

PAKISTAN 'KHAPPAY'

ASIF ALI ZARDARI

PRESIDENT OF ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF PAKISTAN



A pictorial review of the life of President Asif Ali Zardari

PAKISTAN KHAPPAY

Asif Ali Zardari

President of
Islamic Republic of
Pakistan

Editor

Zubair Ahmed Kasuri

Assistant Editor

Fatima Batool

Designer

Zafar Khan Afridi

Published by

Flare Cares

Separation by

Fotoscan Process

Printed by

Qasim Naeem Printers

Stockist

Sultan News Agency

First Edition

10,000 (September, 2008)

Price

PKR 500, US \$10

Contact:

Islamabad: **+92-51-2890054** Fax: **+92-51-2891339**

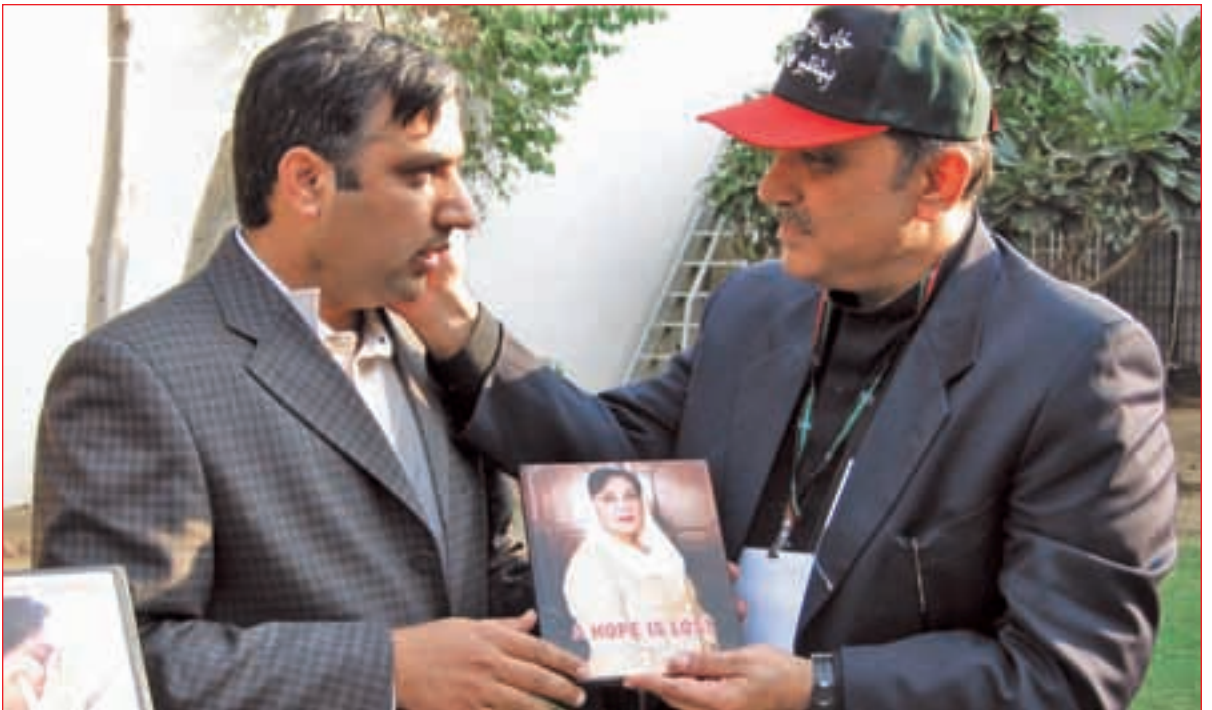
E-mail: **flare.mag@gmail.com**

“A HOPE IS LOST”

A national asset: Asif Ali Zardari

The first book on Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Shaheed after her assassination was launched on January 27, 2008 at Bilawal House, Karachi. It is a pictorial review of Mohtarma’s life with 400 pictures illustrating various aspects of her life.

PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari while receiving the book from Zubair Ahmed Kasuri acknowledged that the book is really an effort to keep people informed about the various aspects of their beloved leader Benazir Bhutto. He further accepted that the book is really an asset not only for him but for the nation. He appreciated Zubair Ahmed Kasuri and his team’s efforts in compiling the book in order to make those understand who think that she had taken away the chance of democracy with her. But it seems even beyond the grave, Bhutto still refuse to be defeated hers message is still struggling to prevail in public through the lenses of camera.



Karachi: Zubair Ahmed Kasuri presents “A Hope is Lost” to PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari at Bilawal House on 27 January, 2008.

Preface

The victory of Asif Ali Zardari in Pakistan's presidential election represents an extraordinary turnaround for the most mistrusted politician in the country. He was thrust into the centre stage after his wife's assassination in December 2007, when he became the de facto leader of PPP. Many doubted his ability to lead the country's largest political party; others simply said it marked the beginning of the end for the PPP. But thus far Mr Zardari has proven them all wrong. After the PPP's success in February's elections, Mr Zardari engineered a coalition government that included the PPP's historical rival, the PML-N of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. Mr Zardari then played a Machiavellian game in which the two men worked to force President Musharraf to resign, rather than risk being impeached.

After that struggle which he has made (and is making) after his beloved wife, people have least doubt about the election of Asif Ali Zardari as President of Pakistan, the toughest job in the world. If we look back in to the history of world leaders, it will be evident that the profile of Zardari is unique. A person who has remained in prison (without any evidence) for ten years has become popular, however this acknowledgement is not sudden. He has really tried his level best to keep the country running in most unstable circumstances. Mr Zardari demonstrated some extraordinary political skills in managing enough support to keep his party's government intact and to get elected even after losing the PML-N, which had emerged as the second largest party in the country.

This book is a tribute to the esteemed personality of Asif Ali Zardari who dared to take the reins of a smashed democracy... May he succeed in improving the injured infrastructure of Pakistan.

Acknowledgement

After “Paradise Lost” ,“A Hope is Lost”,and “My Heart Aches”,“Pakistan Khappay” is another effort to highlight an issue of national importance. This is a pictorial review of the life of President Asif Ali Zardari and a tribute to those efforts and determinations which he has shown during his political career. I am grateful to my parents especially to my Ami Jan whose motivation and encouragement has enabled me to achieve the higher goals of my life. I would not have been able to do anything without her support.

I would like to express my gratitude to Mir Shakil-ur-Rehman Group Editor in Chief of Jang Group of Companies whose expertise, understanding, and patience helped considerably to achieve this task

Special thanks to Salim Bukhari.. A special thanks to Bashir A. Tahir, CEO Abu Dhabi Group, I doubt that I will ever be able to convey my appreciation fully, butt I owe him my eternal gratitude

Zibber Mohiuddin, CEO Ericson Pakistan, and Ali Qadir Gilani, EVP PTCL encouraged me as well for the completion of this book Especially Murtaza Hashwani, CEO Hashoo Group, I am thankful to him, it was under his guidance that I developed a focus and became interested in vision and human factors.

I am also very thankful to Ejaz Durrani, In charge Media Cell Pakistan Peoples Party Bilawal House Karachi, for his support in completion of this book. I am also grateful to those who contributed to this book with informal reviews, suggestions, and fixes

I also received invaluable assistance from “The News”, and news agencies who got the source code and sent in patches for the completion of the book.



Zubair Ahmed Kasuri

Editor-in-Chief

Flare

Foreword

Asif Ali Zardari is a man of variable wonders. When he managed to marry the most charismatic political personality of the country, Benazir Bhutto, the daughter of late Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, we wonder for the very first time. The second wonder was his prolonged stay in prison with grace and dignity. His third wonder is his journey from prison to Presidency. Controversies are still springing about his personality however he is now well-settled in the saddle of Pakistan's Presidency.

There are several untold stories about President Asif Ali Zardari besides those which are in black-and-white. Mr Zardari was thrust into the centre stage of current political developments when his wife, the enthusiastic former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto was assassinated in December 2007. He resolutely stood by PPP party after his wife death (and with his wife during her life) - although at times he disagreed with the politics of both. His friends say this was entirely in his character and no-one can deny his personal courage.

Since then he has led Pakistan People's Party (PPP) through successful general elections and worked with former political enemies to force President Pervez Musharraf to quit that office which he held for more than nine years. Before Benazir Bhutto's ruthless killing, Mr Zardari's public image was so controversial that the PPP kept him out of the public eye as much as possible during the campaigning for February 2007 elections.

To throw some light on his personality, Zubair Kasuri has boldly taken the initiative of publishing 'Pakistan Khappy', a pictorial review of Asif Ali Zardari's life. Earlier, he published a book right after Benazir's assassination under the title of "A Hope is Lost." This book 'Pakistan Khappy' has encompassed various aspects of Mr Zardari's political carrier, family life and early days. It is a pictorial publication that includes some rare photographs.

One thing that I would like to mention here is the fact that Mr Kasuri does not publish these books either on request or to earn money. He is a volunteer and takes tremendous pleasure by claiming that he is doing a service to Pakistan People's Party in particular and Pakistan in general. May Almighty reward him for his efforts!



Salim Bokhari
Editor-in-Chief
Amoon Media Group
Lahore





President Asif Ali Zardari

Blood line: PPP Co-Chairman Senator Asif Ali Zardari was born on July 26, 1955 in a prominent Baloch family from Sindh. Asif Ali Zardari is the chief of the Zardari tribe. He is the son of veteran politician Hakim Ali Zardari. On his maternal side he is the great-grandson of Khan Bahadur Hassan Ali Effendi, the founder of the first educational institution for Muslims in Sindh. The Founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah was among the prominent students to graduate from the Sindh Madrasa.

Nurturing: Mr Zardari received his primary education at Karachi Grammar School, and Secondary Education at Cadet College Petaro. He pursued his further education in London where he studied Business.

Personal Life: He was married to Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto in 1987 and was widowed on December 27, 2007, when Benazir Bhutto was assassinated in a terrorist attack in Rawalpindi. Benazir was PPP Chairperson from 1979 until her assassination and was twice elected prime minister of Pakistan. They have three children, Bilawal, born in 1988, Bakhtawar, born in 1990 and Asifa born in 1993.

Hardships: Mr Zardari was targeted by anti-democratic forces for vilification and persecution and bore the hardship with fortitude. He spent eleven and a half years in prison in conditions often unacceptable by human rights standards, without any charge ever being proven against him. He won election as MNA and as senator while in prison. He was kept in custody from 1997 to 2004 on charges ranging from corruption to murder, all of which were never proven. He was granted bail and released in November 2004 when a judge said the cases were all false. However, he was re-arrested on 21 December 2004 after his failure to attend a hearing in a murder trial in Karachi. He was charged with conspiracy in the 1996 killing of a judge and his son. These charges coincided with his plans to launch massive protests in the country.

Despite many offers from the government of the time to leave PPP or to go abroad under a negotiated political exit, he remained committed to Party goals and continued his fight for justice and the return of a democratically elected civilian leadership.

Services

- ❖ Mr Zardari served twice as Member of National Assembly (1990-93 and 1993-96), as Federal Minister for the Environment (1993-1996) and as Federal Minister for Investment (1995-96).

- ❖ He was the principal architect of the Benazir Bhutto government's efforts to transform Pakistan's energy power sector by encouraging major investment opportunities in power generation. He was also the initiator of the Iran-Pakistan natural gas pipeline project.

- ❖ Mr Zardari was elected Senator in 1997 and served in that capacity until the dissolution of the Senate following the military coup of 1999.

- ❖ He was elected Co-Chairman of the PPP in January 2008 following the assassination of Benazir Bhutto.

- ❖ Mr Zardari's political career spans two decades spent working closely with Shaheed Benazir Bhutto. During this period he helped formulate policies that expanded the freedom of the media, revolutionised telecommunications and opened Pakistan for foreign direct investment.

- ❖ During Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto's first term in office CNN and BBC were allowed broadcasting rights in Pakistan and mobile telephone services introduced at Mr Zardari's initiative. During her second term in office, in addition to the independent power producers (IPPs) being allowed in, he also encouraged the introduction of FM radio in the private sector.

- ❖ Mr Zardari was asked by the Central Executive Committee (CEC) of the Pakistan People's Party to serve as Chairman of the Party after the assassination of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto. Although he was elected unopposed, he nominated his son Bilawal Bhutto Zardari for that role and accepted the job of Co-Chairman of the PPP.

- ❖ After Benazir's death he has remained in the frontlines of shaping a national consensus at the federal level on the politics of reconciliation initiated by Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto.

- ❖ Under Mr Zardari's leadership, the PPP's candidate Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani was elected Prime Minister of Pakistan unopposed. This was a singular and unprecedented event in Pakistan's political history.

- ❖ Mr Zardari also spearheaded the appointment of Dr Fehmida Mirza as the first female Speaker of Pakistan's National Assembly and continues to support the empowerment of women and minorities in all government policy making.

- ❖ Today, the PPP government has coalition governments in Pakistan's four provinces which is indeed the fruit of pains and hardships tackled by Mr Zardari.

- ❖ Most recently PPP, under his leadership, removed dictator General (Retd) Pervez Musharraf, the unconstitutional President of Pakistan, from office in a historic move, through a series of complex negotiations and political diplomacy. Mr Zardari united Pakistan's major political parties and this unprecedented act was accomplished without any violence.

- ❖ Mr Zardari was elected President of Pakistan with an overwhelming majority in the presidential election held on September 6, 2008. ■



Democracy in presidency

Pakistan's political history can best be understood as a struggle between democratic political forces from all parts of the country and an establishment belonging to the power corridor, geographically located between Lahore and Rawalpindi-Islamabad. The PPP's decision to nominate its Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari for the presidency was aimed at ending the monopoly of the undemocratic establishment over the highest office in the country. Mr Zardari is the Pakistan's first national political figure to become president since the post replaced that of governor-general in 1956.

If Pakistani democracy is to be strengthened and consolidated, it is important that the office of president should be different from that of governor-general as envisaged under the colonial era. The British did not trust the natives and, therefore, wanted real power to be wielded by serving or retired military officers or civil servants. At independence in 1947, Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah refused to accept Lord Mountbatten as governor-general of both India and Pakistan to establish the principle that the highest office in the land should be occupied by the political leader with most support from the people's representatives.

After the Quaid-e-Azam's death a year after independence, another politician, Khawaja Nazimuddin from East Bengal, served as governor-general who struggled to give the country its constitution. But the civil-military bureaucracy took charge soon after the assassination in 1951 of Pakistan's first prime minister, Liaquat Ali Khan and since then the position of head of state has remained in the hands of unrepresentative individuals. This continuation of non-political dominance by the establishment has harmed national integration and caused unrest in Pakistan's smaller provinces and ethnic minorities.

The PPP is the only political party with support in all four provinces of Pakistan as well as Azad Kashmir and the Northern areas. Regional parties from the smaller provinces have all supported Mr Zardari's candidacy. After the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, Mr Zardari represents the unity of the Pakistani federation. The federation will continue to come under strain if the voices of the smaller provinces are not heard and the Lahore-Pindi power corridor continues to insist on its monopoly over power. Of the two parties that have fielded candidates against Mr Zardari one was created by General Ziaul Haq and the other spawned under General Pervez Musharraf. Although both now profess democracy as their political philosophy their past cou-

pled with their being limited to one geographic region makes them unsuited to unilaterally lead the country into a democratic phase.

The PPP and Mr Zardari have articulated a clear vision for a democratic, progressive Pakistan and this has received support from other political forces. National unity and reconciliation can only be achieved under a president who is able to bring disparate political parties to the table. Anyone who insists on flying solo cannot unite our nation. He has demonstrated the ability to forgive and to forge coalitions. Those calling for a neutral or bureaucratic president are missing the important requirement of consensus and coalition building that must be fulfilled by the president. To ensure continued international support for Pakistan, his views on the war against terrorism are also very clear. His positions on various issues reflect the stance of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto who loved and respected her husband through long periods of trial and tribulation until her tragic assassination. The Pakistani establishment has demonised Mr Zardari just as it demonised all popular democratic leaders in the past, including Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who was sent to the gallows.

None of the charges against Mr Zardari have ever been proven and the current round of fabricated allegations and rumours will also be rejected by the people. He demonstrated great character by accepting to remain in prison for eleven years including eight-and-a-half years consecutively without being convicted of any offence. Many Pakistani political leaders in the past have accepted early release as part of some deal, including Mr Sharif who went into exile instead of staying in prison.

The recent spate of negative stories about Mr Zardari makes it clear that someone is executing a hatchet job against him. It is no coincidence that confidential medical statements made to an English court were leaked to a British newspaper and unnamed officials have come out of the woodworks to talk to (primarily) British journalists.

The beneficiaries of the vice-regal system of the former Raj clearly do not like the idea of a true Pakistani native son to become president.

As is always the case whenever the Bhutto-Zardari family enters a new phase of their political struggle, certain individuals have become overactive in their outreach to the media. One of these is a gentleman who has nothing in common with the party of Ms Bhutto, the modern Pakistan People's Party, than anyone with the last name of "Brown" would have as a spokesman for Britain's Labour Party. The gentleman has been estranged from the PPP for decades and was a bitter opponent of Ms Bhutto. He consistently fought against her in her campaigns for prime minister and during her two terms as prime minister. Indeed he and some other members of his branch of the Bhutto clan repeatedly have run for office against PPP candidates, and have repeatedly been thrashed at the polls. But that does not prevent him and others like him from holding forth, and receiving publicity, completely out of proportion to their political significance in Pakistan, from British newspapers. These non-entities are being given space to condemn the PPP's co-chairman.

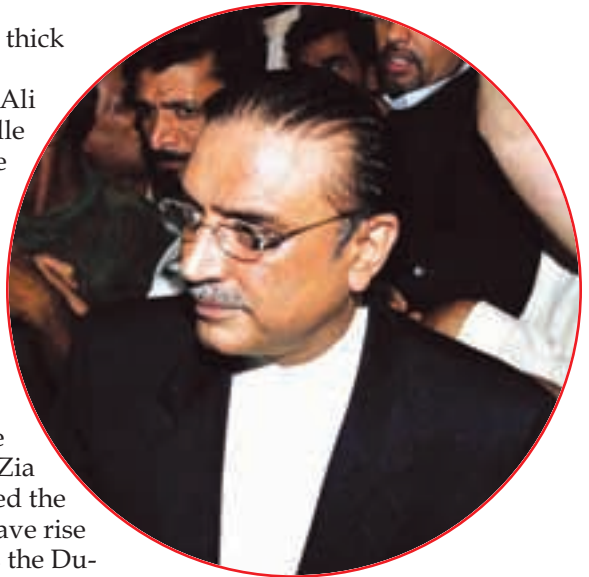
One of the oft-repeated charges against Mr Zardari these days is that he did not keep his promise of restoring the judges unlawfully removed from superior courts by General Musharraf. The truth is that Mr Zardari is fulfilling his promise of restoring the judges but as he had said earlier, the PPP disagrees with some people on the modalities of the judges' restoration. Clearly, it is unfair to say that he has not kept his promise since not agreeing to some people's view – on how to restore the judges – does not amount to a breach of promise.

Asif Zardari's election has brought a democrat and a politician into the presidency, the last bastion of the philosophy of elite-guided democracy in our country. The only people who are uncomfortable with the idea of a Zardari presidency are those with a history of supporting dictatorship or those who favour dominance of the establishment. ■

Risk of demonising Zardari

It is not difficult to understand why there was a thick tension in the air when Pakistan prepared for a Zardari presidency. For two decades now Asif Ali Zardari has been the object of establishment, middle class and educated elite contempt. Just because the educated liberals and urban conservatives in Pakistan don't like Mr Zardari, doesn't mean he shouldn't be president. Pakistanis have a habit of personifying national failure in the shape of individuals. It is time to ditch old habits, and embrace democracy.

Within the tradition of personifying national failure, General Ziaul Haq is perhaps the favourite of the English-language babus. It is amazing how Zia single handedly created religious fanaticism, turned the country into Ronald Reagan's hand-maiden and gave rise to all the evil that lurks in Tora Bora and straddles the Durand Line. If Zia is at the top of the list, Zulfi Bhutto is a not too distant second. The most recent addition to the arsenal of both liberals and conservatives is of course the recently retired and resigned Pervez Musharraf. In many ways he trumps both Bhutto and Zia in villainous magnitude – combining the supposed institutional appetite for fanaticism, with his personal appetite for the finer things in life.



Before Mr Zardari is tagged with the label of national villain however, it would be useful for Pakistanis to take a long, hard look at where the country is today, and how it got here. The nervous ticks that a Zardari presidency is inspiring are rooted in three issues. First, presidential power to dissolve the assemblies, second, Mr Zardari's alleged corruption, and third, the symbolism of Mr Zardari as a non-traditional political figure, occupying the Aiwan-e-Sadr. Examining these in further detail reveals little to justify any logically consistent argument against the President Zardari presidency.

