team submitted a report to the government in which they neither performed post-mortem on Bhutto's body and nor did they receive any instruction to do so.

Talking to a Pakistani news channel, Nawaz came out with the claim, "The report says she had head injuries – an irregular patch – and the X-ray doesn't show any bullet in the head. So it was probably the shrapnel or any other thing has struck her in her head. That damaged her brain, causing it to ooze and her death. "The report categorically says there's no wound other than that."

Sources in the Government informed that there would be an investigation to determine the reason why no autopsy was conducted.

Doctors at the Rawalpindi General Hospital, according to agency reports, struggled frantically for 41 minutes to resuscitate the former Prime Minister after she had been shot but failed in their efforts.

She was pronounced dead 41 minutes after being brought to the hospital's emergency department at 1735 hrs (local time) with open wounds on her left temporal bone from which "brain matter was exuding", the report read.

It added that in the final moments, Bhutto was not breathing and her pulse and blood pressure were “not recordable”.

- IANS, according to a report, stated that “immediate resuscitation (process) was started” and she was immediately taken to the operation theatre where a team of doctors headed by Musaddiq Khan, Principal of the Rawalpindi Medical College attended her.

“Left antrolateral thoracotomy for open cardiac massage was performed,” the hospital report stated, adding, “In spite of all the possible measures she could not be revived and (was) declared dead at 1816 hrs IST (6.16 p.m.).”

No autopsy was carried out at the hospital because the “district administration and police had not requested the hospital authorities (for this),” the report said.

Ironically, Bhutto was shot not far off from the place where Pakistan’s first Prime Minister, Liaquat Ali Khan was killed by Saeed Akbar’s bullet about four years after the country was liberated.

An official of Toyota, the company that manufactures the vehicle, argued that Bhutto could not have been fatally injured even if she had hit her head on the sunroof lever of her Land Cruiser. “We are convinced that it can’t be a lever (that caused the fatal head injury) but we are still looking into more details,” the official stressed, speaking on the condition of anonymity.

He explained that the lever could not have caused the head injury as it was moored inside the vehicle and a distance of at least six centimeters separated it from the edge of the sunroof.

Simultaneously, he did not dispute the fact that there could have been bloodstains on the lever. “This is understandable. If she was hit in the head by a bullet, bloodstains could have been left on the lever.”

However, Interior Ministry spokesman, in a briefing to media personnel, divulged that that Bhutto was killed after she had hit her head against the sunroof lever of her Toyota Land Cruiser as it left the Liaquat Bagh, historic in retrospect, after addressing a rally.

He agreed to the authenticity of the fact that the three bullets fired were folloy, ad by a bomb blast but claimed that neither the bullets nor the shrapnel from the explosion had hit the PPP life-time chairperson. Rather, he held that she had

raised herself up from the sunroof to wave to her elated supporters and head slammed on the lever when she tried to duck after hearing the gunshots.

Justifying his claim, Cheema pointed out that there was blood on the lever. Subsequent to the government version, Toyota officials held a meeting in Karachi after Cheema's statement.

PPP veterans have called his assertion preposterous, saying that many of Bhutto's associates saw the wounds caused by the bullet.

"There were clear bullet wounds on her head," PPP information secretary Sherry Rehman, who supervised the ritual of bathing the dead body, remarked.

She said that the bullet appeared to have been shot from the left side and pierced out of the skull on the right.

- Pakistan's Interior Ministry, CNN reported, retracted its earlier statement that Bhutto had died because she had dashed her head on a sunroof latch during a gunfire and bomb attack.

The government also made a public announcement of the offer of reward in various national papers to anyone who could identify two suspects of the killing. Interior Ministry spokesman, Javed Iqbal Cheema told CNN that the ministry would wait for the findings from forensic investigators before making public a conclusion about her actual cause of death.

Cheema took refuge in the argument that he had made the statement about the sunroof latch on the basis of initial investigations and reports by the medical doctors who had treated her at Rawalpindi General Hospital.

"I was just narrating the facts, you know, and nothing less nothing more," he stated, justifying his response.

"There's no intention to conceal anything from the people of Pakistan," a news release of his ministry clarified its position.

The reward offer, appearing with photographs of the dead suspects, announced that "the person identifying these terrorists will be awarded a cash prize of five million rupees" (about \$81,400) and his identity will also be kept confidential" -- a total reward available of 10 million."

Punjab spokesman Ashfaq Gondal admitted that the response from the public has been nil by then.

Athar Minallah, a lawyer on the board that manages Rawalpindi General Hospital, told CNN that doctors had not made the statements attributed to them by the authorities.

CNN obtained the medical report from Minallah but it made no mention of the sunroof latch and listed the cause of death as "Open head injury with depressed skull fracture, leading to Cardiopulmonary arrest."

Minallah issued an open letter and released the clinical notes of the doctors in a deliberate attempt to detach them from the government version.

He said that the doctors proposed to the officials to perform an autopsy but that Saud, the Rawalpindi Police chief "did not agree." He pointed out that law vested the police investigators with "exclusive responsibility" in deciding whether to have an autopsy or not.

Minallah informed CNN that he was compelled to speak out because the doctors at the Rawalpindi General felt "threatened."

"They are government servants who cannot speak; I am not," he said, however, he did not elaborate on the threats against them.

He said that the fact, that no autopsy had been conducted, gave rise to a widespread perception that there was some kind of cover-up, though "I might not believe in that theory."

"There is a state within the state, and that state within the state does not want itself to be held accountable," Minallah said.

The three-page medical report, signed by seven doctors, described Bhutto's head wound, however, it did not conclude as to what had caused it. It noted another flaw that the X-ray images had been made after she had been pronounced dead.

It described the wound as an irregular oval of about 5 centimeters by 3 centimeters above her right ear. It noted that sharp bones edges were felt in the wound while no foreign body was felt in the wound.

Minallah alleged that the Rawalpindi's police chief stopped doctors at Rawalpindi General where Bhutto had died from performing an autopsy.

Minallah lambasted the action as a blatant violation of standard procedures of criminal law of Pakistan which resulted in the prevention of a medical

conclusion about what had wrought the death of the internationally renowned political figure.

The spokesman of Interior Ministry affirmed, saying that the government had no objection to Bhutto's body being exhumed for an autopsy had the family requested so.

Zardari, her widower, said that the family did not recommend exhumation because it could not trust the government.

However, Minallah said that family members could not have prevented an autopsy at the hospital without getting a court decree.

The revelations about the actual cause of her death came after a new videotape of her assassination emerged which showed her ducking just after gunfire shot out. It provided the clearest view of the assault and lent support to the view that Bhutto was shot, in stark contradiction to the version publicized by the government.

An earlier footage had shown a man at the right of her vehicle raising a gun, pointing it toward Bhutto who had stood in her car with her upper body through the sunroof. Then there was a rocking explosion as he fired three shots that saw the death of one of the most crucial players in the power politics of Pakistan.

In the video mentioned before, Bhutto was standing, and her hair and scarf swayed, perhaps due to the effect of the gunfire. As Bhutto fell into the car, the blast roared.

The images apparently supported the yet-to-be-ascertained hypothesis that Bhutto faced death at the hands of a sniper before a bomb exploded, which killing another 23 innocent lives.

- In an interview with CNN's Wolf Blitzer, Bhutto's husband demanded an international investigation into the death of his wife, saying that the new video had proved their assertion that the Pakistani government had been trying relentlessly to "muddy the water from the first day."

He conclude, "Everything is now very clear that she was shot,"

Zardari also sought the support of the American government to push for an international probe. "I want them to help me find out who killed my wife, the mother of my children," he called upon the Bush administration, in an emotional tone.

The reward offer proclaimed, "The public is hereby informed that the two individuals in the above photograph are the accused terrorists involved in the Liaquat Bagh, Rawalpindi Terror Attack, which resulted in the death of Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto and others." "The person identifying these terrorists will be awarded a cash prize of 5 million rupees (about \$81,400) and his identity will also be kept confidential," announced Punjab Chief Minister, Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi.

- A New York Times story filed by Eric Schmitt and Salman Masood reported the briefing of officials that detectives of Scotland Yard had concluded that Benazir had died after hitting her head as she was tossed by the force of a suicide blast and not from a sniper's bullet.

The findings lent support to the official explanation of the Pakistani government of Bhutto's untimely death at the age of 54. The account had been met rebuke and disbelief by the late leader's supporters, medical and forensic experts and common Pakistanis.

The announcement was followed by another development as the Pakistani government announced that it had apprehended two more suspects in connection with the assassination plot but avoided giving other details.

Meanwhile, in her hometown, multitude of Bhutto's supporters thronged her mausoleum at the end of a 40-day mourning period.

What is perplexing is how the Scotland Yard investigators reached such conclusion sans autopsy findings or other potentially decisive evidence that was hosed down by cleanup staff in the immediate aftermath of the blast, which witnessed the death of more than 20 other people.

- The Scotland Yard report also determined that a single gunman whose image was captured in numerous images at the scene caused the explosion. The officials spoke on the condition of anonymity as the report has not been released before the public. Originally, Pakistani authorities held there were two assailants, an account based partially on photographs published across the front pages of the leading papers of the country of the deceased dignitary.

The Way of the World

The assassination became further shrouded in mystery as a Ron Suskind's new book revealed that President Pervez Musharraf had warned Bhutto that her life

would be in danger if she did not render him political cooperation prior to her return to Pakistan.

Pulitzer Prize winning U.S. journalist Ron Suskind's book 'The Way of the World' disclosed that the President had issued a disguised threat to the former premier, referring to a conversation between Bhutto and Musharraf in September 2007 that was intercepted by United States intelligence agencies. During the talk, Bhutto insisted on striking down the statutory provision prohibiting a third term for Prime Minister, Musharraf refused, ending the conversation on a threatening note.

"You should understand something," Musharraf said, "Your security is based on the state of our relationship."

Suskind reported that the conversation took place during Bhutto's meeting with U.S. legislator's at Capitol Hill, including former Presidential candidate, John Kerry, and State Department officials.

"The twice-elected provision is important to me," Bhutto insisted. "If you're retreating from that, what can you give me? Maybe some real reform in the election commission?"

Bhutto also queried as to whether some U.S. officials had called the President to make it abundantly clear that the responsibility for her security lies with him.

"Yes, someone has called," Musharraf replied, adding, "The Americans can call all they want with their suggestions about you and me, let them call."

Suskind also wrote that the American intelligence agencies had eavesdropped on Bhutto's phone calls, before her arrival in Pakistan, to "play under-the-table, cut-throat games more effectively".

The PPP had demanded a probe into the matter and proposed that it should form necessary component of the proposed investigation of the United Nation.

The U.S. also tapped the slain leader's conversation with her son, Bilawal, in which she told him about the secret bank accounts holding the family's allegedly ill-gotten wealth.

When Bhutto once suggested freezing foreign accounts of key officials around Musharraf, a U.S. official told her that the agencies were already in full knowledge about her own reserves and could press to 'constrain her assets'.

“This should help the U.S. play its under the table, cut-throat games more effectively. The intercept will be used as part of a wider ‘carrot and stick’ programme in which the U.S. let Bhutto know they were happy to work with her in setting up a marriage with Musharraf, but they could make her life difficult if she started to improvise and freelance,” the book said.

The book also contains details of Bhutto’s meeting with Senator John Kerry, during which she requested for her security, while Kerry responded that the United States was generally reluctant to ensure the safety of anyone who was not a “designated leader”.

The efforts to install Bhutto into the political machinery of Pakistan, the book said, was initiated and led by U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and her State Department.

On the other hand, the famous neo-con Vice President Dick Cheney did not believe in disturbing the prevalent political map in Pakistan.

Concluding the general assessment of the vice president, a senior advisor to Cheney remarked, “Our feeling was that arranging this marriage could only backfire on us. Bhutto is complicated and unpredictable. It’s best to just support Musharraf, give him whatever he wants or needs to stay in power.” the book said.

**BB'S HISTORIC INTERVIEW
BY ACADEMY OF ACHIEVEMENT
(Established in 1961)**

**A museum of Living History
(Washington DC)**

**The Academy of Achievement brings students
face to face with extra ordinary leaders thinkers
and pioneers who have shaped our world.**

Benazir Bhutto

Former Prime Minister of Pakistan

Q : Could you begin by telling us something about your childhood in Karachi?

BB: 1953. It was a very different world then. Very few motor cars and much more poverty. The gap between the rich and the poor was greater, too. I remember people walking barefoot and bare-backed because of the poverty. It was a very privileged life that we led with huge homes and scores of staff with everything looked after. Now the world has changed much more. There's a greater appreciation of each human being, being equal and entitled to the same opportunity, as well as an emphasis on human dignity. In those days there was much less dignity. I remember that the poorer people would greet the richer people by bending down and touching their feet, or prostrating them and throwing themselves on the feet, so it was a totally different kind of world and it has changed for the better in that sense.

Q : As you say, you led a life of privilege amidst great poverty. Were you aware of these disparities? How did this influence you?

BB: My father was always championing the cause of the poor. He was very much against the status quo, so he was always telling us that it is wrong, that there should be people in such abject poverty, unable to feed their children. I'd be sitting there when women would come to my mother and say, "Take my children, we can't feed them."

My father was a lawyer. I remember him coming back and saying that a man came and said, "I don't have any money to pay you for this case." Some other case he'd been involved in. And he said, "Take my cow because I don't have any money," and that was the cow that would give them milk to feed the children. So it was quite shocking to me, and I was sensitive to it because my father was sensitive to it. And he'd take us -- we were landowners, large landowners -- and he would take us to the lands and he would tell me, "Look at the way these people sweat in the heat and in the sun in the fields, and it is because of their sweat that you will have the opportunity to be educated, and you have a debt to these people, because they weren't born to sweat like this. And, "You have a debt and you've got to come back and pay that debt by serving your people."

Q: Your father was an important influence in your life?

BB: A very important influence.

Now when I look back on it, it was my father who was against the gender constraints of my time. And my mother, she used to be a working woman herself, she joined the National Guards. She was a captain in the National Guards. She was the first woman in Karachi to own a car and to drive, and people used to talk about her because they said, you know, "We're not supposed to drive cars." But when I look back on it, it was my mother who taught that a woman grew up to be married and to have children, and she would tell my father in front of me, "Why do you want to educate her? No man will want to marry her." So all the same, for her, success depended on having a good catch as a husband, and having children. Whereas for my father, he broke free of those constraints, and he insisted that I have an education. He said, "Boys and girls are equal. I want my daughter to have the same opportunities."

Q: How do you account for that?

BB: I really don't know, because I never had a chance to ask him. As a child I just assumed this is what fathers did, and when I finished university he was in prison. Then he was unjustly hanged by a military dictator. Now in reflection, I would like to ask him, "What made you do things differently?"

I'd go to other people's homes, and I remember a friend of mine -- they couldn't eat food until the brothers had finished, and the leftovers would be given to the daughters. That never happened in our home. I remember that I used to sit at the head of the table because I was the eldest child. That never happened in other homes, and I should have asked my father when I had the chance, but he enabled me to appreciate that a woman is not a lesser creature.

And also my nuns. I used to go to a convent school, the Convent of Jesus and Mary. And I remember very much Mother Eugene used to teach us literature and poetry, and to reach for the moon, and the lodestar, and inspiring us. It was very inspirational and motivational that one could conquer the moon and the stars if one reached out. It was all about reaching out. I think the two powerful influences in my life in my childhood was my father and my teacher in the Convent of Jesus and Mary, Mother Eugene.

I was fascinated with literature. My father gave me a love for books. He loved reading books and he'd make sure that I bought books and he'd buy me books. And then Mother Eugene made my imagination run wild through Shakespeare -- Twelfth Night and Julius Caesar -- and Keats and Browning and Byron.

Q: What books were most important to you?

BB: It was mostly historical biographies that I would read. I remember starting out with King Alfred of England, and the cakes that he burned when he got lost and was taken in and given refuge. Alexander, the Great, cutting the Gordian knot. Nobody could do it, but he sliced it. His horse who was frightened; he tamed the horse because he understood it was the shadow that frightened the horse. I read mostly about people who were achievers.