The issue of the potential role of the president of Pakistan as a destabilising force that can dissolve assemblies is a legitimate fear. How that is Mr Zardari's fault however, is a mystery. Before being deposed, Nawaz Sharif had successfully restored the presidency to its figurehead role, without executive powers over parliament. That restoration had been over a decade in the making, given the horrible mutilation of institutions that occurred during General Zia's era. The presidency was not a powerful position in Pakistan again until December 2003, when the 17th Amendment was passed, restoring the lost lustre of dictatorship back to the presidency. Who gave the presidency these powers? It couldn't have been Mr Zardari himself, given that he was locked up in jail at the time. In fact, it was the parliament at the time, a parliament that was loaded with two parties of note, the so-called PML – Q and the right-coalition of the MMA. Sim-

ply put, any trepidation about the powers of the presidency has nothing to do with Mr Zardari. The credit or blame for any anxiety caused by the president's powers can be placed squarely at the feet of those two parties, and their task master at the time, the former president himself. At least on the count of draconian presidential powers then, we can be certain that Mr Asif Ali Zardari is not the one who enabled a presidency that has the power to interrupt the democratic process and facilitate dictatorship.

The second issue of concern in a Zardari presidency is of course the issue of his alleged corruption. This is not a complex issue at all. From a technical, legal standpoint Mr Zardari is innocent until proven guilty. At least three different governments over a span of almost twenty years have spent millions of dollars pursuing the cases against him. They have failed to deliver a guilty verdict. It is not Mr Zardari's fault that the system of justice in Pakistan is broken, and that the prosecutors of the agenda of accountability are incompetent. This is an issue on which clarity is of vital national importance. The simple perception of wrong doing is not good enough to prosecute someone. Moreover, it is hard to take the entire anti-corruption, transparency and accountability agenda seriously, when those that are responsible for delivering transparency and accountability have sullied reputations themselves. No matter who the next president is, sooner or later, the government will reinstate the accountability agenda.

Finally, there is the issue of perception, the question of what a Zardari presidency would symbolise. Perception is a funny thing, because it is driven by our own biases and our own psychoses. What did a president in uniform symbolise? Where was middle class disgust and outrage when Ayub, Zia or Musharraf took over? What did a president who had no achievements of substance to his record other than to steadily and stealthily climb the ladders of power over a forty-year career represent? Where were the bureaucratic babus and their outrage when Ghulam Ishaq Khan not only became president, but proceeded to dissolve the assemblies not once, or twice, but three times? Or when a banker who was plucked from nowhere to not only become chairman of the Senate, governor of Sindh, but also caretaker prime minister, and then seamlessly back to chairman of the Senate? In each case of course, there was always a smattering of boos, and some discomfort, but nothing like the wide-scale self-pity that Pakistanis are about to dive into.

A democratically elected, parliamentary powerful party has the right to elect a president of its choosing. No matter how much Mr Zardari is disliked by both liberal and conservative Pakistanis, his candidature is no worse than any of the other presidents Pakistan has had over the last two decades. At least in Mr Zardari's case, there is an element of democratic redemption that perhaps among his predecessors, only Rafiq Tarrar possessed.

The truth is that Pakistan's institutions are constantly being bludgeoned by the self-righteousness of the urban educated. It is they who provide the military with the legitimacy that allows well-meaning but illegitimate dictatorships to take root. Pakistan can begin its latest journey in democratic discovery the same way in which all previous journeys have begun. By stacking the deck against political parties, and by rejecting their electoral, legal and moral legitimacy. This is simply preparing the ground for the next coup against democracy. It is ok to dislike Mr Zardari, and to oppose his presidency. Liking something does not make it right, and disliking something, does not make it wrong -- Pakistanis confuse the two at their own risk. Demonising Zardari today will have grave consequences for Pakistan's democratic future. ■

Zardari proves his point

Asif Zardari like most of other Pakistani politicians is a mortal being; the purpose of this blog is not to prove that he is the best, or he is the messiah that Pakistan was looking for or we are very lucky to have him at the helm of affairs otherwise we are doomed. I am also not interested in the past, you may say how convenient? My reason is simple a lot has been said and written about it. I agree Mr. Asif had been a controversial person in the previous Pakistan People's Party regimes. But I must ask "Who else is not controversial?" With the exception of Quaid-e-Azam all the other politicians of Pakistan have a checkered history. When Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto was alive I never took Zardari seriously, he was overshadowed by the towering personality of Benazir Bhutto.



It was only after her sad demise that the true potential of Zardari was recognized and his true colors were revealed. Very few people know how difficult it was to hold the party together after the vacuum created after her death. The skeptics were sure that People's Party will disintegrate, there were internal as well as external pressures trying to create rift among the leaders and followers of the only anti-establishment political party of Pakistan. It was a time when each and Pakistani in general and Sindhi in particular was extremely angry, there was a dominant element of helplessness in this anger. People were baffled that how easily the establishment could murder the most popular political figure of the country in front of thousands of people and just get away with it. The symbolism of the event was even more callous, the setting of Liaquat bagh was carefully chosen, the enemies of Pakistan were sure that the event will spark the most powerful separation movement in Sindh. Asif Zardari may not be the most eloquent, articulate person (though he has improved a lot now), but when he declared amidst anti Pakistan slogans that 'Pakistan Khappay' that was the time when he established himself as the custodian of the largest political party of Pakistan.

When Punjabi leaders of the party couldn't find the courage to even participate in the funeral of Benazir Bhutto, Mr. Zardari had the courage to nominate a Punjabi Prime Minister. Imagine how tough the decision of ignoring the candidature of Amin Fahim was, remarkable courage is required to take such bold step. Zardari's policy of national reconciliation is also working well so far, a number of Pakistanis are perturbed by the inclusion of MQM in ruling coalition. People ignore a simple fact that MQM have the potential of choking the most important city of Pakistan. At the moment it is unwise to start another internal front while the situation in NWFP and Baluchistan is volatile and

the external security situation of Pakistan is exceptionally perilous. We can't afford an internal rift now; moreover people voted for MQM and the only way to deal with the centrifugal forces is to include them in the process of decision making and sharing power with them..

The brightest and most colorful feather in Zardari's cap is the manner in which he facilitated the ouster of General Musharraf. Without any tall claims or Sultan Rahi fame 'Baraks' he moved smoothly inch by inch till the time was right to deliver the knockout punch. The matter was dealt with utmost dexterity and delicacy. There was an imminent threat of dissolution of legislatures. American were also unsure and hesitant, without causing much ado Zardari isolated Musharraf and he was shown the door much to the relief of Pakistanis.

Another daring decision taken by Zardari is to run for the office of the President of Pakistan. It was more convenient for him to run the show from the shadows since it is known to all that he is the one who calls the shots. Like his predecessor, who was the de-facto ruler of the country and yet blamed every failure on others. Zardari on the contrary has decided to take the bull by horns. His performance in the office will be closely observed by all and it will reflect upon the future of the PPP as well as the political career of Bilawal Bhutto.

I am not in agreement with Zardari's policy on restoration of judiciary, he may have his reasons but the fact remains that the overwhelming majority of the people of Pakistan want them to be restored.

Politics is not easy in a country where the military junta is one of the prime stakeholders in governance. The society is heterogeneous, with ethnic diversities and mutual distrust. The only possible path to success may be the policy of merit. I know it is very difficult since Zardari is known as 'Yaroon ka Yaar'. Yet this bitter pill is to be swallowed, he will be the President of Pakistan not the President of PPP. Pakistan is facing the most difficult times, internal and external threats are looming large. Zardari must work very hard to avert the disasters expected to emerge in near future. He is also laden with the task of presenting and fighting a case for democracy in Pakistan. Already Western media have started expressing their reservations in dealing with democratic forces in Pakistan. In my humble opinion Zardari is capable of handling the situation, he has grown, matured and groomed into the role of a true politician. However, it is easy to be politically correct when not in power; compromises and adjustment are to be made once one is enjoying power. While doing so the national interest of Pakistan must be upheld at all costs. May Allah be the protector and savior of Pakistan... ■

The politics of being Zardari

ince the announcement of Asif Ali Zardari as the candidate till this date, on the eve of the presidential election, the newspapers are full of verbal vitriol against the man who is going to be most likely voted as the next President of Pakistan.

The elite writers of this country and elsewhere love to have a go at him and this is almost pathological, if I can use a medical metaphor. Asif Zardari is the hangman, the fall guy, responsible for everything, including bad weather, bad times and bad everything. He is presented variously as the feudal lord, as the man who breaks promises, and now the two that I find quite below the belt are, the stories of his supposed mental illness and an informal reference to Zalmay Khalilzad, America's ambassador to the UN. As far as the popular sentiment and aspiration of the people goes, none of this makes political sense.

First, no one can deny the fact that Asif Zardari knows his politics, and knows it well. His politics is logical, often cold-hearted but pragmatic to the core.

Politics and morality are not the same thing. Politics is not religion nor is it a moral code. It is the art and the science of reaching, keeping and sustaining power. It is a system of making, or breaking alliances, for the common cause. The only principle that is of primal value for the party he leads, the Pakistan People's Party, is democracy and that power has to flow from the people and the ultimate objective is to deliver the goods to them. This is the basis on which the party has fielded Zardari as a candidate, and the path to that end is strictly according to the law.

Zardari knows his politics, and he also knows how political tactics can make dictators melt away, and turn fortunes around, can bring together parties that formerly never saw eye to eye. In an art that works through symbols, gestures and cleverly crafted statements, he uses the symbols and gestures effectively, politically and with results. He befriended his political opponents, he apologised to the people of Balochistan, he got his party workers to visit the graveyard of Altaf Hussain's brother killed in an ethnic conflict, and then got the MQM leadership to visit former chief minister Abdullah Shah's brother who was also killed in the conflict thus healing broken relations. Then the MQM leadership came to Garhi Khuda Bux to offer fateha for Benazir Bhutto. All these exchanges forged political ties between hitherto unlikely partners.

In his many speeches too, his political language is to forge ties that string history with present politics. The last I heard him, he spoke of his links with Khan Abdul Wali Khan whom he met in jail, with Nauroz Khan, who was the Baloch leader who was hanged and his relations helped with the funeral preparations.

And of course not to forget, his eleven years in jail were not spent writing a nostalgic book, they were used crafting a new political agenda. In jail, Asif Ali Zardari befriended opponents, made new contacts and reached out to the political class that was the underdog of Pakistani establishment.

Prisons are liminal spaces, waiting rooms of history. Prisons have reversed fortunes, taken people from rags to riches and vice versa. The prison period perhaps was the place where



Zardari trained in political strategy and planning. The ideas for reconciliation with Nawaz Sharif took root then, as did the method to appease the Baloch.

True, he is not a populist, he realises perhaps that he is not a Bhutto who would draw a vast ecstatic crowds. Now more than ever, with a family to look after, and a party to manage, he cannot even afford this, as populism in Pakistan is fraught with dangers. He has been a backseat manager of sorts, the prime strategist of the party.

Pakistan People's Party is built on tolerance, on how party workers, leaders, stalwarts can stand by the party in times of trouble. Imprisonment of Asif Ali Zardari for nearly eleven years earns him party credits few can compete with. This was not just simply about being in the prison but fighting many court cases, ranging from murder of Murtaza Bhutto, theft, bomb attack, all involving difficult and torturous court journeys, and not to forget the physical torture that the world witnessed.

Talking of principles, Zardari has proved loyal to the party and steadfast as well. Talking further of principles, here is a person who despite his eleven years in prison, has not pursued politics of revenge. And finally, here is a man who stood by his wife, and her politics, agreed to be her second in a society where it is not the done thing. So where is the feudal? To the urban people, everyone hailing from the rural areas especially rural Sindh who has some land has to be a "feudal" a term often used to malign the rural landowning families. Zardari is not a feudal. Even the lifestyle of the Zardari family has not been "feudal." Certainly land was not the only source of income. If he was a feudal, would he let his sisters come into the field of rough politics? And now speak vehemently on distribution of land to the landless women, which a typical conservative landowner would never do. His father was modern and middle-class businessman who ran cinema business in the 60s in Karachi. The family is versatile with deep political and social networks. Zardari is related to the Effendi family who laid the foundation of the Sind Madressah, an alma mater of political renaissance in Sindh. He is also related to Mirza Qulich Beg, the most prolific writer Sindh has ever produced. Mirza Qulich Beg has at least 500 writings, and translations to his credit, among them the classic Chachnameh. This is a class of families that is intellectually firmly rooted in history

In the final analysis, for me as a political worker from his party, and somebody touched by the magic of the Bhuttos, it is not Asif Ali Zardari that is important, but what he represents politically. He represents party unity and continuity, and has faithfully followed in the footprints of Benazir Bhutto.

If this is the man who has used helped us overcome the grief and tragedy of Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto's assassination, and if he has used political means to get us rid of the most detested and dangerous man in Pakistan's recent history, and then brought together Mohajirs and Sindhis, Balochis and Punjabis, and work to heal the wounds of the Pushtoons, isn't he the most important symbol of the federation?

Surely history makes its own selections. Zardari has made the necessary historical strides, and yes, the manoeuvres too, suffered trials and tribulations, sometimes made some glaring mistakes that he has boldly acknowledged, has learnt his lessons from his many experiences, and is now the man who moderates politics, moderates east and west, and moderates political power. He is the man who matters. A presidency with him in there will help in bringing coherence and cohesion to the nation, to the system, and to the federation and most importantly, this would be a befitting tribute to a man who took the reigns of a broken-hearted party and turned its grief to strength on the fated Dec 27, 2007. ■



The duty my wife left us

Last week the world was shocked, and my life was shattered, by the murder of my beloved wife, Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto. Benazir was willing to lay down her life for what she believed in -- for the future of a democratic, moderate, progressive Pakistan. She stood up to dictators and fanatics, those who would distort and defy our constitution and those who would defame the Muslim holy book by violence and terrorism. My pain and the pain of our children is unimaginable. But I feel even worse for a world that will have to move forward without this extraordinary bridge between cultures, religions and traditions.

I married Benazir in 1987 but spent less than five years living with her in the prime minister's house over her two terms in office, which were interrupted by military interventions. I spent more than 11 years in Pakistani jails, imprisoned without a conviction on charges that former prime minister Nawaz Sharif and Pervaz Musharrf (who brought and pursued the charges) have now publicly acknowledged were politically motivated. Even before Benazir was first elected prime minister, in 1988, Pakistan's intelligence agencies began working to discredit her, targeting me and several of her friends. I was called "Mr. Ten Percent" by their hired guns in public relations, and the names of her friends abroad were besmirched with ridiculous charges that they headed the nonexistent "Indo-Zionist" lobby.

This campaign of character assassination was possibly the first institutional application of the politics of personal destruction. Benazir was the target, and her husband and friends were the instruments. The purpose was to weaken the case for a democratic government. It is perhaps easier

to block the path of democracy by discrediting democratic politicians.

During the years of my wife's governments, she was constrained by a hostile establishment; an interventionist military leadership; a treacherous intelligence network; a fragile coalition government; and a presidential sword of Damocles, constantly threatening to dismiss Parliament. Despite all of this, she was able to introduce free media, make Pakistan one of the 10 most important emerging capital markets in the world, build over 46,000 schools and bring electricity to many villages in our large country. She changed the lives of women in Pakistan and drew attention to the cause of women's rights in the Islamic world. It was a record that she was rightly proud of.

Her murder does not end her vision and must not be allowed to empower her assassins. Those responsible -- within and outside of government -- must be held accountable. I call on the United Nations to commence a thorough investigation of the circumstances, facts and cover-up of my wife's murder, modeled on the investigation into the assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafiq al Hariri. And I call on the friends of democracy in the West, in particular the United States and Britain, to endorse the call for such an independent investigation. An investigation conducted by the government of Pakistan will have no credibility, in my country or anywhere else. One does not put the fox in charge of the henhouse.

But it is also time to look forward. In profound sadness, the torch of leadership in the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has been passed to a new generation, to our son, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. I will work with him and support him and protect him to the extent possible in the trying times ahead. The Bhutto family has given more than anyone can imagine to the service of our nation, and in these difficult days it is critical that the party remain unified and focused. My wife, always prescient and wise, understood that. Knowing that the future was unpredictable, she recommended that the family keep the party together for the sake of Pakistan. This is what we aim to do.

The Musharraf regime has postponed the elections scheduled for Tuesday not because of any logistical problems but because Musharraf and his "King's Party" know that they were going to be thoroughly rejected at the polls and that the PPP and other pro-democracy parties would win a majority. Democracy in Pakistan can be saved, and extremism and fanaticism contained, only if the elections, when they are held, are free, fair and credible.

To that end, the people of Pakistan must be guaranteed elections that are (1) conducted under a new, neutral caretaker government, free of cronies from Musharraf's party; (2) supervised by an independent and autonomous election commission formed in consultation with the major political parties; (3) monitored by trained international observers who have unfettered access to all polling stations as well as the right to conduct exit polling to verify results; (4) covered by electronic and print media with the freedoms they had before martial law was imposed on Nov. 3; and (5) arbitrated by an independent judiciary as provided for in the constitution. In addition, all political activists, lawyers and judges being detained must be released.

The enemies of democracy and tolerance who took my wife from me and from the world can and must be exposed and marginalized. Dictatorship and fanaticism have always been rejected by the people of Pakistan. If free and fair elections are held, those forces will be defeated again on Feb. 18. And on that day, the vision and indefatigable spirit of Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto will burn brightly, and, in the words of John Kennedy, "the glow from that fire can truly light the world." ■



The act of balancing

Now Zardari's main task will be to act as a channel between the military and the political government, and coordinate the imperatives of political and popular governance with the professional and corporate interests of the military

The September 6 presidential election was a historic event as it paved the way for a civilian to take the post after a gap of over seven years. General Pervez Musharraf had manoeuvred his re-election in October 2007, securing the presidency till 2012, but the rapidly changing political scenario forced him to quit last month.

The new occupant of the presidency will have to contend with the legacy of its domineering role in governance and political management as articulated by Generals Ziaul Haq and Pervez Musharraf. The latter often stepped beyond his constitutional domain to function as the chief executive, undermining the role of the prime minister. Zia commanded the political system even after appointing a prime minister and restoring the constitution in 1985.

The presidential elections were orderly. The three candidates and their respective political parties campaigned with members of the electoral college, comprising the two houses of Parliament and the four provincial assemblies. Asif Ali Zardari had a clear advantage over other candidates as his Pakistan People's Party has the largest number of legislators at the federal and provincial levels. Another advantage was that the PPP is the ruling party at the Centre and shared power in all provinces. However, this was no obstacle to the other candidates' campaigns.

Mushahid Hussain of the PMLQ was the only candidate who threw punches at Zardari. The PMLN candidate, former Chief Justice Saeeduzzaman Siddiqui, presented his perspective on national issues rather than criticising other candidates. Zardari followed a similar strategy of outlining his political agenda and why he was contesting the elections.

In an article published in the Washington Post, Zardari maintained that the decision to contest the presidential elections was made on the insistence of his party, to cope with the challenges currently faced by Pakistan and to facilitate the transition from 'dictatorship to democracy'.

Zardari is confronted with a host of domestic and foreign policy challenges that will impact the future direction of Pakistani state and society. Zardari and the PPP are confident that they have the determination and capacity to cope with these challenges. However, this optimism is not fully shared by large sections of informed public opinion that view his elevation to the highest office with scepticism.

Zardari's close links with the PPP may become an obstacle in adopting a non-partisan role. As co-chairman of the PPP, he exercises disproportionate influence on the prime minister, who is junior to him in the party hierarchy and owes his office to Zardari. Zardari's position is further strengthened on his ascension to the presidency.

This raises two fundamental questions. First, will he carry on with the co-chairmanship of the PPP, which would be the first case of an active civilian party leader holding the presidency? Second, will he allow the prime minister and his cabinet to grow as an autonomous political entity or will he continue with Musharraf's tradition of undermining the role of the prime minister and

the cabinet?

The PPP's current profile is so closely linked with Zardari that his dissociation will weaken the party's top command. Zardari has revamped the leadership by pushing aside some people who enjoyed special status during the Benazir Bhutto days. These sidelined leaders are expected to build pressure on the leadership structure if Zardari quits his party post. It will be an uphill task for the party to select his successor.

When one party controls all key offices, internal accountability mechanisms falter, weakening the capacity of the government to effectively vent political grievances. One wonders if the prime minister, his cabinet and parliament can come out of Zardari's shadow when he combines the presidency with the party leadership. This also reduces the prospects of change from within the PPP-dominated power structure.

One way to address these concerns is to amend the constitution to reduce the powers of the president that give him a clear edge over the political edifice. Zardari has indicated that he would be prepared to surrender the powers that perturb the political class. If this is done without unnecessary delay, it will help restore confidence in his presidency.

Another way to reduce controversies around the presidency is to build broad-based partnerships with other political parties. It will be important to develop a working relationship with the PMLN, which is stuck with its one-point agenda of the restoration of the judiciary on its terms. If Zardari takes the initiative of talking to the PMLN leadership, they are expected to overcome the trauma of not getting their way on the judges issue. The real test of the partnership is how the PPP deals with the PMLN-led government in the Punjab. The PPP needs to assure the PMLN that its government at the Centre will not destabilise the Punjab government.

There are signs that the two main parties are drifting in opposite directions. This trend is likely to be reinforced as PMLN members from the Punjab voted against Zardari, reducing his vote there. Unless the two sides realise that an open confrontation will be harmful for both the PPP and the PMLN, they will continue to move towards a bitter conflict. If the presidency can help defuse this tension, it would be a great service to democracy and will also show that Zardari can rise above partisan considerations to serve national interests.

Two other factors will influence the future of the presidency. First, the extent to which the president and the government will own the ongoing war on terrorism. They need to provide clear political backup to the Pakistan Army, which is dealing directly with the Taliban and other militants. Such support is needed to boost the morale of the army and paramilitary personnel at the frontlines.

Second is how they will address American concerns that some sections of the Pakistani intelligence community and civilian administration are quietly supporting militancy in the tribal areas. On the other hand, Pakistanis are perturbed by unilateral US military action in the tribal areas. The president needs to work towards removing the gaps in the American and Pakistani approaches towards terrorism.

The most daunting challenge for the president will be to maintain cordial relations with the military top brass. Zardari's main task will be to act as a channel between the military and the political government, and coordinate the imperatives of political and popular governance with the professional and corporate interests of the military.

This will be the first time that a civilian president will chair the National Command Authority and the National Security Council. The military will closely monitor how the new civilian president functions.

Zardari has to balance pressure from at least five quarters – the political class, his party and the government, provincial interests, the military and the international community. Above all, there is a threat of economic meltdown. These are formidable challenges, and the new president is expected to help the government cope with them. ■

A new President

Media blitzkrieg by prophets of doom against largely consensus presidential candidate Senator Asif Ali Zardari has died unsung on the eve of the elections rendering its perpetrators deeply bruised by the backlash of humiliation.

They have even strongly reacted to and bitterly criticised a maverick proposal that army should step in and clean the Augean stables that Pakistan was turned into by the long rule of General Pervez Musharraf and much too repeated military interventions deflecting Pakistan from a democratic course. They unanimously support Army Chief General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani's commitment to keep the institution out of and away from politics, devote itself to the national defence including eradication of terrorism from its roots and be at the beck and call of the democratic government.



In this context I would like to quote from a commentary by Robert Templer: "Seize this chance to support Pakistani democracy" (Financial Times, August 31).

"Not much good news has come out of Pakistan recently..., it is worth bearing in mind that the country has a legitimate government for the first time in years and no crowds have taken to the streets... What is needed now is recognition that there is no quick fix, no one essential figure to lead the process and no underhand deal to be brokered by shadowy emissaries from London or Washington."

He has responded succinctly to those who still believe that military has the answers to Pakistan's problems. "...what is needed are policies that put the Pakistani people ahead of personalities and institutions ahead of facile answers."

Templer has also given the right advice to outsiders who think that by following their dictates Pakistan can pull itself out of the quagmire. He supports the policy of the democratic government of bringing Tribal areas into the pale of civilisation. He has endorsed what the PPP coalition is trying to change, that is, end the tribal people's disconnect with the rest of the democratic country and bury their status as second class citizens.

One would agree with Mr Templer and his advice to Islamabad's Western friends is absolutely right that for "Pakistanis, the critical issue is the economy. Inflation is above 25 per cent. Families are struggling to buy food and power cuts are undermining industry. A US Senate plan to provide \$15bn (€10bn, £8bn) in civilian aid over a decade is a start, as is some emergency food support, but all donors need to move rapidly to help stabilise the economy. An international plan to improve infrastructure, healthcare, education and justice should be the next step."

While he has reasons to be critical of General Pervez Musharraf and his policies, he needs to give credit to the Pakistani military ever since the change in its leadership for leaving no stone unturned in combating terrorism. No doubt Washington gave General Musharraf unaccountable billions in dollars; Pakistani military does need new high-technology weapons to penetrate into areas to fight insurgents operating from most rugged, difficult and impregnable terrain. Indeed, Pakistani soldiers have definitely done better than NATO troops – at a heavy human cost – in countering Taliban threats and aggression. It is uncharitable to an army that has lost more than thousand of its soldiers that it has not fared well and that its "military's intelligence agencies still view jihadis as a foreign policy tool."

Ever since the democratic change in Pakistan, Islamabad has indeed been rapidly improving police and civilian intelligence agencies in order to make them part of its overall strategy to counter terrorism and provide security to its citizens.

"The best policy for the west would be an end to the view that outsiders can shape Pakistani politics... Instead, the US and others need to broaden their relationships with the country, expanding trade, opening markets and providing more education assistance."

Now Pakistan has a democratic government with a unanimously elected prime minister and an elected democratic president. As such Mr Templer's advice to the west has come about just at the right time, that with Mr Musharraf gone "the world's view of Pakistan must change. Anxieties about state failure and loose nukes are overstated and hypocritical when the steps most needed to prevent them – addressing the economic and social concerns of the population – are ignored. Dictatorship has been applauded while an elected government is viewed with snide suspicion. But that government provides the first opening in years to confront extremism and tackle Pakistan's real problems." ■



Welcome the President

Mr Asif Ali Zardari has been chosen by the representatives of the people of Pakistan as the next president of Pakistan and to remain so concurrently with the parliament for five years, till 2013. His victory was a foregone conclusion because of the mathematics of support which he achieved at the centre and in the provinces. Fortunately, however, despite all the media controversy, the political system under the Constitution was much less stressed about his nomination than might have been imagined.

The result achieved by the PPP is owed to its political positioning after the 2008 elections. It would be far-fetched to say that this political placement was actually done to bring about the presidency of Mr Zardari, but one can't ignore the deftness with which the party has been able to create a consensus of thinking in the provinces, except perhaps Punjab which coalesced first only to fracture as the PPP's coalition alliance became loose and then fell apart. Incidentally, most of the TV channel cassettes spewing dire predictions are focused on the split that took place between the two big parties.

The fright is actually at the extraordinary powers of the president as they were left behind by President Musharraf, and most discussants keep referring to them because they think that Mr Zardari will use them recklessly to bring Pakistan's political house of cards down. But the truth is that his relationship to Article 58-2(b) is completely different from the past presidents who were part of the system of power "troika" set up to diminish the powers of the prime minister in a parliamentary form of government and keep parliament in check. In fact, he can't even be compared to the earlier PPP President Sardar Farooq Leghari because Mr Zardari is the top leader of the PPP rather than one who might nurse ambitions to become one. So he will not be in the presidency to water down the powers of Mr Yousaf Raza Gilani and parliament by stressing his relationship with the army chief as happened under the troika system. And this is an important consideration for the consolidation of the civilian system at the expense of the notorious troika that laid the system low in the 1990s.

There is some leeway in the "consultation" powers — as opposed to "advice" — he will have over the provinces, and those powers come from the 17th Amendment. By all accounts and his own assertions, he wants to undo the 17th Amendment, and the offended PMLN will have to help him do that in the parliament when the time is ripe and it is advantageous to the system rather than to any one or other party or leader. Meanwhile, the current ground reality is that the PPP will not benefit at all if it starts a battle in Lahore. Popular support in the province is not with the PPP after the long drawn out drama of the lawyers' movement and the unpleasant denouement of the Murree Agreement signed at the heyday of the PPP-PMLN romance after this year's elections. Indeed, that is why the PPP still wants the PMLN back in the coalition government at the centre!

One thing should be clear to both Mr Zardari and Mr Sharif. Pakistan's policies will have to be informed by wisdom, as opposed to populism, in the coming days. The state needs a supple response from the PPP government; and Mr Zardari will have to achieve a measure of pragmatism ahead. A number of crises of the state have come together and are crowding around the government in Islamabad. The provinces need to be placated over their autonomy. Law and order is bad everywhere but there is global terror in the Tribal Areas and insurrection in Balochistan. Indeed, never was the centre required to give as many rights away to the provinces as now.

Last but not least, Pakistan will have to give up the habit of designating undefeatable enemies in the region and at the global level, and learn to promote its national economy in place of its role as a "challenger" state. President Zardari should demonstrate the practical wisdom to deal with the situation. He has given us a glimpse of it in the wake of the political scenario emerging after the martyrdom of Benazir Bhutto. But now the buck will stop at him and he won't be able to blame anyone else for failure.

A good way to kick off would be to promote people of merit and credibility and integrity in positions of authority and responsibility and shed the horrible stigma of cronyism attached to his team. Loyalty and merit are not mutually exclusive. Of course, even a hint of corruption would be disastrous for the regime because it would give fresh ammunition to his many detractors. ■



Only he can pull Pakistan out of trouble

Few will know Zardari, the country's new president, better than Sindh over four decades. Though a lot of criticism has been hurled at Zardari and apprehensions cast ident, Mirza, a long-time close friend and fellow party member, has no doubt that the PPP co-chairman deserves the slot. A friend of his since 1967, Mirza testifies that though Zardari never mentioned this desire to become president or hold any other high of fice, the fact is that his goals were always high. Aside from the long -lasting friendship, there is also a familial bond between the two as Mirza and Zardari's grandmother were also sisters.

Mirza is convinced that the criticism cast at Zardari is simply and extension of the anti-people and anti-Bhutto motives of some quarters and the disapproval of his candidacy is nothing more than that.

This campaign, feels Mirza, has been around for quite a while. Commenting on his leadership, Mirza recalls that even as younger boys, Zardari always had a certain something in him that he was cut out to be a leader. "Even as a teenager, his thinking was always broad and bright...he was far-sighted in his views."

As a more recent example, Mirza cites Zardari's demeanor right after the tragic assignation of his wife Benazir Bhutto. "For the first time, people in Pakistan felt as if their hope had been killed...but Asif revived that hope...he introduced the slogan of Pakistan Khappay (we want Pakistan). Mirza also has little doubt that Zardari has changed the direction of Pakistan since that tragedy, and stresses that he is the only one who can pull Pakistan out of further trouble.

"Look, what ever it is, for the first time in history the provinces have passed resolutions calling for Asif to become president," he stresses. Knowing him as a friend, a relative and as a fellow party member, Mirza vows that Zardari will be a responsible president.

Talking about the beginning of the campaign to elect Zardari president, as opposed to any other figure, Mirza says that the PPP co-chairman did not harbour any intensions to become president initially. "When you come to power, there are always a group of people around you...sycophants... they will push you to do this or do that," says Mirza, recalling that there was also calls for Zardari to become prime minister himself. However, Zardari always discouraged such ideas and proposals minister. Only recently, when the central executives committee of the PPP and the provincial assemblies decided that he would be their ideal candidate, did Zardari give thought to the possibility, elaborates Mirza.

"My prayers are with him; I hope that all the success that he has had and will have will benefit Pakistan and its people." ■

Zardari takes Pak-helm in mid-storm

With Pakistan's economy tanking and a Taliban insurgency raging, new president Asif Ali Zardari must choose if the time is right to risk more instability by entering a confrontation with old rival Nawaz Sharif. A new power struggle is about the last thing the West would want in a nuclear-armed Muslim state whose backing is central to defeating al Qaeda and helping NATO stabilise Afghanistan.



Zardari and Sharif formed a coalition this year aimed at booting former army chief Pervez Musharraf out of the presidency, but after accomplishing that last month, their alliance collapsed and Sharif became leader of the opposition. Sharif held the premiership twice in the 1990s, as did Zardari's late wife, Benazir Bhutto, when their rivalry undermined democracy to a point that many people welcomed Musharraf's coup in 1999. Analysts fear vendettas from the past could haunt Pakistan. If Zardari and others "have revenge in mind, then the game is lost before it is begun", concluded Ardeshtir Cowasjee, one of Pakistan's most venerable columnists, in the Dawn a day after Zardari's election.

International lenders won't like giving billions of dollars to keep Pakistan afloat if they fear political battles will divert the government from putting finances in order. "We don't care who become the president," Muhammad Hafiz told Reuters as he walked past a rally of celebrating Zardari supporters in the southern city of Hyderabad. "What we care about is security problems, and rising prices." Inflation is running at nearly 25 per cent, and government borrowing needs to be cut drastically.

Ahsan Chishti, head of international institutional sales at Karachi-based brokerage house BMA Capital Ltd., saw a chance of better decision-making, with a president and a prime minister from the same party, but the right steps had to be taken quickly. "Broader challenges will have to be subverted without delay for any sustainable market recovery," Chishti said.

The margin of Zardari's victory in Saturday's vote by lawmakers from the upper and lower houses of parliament and four provincial assemblies should afford him some sense of security. But analysts say Zardari needs a drastic image make-over. Though never convicted on various charges of corruption and murder, he spent 11 years in jail. He denies any wrongdoing. "The challenges ahead are enormous," the News said in an editorial on Sunday. "For a starter, he needs a quick and complete makeover of his image from a wily politician ... not mindful of whether he was breaking his promises or losing his credibility."

How he handles the reinstatement of judges dismissed by Musharraf last year will go some way to determining his credibility, as he has stalled on the issue so far. Eyes are now on Punjab, Pakistan's richest province, to see if Zardari tries to destabilise a PML-N provincial government. The rivals could duck early confrontation while they build up war chests after a decade out of power. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice voiced optimism that Zardari would deliver in the war against militancy, which is the principal U.S. interest in Pakistan. A close adviser to Zardari, who requested anonymity, characterised Zardari's understanding with army chief General Ashfaq Kayani, "We run the politics, you run the army. We won't interfere." ■

Mr President, Sir

Let it be known to all and sundry that Mr Asif Ali Zardari is now the President of Pakistan," the government official read from a typical gazette notification issued after he was sworn in and tears welled up in my eyes. I could remember the not-so-chilly day of December 1988 when a young, bright and faintly emotional woman became the prime minister of this godforsaken country. My cousins and I were sitting with my mother, aunts and some of their friends. These were women who had strong political views, and although they were friends or family, they were as diverse as the wife of the Naib Amir of Jamaat-e-Islami, my paternal aunt who was a major supporter of the National Awami Party and my mother, a diehard People's Party supporter. I vividly remember that every single woman in that room felt very good and wished Benazir well. Apathy and pessimism, cultivated by Zia-ul-Haq's regime, had become the hallmark of our society and polity. That disappeared for some time after Benazir took oath. What happened in years to come, courtesy the combination of the antics of the intelligence agencies against the elected governments and the inherent weaknesses of political parties, paved the way for another military takeover. I hope it never happens again and those at the helm of affairs, particularly the new president, realise that to work with integrity and tolerance and applying their full potential is not just about the perpetuation of their own rule but about the fate of the country as a whole.



So much has been said about the electoral sweep and the subsequent oath-taking, the hopes, the apprehensions, friends celebrating the success, and foes fearing the concentration of power in one individual. For once President Zardari must listen to all of them, irrespective of which side of the fence they sit. The recent issue of the deposed judges is not swallowed properly even by his supporters. He is not a figurehead but a powerful president, for he commands all three: the institutional authority, the political power and the moral high ground. This is unparalleled in the post-Zia era. Neither Benazir Bhutto nor Nawaz Sharif could ever muster this formidable strength. Pervez Musharraf had the institutional authority, chequered political power for some years and of course he could not enjoy for a day any moral legitimacy after abrogating the Constitution. President Zardari has the real institutional and structural authority because that article of the Constitution stays which makes the president more powerful than the Parliament. He has all the political power in his hands, for he heads the ruling party and hence calls the shots in the government. He has all the emotional and moral strength not only drawn from his own and his family's grief but also from the pain and sympathy of a significant number of the people of Pakistan for their cherished leader Benazir Bhutto, the only undisputed martyr in the history of our politics.

As far as the choices in the war on terror are concerned, President Zardari has none other but to fight the war and the people have to own it. The people can only own it if they trust their government. Sooner than later, people will judge the government on its performance and not on the amount of struggle it has put in to get rid of the dictatorship. The president has not necessarily enjoyed an unblemished reputation. But this is his chance to redeem. This is the last chance for the People's Party to make a real mark for itself. ■

Priorities for the President



Asif Ali Zardari's win, without doubt, is a triumph of democratic forces. After his election, Pakistan's parliament stands completed. The 481 votes he received reflect the massive mandate parliament has bestowed on him. Numbers aside, the more important thing is that the country has got its fifth civilian president.

The history of the presidency is rather dismal in Pakistan. The office was created by the 1956 Constitution. In the 52 years of its existence, the office has seen 32 years of rule by military strongmen. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto took charge of the presidency under extraordinary circumstances taking oath as president on December 20, 1971, when the country was reeling from the separation of its eastern wing. It must be borne in mind that the country's constitutions, till the passage of the 1973 Constitution, had remained pro-presidency and this had come at the expense of parliament's supremacy.

The 1973 Constitution corrected the balance between the office of prime minister and president. After its passage, four civilians became president -- Fazal Elahi, Ghulam Ishaq Khan, Farooq Leghari and Rafiq Tarar. They worked for a total period of 17 years, which includes three years of working during army rule. This is still less than the two years that generals have ruled since 1973.

General Ziaul Haq inflicted tremendous damage on the 1973 Constitution by inserting the Eighth Amendment in 1985. The amendment, passed by his hand-picked non-party parliament, invested in the president, through the introduction of clause 2(b) into Article 58, the power to dissolve parliament and sack the prime minister, and appoint governors, services chiefs and judges of the superior courts. It was used by both Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Farooq Leghari who sacked their respective prime ministers and parliaments.

In 1997, however, parliament tried to reassert itself. It passed the Thirteenth Amendment which repealed the Eighth Amendment. However, the empire struck back in the form of General Pervez Musharraf who bulldozed the Seventeenth Amendment which brought back Article 58(2)(b). This infamous article was used by General Musharraf right till the time he resigned as a possible bargaining chip to check parliament's march.

After his election, Mr Zardari must show commensurate will to address the problems dogging the country. He has replaced a president, who, like other military rulers, ruled through palace intrigues and draconian actions. This style of running the presidency Mr Zardari will have to do away with. Unity of federation is another task that requires his immediate attention. He has proved his mettle by raising the slogan of Pakistan Khapay at a very delicate moment when the federation was endangered by nationalist elements in Sindh and other small provinces. He must take this message forward by addressing the complaints of Balochistan and other provinces, in addition to forming a bond between Punjab and other provinces. He should be helped in this by the votes he received from the three smaller provincial assemblies.

The war on terrorism, whose latest manifestation is the September 6 explosion in Peshawar, is another grave challenge, which will require his complete attention and close coordination between him and the prime minister. Other issues include the economy, particularly inflation, the power crisis and last but not least ties with India. All of these are central to the country's politico-economic stability. If Pakistan's experiment with a truly civilian president is to succeed, Mr Zardari should be lent support from all sections of society. One has seen enough of our swagger stick carrying general-presidents – it is time we gave a fair chance to civilian presidents. ■

Why Zardari should be President!



The political discourse in Pakistan these days is focused on the presidential elections. More specifically, it is centred on the question that can Asif Ali Zardari – once known as Mr Ten Percent – lay claim on the top slot of the government of Pakistan? While the PPP leaders are making their case for Asif Zardari to be the rightful president of the country, the opposition, prominent among them being the lawyers' community, the PML-N, and a section of the 'opinion makers', is leaving no stone unturned in trying to portray him as the most unfit man to be the head of state. Unfortunately, the debate is not taking a logical course and is fed by misplaced emotions, undue criticism, and even bias. How?

There is a clear procedure in the Constitution of Pakistan for the election of the president. The National Assembly, the four provincial assemblies, and the Senate form the Electoral College for the president. Of the presidential candidates, the one who gets a majority of votes in the Houses is declared president. Does Asif Zardari not fulfil the constitutional and legal requirements to run for the president? He does. Does he not come from the political party that wields a majority? Again, there is no hitch about it. It should be clear by now that no law of the land bars Mr Zardari to run for the top slot.

Now, those who argue against Zardari's right to run as president fall back on the past politics of about a decade or so in which Zardari turned out to be a corrupt entrant in politics on the back of the PPP government with his wife, Benazir Bhutto, as the prime minister. I think the clarity of thought is missing here among those who oppose Asif Zardari's nomination and election as president. Number one: he has been given a clean chit by the courts whose verdict should be accepted and honoured by each and every Pakistani. There is hardly a politician in Pakistan who does not carry the label of corruption on his chest – true or false. Number two: the PPP leaders point out that while he was languishing in jails and was being tortured, no judicial activism was at work to save him for a 'political' treatment in the jails. Certainly, that makes sense.