My father was himself an achiever and maybe it was a time of achievers. I grew up at a time when colonialism had just ended. The whole inspiration behind colonialism had been to discover the world and achieve more. There was a sense of adventure in going to unmapped places, braving beasts of unknown description, to conquer the world. We were still very much in that phase when words and expressions were more grandiose and the imagination was more grandiose. Now things are much leaner and meaner.

Q: Were you a good student?

BB: I was a good student. My father put a great emphasis on education, and I found that he would always be so pleased when I did well. But it was terrible for my siblings because they were always being compared by the teachers to me and they would revolt against it, because I'd have a neat handwriting. It's awful now, but right then it was neat, and I'd get my work done and finish everything. I was very studious. I was very, very studious. I had a love for learning. The others didn't like to sit down and do their homework, but I loved doing it.

Q: You were the oldest?

BB: I was the eldest, and I had a great sense of responsibility. When my parents would leave the house they'd tell me, "Take care of the other kids." I'd be only three and my youngest sister would be one but I still remember, "Take care of the kids."

I remember once we came to England. I think I was about four, and my younger sister was two. They used to have these gas pipes, and I was always a very curious child and they told me, "Don't touch those pipes." And I went and touched them and opened it up and my parents came back just in time because I nearly poisoned the whole household. So I learned not to be too curious after that.

Q: Were there other influences or inspirations in your early life?

BB: When I was a very young child I remember I was always against violence. It was an era when people used to go shooting and hunting. I remember once coming out on the veranda in our home in the countryside -- and my father was teaching my brother to shoot a parrot and... I remember seeing the parrot fall down dead and bleed, and I remember being appalled by it. And I remember the parrot fluttering and I can't bear to see blood to this day or killing. I'm very much against war and conflict and the taking of life, and I think that seeing that little bird -green and beautiful and living and chirping in the tree, and then falling down dead -- did have a profound effect. It sounds silly to say that I should feel so strongly about a bird, but I remember my father telling me when he was facing the death sentence that "I remember the little girl who cried so much because a bird died, how she must feel." So for me, human life is very, very sacred.

There's another thing I remember.

This man had come to our home. He was a fisherman and he used to fish from the sea nearby and he used to sell us the fish. And he fell very ill, so my mother took him -- he was again shoeless and backless -- and my mother took him inside the house and said, you know, "What do you want, or whatever, to make you feel better?" And I remember he wanted a Coca-Cola. Now everybody drinks Coke, but in those days it was difficult to get a Coke, and that was his wish. And he was very sick and my mother wanted to send him to the doctor, and I remember he didn't want to go to the doctor. He was clinging to the car, and I always felt, after that, that perhaps people need to have their dignity and to die in peace rather than to be taken to strange clinics. So I feel a great empathy now when there is a rediscovering of the way -- of how people should be allowed to pass away. I've had many traumatic deaths in my life, and perhaps that has given me more sensitivity to the need to take leave amongst one's loved ones to

begin the journey to the next world -- because I believe there is a next world - than to let it just end in a clinical room.

Q : Was there a moment of self revelation or self-discovery when you knew what you wanted to do with your life, that you were going to be different just as your father had been different?

BB: It was not sudden. It came gradually. There were two moments, let us say, when it happened.

One of the moments was when my father died and I had my -- before he died, I had my last meeting with him, in the death cell, and he said that, "You have suffered so much." I had been in prison myself, and he said, "You are so young. You just finished your university. You came back. You had your whole life and look at the terror under which we have lived." So he said, "I set you free. Why don't you go and live in London or Paris or Switzerland or Washington, and you are well taken care of, and have some happiness because you have seen too much suffering." I reached out through the prison bars, and I remember grasping his hands and saying, "No, papa, I will continue the struggle that you began for democracy."

So that was one of the points where I decided that I didn't want out. I'd stay, but I still didn't think I'd ever be prime minister.

I thought my mother would be the prime minister, and that I'd work for her to be the prime minister, and that's what I did. But my mother got sick and actually she had lung cancer, but we didn't know she was getting Alzheimer's. So she started behaving differently and we thought it's because she's had this serious illness, and she's reflecting on how to lead her life. And suddenly I found that since mommy was away and the whole party was about to collapse unless I was there, so I started looking after the party at that stage. When I went back, I remember people were shouting, "Prime Minister Benazir!" And suddenly it struck me that "looking after" means -- with mommy ill -- "looking after" means that I will be the prime minister. So it was in that sort of moment when I realized the responsibility that I had taken over could lead me all the way to an office that could govern the destiny of more than 100 million Muslims in Pakistan.

Q : You came to America to go to college. How did the years at Harvard affect you or influence you?

BB: I think the most profound influence in my formative years was the years I spent at Harvard. I went there at a time of great social ferment, at a time when the Vietnam war was being fought. I -- as a nation -- was against the Vietnam

war, but I found that my American fellow students were against that war too. So -- and they didn't want to fight the war. They were protesting it and I found that if you didn't like something you could do something about it. It was also a time when Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King and idealism -- Cesar Chavez and the grape boycott from California, labor rights. So I was very much into saving the world. My generation grew up in saving the world. We thought education wasn't important. Exams weren't important, although I still did it because I was scared my father would get cross, but I discovered that life was more than my homework and my tuitions and my tutorial. Life was about the larger issues where we could all play a role.

The women's movement had just started. Kate Millet had just written her book and I remember all the discussions we'd have about which of us women would succeed. I remember a very dear friend of mine in college years, who I have hardly seen since, Wendy Lesser. She was putting out a literary magazine in California the last I heard. But we'd sit there having these intense conversations about women succeeding. Could they succeed? Could they break the barriers? At that time many women still thought that their objective in life was to go and be married, and not so much to have a career.

It was the time of McGovern running, and President Nixon's resignation. You know, Massachusetts was the only state that voted for McGovern, so it showed how idealistic we were compared to the rest of the world. Recycling newspapers, I'd go around trying to recycle newspapers. I see a bit of that age come back in the sense of the environmental issues which are getting important, but less in issues of sacrificing yourself for the larger community. Now I think it's more an age of the individual comes first. Then it was more an age where we as individuals subordinate ourselves to the larger communal good.

Q: So you took all of this back to Pakistan with you?

BB: Yes. I said, "Why can't we change our presidents?" because I saw Watergate happening and President Nixon being impeached.

I saw the power of democracy. It was really -- I felt powerful. I felt my voice counted. And meantime in Pakistan my father had been trying to empower the ordinary Pakistanis and telling them that they could break free of the shackles of feudalism and a military industrial complex. So when I went back, my own experience put me a bit ahead because I had a broader experience. I had experience in Pakistan and in America, and I had seen it succeed. So I went back really at the right time.

Q : Did you have any doubts about what a woman could accomplish in a Muslim country?

BB: I didn't have any doubts. My father was so important to me, and he thought a woman could succeed. He would tell me that "My daughter is going to make me more proud than Indira Ghandi made her father." So for me it was normal for daughters to succeed. Indira Ghandi was a very powerful leader. Mrs. Bandaranaike in Sri Lanka had been the first woman prime minister. Then of course, we had Fatima Jinna, who was also a presidential candidate -- unsuccessful but a presidential candidate.

I grew up in a region full of powerful women and I thought, "Well if they can do it, I can do it too." But when I used to talk to others they would say, "You're mad. How can a woman succeed?" Not necessarily in politics, but I wanted to be a diplomat. I wanted to have my own newspaper. You know, I wanted to do things, and other people -- men and women -- would find that very surprising, so others doubted it. Even my own husband, when he married me, he thought I was under delusions that I could beat a military dictator, and he thought that, "When she wakes up and finds out that it's all wrong and she can't, then I'll be there to console her." Little knowing that I was the one who had to console him when I won. My father always said, "My daughter will be making me more proud." There would be people saying, "Women are second class citizens, women don't have the same rights as men, and how can you think that people will elect you?"

But I had faith in myself. I had always felt that I could become prime minister if I wanted to, but I didn't want to, because I had seen the assassination attempts on my father. I'd seen the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur in Bangladesh, and maybe there was some kind of subconscious fear of what politics could bring, so I didn't want to do it. I didn't want the fear, the worries.

Q: Was it the execution of your father that changed that?

BB: His (my father's) execution changed that, because I felt I just couldn't let his blood, and the blood of all those others who had died -- because the dictator hanged so many people who were supportive of him. And they were coming on the streets to have him freed, and he'd have them whiplashed or hanged, and I thought they all did so much and he did so much, and how can we let the dictator win and let all this blood go to waste? So it was really at that time a sense of vindicating them rather than having my own agenda. I did believe in democracy but later on I developed an independent agenda of my own.

Q: Not only were you a woman, you were young. You were only 35 when you became the first woman to serve as prime minister of a Muslim country.

BB: It was a victory for women everywhere. I would really realize that when I won and I got so many letters from other Muslim women, and more than that, from women within my own country who felt that it was not decent to work. I don't know why. It's a strange thing to say today, but in those days people thought that it was indecent for a woman to work and "good women" (in inverted commas) didn't work. It was a very strange world of divisions, and it liberated women. They said, "The prime minister is a woman, why can't we work?" I remember being told a story about a lady who wanted to be a pilot, and went for an interview and the chairman, who happened to be from the armed forces, laughed and said, "Come back to me when we have a woman prime minister." Well she did, and she got the job and now there are more woman pilots too.

Q: You've had to deal with family tragedy, you've been in and out of prison, in and out of detention. How have you dealt with these enormous obstacles and challenges in your life?

BB: In life there are challenges, but I think leadership is very much predicated on the capacity to absorb defeat and overcome it. Now, after having been in politics for more than two decades, I have come to the strong conclusion that the difference between somebody who succeeds and somebody who fails is the ability to absorb a setback. Because on the road to success there will be setbacks, and there are those who give up, and those who say that, "No, we are going to go on." So it's that capacity to absorb a failure.

Also, when I was in prison I became very devout. I'm not a fundamentalist but I am very devout, and I believe that God places a burden on one's shoulders that he feels that you can bear. So when the burden grows heavy I turn to God and say, "God, don't let it be so heavy that I cannot put up with it." So I would say that in solitary confinement when I had nobody to talk to. I was brought up ritualistically religious as many people are. Their parents take them to church and teach them how to say their prayers like my mother taught me, but it's all ritualistic.

It was when I was in prison and everyone was cut off from me, my family, my friends, food, even couldn't get a glass of water without having to beg somebody for it who came twice a day with my food, and no ice. I mean, the ordinary things, in the heat of the summer where you can open the fridge and take -- nothing. I had nothing. They cut everything -- took everything away. Material, physical, everything. And suddenly I realized they can take everyone away. I

couldn't read newspapers. They wouldn't give me newspapers or Time magazine. So suddenly I realized that they can't take God away from me. So to pass the time I started passing it in prayer. So from that moment I realized that God is always with one, so what gave me the faith and sustenance was my belief that God places a burden on people to bear and He places only that burden which they can bear.

The second thing was the love of ordinary people. The love was so much that it was enriching. It gave me strength, nurturance. Maybe I'm a needy person, maybe I need love. Sometimes I think, "Why would someone go on doing it?" When I get so much love at the mass level, I feel that I must go on. So I think that those are the two factors that really kept me going because in the worst of my moments I always had vast reservoirs of love.

I remember when I was overthrown in '97 and things were very bad in the press. They were calling us all sorts of names. And the first time -- you know, you're spoiled as prime minister, you have your own planes to go and everything like that, you don't catch passenger planes or go through immigration -- you know, security checks. The first time I caught a plane and was reintroduced to the real world, one of the air hostesses just saw me and she hugged me and she said that, "You know it was during your time that my brother got a job and changed our family's life." Then I remember that when I reached Karachi -- I was going home -- the whole union had gathered, and the whole union received me and they threw rose petals all over me. So suddenly I thought, "I'm not alone." Even if the press, the government, everything was after me.

Q: You ran to improve the position of women, social services, education, health. Your very political ideals were controversial, weren't they?

BB: That was my agenda. First I did it for democracy, because that was my father's agenda and it was also mine as a youth. But my own agenda was very much poverty alleviation and population planning, for instance. We brought down the population growth rate by one-third, and because of the cascading effect it's going to continue going downwards. And there was a lot of hue and cry against the population program, but we did it by recruiting 50,000 women from different villages, and training them in three-month installments. First they would train for three months. They'd go out and work and then every month they'd come back for a refresher to learn something more. So when we had 50,000 women with a vested stake in it, we had ambassadors everywhere to counter people in villages who were opposed to population control.

I remember the iodized salt; the clerics said, "You shouldn't eat iodized salt because it has really got population control in it and you won't be able to have

any children.” So we did take on an agenda that frightened the people who believed in the status quo, and who actually believed in a tribal patriarchal society, because to a great extent there is still an undercurrent of a patriarchal society in Pakistan.

Q : How do you deal with that kind of criticism and resistance? There’s a price you pay for change, how do you deal with that?

BB: There will always be critics. They say in politics there will be the appointed and the disappointed. So there will always be the critics. One has to take it, I learned that right after my first election. I thought all I have to do is win an election and all my critics will disappear and according to Barbara Cartland we’ll live happily ever after. But I realized you wake up later, and your critics are still around and you still have to factor them in.

My experience has made me a more inclusive person, not inclusive to the margins, but inclusive to those people who have differences with us but who are still moderates, so I tried to be more inclusive. It’s not easy because the other side has to respond too. Ultimately there will be critics but one has to do what is right as long as the majority of people support that.

Building schools was right. I tried to placate even the clerics originally. I adopted a very aggressive stance. I thought I had to prove I was as tough as a man because I was in a man’s world. Now I think it’s not a man’s world anymore but in those days it was supposed to be. So I also tried to be very aggressive and warmongering in my second term to try and co-opt my opposition. I am a consensus sort of person, I like to win people over. Not to compromise the core of my values, but I seek the middle way and I tried do that. I think in retrospect it was wrong because I did not co-opt them and I alienated some of my own supporters. But at the same time we got the three years to eliminate polio, to build schools and electrify villages.

Now I feel that if politics was a man’s world in 1997, now it’s a human’s world, and that when people vote for women, they vote because they think women are more nurturing, that they give life, they produce children, and they give life. As the larger issues of communism and capitalism fade away, the focus in my view is turning more and more to the human being, and with more women coming into the work force or into the press, there is a sense that women leaders will be sensitive to the needs of mother and child.

Q : Are there other women leaders in Pakistan today who could be your successor?

BB: When I meet a young woman student now and ask her what do you want to be, she says, "Prime minister." So I'm sure that there are lots and lots of young girls out there who one day can be prime minister. But I think we need to also make it easier for women to win elections in Pakistan, and that's why we have proposed affirmative action: a kind of list system where, on the basis of votes that each party gets, they can then list about 25 percent or 33 percent women to bring more women into parliament.

Certainly there are women activists, but not too many. The base of women who can win elections to parliament is too small, but former Primer Minister Nawaz Sharif's wife has also started politicking, which is really a vindication for us, because they used to be very much against women coming out into the political field.

But of the younger students, the people who were in their first year, second year, third year of university when I was prime minister, those are the women who think that to be successful means to be prime minister of the country. If you ask a man what he wants to be, he'll turn around and say, "A businessman," or "A lawyer," but the girl students that I talked to all wanted to be prime minister.

That generation that grew up in the last decade, used to seeing me as prime minister or as leader of the opposition, has now seen Wajed winning in Bangladesh and Mrs. tiller in Turkey, and other Muslim countries, this has had an impact on the Muslim world. In Oman now they have started having women parliamentarians, and I think they may be permitting them in local elections in Kuwait and some of the other Middle Eastern countries.

When I first got elected, they said, "A woman has usurped a man's place! She should be killed, she should be assassinated, she has committed heresy!" So going from heresy to seeing it happen! Part of it is the information technology because it brings what is happening in the rest of the world to ordinary women in parts of the Muslin world and they say, "Why not us?"

Q : As a woman, as a politician, as a leader, how much room is there for idealism in political leadership and achieving your goals?

BB: For me idealism has been the motivation. I think power for itself is useless. If it was just power, how could one -politics is an obsession. You cannot just be in politics -- or if you really want something -- it is not an eight to five job. It's an around the clock job. So if it was just power I think it would be very empty. I think idealism is very important. The need to change, to bring about change, I feel that life is like -- or society is like -- a canvas, and that if we get office you are given an opportunity to paint it. And it is up to you whether you make a good

picture or whether you make a bad picture. I think it is very, very important to have ideals, because when one has ideals one thinks the suffering is worth it. And for me the suffering has been worth it because I think I could change things, and I am still idealistic and I am still optimistic. And people tell me, "Why are you still idealistic and optimistic?" And I say, "Because there could be ten people who are bad, but there are 90 people who are good."

You do have to be practical, so there are times when you make compromises, not because you want to, but that's how the political mathematics plays out. There have been times when we have been forced into coalitions and we've been unable to do the things we want to do because of other coalition powers. It's a balancing. It's a game of mathematics. How much are you gaining? How much can you do, and how much are you losing? You put those down and you look at it and you say, "Well okay, the gains are so much; if this is the price that has to be paid, let's pay it."

Q : Do you ever stop and think back on how you might have handled things differently in your career, in your life?

BB: Very much so. When I look back on my life, I think of the different stages when we were so raw and naive, before we realized how things work. I think back to the time when my father was in prison. There were hard liners, they rejected compromise. There was a lot of pressure on the military dictator, but we just weren't ready to compromise. I think now I would look at it differently.

I think back to my first tenure as prime minister, and I didn't get on with the president because he wanted to have a kind of presidential system and I believed in the parliamentary system. Then I remember a later president who was from my own party. I think of the amount of power I gave him, and he treated me so shabbily. If I had given the first president half the powers that I gave my own president, maybe he would not have knocked us out, and democracy could have taken stronger root.

I look back also to little things. There used to be a South Asian Association Regional Conference, and I was supposed to go to New Delhi and I didn't go because somebody told me, "Oh, let the president go. He's from the Punjab and if he makes an agreement it will be more acceptable." Now I realize that maybe he was unable to do it because he came from a more militaristic background than I did.

Little things or big things, you look back and you say, "I wish I had done that a different way." Much more critical to my own life was my failure to understand the world is moving towards transparency. I had lived through this era of

military dictatorship when the press would write all sorts of things and it would be water off the duck's back. When there were these demands, I did make an information act, but didn't follow it through, so I wish I had given more freedom of information.

I wish I had tackled the so-called corruption issues more deeply. It was a precedent. We all knew kickbacks must be taken. Not personally but on the level that, "These things happen." It wasn't like, "We are here to change it." It was like, "This is how business is done." In retrospect, I think that I would have done many, many, many things differently.

But you learn from your own experiences. How do you succeed? By making right decisions. But how do you come to the right decisions? Through experience, and how do you get experience? Through wrong decisions. In retrospect, one is older and wiser.

Q: But you simply have to keep going?

BB: You have to keep going and keep in touch with people. Power is such a strange phenomenon that one gets isolated from the real world. People can't see you. They can't phone you. They have to go through the operator, and it's up to the operator who he puts through. They can't write you, because the secretary is going to read the letters and decide which ones are going to come to you. And in countries like mine, where there has been less democracy for so many decades, and people are less literate, or very few have been educated overseas, the ability to decide what is important for the other person is missing, and it's more an ability of who they want to please. This is quite frustrating for me because I have had exposure to the other world and I understand that it has to be done differently.

So really one becomes a prisoner. I used to meet my party people, I used to meet poor people in the villages, and they were all very happy because we were doing poverty alleviation and so on. But people in the urban middle classes were very unhappy, and I realize now that I should have been out more meeting people who worked with us, or meeting people who were the representatives of organized groups.

The other thing I learned, in the past when I used to meet people I used to want to tell them what we were doing. Now I realize that you have to listen to people and what they are saying we ought to be doing, because that's the feedback. I heard the Prime Minister of Ireland say, "Even if you have an idea, let the other person think it's their idea," and he was so right.

Each time one is in trouble or hits rock bottom, it's a time for reflection. I think being able to climb back depends very much on the ability to reflect and see how the world has changed, because it's going to go on changing.

Q : If a young person came to you who wanted to live a life of activism, a political life, what would your advice be to them?

BB: I'd tell them, "If you believe in something, go for it, but know that when you go for it there's a price to be paid. Be ready to pay that price and you can contribute to the welfare of society, and society will acknowledge you and respect you for it. And don't be afraid. Don't be afraid."

Q : You and your husband are facing another personal crisis. What do you see ahead for yourself? What are you looking forward to?

BB: I've left it to the Lord to decide which is the best path for me, while myself seeking high office. I learned in two decades that you can shape the direction of your society by being in power or even being outside power. So for the first time I realize you don't have to be prime minister to dominate the debate, so I thought it's better for me to concentrate on the party and build the party as an institution. Otherwise we never have the time. We've always been hounded, or we're governing. Somebody needs to take time out to organize the party. So I said, "Let somebody else be the prime minister." The party didn't agree to it. They said, "We want you." Now, as the situation is spiraling out of control more and more, people are saying, "But you're the only national figure. You've got a team and you've got the experience and you've got a program, so we need you."

But it's ambiguous, because while people want me, they have reservations. They may be founded well or founded wrong, but they have reservations about the role of my husband. It's very difficult, because when I was in government my husband used to deal with all the traditional politicians, and he was a great help to me. Now I see the crisis is bigger and people expect me to overcome the bigger crisis, and I have that apprehension of "How will I do it if he's not there to be dealing with some of the tribal lords and people who are in parliament?" You can't wish them away. So I have that sort of hesitation.

The second thing is on a more personal level. Of the 12 years I've been married, my husband has been behind bars for seven, so I say, "How is it life?" Again we are in politics, and the children won't have the mother or the father, and my son is now 12. In the next five years he'll be 17 and go off to college and then get a job and get married and have his own home. So I have these ambiguous feelings, "Is it right or not?" But I've always had a strong sense of duty, so I feel that I ought to go and put myself over as a candidate. My party has endorsed me for prime

minister, but whether that happens or not, I leave it to the Lord to say whatever is best for me and best for my country.

Q : Or your son could become prime minister. How would you feel about his going into politics?

BB: If my children go into politics? Again very ambiguous, because I don't want them to go through what I went through. As a mother I want to protect them from the tragedies that I have seen in my life, but they are growing up in a political home. They see politicians all the time. So for them being in politics is natural and they play games about who is going to be prime minister. I tell them, "Wait a minute. First you've got to get a job and you've got to get a profession. You can't even think about politics without having a law degree or a medicine degree or engineering, some degree." So I temper their enthusiasm. The world is changing, and I think that in the new global century you can have a career without being in government. Through NGOs and community service there's a great deal that can be done.

Q : What do you see as the biggest challenges ahead? I mean, not just for you or for Pakistan but in the world as we start our way through the 21st Century?

BB: Ethnic and religious violence. I think that as nation states begin to become weaker because of the force of globalization, there will be a greater reversion to ethnicity and to religious violence. I fear that the international community lacks a mechanism for conflict prevention or being in a position to end the conflict. Everyone is looking towards America, and the American people have their own problems. They can be there if there's a strategic concern, but they can't be there everywhere. So there is a lack of growth of regional institutions that could deal with regional violence and leave the global problems or the strategic problems to the more global powers. I fear the 21st Century could witness a period of contradiction where there is the greatest era of peace -- the super power rivalry having gone -- but there is a lot of localized violence.

Q : Still looking ahead into the 21st Century, what are your hopes for us all? What are your hopes for Pakistan and the world?

BB: My hope is really for a world of peace that provides people opportunities to prosper. Each individual is given life once to lead, and each individual deserves a chance to succeed, especially if they are prepared to work hard. People need peace and they need opportunity, in Pakistan and everywhere else. That's the world I'd like to see.

Q: We hope to see you again someday, perhaps to congratulate you on a Nobel Peace Prize for resolving the conflict in Kashmir. That would be nice.

BB: That would be very nice. I would certainly work towards it if life and fate and my people gave me that opportunity.

Well, thank you for giving us this opportunity. We've enjoyed talking to you. Thank you very much.

(Courtesy : The Academy of Achievement)

IMPRESSIONS

Farewell to Wadi Bua

Fatima Bhutto

My aunt and I had a complicated relationship. That is the truth, the sad truth. The last 15 years were not one we spent as friends or as relatives, that is also the truth. But this week, I too want to remember her differently. I want to remember her differently because I must. I can't lose faith in this country, my home. I can't believe that it was for nothing, that violence in its purest form is so cruel and so unforgiving. I can't accept that this is what we have come to. So, I must offer a farewell. One that is written in tears and anger but one that comes from a place far away, from the realm of memory and forgiving – a place where at another time, we might have all been safe. As a child, I used to call my aunt Wadi Bua, Sindhi for father's older sister.

When I got the news, I was told that something had happened to Wadi Bua. It was an expression I hadn't heard or used in a very long time, when I heard it said to me over the phone I remembered someone different.

We used to read children's books together. We used to like exactly the same sweets – sugared chestnuts and candied apples. We used to get the same ear infections, ear infections that tortured us and plagued us throughout the years.

I have never before written an article that seemed so impossible. We were very different even though people liked to compare us, almost instinctively, because well, they could. It is difficult for me to write about two people, one in the present tense and one in the past, at the same time.

Especially when one person's passing makes the other one wonder whether there is a cusp to things and whether or not there really is a past and present to life.

I never agreed with her politics. I never did. I never agreed with those she kept around her, the political opportunists. They repulse me.

I never agreed with her version of events. Never. But in death, in death perhaps there is a moment to call for calm. To say, enough. We have had enough. We cannot, and we will not, take anymore madness.

I mourn because my family has had enough. I mourn for Bilawal, Bakhtawar, and Asifa. I mourn for them because I too lost a parent. I know what it feels like to be lost and left at sea, unanchored and afraid.

I mourn for the workers of the party, those who have been bereaved of their own loved ones in this tragedy.

When congregants gather in a church, temple, or mosque they offer prayers for those that reside beyond. The congregants sing to the heavens and they offer the divine their hymns of sadness and hope. There are no hymns consisting of frustration or anger – this too shall pass, they say, remember that. What hymns do we sing now?

In those hymns, there is hope encapsulated in the sadness. There is a lingering sense that after darkness a dawn will rise. What then do we have to be hopeful for? And how do we proceed to wake the dawn?

I have always been honest with you, I promised that to you at the beginning. Honestly, I am at a loss. I am compounded in a state of shock.

I am in shock because I have yet to bury a loved one who has died from natural causes. Four. That's the number of family members, immediate family members, whom we have laid to rest, all victims of senseless, senseless killing.

I was born five years after my grandfather, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's assassination. I was born into the void of his absence and for my father, Murtaza, I was given a new chance at life. I grew up hearing my grandfather's speeches, watching him on old black and white video cassettes, enamoured at his every word. My father was a young man when his father was killed and it was something he carried with him every second, every minute for the rest of his life.

I was three when my uncle Shahnawaz was murdered. I remember Wadi Bua sitting with me and telling me stories while the rest of the family was with the police.

When I was 14, my life was ended. I lost my heart and soul, my father Murtaza. I am and have been since then a shell of the person I was. I suppose there are cusps in life, and thank God for that because that way we can stay in between.

And now at 25, Wadi. But this isn't about me; it's about those whom we have lost. It's about the graveyard at Garhi Khuda Bux that is just too full.

I pray that this is the last, that from this moment onwards we will no longer have to bid farewell too quickly... Wadi, farewell.

December 29, 2007

Why I Cried at last

Shaheen Sehbai

It is male chauvinism or bloated egos, but men don't cry, at least in public. But when my friend Masood Haider of Dawn, who had just arrived from New York, called me from Lahore after the news of Benazir's sudden death had broken, both of us just held the cell phones without saying a word and cried, sobbing aloud, tears flowing. I was in the office and told him to calm down and I got back to work, as the job had to be done first. Tears could wait.

What we both were recalling were the numerous sessions we had together with Benazir Bhutto, whenever she was visiting New York or Washington during the last many years of her exile. These were exclusive sessions and what we talked about was everything probably no one else would ever dare to raise with her, friend or critic. Like once she asked how she could correct the perception created about her that she was corrupt and prompt was Masood's reply: Divorce Asif Ali Zardari. She took it without a whiff of protest but then asked us to accompany her to the JFK Airport as she was leaving and wanted to talk more. We did and she argued all the way why Masood was wrong.

She knew about all the long critical articles and stories that I had written during her first and the second tenures in government and would argue with force that the data and equipment that I quoted was leaked, distorted and misrepresented by the establishment, reaching my hands through agents whom probably I did not know but trusted as good news sources.

But she also knew that whenever she was out of power, it was the same media, the same writers and journalists who stood by the persecuted and fought their case. In 1991 when Asif Ali Zardari was in Jam Sadiq Ali's dreaded jail, shortly after Benazir had been removed as Prime Minister, she recalled that journalists from Islamabad were the first to go and meet him, in jail, despite Jam's fierce resistance. I was part of those six journalists, others including Nusrat Javeed, late Azhar Sohail and Shakeel Sheikh, and had been invited by Jam Sadiq to tour Sindh at his expense but write what we saw. That we did and almost every article shredded the late tyrant's claims of peace and tranquillity in Sindh. That jail visit was where we all began a long lasting friendship with Asif Zardari.

She remembered and discussed those days with praise and gratitude.

Benazir thus was not an arrogant person as many portray her to be. She was inexperienced and a little naive in her early years of power but with trials and tribulations of horrendous magnitude she matured into a polished politician, a diplomat par excellence and a pragmatic leader. Her years of exile taught her more about politics and how to handle people than her years in power. She developed a direct rapport with anyone and everyone and used the internet to the maximum. Her E-mail politics, as her critics used to joke, did wonders for her. She was in direct touch with all and she got feedback instantly, helping her make quick and right decisions. That style of politics kept her ahead of her opponents and kept the cadres engaged, giving them a feeling of intimacy and a feeling of access to the top leadership.

My first hand experience of that E-mail politics was when she was planning to visit Jeddah to condole with Mian Nawaz Sharif as his father the late Abbaji had expired in exile. Asif Ali Zardari had also made it to Dubai and they were planning to meet Nawaz for the first time outside their country. Since I was on her E-mail grid and frequently exchanged notes, I asked her what she was expecting to achieve at the Jeddah meeting with Mian Nawaz Sharif as it should be a major political event and not just a condolence meeting. In reply she asked what I thought should come out of Jeddah.

I gave her my view as an objective observer. The meeting must produce some document which gives hope to the people that the two major political parties of Pakistan are now ready to sit together and discuss their past, present and future relations, I suggested. On her insistence I sent her a one-page brief of what they should discuss and announce publicly. I called it the Charter of Democracy. It should, I suggested, candidly admit the past mistakes committed by both the sides and lay down the course of political action making solemn pledges and commitments that never again would the two parties undermine each other to favour any third non-political institution.

Benazir was so excited she responded instantly saying I have just got this paper and I am flying after a few hours and I will take this paper to Mian Sahib. What we saw then was an announcement about the Charter as both Mian Nawaz Sharif and Benazir made it into a cornerstone for their future politics, a watershed of sorts. They set up a committee which gave real shape to the basic idea which remained the reference point of both the leaders, despite their variances in approach, for dealing with the military regime.

That was Benazir Bhutto, the mature politician who would listen to others and share with them her confidence and trust, the grown up Benazir, so to say.

One remarkable aspect of her life in exile was that never ever, even in the wild wild world of the paparazzi, the media men and camera guys chasing world celebrities, any personal scandal about her was discovered, though she travelled almost continuously between world capitals. She was always conscious of her image back home, wearing the proper head dress when appearing before the cameras and always showing respect for other religions and sects.