The hardcore PPP supporters also point out, though we may or may not agree with them, that the judges whom the PML-N and the lawyers want to 'restore' are the very same judges who had taken oath under the PCO besides the fact that the office of the judges was assaulted by the very people then who now pose as its saviour. It should be understandable to the critics who sometimes do criticism for the sake of it that public opinion has no role to play in the elections of the president since the Electoral College, which represents the popular vote in both the Houses, is authorised to exercise its constitutional role to elect a president.

Even on a human level, the case of Mr Zardari is compelling. After the mind-shattering assassination of Benazir Bhutto, Zardari courageously stepped into the shoes of a big responsibility – to save the country from falling apart. That was the time when, immediately after Benazir Bhutto's assassination, chaos ruled the streets of the country, especially Karachi and the masses had lost any direction as a nation.

The matter that is debatable is not whether Asif Zardari should or should not run for the presidency but what steps he should take if he becomes the president. The question whether we want a powerful president or a powerful prime minister is a relevant one. We have a parliamentary democracy. There should be no doubt about that. Asif Zardari, once he becomes the president, should make the 17th Amendment a thing of the past; that is a legitimate concern of the people of Pakistan. We do not want a strong president and we do not want a repeat of the political see-saw played between the presidents and the prime ministers. We have to understand that these are critical times for Pakistan. Getting rid of Musharraf is like starting it all over again. The immediate challenges being faced by the country are enormous; we do not have enough electricity to keep the wheel of our economy going, besides the flour crisis that continues to hit the common man.

If we fail to identify our priorities at the moment, we run the risk of losing whatever we are left with. The situation in Balochistan, tribal areas, and the rest of the country leaves us with no option but to put our acts together and bring stability in the country. We should not forget that though Musharraf has gone, the sword of the 'establishment' still hangs on the head of nascent democracy. It is no time for petty politics! Leave it for another occasion. ■

Why the world needs democracy in Pakistan?



The world has rightly welcomed President Pervez Musharraf's retirement as Army head and announcement that emergency rule will end on Dec. 16. However, a crucial question remains. Is Pakistan heading toward a democratic future? Parliamentary elections are currently scheduled for Jan. 8. Among many worrying signs of corruption, the election commission is biased and not acting on complaints of fraud.

Yet if credible elections are not held, it will have dangerous consequences for Pakistan and the rest of the world community: Extremism will continue to grow, putting everyone at risk. The world must act to prevent this. It must insist on free and fair elections in Pakistan.

President Musharraf's last term in office demonstrated that dictatorship has fueled extremism. The tribal areas of Pakistan have turned into havens for militants to mount attacks on NATO troops in nearby Afghanistan. Lack of governance has led to the expansion of extremism into settled areas of Pakistan.

Democracy offers the best hope of containing extremism. Yet democracy depends on a fair electoral process and an independent election commission willing and able to implement Pakistan's electoral laws to prevent vote fraud. That is not happening.

"Improvised" voting stations, a pseudonym for ghost polling stations, dot practically every parliamentary constituency. Electoral lists - prepared with financial assistance from USAID - are fatally flawed, with more than 10 million unverified and missing names (clearly enough to "win" or "lose" an election). The sanctity of any future ballot is doubtful against reports that district returning officers have been ordered to disperse 20,000 ballots already marked in favor of pro-government candidates. These bogus votes will be "cast" through the process of double voting in the "improvised" voting stations - in ballot boxes that are translucent rather than transparent.

Mayors continue to control guns, police and government resources and are using them shamelessly to campaign for government candidates. The election commission has asked for "a report" on such malpractices but has taken no concrete efforts to stop them. Politically motivated officials have been placed in charge of the civilian intelligence services and key state posts to manipulate the elections further, although election laws demand that such officials be neutral. An assistant to a former chief minister has been made a returning officer to preside over elections in his area. This complaint is being "looked into" as well, which is simply a fancy way of buying

time and doing nothing.

Punjab Province, which elects more than half of Pakistan's parliament, chooses 148 of the members through direct elections, excluding reserved seats for women and minorities. Of these seats, it is believed that 108 have been marked for rigging for government-backed candidates.

By the time all such reports of fraud come in from across the country, the elections will be over.

On top of all this, the media remains gagged, opposition leaders remain imprisoned, voter lists and voting locations have not yet been provided to opposition parties or to the general public in final print or electronic format, and no effort has been made by the pliant electoral commission to regularly consult with political parties on these issues.

There is also no plan in place to ensure that votes counted at voting stations will be delivered to local consolidation centers without being manipulated en route. The National Reconciliation Ordinance, which provides for an immediate consolidated count, has been suspended.

Put quite simply, the elections are being stitched up to give the country a continuation of the outgoing government - one that failed to prevent the spread of militancy, extremism, and terrorism. Major terrorist attacks, including the latest plot discovered in Germany this summer, tracked terrorists' footsteps back to Pakistan's northern areas.

Unless there is a change in the status quo, the past will repeat itself. But that change can only come when the world community puts its weight behind fair elections and its faith in the people of Pakistan.

Musharraf sent a delegation to the US last week to talk to the Bush administration and members of Congress about the current situation. This visit was only meant to feign progress and deflect criticism.

Musharraf wants the world to believe that the coming election, though not perfect, will be "good enough for Pakistan" given the country's difficult circumstances. But the current circumstances are of the regime's making. Those in charge can - and must - do much better on this count.

The international community must send a clear message that it will not be an accessory to this coming crime. It must not wait to see if the elections on Jan. 8 are free and fair. It must insist on a minimum set of benchmarks to be met for the election to be recognized as free and fair. If the benchmarks are ignored, the international community must be prepared to signal its displeasure to the Musharraf regime in specific, tangible ways.

Flawed elections will worsen instability in Pakistan as civil society and political parties protest. Imposing international restrictions after the fact will be fruitless and only deepen anti-American sentiment.

At the very least, America can and should prod Musharraf to give Pakistanis an independent election commission, a neutral caretaker administration, and an end to blatant vote manipulation.

America is the world's most powerful democracy. By standing up for democracy at this critical time, Washington can give this nuclear-armed nation an opportunity to reverse the tide of extremism that today threatens not only Pakistan but the larger world community as well. ■

This last piece of writing by Shaheed Benazir Bhatto was published not only in international but also national newspapers of Pakistan. Courtesy by The News.

Benazir Bhutto Quotations

Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Shaheed, fondly called "the Daughter of the East," became a victim of terror attacks. Twice elected the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Benazir faced many challenges. But she refused to be cowed down. Benazir Bhutto quotes inspire us to rally against mindless dominance and injustice. Here is a collection of quotes from Shaheed-e-Jamhurat which are collected from different links and papers.

On the attempt to assassinate her in October 2007.

"We are prepared to risk our lives. We're prepared to risk our liberty. But we're not prepared to surrender this great nation to militants. The attack was on what I represent. The attack was on democracy and very unity and integrity of Pakistan.

"Just before the attacks happened, I was very happy. The procession was one enormous party, the atmosphere was joyful, people were dancing in the street, it was magnificent. For me, that was the real Pakistan."

On threats to her life

"I know exactly who wants to kill me. They are dignitaries of General Zia's former regime who are behind extremism and fanaticism."

"The supporters of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda have threatened my assassination. The Taliban leader Baitullah Mehsud has said that his terrorists will 'welcome' me on my return."

"Despite threats of death, I will not acquiesce to tyranny, but rather lead the fight against it."

"Don't worry, I'm going to be safe, and God willing I'm going to be safe."

On returning to Pakistan in October after eight years of self-imposed exile she said;

"They would like me to come out on the streets now [in August], before the elections, to force General Musharraf's ouster. But I feel that if we have an agitation four months before the election, it could lead to yet another military rule ... or it may lead to extremists taking over."

"I know some people will think it was naïve [to return despite death threats]," she said. "But if you believe in a cause you have to pay the price." She said her duty was to mobilise "the people of Pakistan in the political life of their country".

Recalling a visit to her father before his execution

"I told him on my oath in his death cell, I would carry on his work."

"You can imprison a man, but not an idea. You can exile a man, but not an idea. You can kill a man, but not an idea"

"I haven't given myself away. I belong to myself and I always shall." - Vowing in 1987 that her arranged Islamic marriage to Karachi businessman Asif Ali Zardari would not upstage her political career.

"Democracy needs support and the best support for democracy comes from other democracies. Democratic nations should ... come together in an association designed to help each other and promote what is a universal value - democracy." - 1989 speech at Harvard University.

"The primary message of the visit and the talks will be that freedom has returned to Pakistan. It is not only a success for the people of Pakistan but for all those who believe in freedom." - Preparing for a visit to the United States in 1989, a few months after she first took office as Prime Minister.

"The voter has gotten more demanding. In 1988, the voters just wanted democracy. Our campaign was much more general then. Now we are more specific." - 1993 Associated Press interview on her ultimately successful bid for re-election. She had been ousted in 1990.

"I never influenced the awarding of a contract, and until my dying day I'll stand by it. They have tried to ruin me because they want to ruin the concept of a pluralistic, liberal Pakistan. To be accused of robbing, that really pains me." - In 1999, shortly after her conviction on corruption charges.

"I always said that I was innocent and a victim of a politically motivated trial." - Commenting in 2001 when her 1999 conviction on corruption charges was suspended and a new trial ordered.

"All our problems, all our disputes, all our disagreements can be resolved quickly to mutual satisfaction if we address the question."

"I think it's very unfortunate for Pakistan that yet another government, a democratically-elected government elected by the people has been dismissed. I think it says something about the fact that our democratic institutions haven't worked."

"Democracy is necessary to peace and to undermining the forces of terrorism".

"Pakistan is at a crossroads. We citizens are faced with a decisive choice this January 8th, Election Day. We can turn our backs on the years of dictatorship, fundamentalism, and economic decline."

"We have to modify our campaign to some extent because of the suicide bombings. We will continue to meet the public. We will not be deterred."



Radio Pakistan: Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Shaheed President and then PM of Pakistan addresses the nation on December 20, 1971.



Benazir Bhutto gets married with Asif Ali Zardari in Karachi on December 18, 1987.



Shaheed Benazir Bhutto with her children, Bilal, Bakhtawar, and Asifa at Alton Tower in Staffordshire on August 6, 1999.



Shaheed Benazir Bhutto and Asif Ali Zardari with Mr and Mrs Bush Senior in White House.



A group photo of Asif Ali Zardari and then PM Benazir Bhutto with US President and her wife.



Mr and Mrs Zardari sitting with top US Administration in a conference.



1995: Asif Ali Zardari with Shaheed Benazir Bhutto and children.



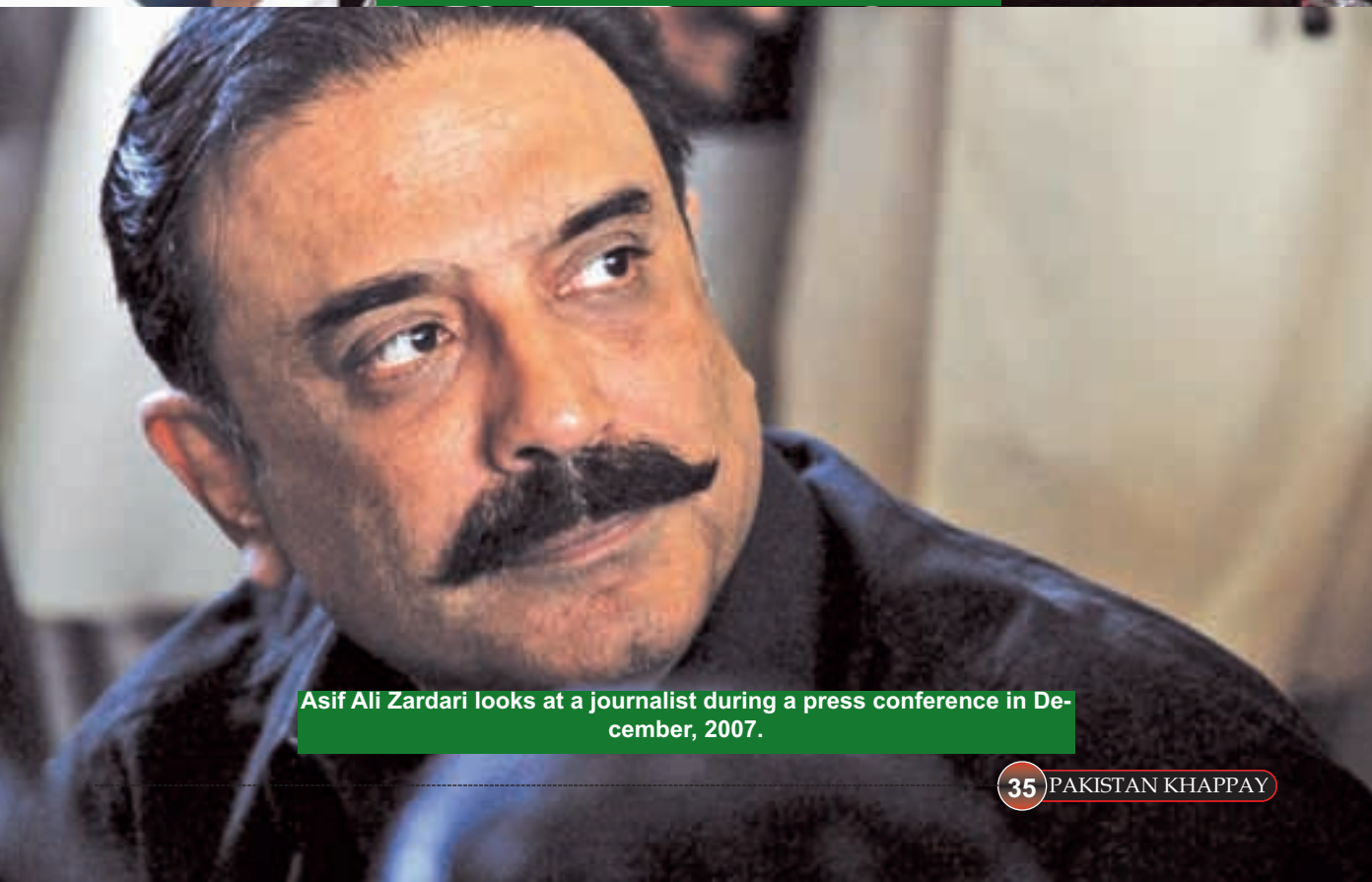
A family photo of Asif Ali Zardari.



Shaheed Benazir Bhutto tying Imam-e-Zamin on her husband's arm before his departure for Lahore on April 16, 2005.



Asif Ali Zardari and Benazir Bhutto in a dinner in Dubai.



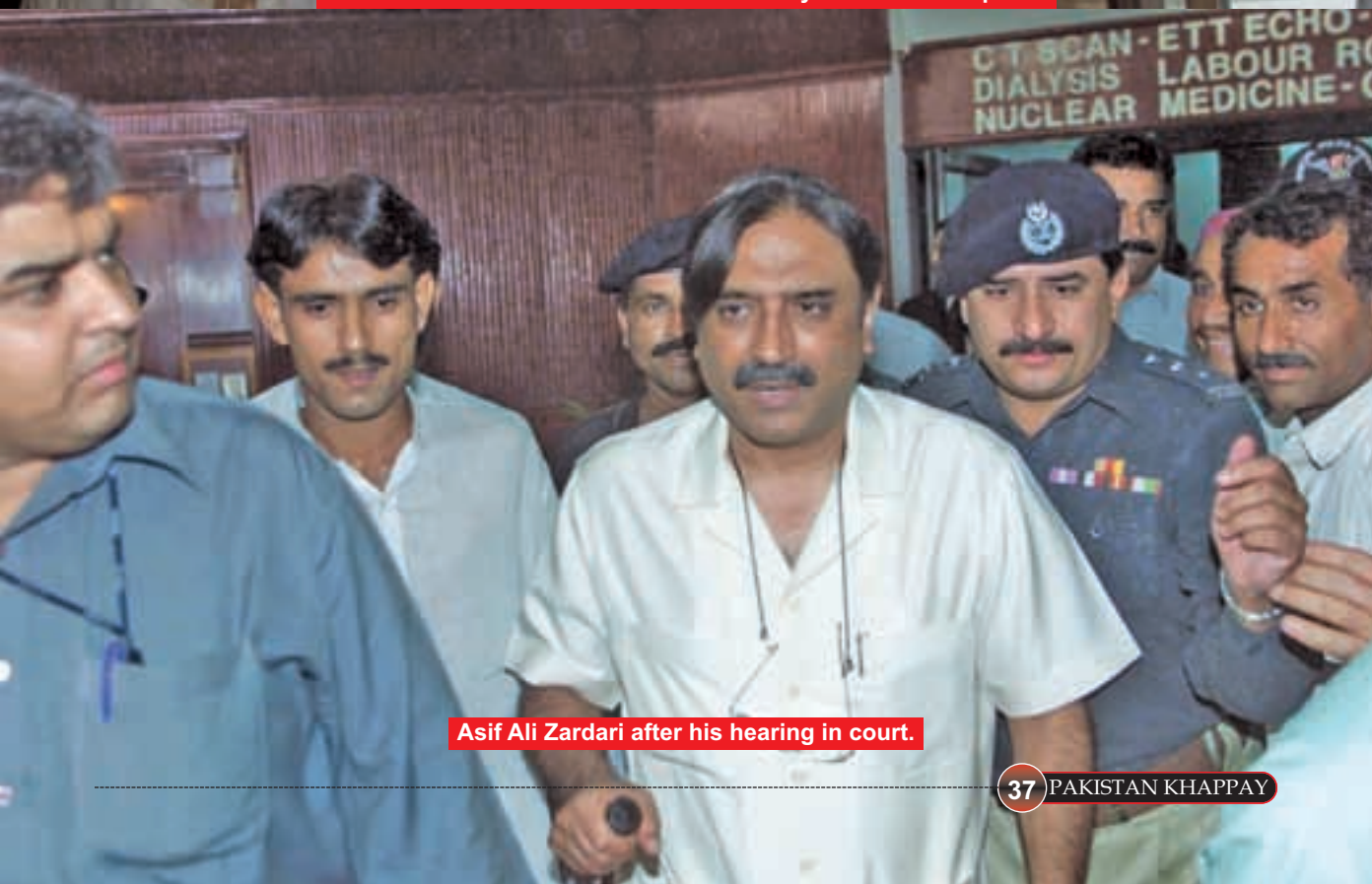
Asif Ali Zardari looks at a journalist during a press conference in December, 2007.



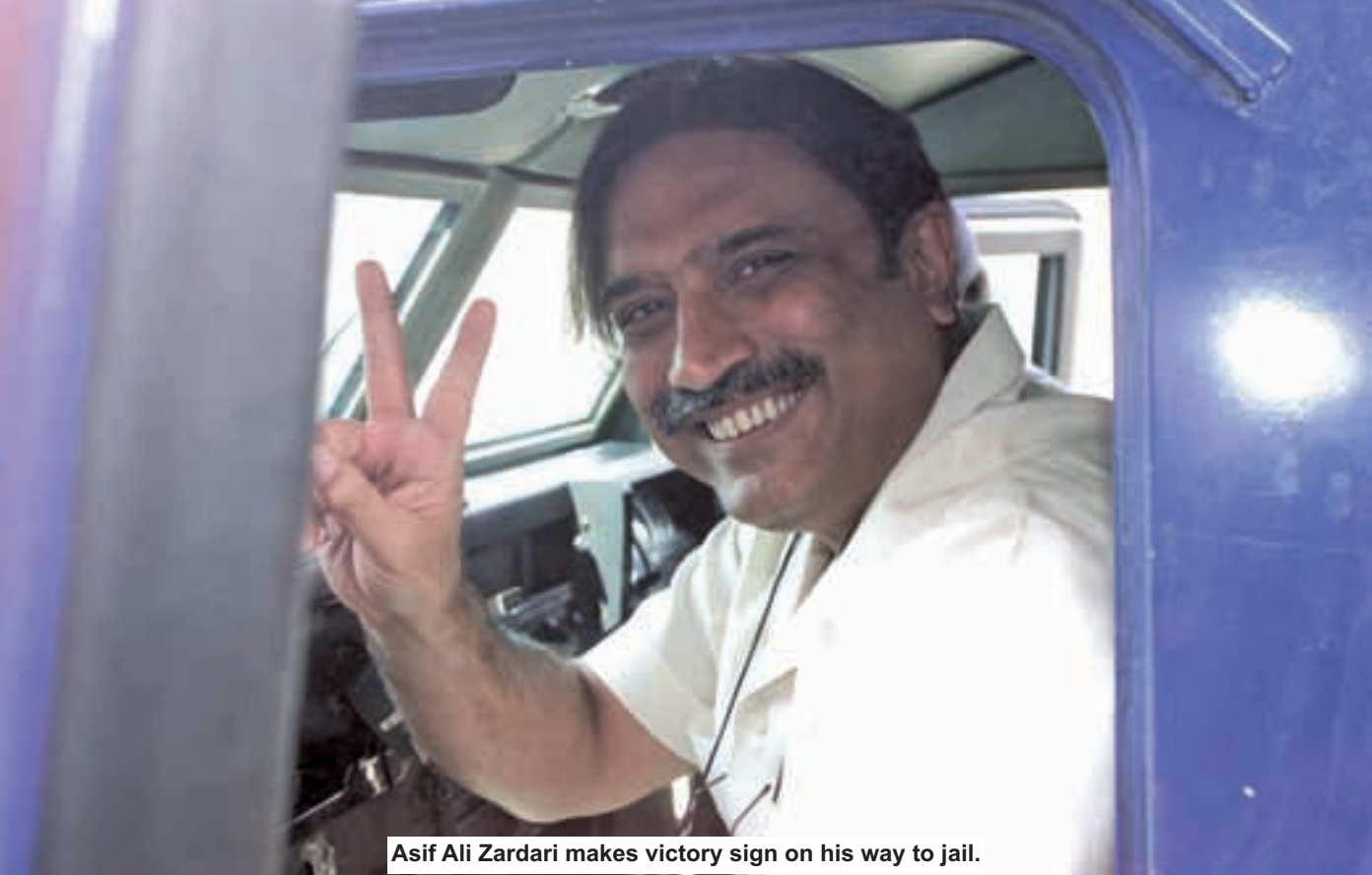
Zardari comes out of police van for appearing before accountability court in Rawalpindi.