She was not always happy with Masood and myself as we would sometimes say things she would not like. In July this year when she was hobnobbing with General Pervez Musharraf some friends met in Washington and reached a consensus that her secret backdoor channels with the military would damage her politically. Somehow I took that on myself to inform her in detail that this was a mistake. Editor Najam Sethi was also part of that discussion and he immediately dissociated with the consensus view. The diplomat Benazir just did not respond to the communication and we did not bother.

When her meetings with Musharraf started yielding results, positive for her but criticized by almost the entire civil society, a feeling started developing that probably she had a point in showing pragmatism as she did not have enough guns and commandos to fight her way to power and win against an entire army.

But probably she miscalculated either the commitment of the other side in her secret talks or the resistance within the institution to her teaming up with General Musharraf. She achieved a lot but she misread the open and hidden opposition, wherever it was. They were out to get her and General Musharraf either did not bother, did not know or did not care. She paid the price for her pragmatism.

We lost a great leader, a popular politician and also a person with whom an intelligent, candid and frank discussion could be held, without fear of any repercussions. No one is left in the political spectrum to match her level of sophistication, international exposure, popular support and still open to receive and act on good advice.

We lost a friend and when I returned home at 3 am after a hard day's work, this shocking reality sunk in that the friend was being air lifted in a casket and her grave was ready to receive her. Benazir in a grave, the thought suddenly jolted me, brought waves of tears and I shed them all in silence, and alone.

December 29, 2007

Waiting for the UN

Aitzaz Ahsan

Addressing a press conference after the Nato Foreign Ministers' Conference in Brussels on March 5, the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said: "We must recognize that one tiny, remote corner of the world – the borders of Pakistan – is the nerve centre for extremists who planned 9/11, the bombings in Madrid and London, the assassination of Benazir Bhutto and the recent carnage in Mumbai". (The NEWS, March 06). She may be right about all the others, but the shahadat of Benazir Bhutto seems to fall in a category by itself.

There certainly are some significantly peculiar features of the assassination of Shaheed Bibi that stand out at once. It cannot, therefore, be equated with the other equally morbid crimes. Mrs. Clinton needs to be informed of these telltale aspects, which distinguish the assaults on Shaheed Bibi's life. One most jarring feature is that the crime scene was washed within an hour of the assassination. Who could have decreed such a washout, and why? Surely do not the terrorists themselves. It must be some one in the state and administration.

That the design of washing the crime scene is evident from the fact that this was not the first such deliberate destruction of material evidence. On October 18, 2007 in Karachi there were two blasts around her truck in the procession that had received Bibi. She narrowly escaped but as many as 180 men were martyred. It was a gory scene. But, as she herself wrote in her book: 'Reconciliation' (p 14) she was shocked later to learn that "Instead of the site being cordoned off to protect evidence, it was scrubbed clean within hours and the evidence was destroyed. No one from the police or the government was collecting testimony from the victims of the attack. A cover-up seemed to be under way from the very first moments of the attack."

The terrorists referred to by Mrs. Clinton could, of course, have done the deed. But who was capable of covering up for the killers? This willful destruction of evidence was repeated on December 27, 2007 at Liaquat Bagh. The first questions thus are about who and why? Who ordered the washout of all the evidence twice over at two distinct crime scenes and why?

It would not be very difficult to discover the person responsible. Now that the doctor in-charge of the Emergency 1122 has identified, in Geo's Capital Talk, the police officer who directed the washout, it is easy to climb up the ladder. Who ordered him, and under whose initial orders? And so on all the way up to wherever the buck stops. QED.

Destruction of evidence is itself a very serious crime. When a murder takes place even in the remotest village in this country, the crime scene is preserved for days until it has been thoroughly examined, measured and mapped. Footprints are carefully preserved for days in cases of theft and housebreak.

Then the second question: why were the crime scenes washed after such horrendous crimes? If you keep in mind the significance of the telltale cell-phone chip in the investigations into the attempts on General Musharraf, it is perhaps easy to discern why.

After the twin but aborted suicide attempts on General Musharraf on December 24, 2003, just beyond Chaklala Bridge in Rawalpindi, the crime scene was sealed for several days. Not a fly was allowed inside the cordoned area. Nothing was touched or moved except by experts. The area was minutely fine-combed. Finally one telling piece of evidence was found: a cell phone chip. The miniscule find was crucial. It led to the identification of the perpetrators of the crime who were arrested, tried by a military court and sentenced. That one chip did it all. The investigation concluded within 2 to 3 weeks. (Refer 'In the Line of Fire' by Pervez Musharraf, p 249).

In stunning contrast, and within an hour of the assassination of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto to the shock of all the viewers glued to their television sets, fire fighters were washing the site with powerful hoses like they did not do to put out the fire in Ghakhar Plaza with people inside. In the not so distant Liaquat Bagh they were certainly making sure that no telltale phone chip was recovered.

Another question is: how were 21 dead bodies buried without a single autopsy? That is not possible even in the most ordinary murder case. There has to be a postmortem report. That is because the dead body is the surest piece of evidence. Who pressured the doctors to hand over as many as 21 dead bodies without autopsies? Again, interrogate the senior police officials present and get to the bottom of the mystery.

The case of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto was, of course, different. Too much attention is focused on a lack of autopsy on her dead body. Regarding her there was a charged and emotional atmosphere at the RGH. Let her rest in peace. There is no way that any further probe should be allowed with respect to her. But what about the others, particularly those about whom there is evidence that the deaths were not due to the bomb blast? These could have been exhumed.

In February 2008 a private TV channel, and now several more detailed analyses by Geo's Hamid Mir, Geo's Dr Shahid Masud and the anchorpersons of many other TV channels, have blown the lid of the 'death by bomb blast' theory.

Injured eyewitnesses have testified that the dead bodies bore evidence of multiple firearm injuries on vital parts such as foreheads of several of the dead. They also pointed out the spots from which the shots had been fired. Multiple bullet wounds in a bomb blast on several dead bodies would indicate a ring of sharpshooters positioned at strategic vantage points. Officials grilled by Dr Shahid Masood have cut sorry figures. The media has done more than the investigators to track the telltale footprints.

Evidence of the multiple fires hitting different people would lend some credence to the theory that the bomb was meant only to incapacitate the bombproof vehicle necessitating the inmates to transfer to another vehicle. She, and others around her, would then be shot by the sharpshooters. That she came out of the escape hatch herself, according to this belief, was fortuitous for the assailants.

A private TV channel more recent investigative report has carried another stunning piece of evidence. Its footage of the tragedy conclusively shows that an injured Bibi had already fallen down into the open hatch before the bomb blast. There is thus no question of her having died of blast shrapnel or of a consequential impact with any lever or car part. The projectile that killed her was thus none other than a bullet fired at her.

But could it be a bullet fired at by the man shown in some video footage aiming a pistol at her? Unlikely. He stood behind her well towards her left. The medical report certifies that she was hit on the right side of her head. Obviously there were other well-positioned hit men around.

Multiple bullet injuries establish the presence of other pre-positioned marksmen. The question then is: was the presence of these other 'hit men' the possible reason why the police forced her to abandon her exit route? This was also stated in the Dawn and Geo TV reports by PPP officials.

Was the change of the route by the police pilot car to marshal the prey towards the trap? Is that also why there was no other security vehicle around her car at the time of her Shahadat? And where was the bomb-proof back-up vehicle if one had been provided? And who was in it? Dr Shahid's programme brought out the contradictions in important statements. Were these recorded earlier by any one? The investigators should have found out about gunmen and vehicles through a thorough probe of the phone records and interrogation based on that record as suggested below.

Almost as fast as the place was washed out, the then government came up with an outlandish theory. It claimed that she had died hitting a lever in the escape hatch of the vehicle due to the impact of the bomb blast. That theory died with

the footage showing that she was down in the vehicle before the blast. The PPP co-chairman, and now president, also categorically debunked this over-hurried explanation within a couple of days of the tragedy. He categorically stated that his sister, a doctor, had seen the body and did not believe the government's version. Why was that government so desperate to deflect the possibility of firearm injuries and to bury the evidence in such a rush?

Evidence of well-positioned sharpshooters may also have been collected through other means. They must have used cell phones. Now, if all persons who made calls via towers of cell phone companies linking the site at Liaquat Bagh with their mainframe been questioned the circle could have been narrowed. Suppose 5,000 calls were made during the hour before the assassination and the half hour thereafter through these towers. Each caller could be identified from company records. Each person, without exception, should then have been grilled narrowing the inquiry down to 20 to 30 suspect calls.

But have the 10,000 persons, each caller and recipient, been questioned? Not to anyone's knowledge. The evidence of recall and memory may have been irretrievably lost or degraded by now. Besides the tell-tale chips lost to the drains of Rawalpindi, this would be the best evidence. Is it lost too?

Statements of witnesses under Section 161 CrPC must be recorded as soon after the event as possible. Otherwise they lose their evidentiary value. Superior courts have held that a delay of even two to three days may be fatal to the credibility of the witness. What will be the value of these statements if recorded now after one year of the incident? This amounts to deliberate degradation of evidence.

Even the Scotland Yard findings are untenable. How could it come to any conclusion whatsoever without autopsy reports and statements of the cell phone callers, or without cogent evidence of who had decreed the washing of the crime scene?

Then there is the curious case of Khalid Shahenshah. He was not only in Shaheed Bhutto's car, but was also assassinated some weeks after her. He has been shown in some tapes as making intriguing signals with his hands and eyes while standing close to her as she addressed the Liaquat Bagh rally. Who murdered him, and why? Did he know too much? Why were his movements not monitored after Liaquat Bagh? Or were they? If so, by whom

There are other questions such as: what linkages have been established between the Karsaz and Liaquat Bagh incidents? Both happened in General Musharraf's watch. In both cases, the crime scene was washed away within hours of the

incident. In both, she was the target. Who could serially have ordered the immediate and blatant destruction of evidence and remain immune from scrutiny?

What about the conversation and other circumstantial evidence that can be derived from Ron Suskind's book: "The Way of the World"? It cannot be disregarded altogether. It is serious stuff. It could be the key. Has any effort been made to contact him and record his statement?

People are also wondering why has no FIR been lodged by the aggrieved party after her Shahadat? I-lad the police approached any one in this behalf? If not, why?

Then there were the letters and complaints by Ralunan Malik himself. The president had recently pointed out that Malik had written 25 letters to the Interior Ministry complaining of lax security arrangements.

He complained that nothing was done in response to any of those letters. According to caretaker interior minister General Hamid Nawaz, Malik had been appointed the contact man and coordinator for Mohtarma's security by the caretaker regime. Then why did the officials not comply with his requests? And why have they not been taken to task after fortunes changed almost a year ago?

Investigation is only about collecting evidence. The final conclusion is drawn by the court after a trial. But the trial becomes meaningless if the evidence is destroyed or lost by efflux of time. The UN cannot help in the collection of any evidence. That will have, per force, to be done locally even if the UN team were here. Delay in securing it has already caused many footprints to be wiped out, many a bloodstained hand to be washed of stain.

President Zardari has always maintained that he will not go for some foot-soldier or subaltern. He wants the top conspirator(s). This must have been the foremost concern with him. He must surely have been advised by his highly competent legal advisers, the law minister and the attorney general included, that inaction will degrade or destroy vital evidence. That surely could not have been intended. Have those, who investigate, endeavored to assist him in his pursuit or has his task been made more difficult? But of course if he himself knows better that is another matter.

The blood of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto demands that the killers be found. Her president, her prime minister and her ministers are in office. Her party is in power. If the president knows who the killers are, as he has claimed, he should expose them. It is not a matter of revenge. Democracy may be a revenge of sorts,

from the autocratic usurper of power. It is no revenge against killers and assassins. This is a matter of the law and the pursuit of truth, not of revenge.

Let us not wait for the UN and allow even the remaining evidence also to degrade and disappear. Let not the UN become an alibi.

Monday, March 9, 2009

The Sadden and Shocked World

Gordon Brown

(Prime Minister of the UK)

The world was shocked and saddened as the news emerged that Benazir Bhutto, along with dozens of her supporters, had lost her life. Given Britain's deep ties with Pakistan, that sense of loss and outrage was keenly felt here. All across the country, Muslims and non-Muslims alike offered their thoughts and prayers for the families of those who died, and to the people of Pakistan who saw their hopes for a brighter future dealt another blow.

Benazir Bhutto was dedicated to her country, which she served twice as Prime Minister, and a woman of immense courage and bravery. From bitter personal experience, she knew well that to return to Pakistan was to risk her life, yet she chose to take that risk in order to fight for democracy in Pakistan. The criminals and cowards who plotted her death knew that for millions of people in Pakistan and all around the world, she was a symbol of the modern Islamic democracy Pakistan aspires to be.

The terrorists also know that the vibrant democracy she championed is the single biggest obstacle for them as they attempt to spread their message of hate and destruction.

Democratic societies are strong because they are based on the common values that bind people together. By guaranteeing freedom and human rights for their citizens, they deny extremists the oxygen of disenfranchisement and alienation that they rely on to poison people's minds. By being empowered by a popular mandate, freely expressed, democratic governments have the strength to stand up to extremists with the clear backing of their citizens, and expose them for the tiny, desperate bands they are. So free, open, democratic societies represent everything the terrorists despise.

That popular mandate is, of course, conferred through elections, which must be free and fair if the government that emerges is to have legitimacy. Pakistan's

leaders are considering the best way to keep the democratic process on track. It is vital that people remain calm during that time, and express their grief and anger in a peaceful way. And it is equally important that the country's political leaders are not deflected from their pursuit of democracy, and that the forthcoming elections can be free, fair and secure. This is an opportunity for Pakistan's politicians to come together, and to work as one to defeat terrorism through a genuinely free, fair and inclusive democratic process.

As we reflect on Benazir Bhutto's achievement as the first elected female leader of a Muslim nation, we must also recognize that a society that allows women's voices to be heard is more likely to be a society of tolerance and compassion where violence has no place. It should also be a part of her legacy that women are empowered to play their full part in Pakistan's democracy: Pakistan's society will be the stronger for it.

Benazir Bhutto may have been killed by terrorists, but the terrorists must not be allowed to kill democracy in Pakistan. Pakistan is a resilient country, its people committed to a democratic, tolerant vision of society. This atrocity will strengthen our resolve that terrorists will not win in Pakistan, in the UK, or anywhere else in the world.

A strong, representative democracy in Pakistan will defeat terrorism and extremism, show the path to a more stable, prosperous future, and stand as a lasting memorial to the life's work of Benazir Bhutto. We owe it to her memory to strive together to achieve that goal.

December 29, 2007

COMMENTS

Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhary **Chief Justice of Pakistan**

The then deposed chief justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, while condoling the sad demise of Pakistan People's Party Chairperson Benazir Bhutto, has said the vacuum created by such tragic incident could never be filled.

The deposed chief justice in his message through his close aide Athar Minallah, said: "The cruel and cowardly murder of Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto and several other innocent citizens has come as a shock to the entire nation, including myself. This is a calculated attack on the forces who ever hoped for true democracy." "This is a wound, which will probably never heal. My sympathies are with Mr Asif Ali Zardari and the children of Mohtarma. My sympathies are with the families of all the innocent lives lost and the nation which stands united in this moment of grief."

He prayed that may the souls of Mohtarma and all the other innocent Pakistanis who lost their lives in the terrible tragedy, rest in peace and may Allah give the families the strength and courage to overcome this shock. May Allah have mercy on this besieged nation, he further prayed.

Athar Minallah told the media that the chief justice was very upset over the loss of a popular political leader. "I am in no position to go for condolence with the aggrieved family," Athar quoted Justice Iftikhar, adding: "I am equally disturbed and grieved as the whole nation is." Athar said all the lawlessness was because of no rule of law in the country and all such dreadful events were directly linked to the future of the country.

"When there is no accountability then there is anarchy," Athar said. The people of Pakistan paid a very high price for the awareness they achieved for the supremacy of the Constitution, he added.

"Losing personalities like Benazir Bhutto and sacking of brave and independent judges is a very high price," the lawyer said, adding: "Nations develop in the same manner but only if their direction is right." He said he was confident that the nation was heading towards a civilised society where there would be the supremacy of the Constitution and no assassination of political leaders.

Ghulam Mustafa Khar

Former Governor and Chief Minister of the Punjab

Ghulam Mustafa Khar, Chief Minister of Punjab in Zulfikar Ali Bhutto era, released a press release anticipating that the attack in Karachi was just a rehearsal and the real attack would be made in Punjab. Majority of the people believed that she has been killed by the intelligence agencies in a joint venture.

“If we look to the politicians killed in Pakistan belonging to small provinces, Abdul Samad Khan Achakzai, Liaqat Ali Khan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Mir Shanawaz Bhutto, Mir Murtaza Bhutto, Nawab Akbar Bugti, Balach Mari, Asad Mengal and Benzair Bhutto and Arbab Sikander Khan Khalil, all belong to the provinces other than Punjab. It raises a big question mark about the activities of the intelligence agencies. People of Pakistan are not kids that they do not understand the game play.”

Utter, utter horror

Ayesha Haroon

(Renowned Journalist)

Our politics has changed today. Benazir symbolized democratic hope, colour, and energy for the people of Pakistan. Whoever killed Benazir has wreaked such utter horror on our polity that perhaps even they cannot fathom its consequences. What have they achieved by killing her? Unable to tolerate her politics and its response amongst people, they have tried to erase a legacy of anti-establishment politics, demoralize all progressive elements in the country, weaken the federation, frighten any meaningful opposition in the country and bring terror into the heart of every citizen of Pakistan.

The impact of her assassination is going to be immense on the national psyche and it will be apparent in the weeks to come. The government of the day has to bear responsibility for a state of insecurity that has led to today's brutal deaths. To say that suicide attacks cannot be stopped is not an acceptable excuse any more.

We are living in an era in which the state and the anti-state elements have raised the ante to a level where killing and assassinating those espousing views different from them is now normal. Unfortunately the impact of their action comes back to haunt the ordinary citizen and her political leaders.

Killing, however, has never solved anything. Benazir was only 26 when Bhutto was hanged by Zia but it did not end the party and more importantly, it did not end the aspirations and the demands of the people that his party represented.

Benazir herself, despite her class interests, could not ignore those demands, could not disregard what essentially her party stood for. She will not be there now and one cannot comment on how quick the party leadership organizes itself but those short-sighted people who killed her forgot that she represents the aspirations of a huge chunk of Pakistani voters. The demands of the voters will stay, will continue, and cannot be assassinated by any suicide bomber.

There is a pall of grey over the country today in a 'security state' that has failed to bring any security to its people. Living under an insecure establishment, the citizens of Pakistan have been trying to create an uneasy peace for themselves. Every spate of killing, whether by non-state actors or otherwise, has made them question the poor equilibrium of the society. This continuing violence was a factor in prompting the comfortable civil society's response to the judicial crisis.

Pakistanis no longer accept a version of truth that does not correspond to their reality. And the reality is that today political parties cannot take part in electoral process without harm. How could this have been the third phase of General Musharraf's transition to democracy? How can this be democracy in which a twice-prime minister of the country is killed during a peaceful electoral campaign in a garrison town?

December, 28, 2007

The World Shared Moments of Grief

World leaders lauded her bravery and commitment to democratic reform.

She was clear headed about the problems of her country, the challenges that she faced, even the security challenges she faced". UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said he was "shocked and outraged" by her assassination.

"This represents an assault on stability in Pakistan and its democratic processes," Ban said. "I strongly condemn this heinous crime and call for the perpetrators to be brought to justice as soon as possible."

The council stressed that all nations "need to combat by all means" such terrorist acts, while still following UN rules and international law. "The Security Council underlines the need to bring perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of this reprehensible act of terrorism to justice," the council said in a statement that also urged nations "to cooperate actively with the Pakistani authorities in this regard".

The then US President George W Bush demanded that those responsible for the killing be brought to justice. "The United States strongly condemns this cowardly

act by murderous extremists who are trying to undermine Pakistan's democracy," he said. "Those who committed this crime must be brought to justice."

The president was speaking to reporters at a hangar adjacent to his Crawford ranch in central Texas. Bush expressed his deepest condolences to Benazir's family and to the families of others slain in the attack and to all the people of Pakistan.

"We stand with the people of Pakistan in their struggle against the forces of terror and extremism. We urge them to honour Benazir Bhutto's memory by continuing with the democratic process for which she so bravely gave her life," he said.

Bush looked tense in delivering a statement that lasted about a minute and he took no questions. The White House said suicide bombing was a familiar tactic for al-Qaeda but declined to cast blame for the assassination of Benazir Bhutto.

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said 'Benazir is irreplaceable' and noted she had striven to improve relations between the two nuclear-armed countries. It was deeply shocked and horrified to hear of the heinous assassination, Singh said. In her death, the subcontinent has lost an outstanding leader who worked for democracy and reconciliation in her country.

The UN Security Council vigorously denounced the killing of Pakistani opposition leader Benazir Bhutto, describing her death on Thursday as a serious blow to stability in the region and demanding justice for "this reprehensible act". The council's members emerged downcast and stern-faced from a two-hour emergency session, most of it conducted behind closed doors, to issue a unanimously approved statement saying the council "condemns in the strongest terms" Bhutto's assassination at a campaign rally.

"Terrorism in all its forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security," said the council, which urged "all Pakistanis to exercise restraint and maintain stability in the country".

Italian Premier Romano Prodi said, he was filled with grief and called Benazir a woman who chose to fight her battle until the end with a single weapon – the one of dialogue and political debate. The difficult path toward peace and democracy in that region must not be stopped, and Benazir's sacrifice will serve as the strongest example for those who do not surrender to terrorism.

Italy's UN Ambassador Marcello Spatafora, said it sought "to flag what are unacceptable acts" that threaten to destabilize the region. "There are no words for condemning this kind of act."

"Pakistan is in a state of shock," said Farukh Amil, a deputy permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN. "Pakistan itself remains a victim of terrorism. These terrorists are targeting all forces of modernism. However, the government of Pakistan remains absolutely committed to fighting terrorism in all its forms and manifestations."

Her death was viewed not only as a serious threat to nuclear-armed Pakistan's democratic process, but also more broadly to stability in the region. "The world has much at stake in the success of Pakistan's democratic institutions," said US Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, who described Bhutto, the first woman to be elected leader of an Islamic country, as a close personal friend and "courageous figure".

"It's a great tragedy because she stood for moderation, for rule of law, for democracy in her country, and her death is a loss for the cause of moderation, democracy, and rule of law for Pakistan," Khalilzad told reporters.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice telephoned Makhdoom Amin Fahim to express US support for Pakistan's upcoming elections, a spokesman said.

Rice also called Benazir's widower, Asif Ali Zardari, to express her condolences, US State Department Spokesman Tom Casey said. "In the last hour or so, she's had the opportunity to call Mr. Zardari, former prime minister (Benazir) Bhutto's husband, as well as Amin Fahim, who is her successor now as the head of the Pakistan People's Party," Casey said.

"Those calls were to express her sympathy and condolences in light of this attack," he said. "But we very much believe that the best way, as the president said, to honour former prime minister (Benazir) Bhutto's memory is for the democratic process in that country to continue."

Casey said: "To have some kind of postponement or a delay directly related to it in the democratic process ... would be a victory for no one but the extremists responsible for this attack." Rice said in a statement: "Ms Bhutto's passing is a great loss for Pakistan. I knew her as a woman of great courage and had been impressed by her dedication and commitment to democracy and to the future of Pakistan itself. "She also urged "the Pakistani people, political leaders, and civil society to maintain calm and to work together to build a more moderate, peaceful, and democratic future."

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice paid tribute to late Benazir Bhutto as she visited the Pakistan embassy here to record her condolences on the passing away of the leader.

"I wanted to express personally and also on behalf of the American people our deep sympathies with the Bhutto family, with the supporters of Benazir Bhutto and, of course, the people of Pakistan," she told newsmen after recording her impressions in the visitors' condolence book. Rice said: "This is a day of great tragedy, a day of mourning."

"She was a champion of democracy, a courageous woman. In my conversations with her, her commitment and dedication came through very clearly," she added. Rice wrote that Benazir's legacy was commitment to democracy and love for the country.

Pope Benedict XVI condemned the assassination of Pakistani opposition leader Benazir Bhutto as a "brutal terrorist attack" and prayed that further violence would be avoided following her death.

"The Holy Father expresses sentiments of deep sympathy and spiritual closeness to the members of her family and to the entire Pakistani nation," the Vatican's No 2, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, said in a telegram of condolence sent to the head of Pakistan's Catholic bishops' conference.

Benazir Bhutto, a former prime minister, was assassinated Thursday in Rawalpindi while campaigning for upcoming elections. Clashes raged across Pakistan as she was buried Friday.

The pope "prays that further violence will be avoided and that every effort will be made to build a climate of respect and trust, which are so necessary if good order is to be maintained in society and if the country's political institutions are to operate effectively," the telegram said.

Hillary Clinton called for an independent, international probe into Benazir Bhutto's murder, as turmoil wracking US ally Pakistan reshaped debate in the White House race.

The Democratic front-runner of the 2008 presidential candidates vied to brandish leadership credentials and zeroed in on twin themes of terrorism and national security, just six days before first party nominating contests.

She called for a “full, independent, international” investigation in an interview with CNN, before trudging out for another day on the campaign trail in ice-bound Iowa.

“I think it’s critically important that we get answers and really those are due first and foremost to the people of Pakistan,” Clinton said.

The former first lady suggested the probe could be along the lines of the international investigation that followed the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in 2005.

“I don’t think the Pakistani government at this time under President (Pervez) Musharraf has any credibility at all. They have disbanded an independent judiciary, they oppressed a free press.”

Veteran Republican Senator John McCain, seizing a chance to project a resolute image in his come-from-behind campaign, earlier called for extreme care in US dealings with Pakistan.

“We want to do everything we can, but it has to be practical and it has to be achievable, and it has to be not opening another front in a war that we are overstressed with today,” McCain said on Fox News.

The former Vietnam war hero called for looming Pakistani elections to go forward, though said it would be tough for the opposition to coalesce around any candidate other than Bhutto.

“I’ve been involved in every national security issue for the last 20 years. And it’s the veteran who is the one that wants to get in wars the least.

One of McCain’s top Republican rivals, Mitt Romney, former Massachusetts governor raised doubts over whether Musharraf could keep a lid on political unrest after the ex-prime minister’s murder.

“I’m not concerned about the quality of his character, but I am concerned about the quality of his judgment in a setting like this,” he said.

“There’s a lot at stake here, and I think we’ve got to handle it with great care,” Romney said, and dismissed suggestions foreign policy fears could bolster rivals with more experience on the international stage.

An unanswered question was how events in Pakistan would play out on the ice-bound campaign trail in Iowa, which holds caucuses, and New Hampshire, which has a primary election on Jan 8.

Voters up to now appear chiefly concerned with hot domestic issues like immigration, a mortgage crunch and healthcare, while concerns like the war in Iraq appeared to decline in recent weeks.

Former United Nations ambassador Bill Richardson, a Democratic candidate, called for a halt to US aid to Pakistan until Musharraf left office and full democracy was restored.

Richardson said the assassination bolstered evidence that the US war on terror was failing, and demanded a halt to US aid to Pakistan, a key anti-terror ally.

“President Bush should immediately suspend non-terrorism related military aid to Pakistan until President Musharraf resigns,” Richardson said.

Republican Mike Huckabee, the former Arkansas governor, dismissed suggestions his lack of experience on national security meant he would be unable to handle crises like that sparked by Bhutto’s murder.

“I don’t think it’s appropriate to respond in a political way,” Huckabee told reporters, warning candidates should not play “political games” over the grave situation in Pakistan.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai condoled the tragic death of PPP Chairperson Benazir Bhutto and extended sympathy to the Pakistani nation and her family. The Afghan president made a telephone call to PPP central leader Amin Fahim and expressed deep shock and sorrow over the tragic assassination of Benazir Bhutto. He said the entire Afghan nation was equally grieved over the tragic murder of the PPP chairperson and prayed for the departed soul. He talked about his last meeting with Benazir Bhutto and paid rich tribute to her services, which she rendered for the her country and nation.

The Afghanistan’s President, who met Benazir earlier before her assassination in Islamabad, said he was deeply pained by the assassination of this brave sister of ours, a brave daughter of the Muslim world.

“She sacrificed her life, for the sake of Pakistan and for the sake of this region,” French President Nicolas Sarkozy, said in a letter. He called the attack an odious act and said terrorism and violence have no place in the democratic debate and the combat of ideas and programme.

Sarkozy said Bhutto had paid with her life for her commitment to the service of her fellow citizens and to Pakistan's political life and urged Pakistan's elections. Prime Minister of United Kingdom, Gordon Brown said she risked everything in her attempt to win democracy in Pakistan and she has been assassinated by cowards who are afraid of democracy. The terrorists must not be allowed to kill democracy in Pakistan, and this atrocity strengthens our resolve that the terrorists will not win there, here, or anywhere in the world.

EU Foreign Policy chief Javier Solana said the attack its clearly aimed at destabilizing the country. He beseeched Pakistanis to refrain from violence.

Chilean President Michelle Bachelet, during a speech south of Santiago, paid sincere tribute to a woman who fought her entire life for a better Pakistan.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said the cowardly terrorist attack ... also targets the stability and democratic process of Pakistan.

Russian President Vladimir Putin's envoy on international cooperation against terrorism, expressed fears the assassination would trigger violent repercussions. Sweden's Foreign Minister Carl Bildt said he had felt disgust when receiving the news of Benazir's murder, which he called bestial. I feel a strong worry for the consequences this will have for Pakistan.

Israeli President Shimon Peres said Benazir feared nothing and served her country with valour.

China expressed shock at the assassination and said it "strongly condemns" the attack, state media reported.

Foreign ministry spokesman Qin Gang said "China is shocked at the killing of Pakistan's opposition leader Benazir Bhutto and strongly condemns the terrorist attack." Xinhua news agency said.

"We also extend condolences to the families of Bhutto and other victims," Qin said.

The Arab League condemned the assassination as a "heinous terrorist crime," the official MENA news agency reported. Arnr Mussa, secretary general of the 22-member pan-Arab body, condemned the killing and "offered heartfelt condolences to the Pakistani people over the tragic development."

Secretary General of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Prof Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu condemned in strongest terms the outrageous and brutal murder.

Ihsanoglu, in a press statement issued from Jeddah, presented his heartfelt condolences to the family members of Benazir and other victims and to the people of Pakistan.

The secretary general characterised this blatant crime as an attack at the stability and peace in Pakistan and on open provocation aimed at derailing the efforts of unity, reconciliation and democratic process.

Government of Iran condemned the assassination and urged the authorities to track down the "terrorists" responsible for the killing. "The criminal action in Rawalpindi is strongly condemned," said foreign ministry spokesman Mohammad Ali Hosseini.

"The Pakistan government should use all efforts to identify the terrorist group which caused this incident and punish them to prevent terrorist groups from finding opportunities to undertake such actions again." Hosseini added.

Japan strongly condemned the assassination, calling the attack "absolutely unacceptable."

"Japan condemns the attack," Japans Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura said. "It is absolutely unacceptable to try to solve something by the means of violence "I strongly hope that Pakistan will pave the way toward democratization by holding fair elections," he said.

Former President Pervez Musharraf also condemned the tragic molder of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in Rawalpindi and expressed the resolve to combat extremists and terrorists till their elimination.

In a message to the bereaved family, he termed the killing of chairperson Pakistan Peoples Party Benazir Bhutto "a great tragedy" and announced three-day national mourning.

"Today Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto was killed in an attack by a cruel, barbaric terrorist in Liaquat Bagh Rawalpindi ... *Innalillah-e-wa inna alehe rajaeoon*," the president said in a message telecast on PTV. "This is a great tragedy which I cannot describe in words ... I am deeply saddened and I condemn it very strongly," he said.