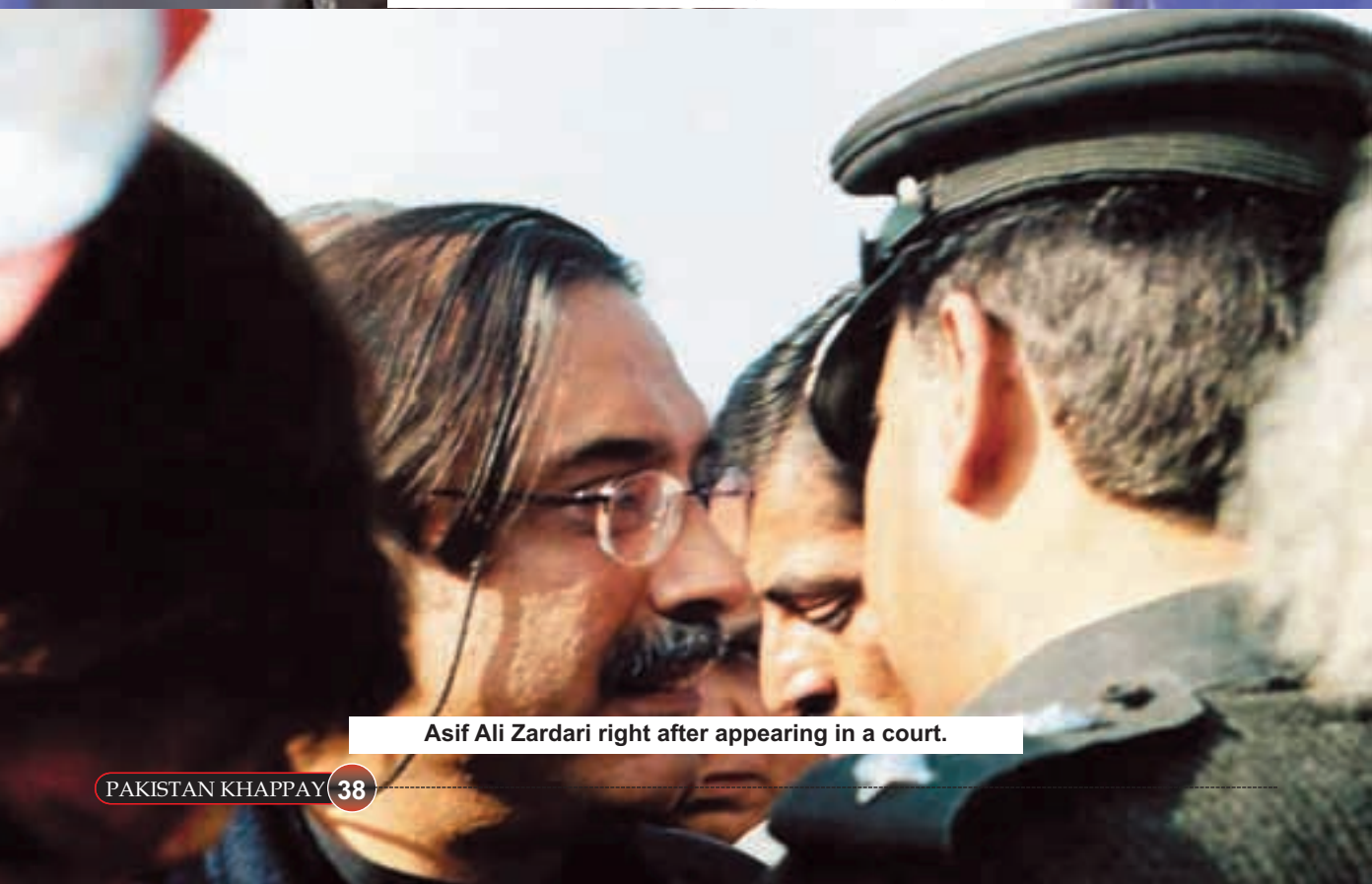
Asif Ali Zardari comes out of accountability court in Rawalpindi.



Asif Ali Zardari after his hearing in court.



Asif Ali Zardari makes victory sign on his way to jail.



Asif Ali Zardari right after appearing in a court.



Asif Ali Zardari makes a victory sign after appearing before accountability court in Rawalpindi in November, 2002.



Baseless prosecutions could not defeat the will of Asif Ali Zardari.



Asif and Asifa enjoying the light moments.



Asif Ali Zardari being checked by doctor before donating his blood at a camp to mark the birth anniversary of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto.



Asif Ali Zardari in a Dubai Hospital soothing his pains with the help of his children on June 10, 2005.



2007: Asif Ali Zardari comes out with his supporters after years of detention in jail.



Asif Ali Zardari making victory sign on reaching Dubai after release.



Asif Ali Zardari celebrating with party supporters in Dubai.



Zardari with Bilawal Bhutto Zardari during a news conference in Dubai.



Zardari addresses party workers in Dubai.



Asif Ali Zardari interviewed by Arshad Anjum in Dubai.



Dubai: Asif Ali Zardari posing with Arshad Anjum after interview.



Asif Ali Zardari wearing PPP colours like a garland, on the launch of PPP election campaign 2008.



Karachi: Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto cries out of joy and bliss as she lands on her motherland on December 18, 2007.



Lahore: Shaheed Benazir Bhutto smiles after arriving at a news conference at her residence on 16 November 2007.



Rawalpindi: Mohtarma waves to her supporters during her last election campaign rally on December 27, 2007.



Benazir Bhutto leaving the stage after addressing her last public rally in Rawalpindi.



Hyderabad: People hold candles during a prayer meeting held to mourn the assassination of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto in India on December 28, 2007.



A supporter of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto cries as he sits among dead bodies after the bomb blast.



A supporter of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto chants anti government slogans besides burning tires during a protest rally in Rawalpindi on Dec. 30, 2007.



Rawalpindi: A man shouts for help as he sits next to an injured after the suicide bomber's attack on Mohtarma's departure from Liaquat Bagh.



PPP supporters burning the Pakistan Muslim League-Q's property at its office, that backs President Pervez Musharraf, during a protest Peshawaron December 28, 2007.



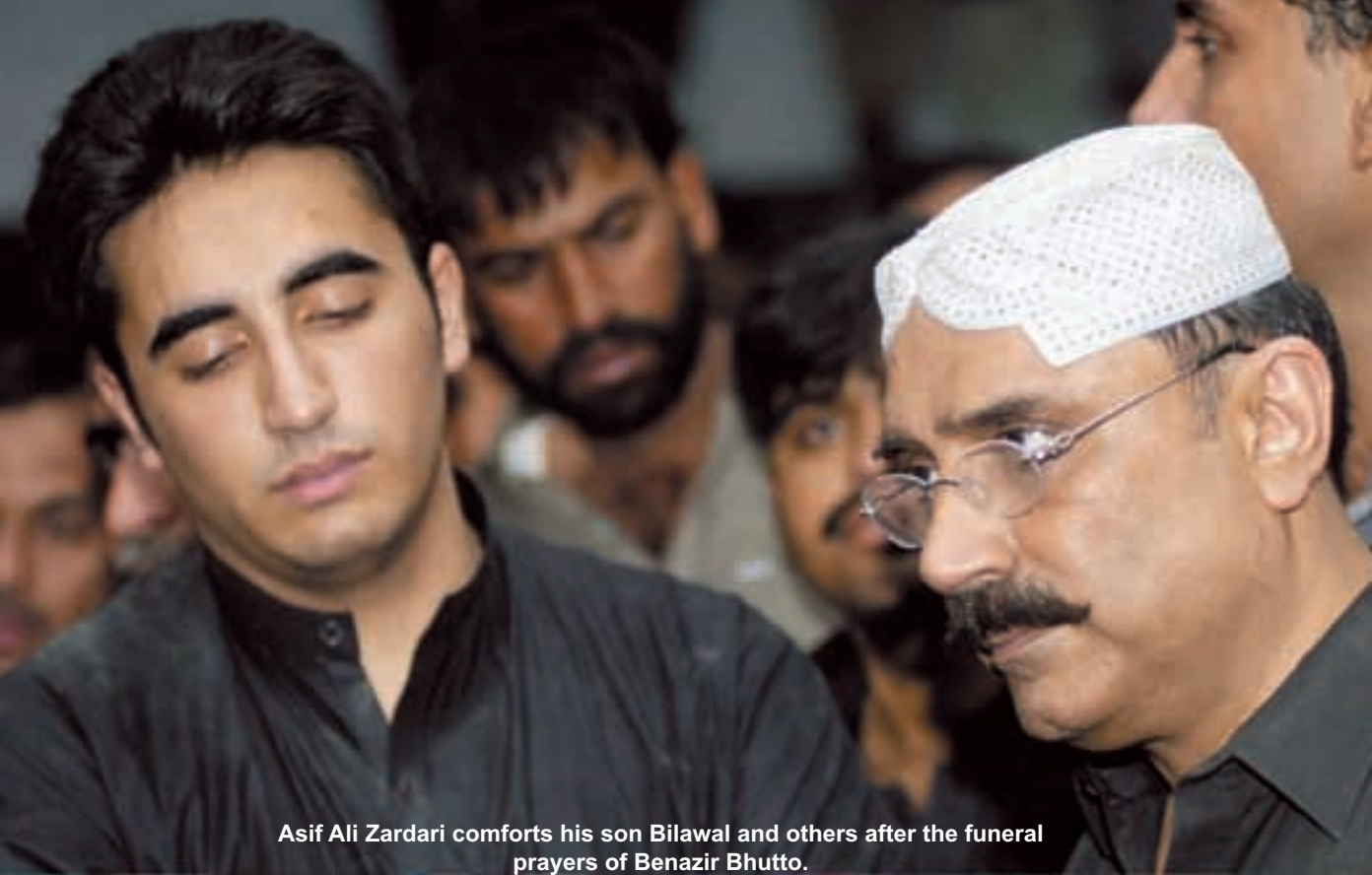
People who adored Mohtarma gather during funeral ceremony at Garhi Khuda Bakhsh on 28 December 2007.



Garhi Khuda Bakhsh: Asif Ali Zardari prays on his wife's grave along with his son Bilawal on Friday, December 28, 2007.



Asif Ali Zardari and Bilawal shower rose petals on the grave of Bhutt at Garhi Khuda Bakhsh.



Asif Ali Zardari comforts his son Bilawal and others after the funeral prayers of Benazir Bhutto.



Nahid Khan bitterly mourns over Mohtarma's grave in Garhi Khuda Bakhsh on 29 December 2007



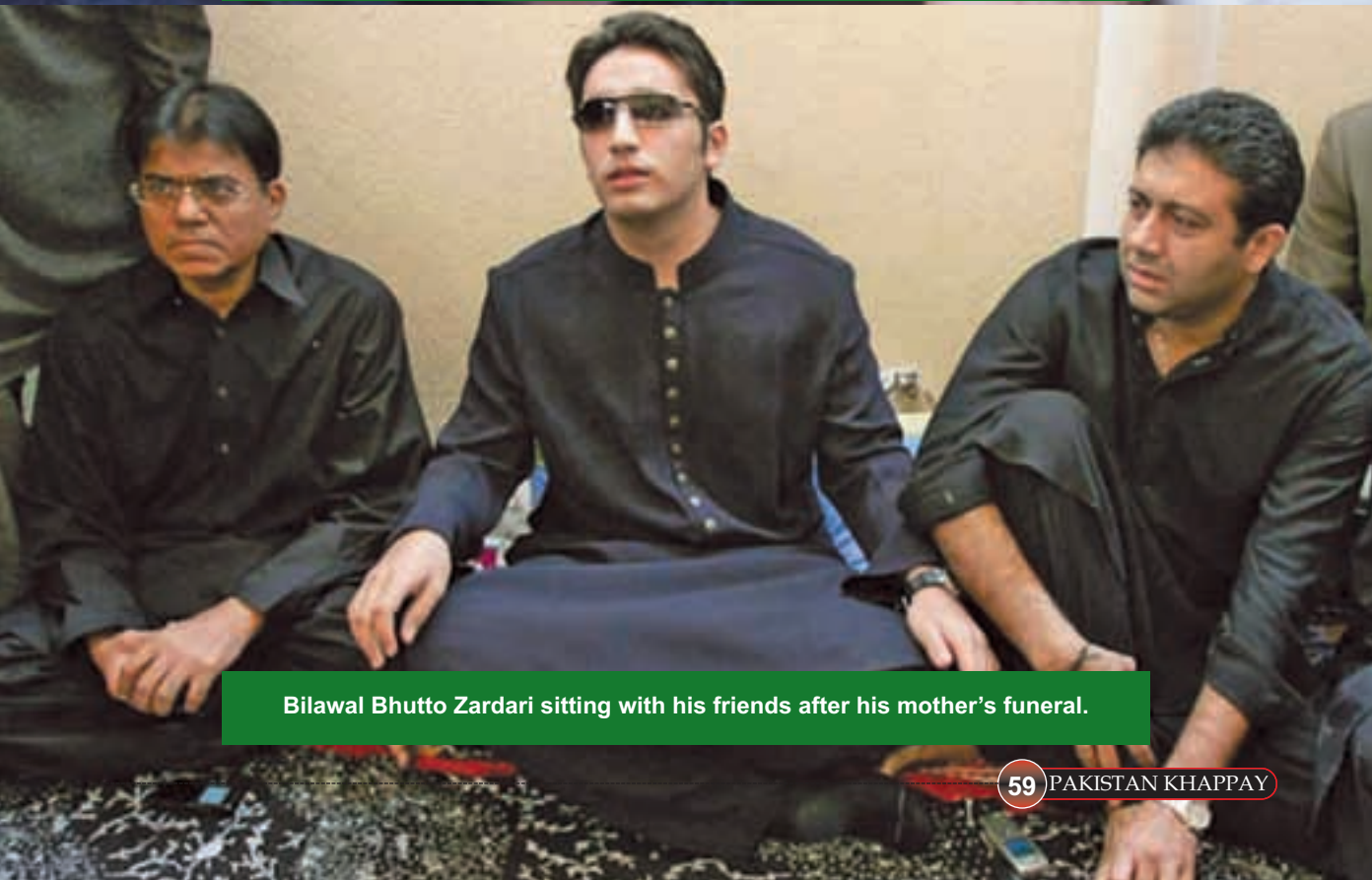
Bakhtawar and Asifa visit their mother's grave in Garhi Khuda Bakhsh on December 29, 2007.



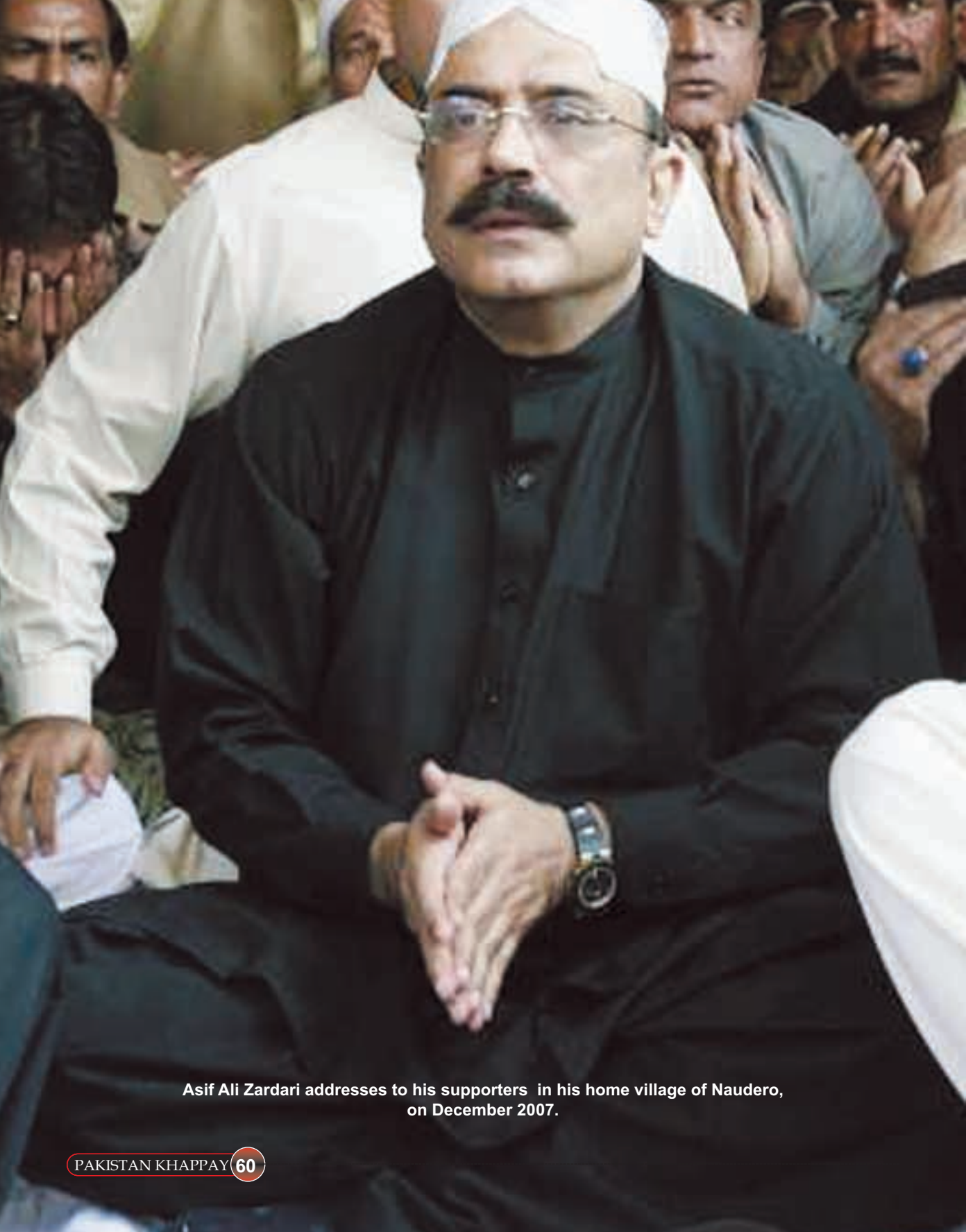
Peshawar: Supporters of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto offer prayers in the memory of Mohtarma and the victims of the attack on Bhutto on December 28, 2007.



Naudero: Asif Ali Zardari, husband of Pakistani opposition leader Benazir Bhutto, cries in her home village of Naudero on December 2007.



Bilawal Bhutto Zardari sitting with his friends after his mother's funeral.



Asif Ali Zardari addresses to his supporters in his home village of Naudero, on December 2007.



Bakhtawar Bhutto Zardari (R) spreads rose petals at the grave of her mother on August 23, 2008.



Bakhtawar Bhutto Zardari offers Fateha at the grave of her mother on August 23, 2008.



Asifa Bhutto Zardari showers rose petals on the grave of her mother at the family graveyard in Gahri Khuda Bakhs on August 25, 2008.



Asifa offering Fateha at the grave of her mother with relatives.



UAE Education Minister Sheikh Nahayan Mubarak Al Nahayan offers floral wreath at the grave of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto on January 2, 2008.