The president said: "On this occasion, I condole with the entire family of Ms Bhutto; including Begum Nusrat Bhutto, Asif Zardari and Sanam Bhutto and particularly her children." "My prayers, my sentiments, and my sympathies are with the children of Mohtarma Bhutto; Bilawal, Bakhtawar and Asifa." He said his sympathies are also with all those innocent countrymen and their families who fell victim to this heinous crime.

He prayed to Almighty Allah to rest the departed souls in eternal peace and grant courage to the bereaved families to bear this tragic loss. The president said the national flag will fly at half mast for three day as a mark of respect for Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto and to mourn this great tragedy. He said the act was carried out by those very terrorists, with whom the government was already fighting.

"Pakistan and the nation face the greatest threat from these terrorists. I, on this tragic incident, want to express my resolve, and also seek solidarity from the nation, their cooperation, also to stand by me, that we will not rest with peace, until we eliminate these terrorists, and root them out." "Because it is vital for the survival of our nation and for its development as these are a major impediment in our progress."

Musharraf, on this occasion appealed to the nation to remain calm and exhibit tolerance and patience. "May Allah help and support us and our nation," the then president said.

WORLD MEDIA PAYS IT'S RESPECTS EDITORIALS

The Australian

(29 December, 2007)

World Plunged Deeper into Crisis

Benazir Bhutto was the best hope of returning democracy and stability to Pakistan. Now she's gone.

The gloomy predictability of Benazir Bhutto's assassination cannot detract from the diabolical crisis into which it has plunged Pakistan and the free world's struggle against Islamic fundamentalism. Ms Bhutto's death potentially holds the seeds of international catastrophe, allowing radical forces to move one step closer to gaining control of the world's most unstable nuclear-armed state. In her final months, Ms Bhutto foresaw the murderous attacks against her and warned that, left unchecked, Taliban forces would be marching on the Pakistan capital, Islamabad, within two years.

Despite her chequered history as two-time prime minister of Pakistan, Ms Bhutto undoubtedly represented the country's best prospect of a smooth return to democratic rule following President Pervez Musharraf's declaration of emergency rule in November. She was also the West's best hope to help close off Pakistan's border region with Afghanistan for use as a safe haven by Islamic militants engaged in a war against the West.

Whoever is found to be responsible for Ms Bhutto's death, it represents a significant boost for the extremists, including Osama bin Laden and al-Qa'ida. The shooting-and-bombing murder of Ms Bhutto has already unleashed explosive forces of protest, aimed initially at Mr. Musharraf, Ms Bhutto's main political opponent, who has responded by putting the country on red alert. Planning for national elections, scheduled to be held on January 8, has been thrown into disarray.

Ms Bhutto's assassination may initially strengthen Mr. Musharraf's claim that the alternative to his authoritarian rule is extremist-led chaos. But Ms Bhutto's death is also confirmation of Mr. Musharraf's failure on many fronts. Despite the known dangers, he failed to provide adequate security for the political contest that was supposed to restore democracy. Rather than contain the extremists, Mr.

Musharraf has run roughshod over Pakistan's democratic institutions for little apparent dividend. Distracted by power, the Pakistani military is split and less potent.

The fact is, Ms Bhutto's murder was the latest in a series of suicide attacks that mirror al-Qa'ida's insurgent campaign that crippled Iraq. Radical forces linked to al-Qa'ida and the Taliban now occupy large areas of Pakistan, including the former tourist destination and skiing resort Swat Valley, north of Islamabad. This year, there was a bloody showdown in the capital to root out Islamic militants from a two-month occupation of the Red Mosque compound, which they had used as a base from which to impose Islamic law.

The spiralling escalation of violence underscores the extraordinary bravery shown by Ms Bhutto in returning voluntarily to re-enter Pakistan's political fray. As a woman and symbol of modernisation and democracy, Ms Bhutto has long been a prime target for the radicals. She was the target of a bomb attack in October, immediately following her return to Pakistan after brokering a deal with Mr Musharraf that decades-old corruption charges against her be dropped. As the daughter of the nation's first democratic prime minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Ms Bhutto held a status akin to dynastic royalty. Educated at Harvard and Oxford, her passion for politics and desire to bolster democracy in Pakistan was forged in the state execution of her father by General Zia ul-Haq's military dictatorship in 1979. In 1988, at 35 years of age, Ms Bhutto became the first woman elected prime minister of any modern Muslim nation. Hostility from clerics and others towards her progressive agenda prevented Ms Bhutto from firmly taking the reins of government, allowing the country to slide into economic crisis. Within two years, Ms Bhutto's first government was controversially dismissed by the military-backed president and an election called, in which her party, the Pakistan People's Party, was defeated. In 1993, Ms Bhutto was re-elected but again dismissed three years later on the grounds of mismanagement and corruption. Ms Bhutto later claimed radical Islamic elements were behind both dismissals. She said Osama bin Laden had contributed \$10 million to the Pakistan intelligence service, the ISI, to help it overthrow her first government. The Pakistani Army's decision to terminate her second government followed Ms Bhutto's pledge to crack down on terrorism.

Pakistan's current crisis began in March, when Mr Musharraf sought to dismiss the country's Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, whom his government accused of abusing the perks of his office. The move sparked pro-democracy protests, with lawyers and others taking to the streets against Mr Musharraf. At the same time, despite resistance among Pakistan's growing middle class, extremism began reaching into big cities. Today, Pakistan remains split between those who want civil liberties and others seeking to establish a strict Islamic state.

Mr Musharraf has been embraced by the West as an ally in the war on terror. But there are growing suspicions that he is either unable or unwilling to deliver on promises to clamp down on the emergent radical forces. One view is that continued secular violence provides Mr. Musharraf with the justification to bolster his authoritarian rule. But Mr. Musharraf overplayed his hand in November when he declared emergency rule, suspending the constitution and forcing the resignation of judges, jailing opponents and taking popular television broadcasters off the air.

For the West, Ms Bhutto was considered to be the logical vehicle around which to rebuild democracy and to provide greater co-operation for international efforts to root out terrorists in the Afghanistan border region. Ms Bhutto's assassination has removed the clear path forward for those who oppose the rise of radical Islam in the region and increased the alarming prospect of al-Qa'ida one day getting its hands on Pakistan's nuclear arsenal. As such, is it difficult to overstate the size of the victory her death represents for alQa'ida and the loss it poses for moderate Pakistanis. The violent immediate reaction throughout Pakistan to Ms Bhutto's murder is testament to the size of the loss and the challenge it presents to Mr Musharraf. Ms Bhutto's death has weakened Mr Musharraf's legitimacy at a time when it desperately needed to be bolstered. The natural response will be to attempt to further consolidate power under the guise of the need for emergency powers. But the big challenge remains to put Pakistan back on the road to democracy. To abandon the promise of free elections now would serve only to amplify the unwelcome success that the extremists have achieved.

The Washington Post

(December 29, 2007)

The Pakistan Test

The Assassination of Benazir Bhutto presented U.S. presidential candidates with a test: Could they respond cogently and clearly to a sudden foreign policy crisis? Within hours some revealing results were in. One candidate, Democrat John Edwards, passed with flying colors. Another, Republican Mike Huckabee, flunked abysmally. Democrat Hillary Clinton and Republican John McCain were serious and substantive; Republicans Mitt Romney and Rudy Giuliani were thin. And Barack Obama -- the Democratic candidate who claims to represent a new, more elevated brand of politics -- committed an ugly foul.

Let's start with Mr. Edwards, who managed not only to get Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf on the phone Thursday but also to deliver a strong message. The candidate said he had encouraged Mr. Musharraf "to continue on the path to democratization [and] to allow international investigators to come in and

determine what happened, what the facts were." Those are words the Pakistani president needs to hear from as many Americans as possible. He has yet to confirm that the Jan. 8 parliamentary elections will go forward and risks a destabilizing backlash against his own government unless he delivers a full and credible account of the authors and circumstances of Ms. Bhutto's killing.

Ms. Clinton and Mr. McCain also endorsed Pakistan's continued democratization. Each cited an acquaintance with Ms. Bhutto or Mr. Musharraf and opportunistically trumpeted their foreign policy experience -- but both also offered some cogent analysis. Ms. Clinton rightly cited "the failure of the Musharraf regime either to deal with terrorism or to build democracy," adding that "it's time that the United States sided with civil society in Pakistan."

At the other extreme was Mr. Huckabee, whose first statement seemed merely uninformed: He appeared not to know that Mr. Musharraf had ended "martial law" two weeks ago. That was better than the candidate's next effort, when he said an appropriate U.S. response would include "very clear monitoring of our borders . . . to make sure if there's any unusual activity of Pakistanis coming into our country." The cynicism of this attempt to connect Pakistan's crisis with anti-immigrant sentiment was compounded by its astonishing senselessness.

By comparison, the Giuliani and Romney statements were anodyne -- they deployed slogans about fighting terrorism or "*jihadism*" while avoiding serious comment about Pakistan. Mr. Obama similarly began by offering bland condolences to Pakistanis and noting that "I've been saying for some time that we've got a very big problem there."

Then Mr. Obama committed his foul -- a far-fetched attempt to connect the killing of Ms. Bhutto with Ms. Clinton's vote on the war in Iraq. After the candidate made the debatable assertion that the Iraq invasion strengthened al-Qaeda in Pakistan, his spokesman, David Axelrod, said Ms. Clinton "was a strong supporter of the war in Iraq, which we would submit was one of the reasons why we were diverted from Afghanistan, Pakistan and al-Qaeda, who may have been players in the event today."

When questioned later about his spokesman's remarks, Mr. Obama stiffly defended them -- while still failing to offer any substantive response to the ongoing crisis. Is this Mr. Obama's way of rejecting "the same Washington game" he lambasted earlier in the day? If so, his game doesn't look very new, or attractive.

London Times

(December 29, 2007)

Musharraf's Moment

Pakistan remains on a knife edge despite President Musharraf's nationwide appeal for calm. The burial yesterday of Benazir Bhutto brought thousands of chanting supporters to the family mausoleum where she was interred beside her father. Many were berating their head of state, shouting "General killer, Army killer" and vowing revenge on the President and the Army, whom they accuse of complicity in her assassination. Across the country, mobs clashed with police and set fire to cars, shops, banks and any symbols of state authority. In Karachi the shops were shuttered and police patrolled the streets after more than 2,000 people attacked a police station and set it on fire. In Sindh, the home province of the Bhutto family, protesters threatened "revolution" against the Punjab dominated military Establishment.

Now, more than at any time since he seized power, President Musharraf's leadership is being tested. The killing of Ms Bhutto was as much an attempt to overthrow his authority as it was to wreck the return to democratic politics. All the evidence points to al-Qaeda extremists as the perpetrators: as in Iraq, their aim is to use suicide bombings and assassinations to make the country ungovernable and then impose their own authority. They knew that the likely victory of Ms Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party in the January elections would, as the West hoped, have consolidated the informal alliance with Mr. Musharraf. That, in turn, would have increased the pressure on the Islamists and entrenched the pro-Western and anti-Taleban policies in Islamabad.

Nevertheless, it is not only PPP supporters who are voicing suspicions that disaffected elements in the Army or in Pakistan's nebulous intelligence service may have been involved in the plot. They, too, had much to lose from a Bhutto victory, fearing that their privileges and influence would have been affected. Amid inflammatory conspiracy theories, the suggestion that the security protection for Ms Bhutto was culpably slack or that sympathizers in the military may have helped the bomber's infiltration is believed widely, adding to the public anger directly at President Musharraf.

He now must show the leadership that his country so desperately needs. He must demonstrate the decisiveness and political impartiality that have been so lacking in recent months, to regain the respect and confidence not only of his own disillusioned countrymen but also of the outside world. For Mr. Musharraf remains the only leader able to take tough decisions and the only politician who has shown any readiness to confront the extremists and separatists who threaten to pull Pakistan apart. He still has the backing of America and Britain, though his

antics have strained their patience. It is time to repay that trust. That means, first of all, deciding what to do about the elections. Tempted though he may be to reimpose martial law or postpone the vote, he must base any decision on proper consultation. The PPP may still be eager to go ahead, hoping to cash in on Ms Bhutto's martyr image. But it may still need another month to select a new leader. If there is to be a postponement, a new date, in the near future, must be set.

Mr. Musharraf must also move swiftly to avert civil war. That means the deployment of troops and police to halt rioting, proper and impartial protection of all political leaders and meetings, and a much more vigorous response to the threats by al-Qaeda and religious extremists. There has long been a suspicion that, in his maneuverings to remain in office, he has reached out too far to extremists. He has made deals to withdraw the Army from the tribal lands, gone soft on the pursuit of al-Qaeda and delayed the confrontation over the Red Mosque. All that must end: a commitment to restore democracy must equally mean a commitment to crush the enemies of democracy.

Mr. Musharraf has long argued that, like his hero Kemal Ataturk, he must remain in power to save his country from extremism and disintegration. Pakistan stands on the brink of both. This is truly his Ataturk moment.

Guardian

(27 December 2007)

Death in Rawalpindi

The assassination of Benazir Bhutto was an event as terrible as it was bleakly predictable. She was a brave and charismatic democrat for all her barely hidden flaws, and her death will be perilous not just for Pakistan but for the world. If anyone could have unified her country after decades of military misrule, it was her. No other Pakistani leader can hope to fill her place. Hopes that political chaos would end with elections on January 8 were dim before Ms Bhutto's death. They have all but been extinguished now.

There are two certainties in the immediate aftermath of the suicide bombing that took her life and those of many others at an election rally yesterday. The first is that her decision to return to Pakistan last October after eight years of exile was an act of great personal bravery. It was controversial at the time, because of the amnesty on corruption charges that she had obtained from Pervez Musharraf. This was both selective and legally dubious. But the furore over the amnesty obscured the physical risks she was taking by returning to the land where old enemies were lying in wait. She spoke often of the dangers of assassination. She said she put her life in danger by returning home because she felt her country was in danger. It was a good piece of election rhetoric, but it was also true.

Her father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had been executed by General Zia-ul-Haq. Her two brothers Shahnawaz and Mir Murtaza both died in mysterious circumstances. Islamic militants had vowed to kill her, because of her close ties to Washington and the attention she had paid to the *madrasas* when she was in power. Twice prime minister, and a woman of substantial personal wealth, Ms Bhutto could have opted for a life of luxury and security in exile in London or Bahrain. It is to her credit that she chose not to remain on the cushioned sidelines of exile.

Within hours of her return, Ms Bhutto narrowly escaped injury when a suicide bomber struck her convoy in Karachi, killing 136 people and injuring more than 450. She blamed four of Mr. Musharraf's close associates for allowing the attack in Karachi to take place, although she was careful not to point the finger at the president himself. Which brings us to the second certainty: there is no reason to believe that the suicide attack took place without the involvement of elements within Pakistan's security forces.

Ms Bhutto was not campaigning in Quetta or Swat, or other parts of the lawless tribal areas where militants roam. She was in Rawalpindi, a garrison town in the heart of the territory controlled by the Pakistan army. The threat her return represented to Islamic militants was as nothing to the one that it posed to dark elements within the military establishment who had waged a 30-year war against her family. Had Ms Bhutto succeeded in her ambition to drag Pakistan from military dictatorship to civilian rule she would have posed an intolerable threat to the security and personal wealth of some of Pakistan's most corrupt generals. What better way to dispose of her and turn off the light of publicity that she would have shone on their dark and lucrative affairs, than to direct the suicide bombers her way? One eventually would get through, and yesterday he did.

Within hours, President Musharraf addressed the nation, expressing his resolve to not rest until he had uprooted terrorism. This is by now a familiar speech. He made it when he first seized power as chief of the army eight years ago. He had made it when he launched a mini-coup by declaring a state of emergency on November 3. And he made it again last night. Each time he claims that the chaos in society justifies emergency powers, he fails to deliver that stability.

As the news of her assassination triggered angry demonstrations around the country, the claims of a conspiracy also spread their tentacles around the embattled president and his entourage. Ms Bhutto's supporters in the Pakistan People's party will not be bound by the tactical reticence their leader showed when she was alive. Mr. Musharraf, on the other hand, will do anything to stay in power. He needs the elections scheduled for January 8 to manufacture his

legitimacy as a civilian president. But he knows that no election can take place in these circumstances. The most likely outcome is that he will have to postpone them, but all options are bad ones for him. The assassination also deals a blow to Washington's plans to use Ms Bhutto as cover for the military president turned civilian leader. The nearer Ms Bhutto got to assuming real power as prime minister (and success in the elections would have demanded it), the greater the threat she would have posed to Mr. Musharraf. Now even that fig leaf has disappeared and there is no one, least of all the former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, prepared to take her place. Washington is back to square one: how to shore up an ally who is desperately unpopular in his own land.

Ms Bhutto's legacy is mixed. She promised more than she could deliver. Her two terms as Pakistan's first woman prime minister failed to cement civilian rule, although she rightly claimed some success in modernizing the *madrastas* and advancing the cause of women in her country. She left her country with a hefty foreign debt and would be pursued along with her husband around the world for the next eight years on corruption charges. To the end, her resistance to Mr. Musharraf's attacks on civil society was equivocal. Her demands for the release from house arrest of Pakistan's former chief justice Iftikhar Chaudry were tempered by the knowledge that if the supreme court were restored to its pre-emergency rule state, the amnesty she had obtained from Mr Musharraf would be up for judicial review.

She boxed and weaved to stay in the running. But for all this, Ms Bhutto was the nearest thing to a real leader that Pakistan had got. Recalling a visit to her father before his execution in 1979, she said that she told him in his death cell that she would carry on his work. Yesterday she paid with her life for that promise, a life that ended, like her father's, in Rawalpindi.

The New York Times

(December 28, 2007)

After Benazir Bhutto

Benazir Bhutto was a flawed and undeniably courageous leader. Her return to Pakistan two months ago raised hopes that her country might find its way toward democracy and stability. Her assassination on Thursday is yet one more horrifying reminder of how far Pakistan is from both — and how close it is to the brink.

Ms. Bhutto's death leaves the Bush administration with no visible strategy for extricating Pakistan from its crisis or rooting out Al Qaeda and the Taliban, which have made the country their most important rear base.

Betting America's security (and Pakistan's nuclear arsenal) on an unaccountable dictator, President Pervez Musharraf, did not work. Betting it on a back-room alliance between that dictator and Ms. Bhutto, who had hoped to win a third try as prime minister next month, is no longer possible.

That leaves Mr. Bush with the principled, if unfamiliar, option of using American prestige and resources to fortify Pakistan's badly battered democratic institutions. There is no time to waste.

With next month's parliamentary elections already scrambled, Washington must now call for new rules to assure a truly democratic vote.

That means a relatively brief delay to allow Ms. Bhutto's party, probably the country's largest, to choose a new candidate for prime minister and mount an abbreviated campaign. Washington must also demand that Pakistan's other main opposition leader, Nawaz Sharif, be allowed to run. And it must insist that Mr. Musharraf reinstate the impartial Supreme Court judges he fired last month in order to block them from overturning his rigged election.

Mr. Musharraf is stubborn. Washington will need to send the same message to Pakistan's military leaders, perhaps the ex-general's only remaining backers.

Ms. Bhutto and her father and political mentor, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, were democratic, but imperfect political leaders - imperious, indifferent to human rights and, in her case, tainted by serious charges of corruption. The father was deposed by a military coup and then hanged. The daughter was twice elected and twice deposed. But both had one undeniable asset: electoral legitimacy – legitimacy that the generals and the Islamic extremists could only seek to destroy or, in Mr. Musharraf's case, hope to borrow.

The Bush administration has to rethink more than just its unhealthy and destructive enabling of Mr. Musharraf. It also must take a hard look at the billions it is funneling to Pakistan's military. That money is supposed to finance the fight against Al Qaeda and the Taliban. As a report in The Times on Monday showed, Washington hasn't kept a close watch, and much of it has gone to projects that interested Mr. Musharraf and the Pakistani Army more, like building weapons systems aimed at America's ally, India. Meanwhile, Al Qaeda and the Taliban continued, and continue, to make alarming gains.

The United States cannot afford to have Pakistan unravel any further. The lesson of the last six years is that authoritarian leaders – even ones backed with billions in American aid – don't make reliable allies, and they can't guarantee security.

American policy must now be directed at building a strong democracy in Pakistan that has the respect and the support of its own citizens and the will and the means to fight Al Qaeda and the Taliban. Pakistan is a nation of 165 million people. The days of Washington mortgaging its interests there to one or two individuals must finally come to an end.

The Canberra Times

(December 29, 2007)

Pakistan's Bitter Political Harvest

There are many who will mourn the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, but none more so than the majority of Pakistanis who though they yearn for peace, justice and prosperity have had to settle for decades of corruption, mismanagement and political paralysis served up by the country's military and political elites.

Bhutto was very much part of Pakistan's political elite and disliked, even hated, by some Pakistanis for her pro-Western views, but at the time of her death she and her Pakistan People's Party enjoyed considerable support for their efforts to restore democracy to the country that has endured eight years of divisive military rule under President Pervez Musharraf.

Whether Bhutto could have managed the country's transition to stable democracy as prime minister under Musharraf, let alone meet even some of the aspirations of its grassroots supporters, is questionable, but there is no doubt that she was a symbol of hope to millions of Pakistanis.

What is beyond doubt was her courage not only for returning to an increasingly lawless and divided Pakistan in October after several years in exile, but for remaining there after an attempt was made on her life the day she arrived. Bhutto is now the fourth member of her immediate family to die a violent death, such are the political chasms that divide Pakistan. Perhaps because her family name was closely associated with martyrdom [her father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was hanged by the military after being ousted in a coup in 1979], Bhutto considered it her destiny to again lead the country, despite the allegations of fraud, corruption and familial strife that marked her first two terms as prime minister.

She was the politician most likely to deliver Pakistan from years of unpopular and increasingly repressive military rule, but she erred in concluding a deal with Musharraf that would allow her to come home to Pakistan and contest parliamentary elections in return for agreeing to allow him to remain as president. Though the deal was good for her and the PPP, it was fundamentally undemocratic in that it allowed Musharraf to sideline Nawaz Sharif, the leader of

the other large opposition party, the Pakistan Muslim League, and Bhutto's only real rival in the general election scheduled for next month.

Why Bhutto agreed to this deal, brokered by the Bush Administration in an attempt to force Musharraf into making further democratic concessions, when she knew it would be anathema to the country's increasingly assertive extremists and fanatics, is not clear. But it was a big mistake. Most likely she thought a cooperative Musharraf would provide adequate protection, but as Thursday's events have shown, a determined suicide bomber will test even the tightest security.

The violent removal of Bhutto from the political scene offers the military the opportunity to delay, possibly for years, any transfer of power to a civilian administration firstly by postponing next month's election. But whether Musharraf remains as head of state is open to question. If the army is blamed for the Bhutto's death and there is a popular backlash against military rule, then Musharraf could be made the fall guy, clearing the way for a new generalissimo. While the military is as faction-ridden as any of Pakistan's institutions, an ambitious officer may well see an opportunity in the current climate of crisis to reassert strong central authority.

Also likely to be conflicted is the White House: does it persevere with its efforts to oversee a transition to democracy, in this case by pressing Musharraf to make an accommodation with someone like Sharif, or does it acquiesce in a continuation of military rule? The prospects of Sharif cooperating with Musharraf look slim, however.

Sharif was deposed and tried for treason by Musharraf, and has said consistently that he will not serve under him as prime minister although Bhutto's death might prompt a change of heart. But a political accommodation of any kind with the unpopular Musharraf carries considerable risk.

A better scenario, certainly for the long-suffering people of Pakistan, would be the emergence of a credible successor to Bhutto from within the PPP one able to harness popular and international pressure to demand an unequivocal return to civilian rule. Alas, because the country's largest party has been run more or less as a Bhutto family enterprise for four decades, there are no obvious alternative leaders.

Bhutto's death is undoubtedly a blow for the restoration of democracy in Pakistan, but not necessarily a final one. While it has underscored the spread and danger of extremism in the country, it is also likely to steel the resolve of those determined to restore civilian rule. And while Musharraf may well exploit the

opportunity to extend his tenuous grip on power, he must now recognize the price of failing to heed the popular will for change.

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San Francisco Chronicles

(December 28, 2007)

Bhutto's Legacy

Benazir Bhutto - two-time prime minister of Pakistan, firebrand for the causes of moderation and democracy, two-time defendant against corruption charges, self-proclaimed "daughter of destiny" for the Pakistani people - is dead. And with her may also go the world's hopes for stability in Pakistan.

Bhutto was not an ideal leader. During her two tenures as the Muslim world's first female prime minister, she lied to the world about the nature of Pakistan's nuclear program. She led, for the most part, like a strongman - doling out carrots and sticks instead of attending to the difficult business of infrastructure and economy building. And clearly, she associated with the wrong people. The vast corruption alleged against her husband, Asif Ali Zardari, was devastating, and it cost her her position - twice. But there was a reason why so many Pakistanis yearned for her return. There was a reason why she was a leading contender to be prime minister again - and why many Western powers looked upon her decision to return to Pakistan and stand for elections with a small sense of hope. Bhutto was extraordinarily courageous, and the causes that she served, however poorly - a secular government, an end to terrorism - remain in dire need of courageous voices. She was truly Pakistan's best hope in a time of overwhelming instability.

Now she is gone, and all eyes are on Pakistan's unpopular president, Pervez Musharraf. Will he declare "emergency rule" again? Will he postpone elections? Will he be a target of assassination? (Possibly - he has already survived multiple attempts, though he is far more cautious about making public appearances than Bhutto was.)

Bhutto's supporters have already turned on Musharraf, claiming that his government is responsible for her death. However, Musharraf had nothing to gain from her assassination and much to lose. More likely, his culpability is his failure to fight terrorism the way he promised to, and has clearly lost control over the country's many insidious and unstable factions.

Instead of making war against Musharraf, Bhutto's supporters must attempt to work with him against their country's real enemy: the extremists who wish to remake Pakistan in their own image. Bhutto recognized these forces as the real

enemy, which is why she was committed to working with Musharraf, despite all of her misgivings about him.

“You’ve got to take (extremists) on,” Bhutto said in August, shortly before she returned to Pakistan. “If you take them on, well, either you win and if you don’t win, well, you’ve tried, and somebody is going to come in and try harder.”

HAVE A LOOK MINOR THINGS TO THINK

Roots of Assassination Plan

A very important individual, who had spent a long time in confinement, was heavily debriefed by the sleuths of a force for at least a couple of days before he was set free in December 2004. Those debriefing sessions were held in a heavily guarded 'Rest House', famous for lodging the political leaders in the past as well, especially during the times of former military dictator General Ziaul Haq.

A Reluctant Zardari

What is impeding Asif Ali Zardari, the spouse of Benazir Bhutto and now President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, to unveil what he knows about the assassins of his wife? What hurdles he is facing to indicate the characters involved in the assassination plan, who he claims he knows in his public address in Naudaro on the occasion of first death anniversary of Benazir Bhutto.

Why they flee?

After the attack the movement of the escort car in which Bhutto's Security Advisor, Rehman Malik, now Interior Minister, was riding, raised many questions. It is hard to believe that Rehman Malik was not aware that Bhutto's vehicle had been badly damaged and decided to drive all the way to Islamabad. After the hearing the blast sounds, he asked Khizar (driver of his vehicle) to speed up the vehicle towards Islamabad. According to other riders of the vehicle, Rehman Malik shouted at Khizar asking 'keep driving' when he stopped the vehicle at turning of Liaquat Road after hearing blast sound. Khizar, again tried to stop the vehicle, near underpass at Committee Chawk, telling the riders, that BB's vehicle had not yet appeared at Murree Road, but Malik didn't allow him, even, to slow down speed.

It is hard to believe that both Rehman Malik and Senator Babar Awan did not receive the information about Bhutto's death while they were in touch with everybody through their cell phones. Yet, what was so important for them to first reach the safety and security of Zardari House in sector F-8/2 of Islamabad then returning to the RGH or the crime scene? This thing created a lot of doubts in the minds of not only general public but those, investigating the tragedy, ignored all.

What happened in the hospital?

Another perplexing factor was that the government did not carry out autopsy on Bhutto, a basic legal requirement in such cases. It was an external examination that was conducted to determine the cause of death and some X-Rays were also

taken. Had the doctors conducted a proper post mortem they might have found some vital evidence from the wound as is so usual when somebody is struck with a bullet. In this day and age the forensic evidence lifted from the wound and the area around the wound would have been a lot of help and assistance for those investigating the incident. Instead of fulfilling the legal requirement a panel of unconcerned doctors performed the basic inspection only to determine and announce that she was dead before she was brought to the hospital.

Reverse Investigations

The traditional way of investigations into any crime followed by the investigating agencies, the police or any other body, had always been: 'From Crime to Criminal'. Here, in case of Bhutto's assassination the investigators had done the other way round as they kept detaining or arresting people from different parts of the country and accused them of their involvement only after they were arrested.

What the JIT was up to?

The JIT (Joint Investigation Team), which was set up to probe the incident created unnecessary controversy of 'hook hitting' at initial stage proving that she was not killed by the terrorist(s) but lost her life accidentally. The JIT spent all its efforts to prove the wrong thing as right. The JIT, finally submitted its report that Benazir's death occurred because of her banging her head against the protruding lever of the sunroof and based its findings on the controversial medical report.

Lever Controversy

But all this only complicated the whole affair further and suspicions in the minds of people continued gaining strength that somebody somewhere was busy pulling the strings to hide the facts and to hide the facts the person or persons were striving hard to prove that Bhutto's death was not an act of terror but an accident. People openly voiced their suspicions and even mock the report compiled by the JIT in this regard. But there was hardly anybody who would come out openly and say that the JIT conducted their investigations under some hidden pressure as well as they were being prevented from investigating in the right direction by those forces by eliminating the basic evidences and preventing a proper post mortem to determine as to what actually hit Bhutto in the head. Even a number of medical doctors claim that a proper post mortem and inspection of the wound would have revealed if it was a bullet that hit her in the head or the rooftop exit door lever because the bullet would have left its footprints on the wound.

What the Scotland Yard team did?

The Scotland Yard team, invited to carry out a 'fact finding inquiry' mysteriously endorsed the wrongdoings of the JIT. The Scotland Yard expert endorsed what

the JIT had already come up with in its investigations without questioning about any evidence while the whole nation was looking towards them to probe deeply and unveil the real culprits behind the assassination of their leader. This 'fact-finding report' prepared by the Scotland Yard team cost the country millions of dollars.

Scotland Yard Vindicates JIT Report

The government remained stubborn on its stance. It also tried to vindicate the earlier report through an inquiry conducted by a team of detectives and experts engaged from the Scotland Yard of the United Kingdom.

However, it is abundantly clear that the Scotland Yard team was engaged only to verify the facts already presented in the report submitted by the JIT on the basis of the available evidence. They were not permitted to expand their investigations beyond what was available in the report presented to them by the local investigators. So, the Scotland Yard team did exactly what was expected of them when they simply announced that the conclusions reached by the JIT were correct on the basis of the facts and evidences on which they had worked!

FIA Expert Rejected JIT and Scotland Opinion

An FIA's explosive expert who was part of the joint investigation team (JIT), constituted to investigate the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, rejected the JIT and Scotland Yard's conclusion and to buy the arguments and evidence presented by the JIT and Scotlanders.

He was in absolute disagreement with the findings of the initial investigations of both the Joint Investigations Team (JIT) as well as the report prepared and presented by the investigation team from the Scotland Yard.

The basic argument of Maj (Retd) Shafqat was that the ascertainment of Bhutto's death was based on the 'radiological report', comprising of X-Ray and the external examination of the wound and those engaged for the purpose never paid any attention to look closely enough to find any evidence of the footprints of the presence of firearms.

Good work done by the CID!

Meanwhile, the Crime Investigation Department (CID) of Police, which was one wing of the JIT, picked up its own lead and worked studiously upon it which eventually led to finding out at least one important link in the whole conspiracy. This was to identify the individuals employed in the attack. It was the officials from the CID who traced all the nine individuals and then linked them up through their own investigations, which were later made part of the JIT report.