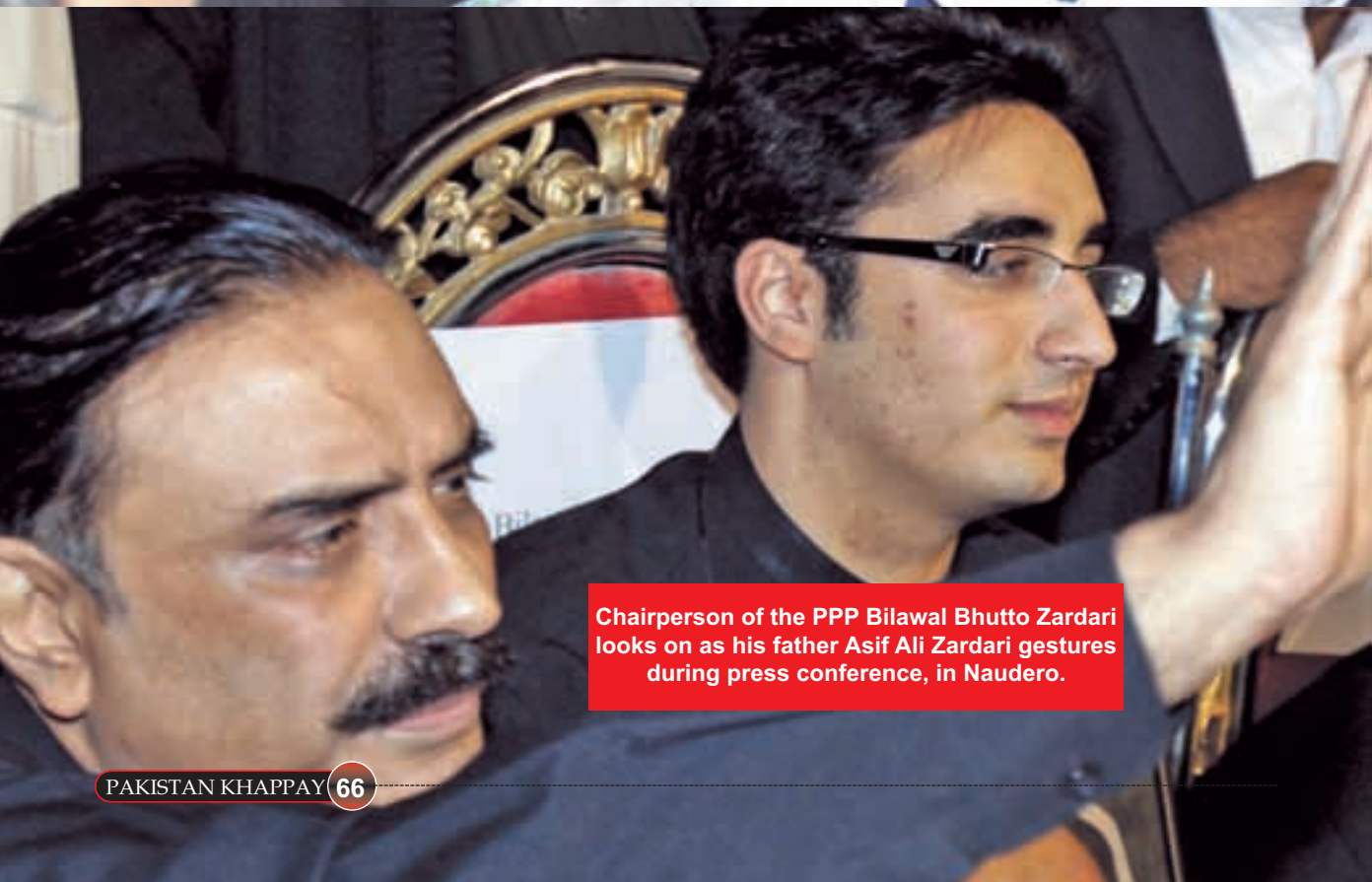
Dubai: Bilawal bhutto Zardari and his sisters Asifa (R) and Bakhtawar (C) receiving condolences for their Shaheed mother from Emirati Deputy President Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin al-Maktoum at former's family residence January 2, 2008.



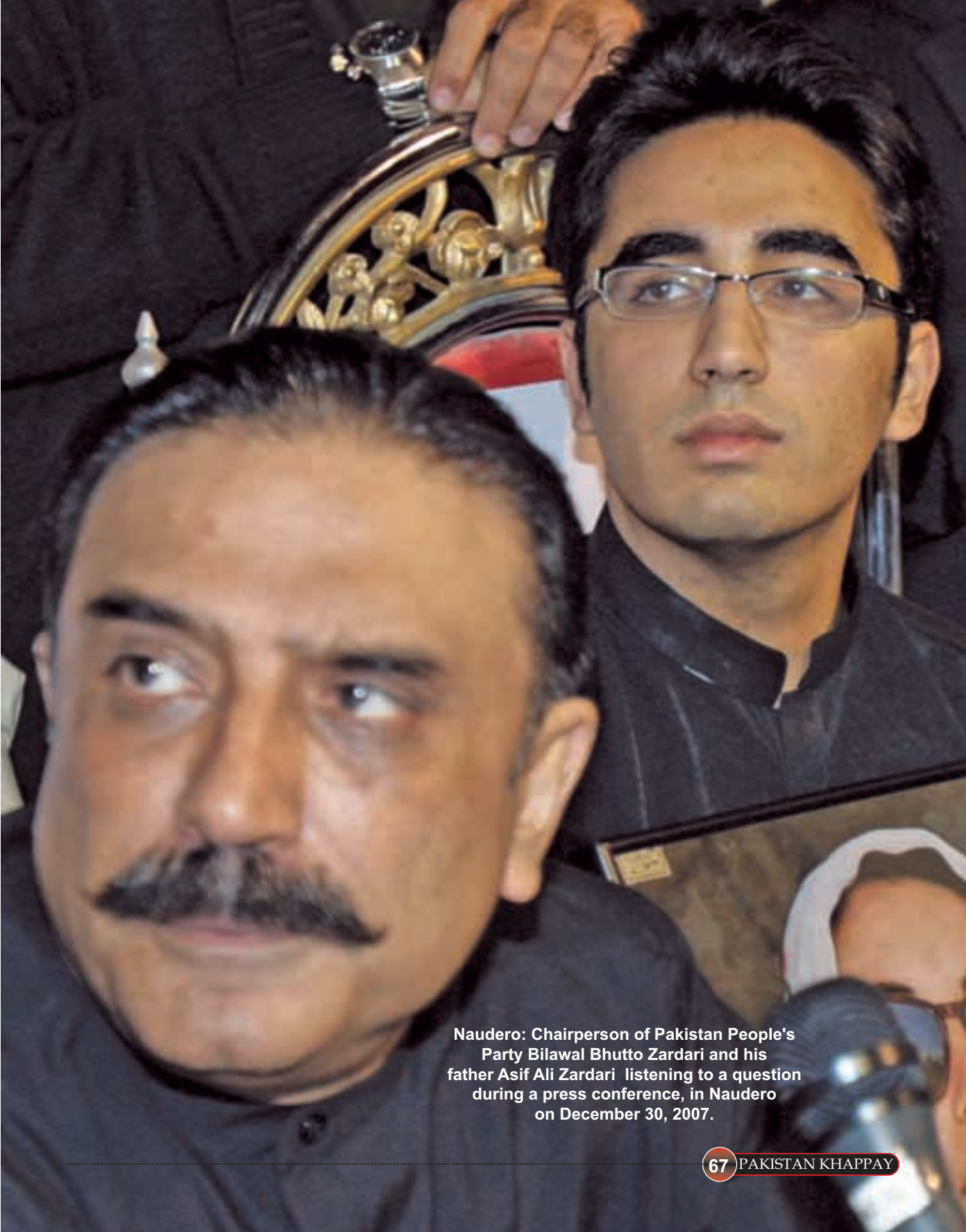
UAE Education Minister Sheikh Nahayan Mubarak Al Nahayan (C) prays Fatehaat the grave of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto.



Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Asif Ali Zardari with party members offer Fatiha in Naudero on December 29, 2007.



Chairperson of the PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari looks on as his father Asif Ali Zardari gestures during press conference, in Naudero.



Naudero: Chairperson of Pakistan People's Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and his father Asif Ali Zardari listening to a question during a press conference, in Naudero on December 30, 2007.



Naudero: Asif Ali Zardari presides over a PPP Central Executive Committee meeting in on 02 January 2008.



PPP Co-Chairman Senator Asif Ali Zardari addressing a press conference at Zardari House on May 14, 2008.



PPP Co-Chairman Senator Asif Ali Zardari in a good mood during press conference.



PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari holding Rayan Zulfiqar Ali, son of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali, on May 29, 2008.



PPP Co-Chairperson Asif Ali Zardari speaks to the elected MPAs belonging to Punjab at Zardari House on February 23, 2008. Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani and Makhdom Amin Fahim sitting besides.



Naudero: UAE Education Minister Sheikh Nahayan Mubarak Al Nahayan condoles the death of Benazir Bhutto with Asif Ali Zardari on January 2, 2008.



Asif Ali Zardari, ANP leader Asfandayar Wali and Afrasayab Khattak praying for Shaheed.



Bilawal Bhotto Zardari speaks during a press conference at Bhutto House, leaders of PPP, Makhdoom Amin Fahim and Asif Ali Zardari, are also sitting on December 30, 2008.



Widower of Benazir Bhutto Asif Ali Zardari speaks during a press conference at Bhutto House, Bilawal Bhatto Zardari is also sitting on December 30, 2007.



Asif Ali Zardari (L) and former premier Nawaz Sharif (R) in good mood at a joint press conference in Murree on March 9, 2008.



PPP Co-Chairperson Asif Ali Zardari, PML-N Chief Mian Nawaz Sharif and Sherry Rehman exchanging views during the joint Parliamentary luncheon meeting organized by Asif Ali Zardari at a local hotel on February 27, 2008.



Murree: Asif Ali Zardari exchanges documents with former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif during a press conference on March 9, 2008.



Asif Ali Zardari and Nawaz Sharif shake hands upon their arrival at a joint press conference in Murree.



Hottest from IT/Telecom

FLARE
Leading Telecom News Magazine

Free download flare.com.pk
Tel: +92-51-2890054, Fax: +92-51-2891339
www.flare.com.pk

Available at your nearest book shops



President Jammu and Kashmir Peoples Democratic Party Ms Mehbooba Mufti Sayeed presenting a Kashmiri Shawl to Asif Ali Zardari after a meeting at Zardari House on March 28, 2008.



Asif Ali Zardari Welcomes Nawaz Sharif at Zardari House.



Asif Ali Zardari briefing journalists with Nawaz Sharif.



Islamabad: Asif Ali Zardari, Nawaz Sharif, Maulana Fazlur Rehman and Asfandiyar Wali attending their joint parliamentary meeting on March 17, 2008.



Asif Ali Zardari widower of slain former and co-chairman of PPP is flanked by former premier Nawaz Sharif as he waves to new parliamentarians during the inauguration of new parliament on March 17, 2008.



Islamabad: Asif Ali Zardari talking with coalition leader Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman, head of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam and Nawaz Sharif during a meeting on August 6, 2008.



PML (N) Quaid Nawaz Sharif gestures as he speaks during a meeting with Co-Chairman PPP Asif Ali Zardari in Islamabad on August 5, 2008.



PML-N Chief Nawaz Sharif warmly received by PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari upon his arrival for a meeting at Zardari House on August 5, 2008.



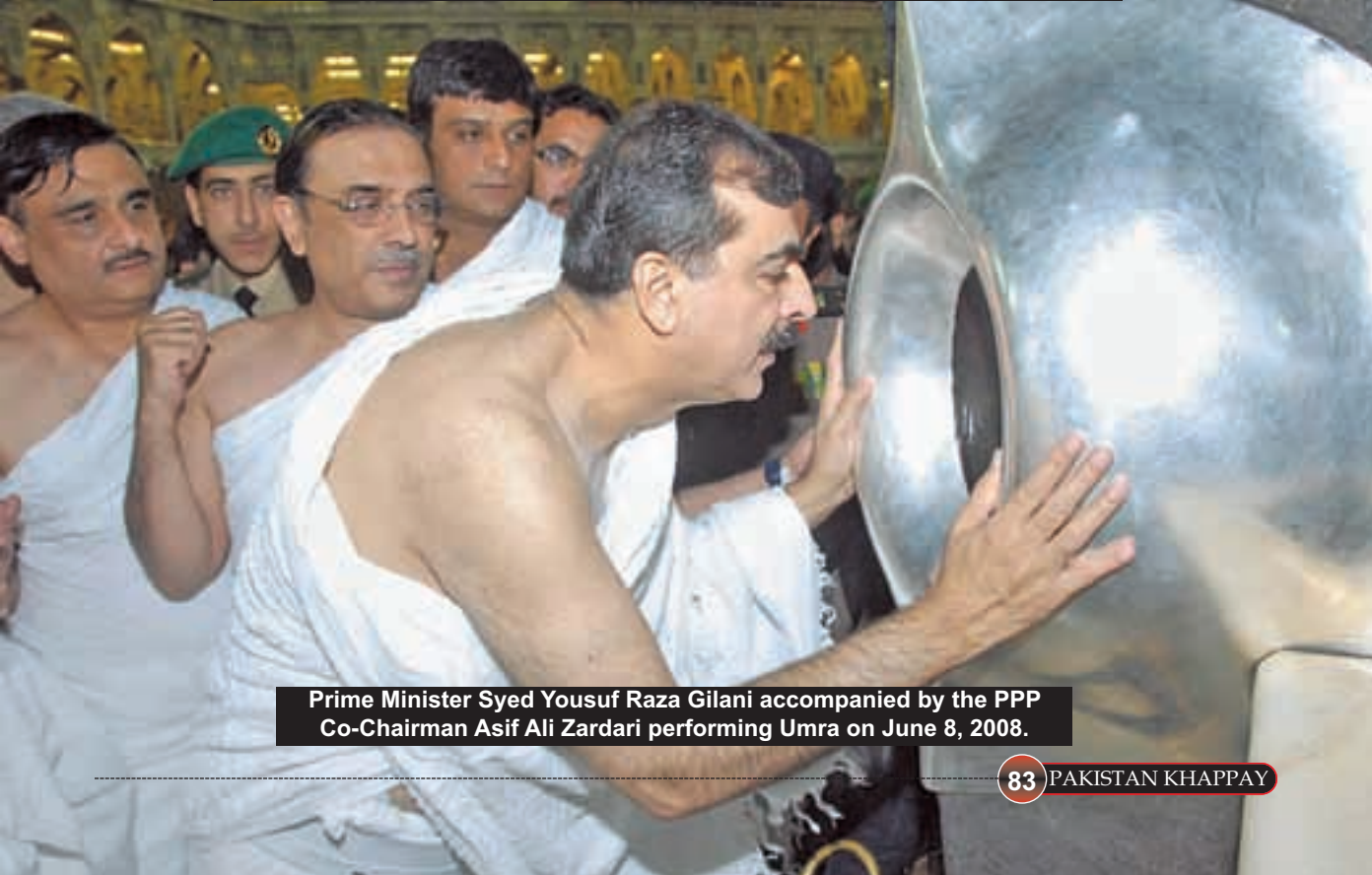
Islamabad: Asif Ali Zardari speaks during a seminar on Media Freedom Laws and Security on May 23, 2008.



Mr Zardari acknowledges the welcoming slogans during the book launching “The Evolution of Democracy” by PPP leader Jahangir Badar at Awan-i-Iqbal on June 19, 2008.



Madina: Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani and PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari offering dua at Roza-e-Rasool on June 7, 2008.



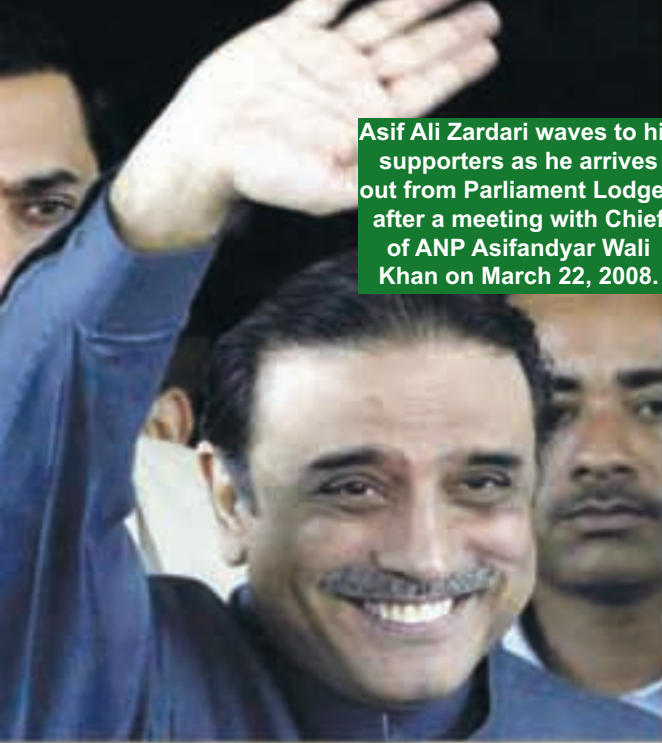
Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani accompanied by the PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari performing Umra on June 8, 2008.



PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari addressing a press conference at Press Club on June 12, 2008.



Asif Ali Zardari PPP raises his hand on his arrival at Parliament House to attend the first session of 13th National Assembly on March 27, 2008.



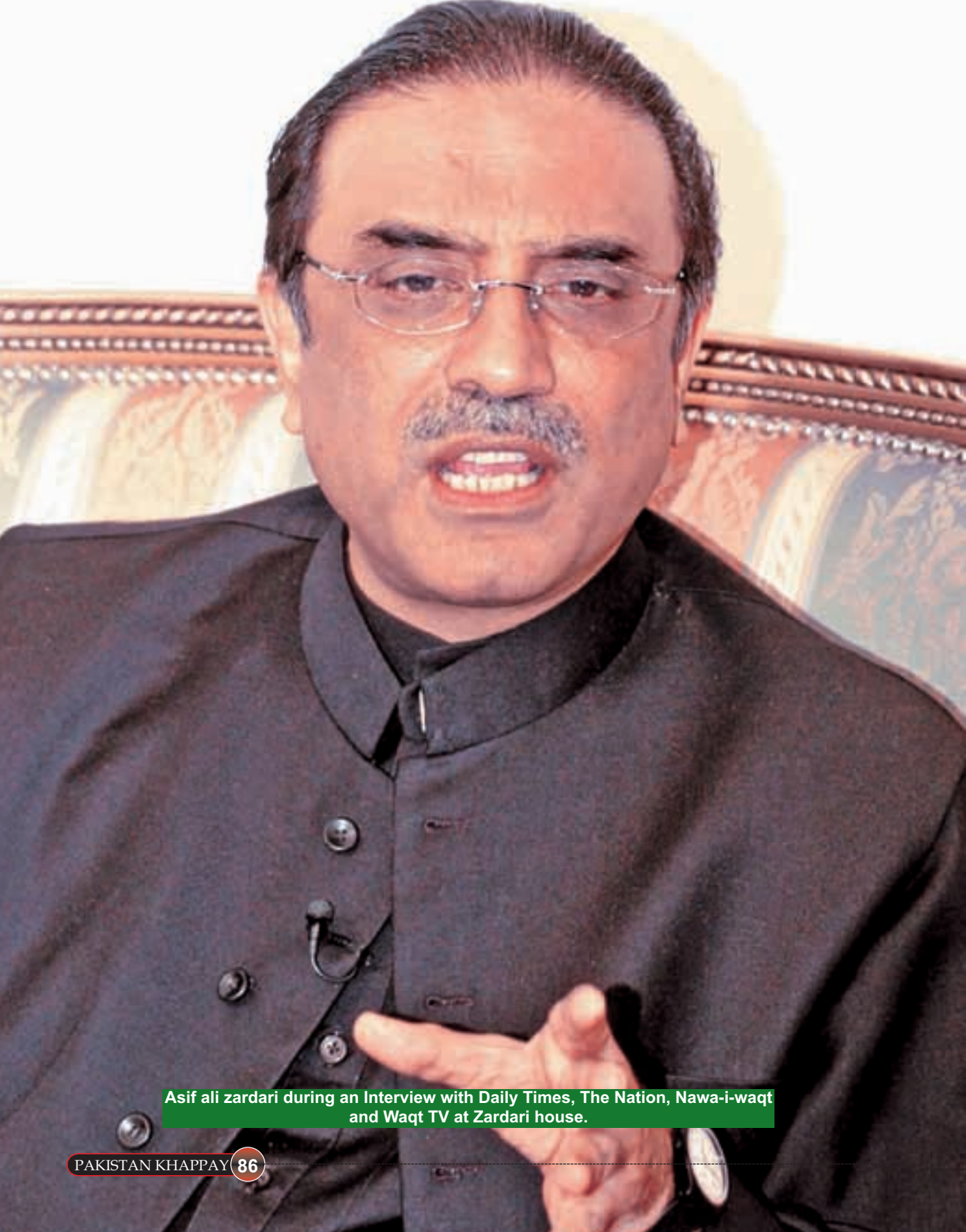
Asif Ali Zardari waves to his supporters as he arrives out from Parliament Lodges after a meeting with Chief of ANP Asifandyar Wali Khan on March 22, 2008.