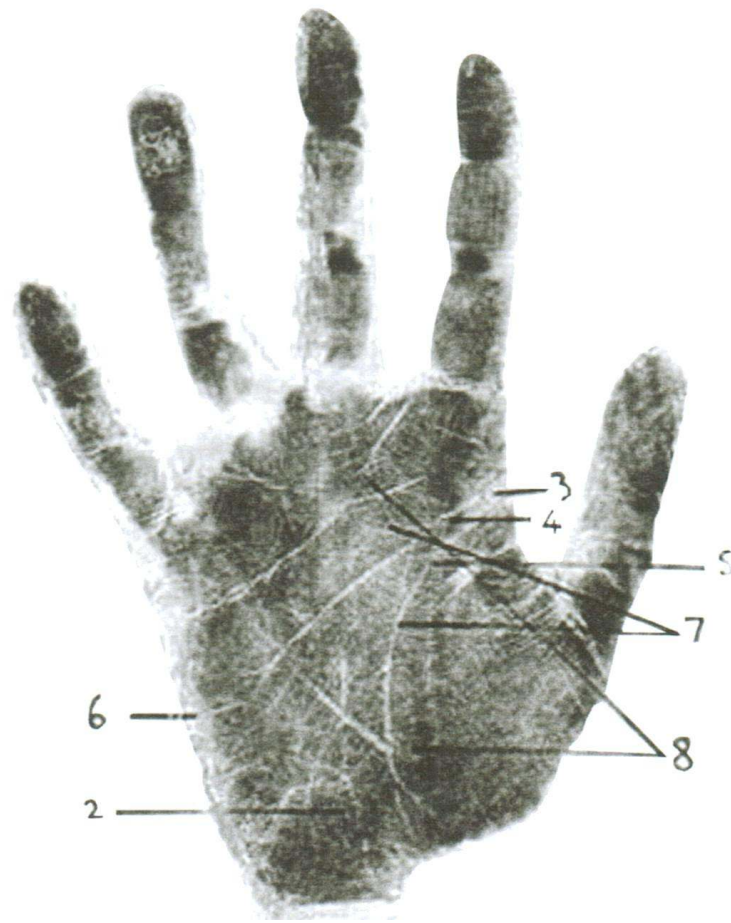
But, at the same time, it is believed that the same report became the cause of death of some of those persons who were tracked down by the CID investigators because there were strong possibilities that they were aware of the whole conspiracy and had even mediated between the militant commander Baitullah Mehsood and the forces who wanted to eliminate Bhutto.

These factors clearly and abundantly indicate a certain force or a group of individuals who were behind the gruesome tragedy that deprived not only Pakistan but the whole world of a visionary leader.

Brig. (Retd) Ejaz Shah (Former IB Chief)

The former IB Chief was known to be a close associate of the former military dictator, General Pervez Musharraf, and was hand-picked to head the premier civilian intelligence agency of the country. He was part of the ISI, the most dreaded military intelligence outfit known to meddle with the national politics and was known to be averse to the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) when he was in the ISI as well as the IB Chief, where he was brought by the former military dictator.

Palm Print of Benazir Bhutto



June 21, 1953- December 27, 2007

This palm print was taken after a University debate at Oxford and was the subject of much later Astrological analysis and debate in India and Pakistan.

1. Her handprint shows an intuitive, intellectual and artistic communicator, As most Gemini's are.

2. Experts in Vast Shanus, say when the fate line starts from the first bracelet, a fated or predestined life is inferred, and this is confirmed at the start of the lifeline, these small marks, often called the "lines of demarcation" give clues to the life to be lived, and the nature of its lessons. Muslims call this "*quada wa quada*".

3. Surprisingly a nervous and shy child, several childhood illness's show here as upper respiratory infections, such as bronchitis, chest inflammation and sore throats up until the age of 12.

4. At age 18 we have signs that romance is considered a lot at this time, first love and a feeling that someone on an intellectual par is paramount, this period climaxes at age 22.

5. This need for education leads to her spending much time in Britain, where she was a well known speaker and author, and she also studied at Harvard in America, where she is remembered for being engrossed in political theories. Her eloquence and beauty made her a big star in the West, she knew her destiny lay with her people in Pakistan, and she and her mother endured the execution of her father and many terms of imprisonment.

6. Exiled to Britain in 1986, she married Asif Ali Zardari in an arranged ceremony in 1987, and was elected as P.M at the age of 35 in 1988. Investigations began after assault armaments was caught offering large bribes for contracts, and intelligence community rumours of gold and currency dealing in Swiss bank accounts, this and offers of foreign investment led many to demand the truth. Her 20 years abroad, meant her Urdu was poor and it was known she had attended Christian meetings, this was construed by some as abandoning her heritage.

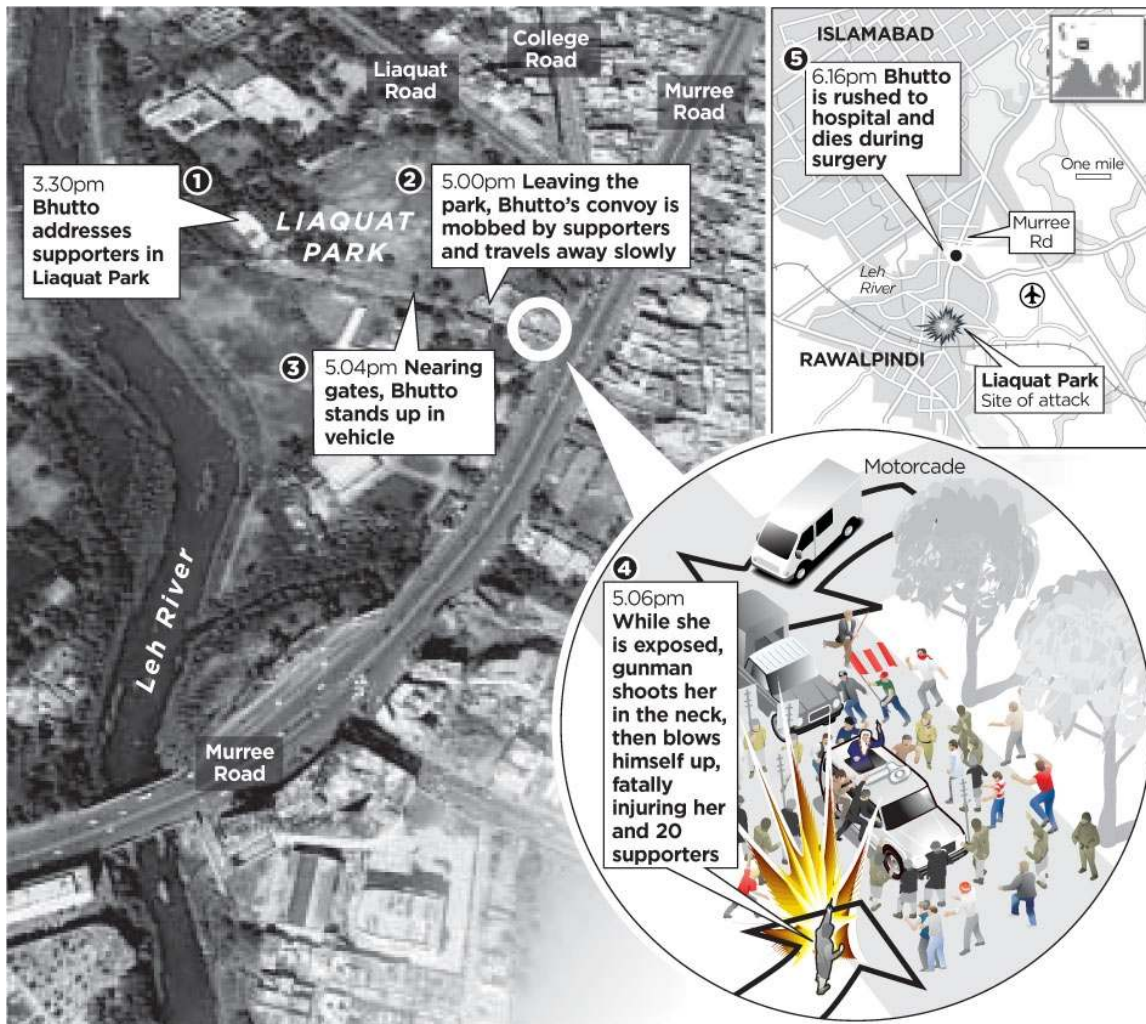
7. Saturn afflicts her sun in 1999 so from this period she is on borrowed time, this coincides with her Saturn year age 44 and is an omen of what may come. Her assertion that when she is again in power, she will press for civilian rule and allow George Bush to bomb dissidents in Pakistan, angers many worldwide. The feeling of the U.S.A that certain countries will have democracy, or will be bombed into it, leads some to declare that while this occurs, British and U S citizens are daily having their democracy eroded, so what is it really about ? Although loved in Britain, she was seen by many at home as another foreign puppet, Remember that all India fought very bravely for Britain in W.W.II yet Winston Churchill refused to help in the Indian famine that killed millions, while sending huge amounts of help to the Soviets who were our intelligence services

said; more dangerous to Britain than Germany “ The recent feeling was that the Indo/Pak subcontinent could do better without outside interference, the C.I.A murder of General Zia did not help matters.

8. The line colliding with the life line at age 54 tells of an assault on the life energies at that time, and the line after that point is weak. Some palmists claim you cannot see the future as the lines change, and some lines do actually change but in the second character only, the lines are indelibly printed on the hand from the first few weeks in the womb. This is a simplified palmoscope for easy digestion, a full analysis is available, using Hindu, Muslim and Tibetan techniques, with western analysis. A great leader from a great family, her death has left a huge gaping wound across the world, her political shoes will be hard to fill. (T. Stokes)

+++The community also houses a forum with a Pakistani astrologer and palmist describing the influence of number nine on her life. From her date of birth (21-06-1953 = 2 + 1 + 0 + 6 + 1 + 9 + 5 + 3 = 27 = 2 + 7 = 9) to her marriage with Zardari on date 18 (1 + 8 = 9), returning to Pakistan on October 18 (1 + 8 = 9) and an unsuccessful attempt on her life same day, then second successful attempt on her life on December 27 (2 + 7 = 9), year of her death 2007 (2 + 0 + 0 + 7 = 9) and finally her age at the time of death 54 (5 + 9 = 9), the astrologer tries to bring home the importance of digit 9 in her life. She is still alive in our hearts,” says another community with 309 members created on the day of assassination. Navjeevan Gopal (Express India).

MURDER LOCATION



WILL OF BENAZIR BHUTTO

Pakistan Peoples Party

To the officials and members of Pakistan Peoples Party I say that I was honoured to lead you. No leader could be as proud of their party, their dedication, devotion and discipline to the mission of Quaid e Azam Zulfikar Ali Bhutto for a Federal, Democratic and Egalitarian Pakistan as I have been proud of you. I salute your courage and your sense of honour. I salute you for standing by your sister through two military dictatorships.

I fear for the future of Pakistan. Please continue the fight against extremism, dictatorship, poverty and ignorance.

I would like my husband Asif Ali Zardari to lead you in this interim period until you and he decide what is best. I say this because he is a man of courage and honour. He spent 11 1/2 years in prison without bending despite torture. He has the political stature to keep our party united.

I wish all of you success in fulfilling the manifesto of your party and in serving the down trodden, discriminated and oppressed people of Pakistan. Dedicate yourselves to freeing them from poverty and backwardness as you have done in the past.

Benazir Bhutto

October 16, 2007

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shakeel Anjum is a seasoned journalist who started his career in 1978 as a reporter with a Rawalpindi-based Urdu language daily newspaper 'Ta'ameer'. At that time, the newspaper was considered a 'voice of dissent' against the Martial Law imposed by dictator General Zia-ul-Haq.

Born on 15th April, 1953, in Rawalpindi, Shakeel Anjum is the fourth scion of Al-Ha'aj Rajab Ali Qureshi, a respected Makhdoom family of 'Maidan Baba Farid' in Pakpatan Sharif district of Punjab. His family settled in Rawalpindi in 1964 after the retirement of his father from army.

He graduated from Gordon College, Rawalpindi in 1974-75. He had a passion for writing and his short stories had been published in country's widely read periodicals. He was also the 'Chief Editor' of the College Magazine, 'Gordonian'. Shakeel Anjum remained attached with daily 'Ta'ameer' and enjoyed honor of working with the legendary journalist Bashir-ul-Islam Usmani for almost six years. Shakeel left the country at a time when the Martial Law regime of dictator General Zia-ul-Haq was at its worst. He remained in Europe for almost a year but had to return home on the sad demise of his father. He decided to abandon the plans to go to Europe again and returned to journalism. On return from Europe, Shakeel joined the Urdu daily 'Markaz', published from Islamabad.

What followed is a long series of job-hopping during which he spent different spans of time with Urdu daily 'Masawat', the English language national daily, 'The Nation', and then joined 'The News' along with the senior journalists like Nusrat Javed and Mariana Babar when it was launched in 1991. After spending less than a year with 'The News,' Shakeel Anjum again left the country, this time heading for the United States of America to join a private radio channel, where he remained for about three years.

On return, he joined the Urdu language daily newspaper, 'Pakistan', on the offer of senior journalist Mujeebur Rehman Shami as Deputy Editor. He joined Frontier Post and then, finally, in the year 2001 Shakeel Anjum returned to 'The News' as a reporter and till date is attached with the organization. Over this period of time he built his reputation as an honest Crime Reporter mostly engaged in investigative journalism, a reputation very unique to build and maintain by a reporter covering the most infamous Crime Beat.

Because of his outspoken and honest approach towards his profession, Shakeel landed in trouble many times and was even implicated in a triple murder case by

the Islamabad police when the police officers, whose corruption and wrong doings were exposed by him, decided to teach him a lesson for writing the truth against them. Those were tough times for Shakeel Anjum as some elements in the most powerful organ of state, the 'Police', found him frequently writing the things that they found hard to swallow. Instead of putting their own house in order, they resorted to despicable tactics of 'arm twisting' against him. He received frequent threats to his life. His house was attacked by a gang of gunmen, his son (Ammar Lasani) got injured when he received a bullet in his leg during indiscriminate firing by 'unknown gunmen' who attacked his house in Rawalpindi.

Those were the most testing times for Shakeel Anjum when the Islamabad Police, decided to 'cut him to size' in an outrageous manner by implicating him in a false 'triple murder case' on September 16, 2006 under sections 302, 324, 148, 149, 427, 109 PPC and 6/7 Anti Terrorist Act (ATA). He was, however, rescued by the Supreme Court of Pakistan when the Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry, took Suo Moto notice of the case and ordered appointing a 'Joint Investigation Team' (JIT). The JIT finally exonerated him from the malicious charges of involvement in the heinous crime of murder. The Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry, allowed Shakeel Anjum to proceed against those who conspired towards implicating him in the false murder case under section 182 PPC. However, Shakeel Anjum decided not to proceed against the police officials who deliberately attempted to malign him.

Shakeel Anjum started his career at a very crucial juncture in the history of the nation when the most popular elected Prime Minister of the country, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was being ruthlessly pushed to the gallows by the judiciary operating under the thumb of the ruthless dictator General Ziaul Haq. And, as a 'newspaper reporter,' he was required to report the unfortunate 'judicial murder' of the first-ever elected Prime Minister of the country!

Later, Shakeel covered major events that shaped the history of the country, including among many others the 'Ojhri Camp ammunition depot blast', the Bahawalpur plane crash, the Marriott Hotel blast in the federal capital, the mind-numbing assassination of Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto and the shadowy investigations in the case and the attack on GHQ.

Shakeel Anjum focused on the human side of the stories and frequently highlighted touching aspects out of gruesome crime incidents. His efforts eventually caught the eye of the 'Pakistan Education Forum', a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) headed by country's leading educationists, intellectuals, writers and poets, which selected him in the year 2004 for the

prestigious 'Life Time Achievement Award', for best reporting on human rights issues.