Karachi: Asif Ali Zardari arrives for a press conference on June 12, 2008.



PPP Co-Chairman Senator Asif Ali Zardari speaks during a seminar on Media Freedom, Laws and Security organized by SAFMA held at a local hotel.



Asif ali zardari during an Interview with Daily Times, The Nation, Nawa-i-waqt and Waqt TV at Zardari house.



PPP Co-Chairman Senator Asif Ali Zardari speaks during a seminar on Media Freedom, Laws and Security organized by SAFMA on May 23, 2008.



Nawaz Sharif talks with ruling coalition partner Asif Ali Zardari after the joint press briefing in Islamabad on April 22, 2008.



Islamabad: Asif Ali Zardari addresses supporters prior to a party meeting at his residence on February 20, 2008.



Islamabad: Nawaz Sharif greets with coalition partner Asif Ali Zardari upon arrival for a meeting on August 19, 2008.



Nawaz Sharif walking with Asif Ali Zardari Co-chairman and his son Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Chairman of the ruling PPP as they arrive for a meeting in Islamabad on August 19, 2008.



Nawaz Sharif walking with Asif Ali Zardari and his son Bilawal Bhutto Zardari chairman of the ruling Pakistan People's Party as they arrive for a meeting on August 19, 2008.



Islamabad: Nawaz Sharif standing with Asif Ali Zardari and Bilawal Bhutto Zardari as they arrive for a meeting with coalition leaders in Islamabad on August 19, 2008.



Dubai: Asif Ali Zardari and Nawaz Sharif take a break after the first round of talks on April 30, 2008.



Islamabad: Nawaz Sharif and Asif Ali Zardari talk with media during a joint press briefing on April 22, 2008 at the end of two day of talks on restoration of sacked judges.



Asif Ali Zardari talking to media during a press conference.



Asif Ali Zardari talking to media during a press conference.



Mr Zardari's various poses during an interview.



Lahore: PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari warmly welcomed by party workers upon his arrival at Allama Iqbal International Airport on June 16, 2008.



Asif Ali Zardari casting his vote.



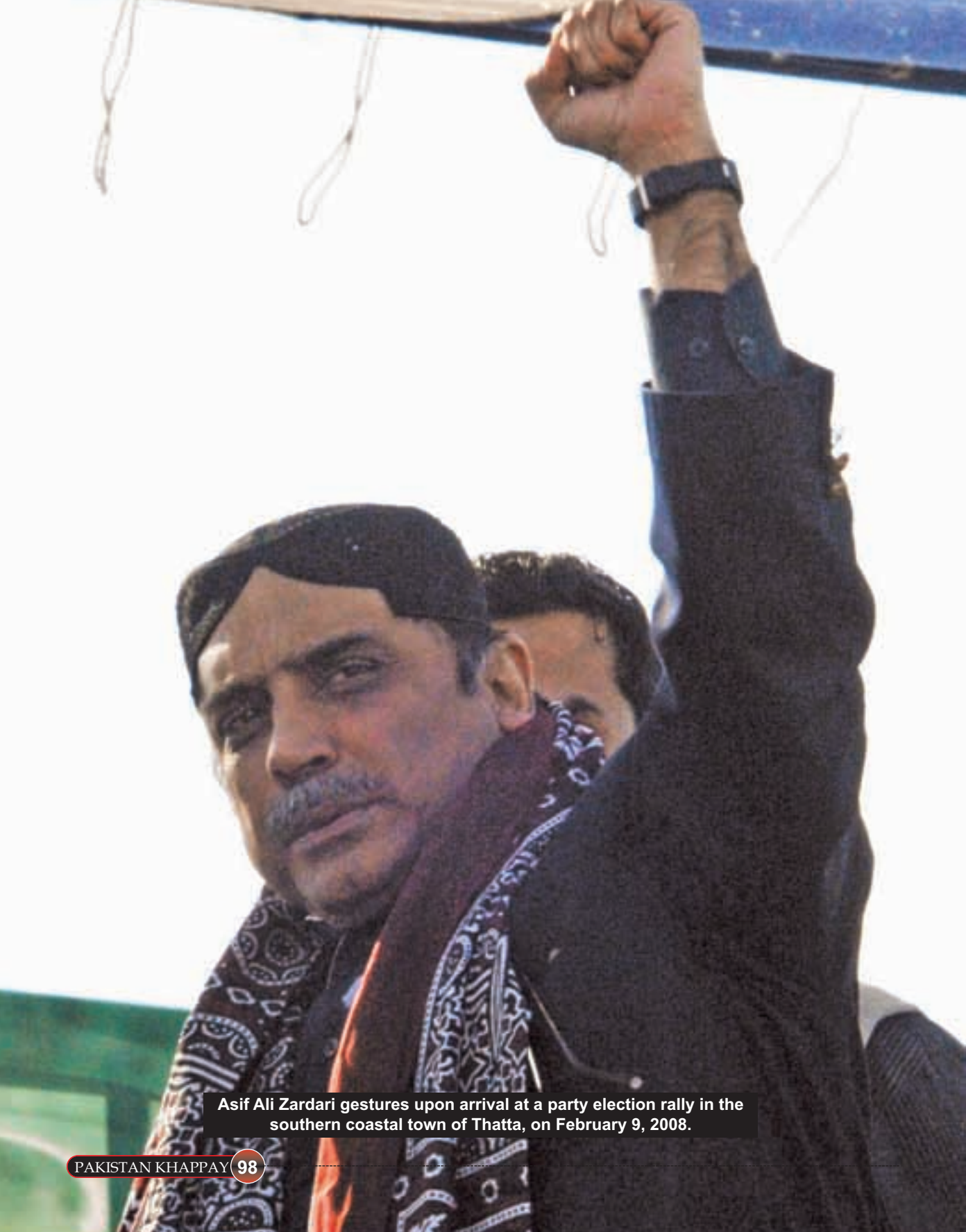
British High Commissioner H.E. Robert Brinkley called on PPP Co-Chairman Senator Asif Ali Zardari at Zardari House on May 22, 2008.



Asif Ali Zardari, addresses the party election rally at the southern coastal town of Thatta, a rural town in Bhutto's home province of Sindh on February 9, 2008.



Karachi: Asif Ali Zardari stands in front of his wife's banner during a ceremony to pay tribute to Bhutto and her supporters who were killed in the bomb blast on Sunday, Jan. 27, 2008.



Asif Ali Zardari gestures upon arrival at a party election rally in the southern coastal town of Thatta, on February 9, 2008.



PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari addressing during PPP Central Executive Committee meeting at Prime Minister House on August 22, 2008.



Asif Ali Zardari during in an excited mood press conference.



Sindh Governor Dr Ishratul Ebad called on PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari at Zardari House on April 23, 2008.



PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari along with Secretary General Luis Ayala jointly addressing a press conference after Socialist International Asia-Pacific Committee meeting on May 30, 2008.



US Ambassador Ms Ann W. Patterson called on Asif Ali Zardari at Zardari House on May 31, 2008.



Ambassador of Argentina H.E. Rodolfo J. Martin-Saravia called on PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari at Zardari House on March 13, 2008.



Indian Petroleum Minister Murli Deora called on PPP Co-Chairman Senator Asif Ali Zardari at Zardari House on April 24, 2008.



President elect and Co-Chairman PPP Asif Ali Zardari meets with PPP leader Israr Shah during an Iftar reception hosted by Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani at Prime Minister House on September 6, 2008.



Lahore: Asif Ali Zardari addresses members of PPP at their meeting on February 13, 2008.



Asif Ali Zardari meeting with Allam Sajid Naqvi.



Karachi: PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari addressing a press conference at Press Club.



Lahore: Asif Ali Zardari during press conference.



Asif Ali Zardari warmly welcome the PPP leader Dr Israr Shah during a meeting held at Zardari House on February 25, 2008.



PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari shakes hand with Mian Manzoor Watto during reception hosted by Wattoo where he announced his joining to PPP on May 29, 2008.



Asif Ali Zardari addressing a press conference on June 12, 2008.



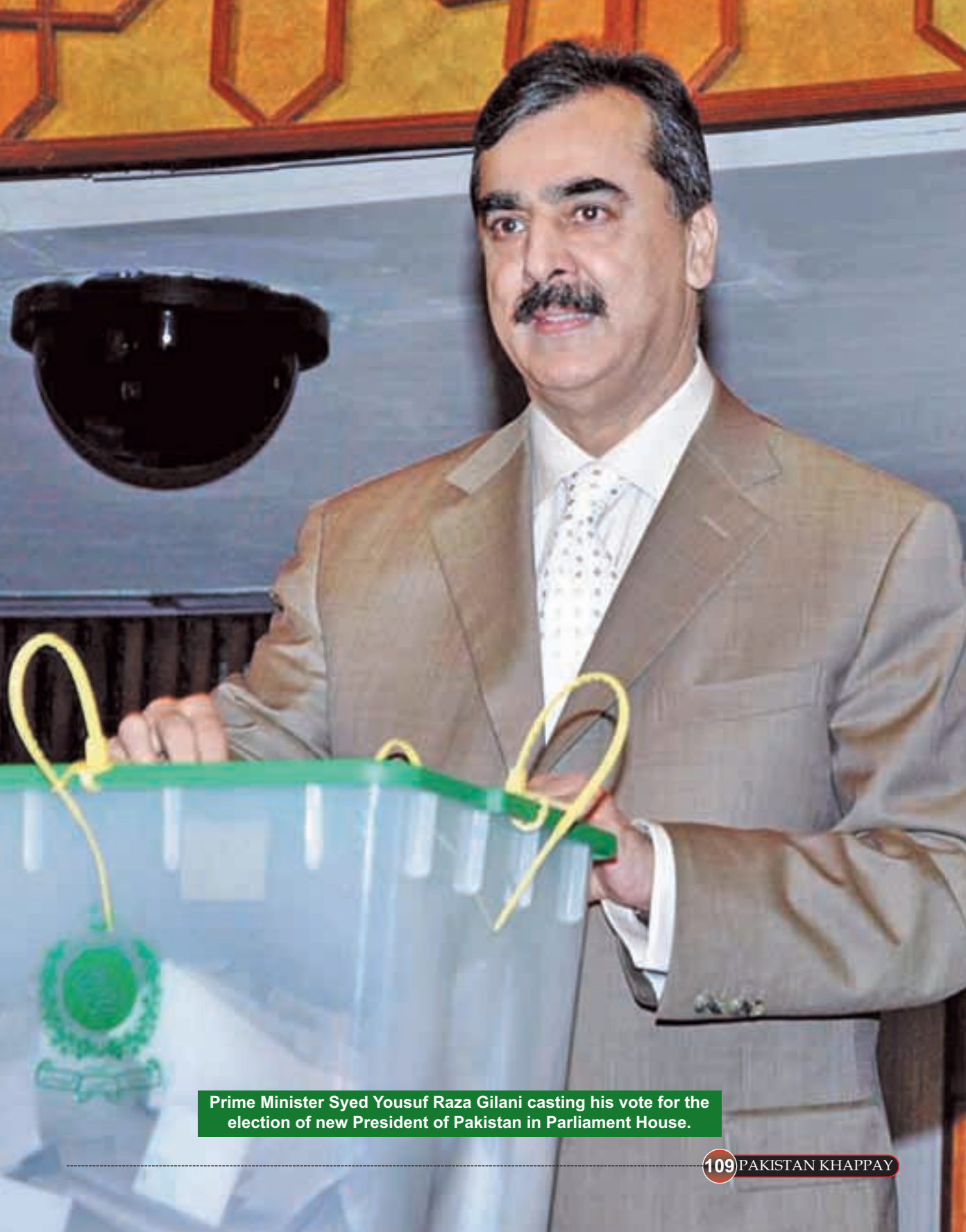
PPP Co-Chairperson Asif Ali Zardari exchanging views with European Union Ambassador H.E. Johannes De Kok during a meeting held at Zardari House on February 29, 2008.



Asif Ali Zardari takes leave of the chief ANP Asfandiyar Wali Khan after their meeting in Islamabad on February 21, 2008.



Lahore: PPP Co-Chairman Senator Asif Ali Zardari addressing to party workers at Governor House Lahore on June 16, 2008.



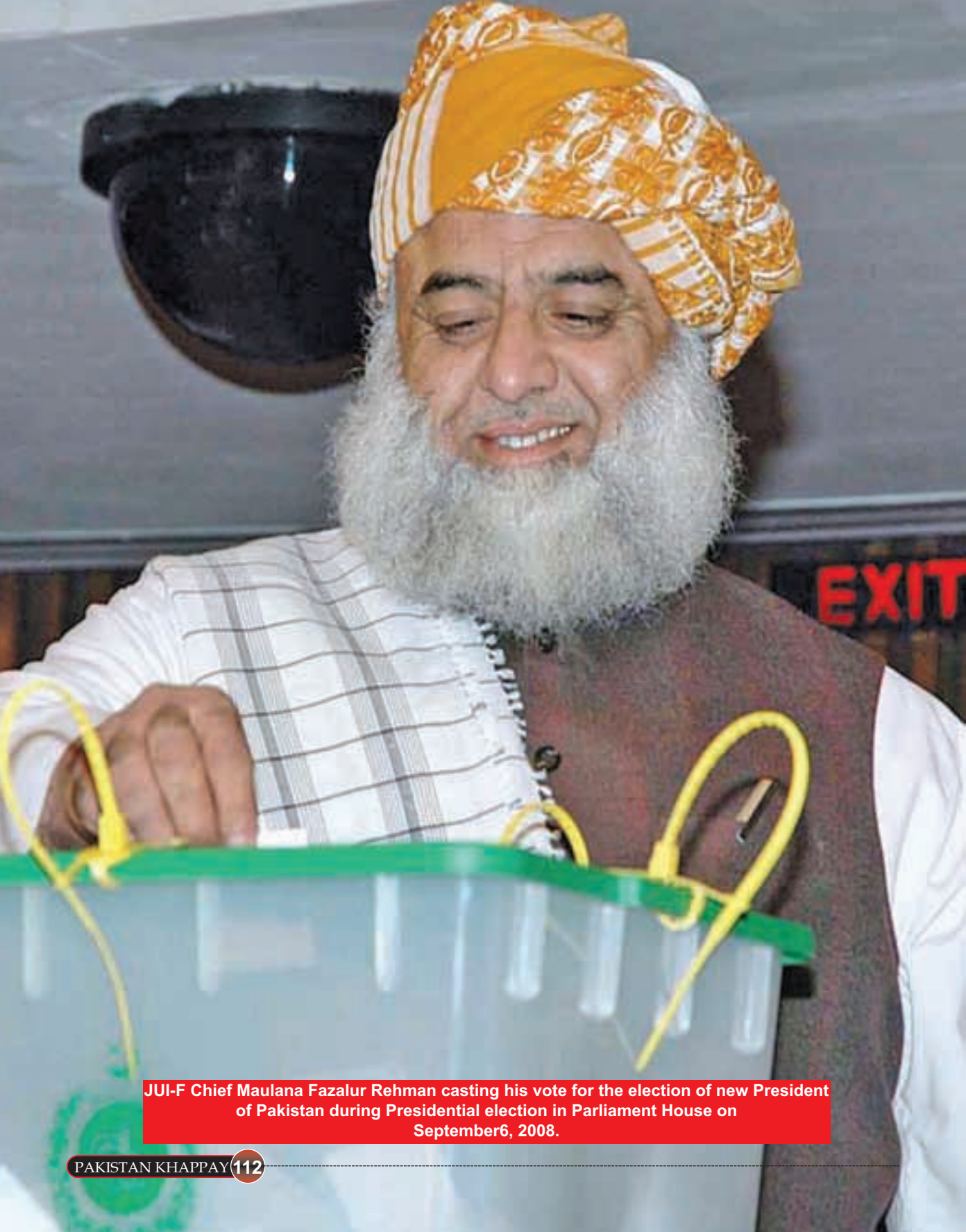
Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani casting his vote for the election of new President of Pakistan in Parliament House.



Islamabad: MNA of PPP Farzana Raja makes victory sign after casting her vote in Parliament House during presidential election on September 6, 2008.



Islamabad: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Ms Sherry Rehman casting her vote.



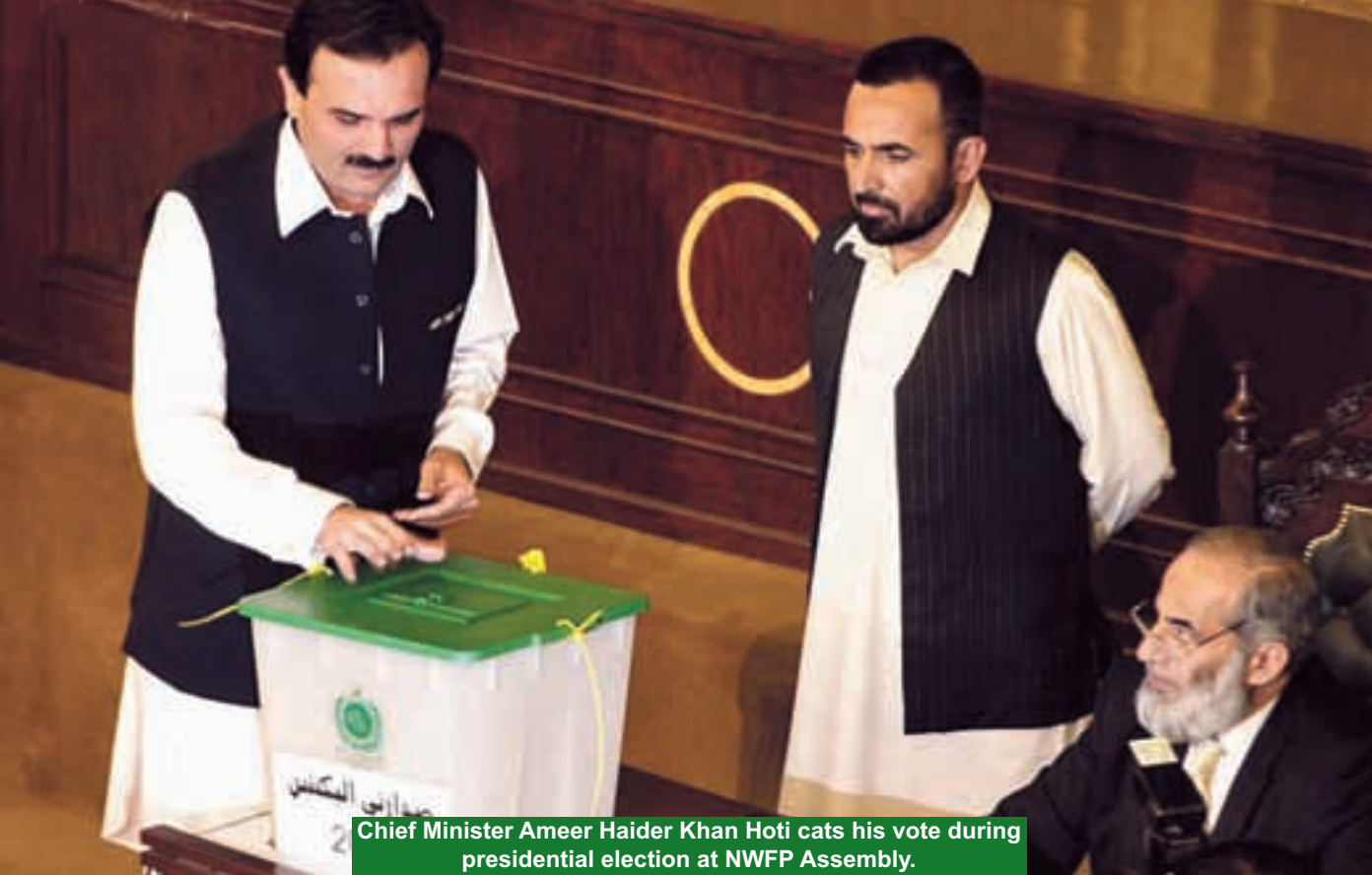
JUI-F Chief Maulana Fazalur Rehman casting his vote for the election of new President of Pakistan during Presidential election in Parliament House on September 6, 2008.



Speaker National Assembly Dr Fehmida Mirza casting her vote during Presidential election.



Care Taker President Mohammed Mian Soomro casting his vote for the election of new President of Pakistan.



Chief Minister Ameer Haider Khan Hoti casts his vote during presidential election at NWFP Assembly.



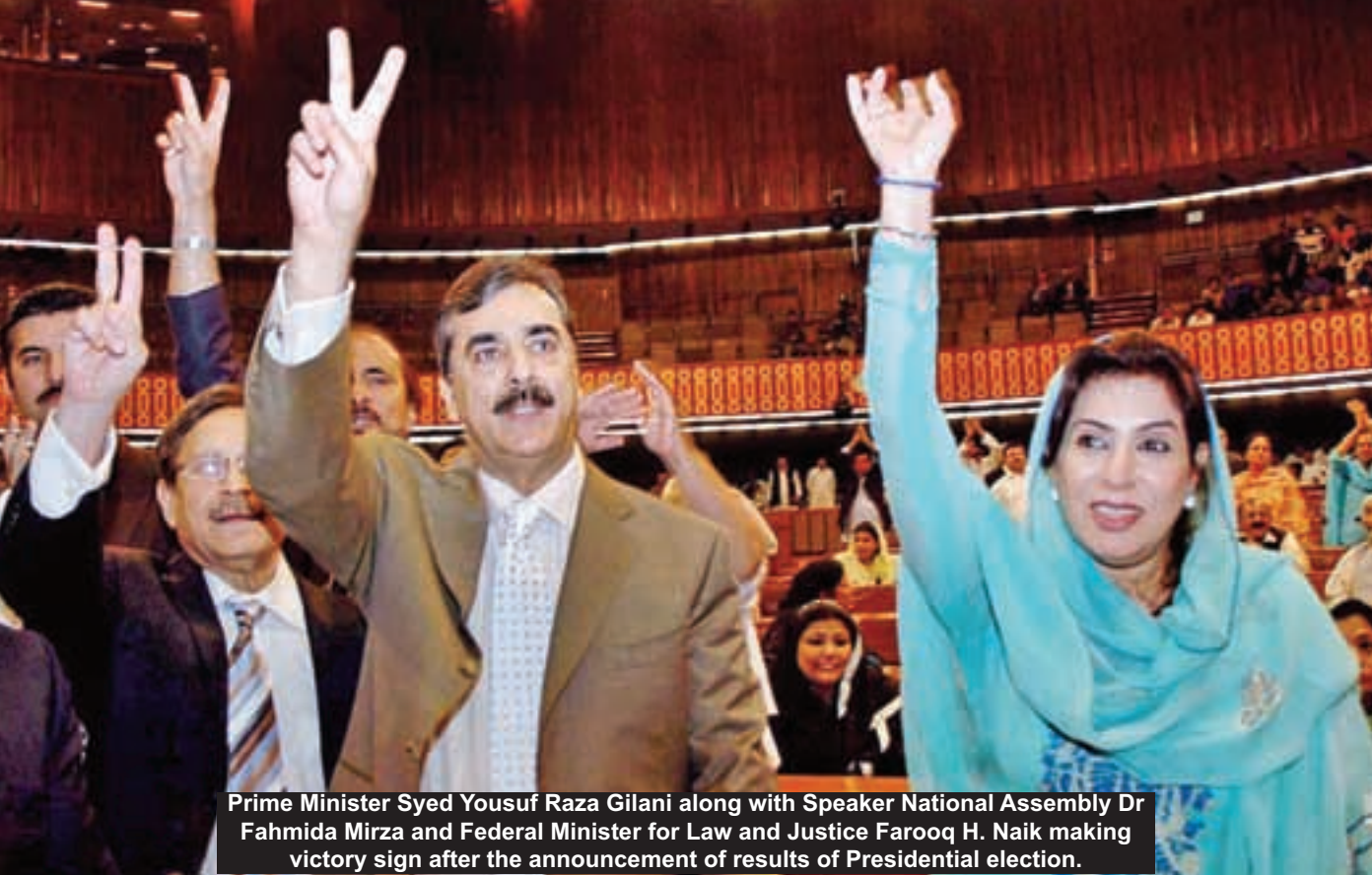
A lady MPA of PPP casting her vote during Presidential election at NWFP Assembly.



Chief Election Commissioner Justice (Retd) Qazi Muhammad Farooq counting the votes for the Presidential election in Parliament House.



Islamabad: Policemen stand besides an election billboard displays presidential candidates Asif Ali Zardari (C) retired chief justice Saeed-uz-Zaman Siddiqui (R), and Mushahid Hussain (L) in front of the Parliament building.



Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani along with Speaker National Assembly Dr Fahmida Mirza and Federal Minister for Law and Justice Farooq H. Naik making victory sign after the announcement of results of Presidential election.



Members of provincial assembly standing to support a resolution recommending the name of Asif Ali Zardari to contest the Presidential Election by Chief Minister Haider Khan Hoti on August 25, 2008.



A view of the NWFP Assembly which passed the resolution in support of PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari to contest the Presidential Election during the session on August 25, 2008.



Speaker Sindh Assembly, Nissar Ahmad Khoro presides over a session of Sindh Assembly which passed unanimous resolution for Asif Ali Zardari as the presidential candidate on August 22, 2008.



Sindh Home Minister Zulfiqar Mirza along with MPA Makhdoom Jamil-uz-Zama submitting the nomination papers Mr Zardari on August 26, 2008.



Election officials count the ballots at the end of voting in the Baluchistan Assembly during presidential election in Quetta on September 6, 2008



PM Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani congratulates Bakhtawar after the announcement of results of Presidential election.



Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Sherry Rehman cannot control her sentiments after the announcement of President.



Islamabad: Sherry Rehman hugs Bakhtawar Bhutto Zardari, as they celebrate the victory of Asif Ali Zardari in The Parliament House.



Islamabad: Bakhtawar Zardari and Asifa Zardari joyfully reacting after the unofficial results of Presidential election Pakistan on Saturday, September 6, 2008.



Bakhtawar and Asifa hold their mother's portrait as they make victory sign after unofficial results for the presidential election at the Parliament in Islamabad.



Bakhtawar Zardari and Asifa Zardari congratulated by their aunt Faryal Talpur after the announcement of unofficial results.



Bakhtawar Bhutto along with Faryal Talpur standing in visitor's gallery during Presidential election in Parliament House to elect the new President of Pakistan.



PPP MNAs and workers celebrate the success of Asif Ali Zardari.



A woman celebrating Zardari's success in Presidential election.

PPP MPAs embrace each other to celebrate the grant of bail of Rs 1 million to Asif Zardari by the Supreme Court outside Ziauddin Hospital in Karachi where Zardari was currently treated.





Lahore: Activists of Pakistan Peoples Party celebrating the victory of Asif Ali Zardari.



Karachi: PPP activists celebrate the victory of Asif Ali Zardari.



Lahore: Punjab Governor Salman Taseer acknowledge the slogans raising by PPP workers after unofficial announcement of PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari as President elect of Pakistan at Governor House.



Activists of Pakistan Peoples Party chant slogans in favor of PPP Presidential Candidate and Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari as they celebrate his victory in Presidential Election outside press club in Hyderabad on September 06, 2008.



Islamabad: PPP Co-Chairman Senator Asif Ali Zardari warmly embracin Bilawal Bhutto Zardari at Zardari House on March 20, 2008.



Islamabad: Supporters of PPP celebrate the victory of Asif Ali Zardari.



Lahore: Supporters of PPP celebrate the victory of Asif Ali Zardari on September 6, 2008.



Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Sherry Rehman, Federal Minister for Law and Justice, Farooq H. Naik, Asfandyar Wali Khan and others making victory signs after submitting the nomination papers of Asif Ali Zardari at election commission office in Islamabad on August 26, 2008.



PPP leaders Aftab Shaban Meerani and Mian Manzoor Watto smiling after submitting the nomination papers of Asif Ali Zardari as Presidential Candidate.



Federal Minister for Information Sherry Rehman, Farooq H Naik and others flash victory signs after submitting nomination papers of Asif Ali Zardari for presidential elections on August 26, 2008.



PPP workers holding a rally after the nomination of PPP Co-Chairman Senator Asif Ali Zardari to contest presidential election on August 24, 2008.



Islamabad: Women supporters of PPP chanting slogans at the main office of election commission where their leaders arrived to file Asif Ali Zardari's nomination papers on Aug. 26, 2008.



PPP activists distribute sweets during a rally to celebrate the Co-Chairman PPP Asif Ali Zardari's decision to contest Presidential election, outside Zardari House on August 24, 2008.



PPP activists chant slogans during a demonstration to celebrate the nomination of Co-Chairman PPP, Asif Ali Zardari as Presidential candidate, outside Karachi Press Club on August 26, 2008.



A supporter of the ruling PPP lights fireworks as they celebrate the victory of Asif Ali Zardari, in Islamabad on September 6, 2008.



A little girl kissing the portrait of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto after unofficial announcement of PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari as President at Liaquat Bagh.



PPP supporters celebrate the unofficial results of Presidential election in front of Punjab Assembly.



Lady MPAs of PPP congratulate each other after the result announced at NWFP Assembly



PPP workers holding a rally to celebrate the victory of Asif Ali Zardari at Radio Pakistan Road on September 6, 2008.



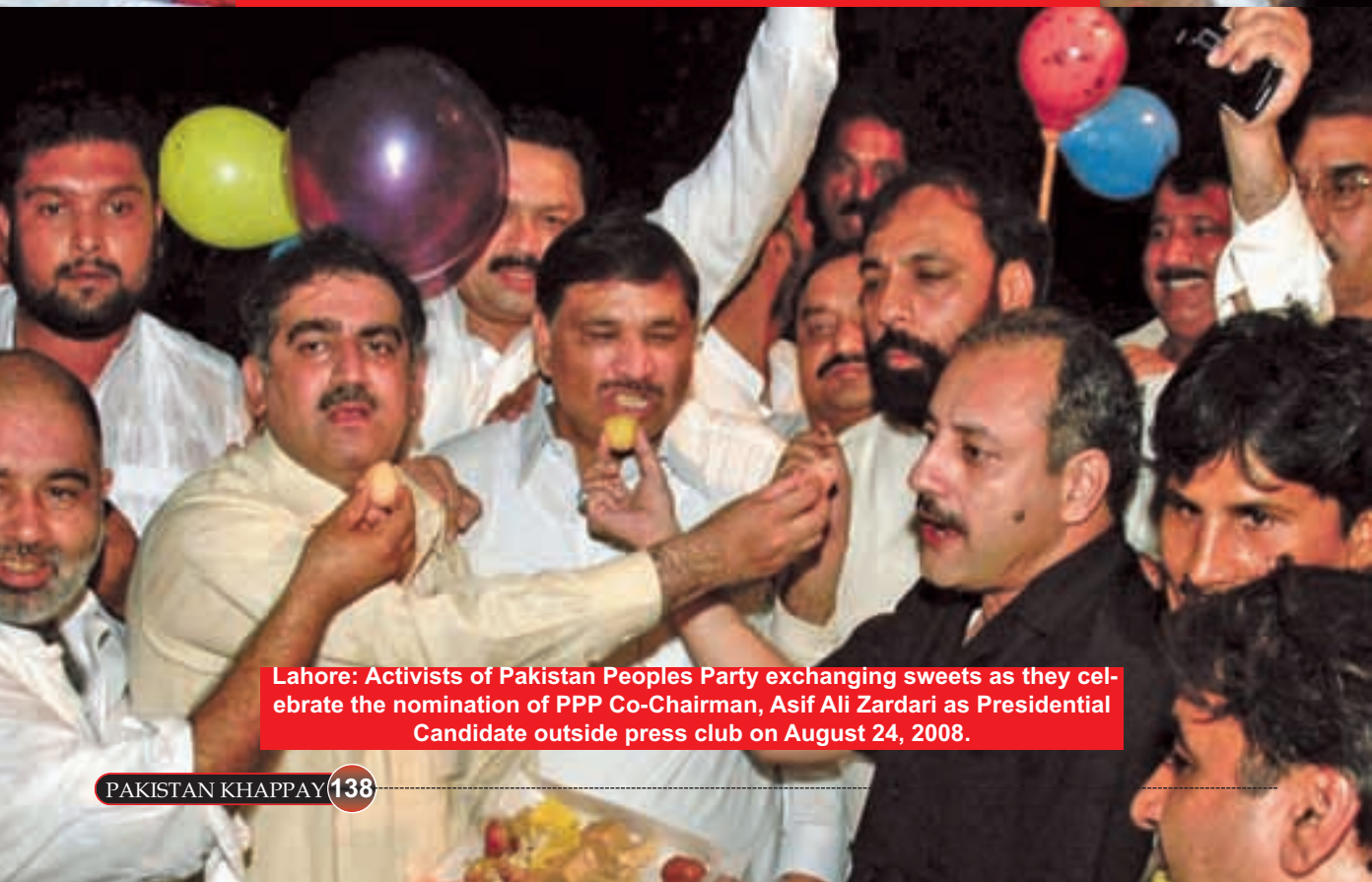
Chief Minister Balochistan Nawab Aslam Khan Raisani shaking hand with Senior Minister Maulana Abdul Wasey during Presidential election at Balochistan Assembly.



Sindh Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah briefing media after filling the nomination papers of Asif Ali Zardari for Presidential Election at High Court on August 26, 2008.



Provincial President of PPP Haji Aziz-ur-Rehman addresses the party workers of rally holding after the nomination of PPP Co-Chairman Senator Asif Ali Zardari to contest presidential election on August 24, 2008.



Lahore: Activists of Pakistan Peoples Party exchanging sweets as they celebrate the nomination of PPP Co-Chairman, Asif Ali Zardari as Presidential Candidate outside press club on August 24, 2008.



Lahore: Female lawmakers of Pakistan Peoples Party making victory signs as they celebrate the nomination of PPP Co-Chairman, Asif Ali Zardari as Candidate for the President of Pakistan on occasion of Punjab Governor, Salman Taseer's press conference at Governor House on August 21, 2008.



Karachi: Leaders and activists of PPP join hands with each other showing their solidarity with Mr Zardari during a celebration rally outside press club on August 24, 2008.

ASIF ALI ZARDARI
CO CHAIRMAN



Karachi: A woman activist of PPP feeds sweet to her colleague as they celebrate the nomination of Asif Ali Zardari as Presidential Candidate outside press club on August 24, 2008.



Karachi: Supporters hold the pictures of their leaders as they gather to celebrate the nomination of Asif Ali Zardari for Presidential candidate on August 26, 2008.



Karachi: Supporters of PPP hold posters of newly elected President Asif Ali Zardari as they lights fireworks to celebrate the victory on September 7, 2008.



Islamabad: Supporters of the ruling Pakistan People's Party celebrate the victory of Asif Ali Zardari, widower of slain former premier Benazir Bhutto, in the presidential election, in front of The Parliament House on September 6, 2008.



Islamabad: Activists of the PPP shower petals on a portrait of slain former premier Benazir Bhutto as they celebrate the decision by Bhutto's widower Asif Ali Zardari to run for the post of president on August 24, 2008.



Islamabad: Activists shout slogans in support of party Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari outside the Election Commission office on August 26, 2008.



Islamabad: Supporters march as they celebrate the victory of Mr Zardari in front of Parliament House on September 6, 2008.



An activist of PPP holds pictures of PPP leaders to take part in a rally to celebrate the victory of Asif Ali Zardari in presidential elections.



Lahore: Supporters of the ruling Pakistan People's Party celebrate the victory of Asif Ali Zardari on September 6, 2008.



Islamabad: Sherry Rehman (L) and Farooq Naek (R) show victory signs along with coalition partner Asfandyar Wali (C) outside the Election Commission Office on August 26, 2008.



Islamabad: Pakistan People's Party Co-chairman Faryal Talpur, sister of Asif Ali Zardari, shows a victory sign after submitting Zardari's nomination papers on August 26, 2008.



PPP workers releasing pigeons during a rally after the announcement of Presidential election results.



PPP workers celebrate after the announcement of result of Presidential election in front of Parliament House.



PPP workers presenting sweets during a rally to celebrate the announcement of Presidential election results at Radio Pakistan Road on September 6, 2008.



Lahore: PPP supporters after the unofficial results of Presidential election at Mall Road.



PPP workers celebrate the announcement of result of Presidential election in front of Parliament House.



Islamabad: Pakistani paramilitary soldiers march in front of the Presidential Palace during the swearing-in ceremony of Asif Ali Zardari.

Islamabad: Soldiers's march outside' Presidential Palace during Mr Zardari's oath on September 9, 2008.





President Asif Ali Zardari addresses a joint session of Parliament in Islamabad



Joint Chiefs of Staff (L/R) Lt. General Tariq Majeed, Army Chief General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, Naval Chief Admiral Muhammed Afzal Tahir and Air Force Chief Tanveer Mehmud listen to an unseen President Asif Ali Zardari as he addresses a joint session of Parliament



Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani received the President Asif Ali Zardari on arrive at Parliament House



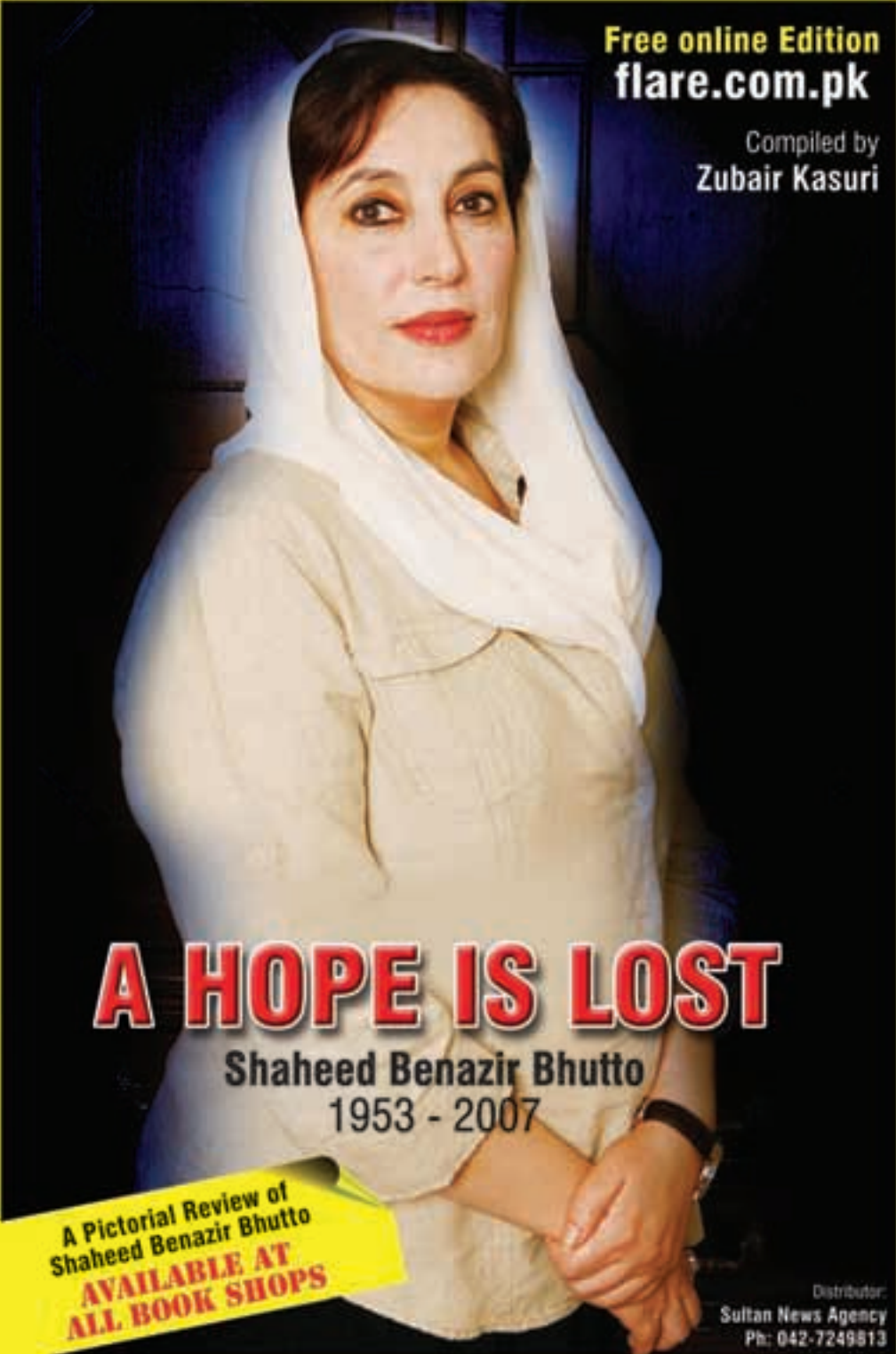
September 20 – President Asif Ali Zardari waving to the parliamentarians while arrives to address to the joint sitting of the Parliament at Parliament House.



Islamabad: President Asif Ali Zardari leaving with Hamid Karzai after a joint press conference on September 9, 2008.



President of Pakistan and his Afghan counterpart Hamid Karzai during a joint press conference at The Presidential Palace.

A portrait of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto, wearing a white headscarf and a light-colored, long-sleeved top. She is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a neutral expression. The background is dark and out of focus.

Free online Edition
flare.com.pk

Compiled by
Zubair Kasuri

A HOPE IS LOST

Shaheed Benazir Bhutto
1953 - 2007

A Pictorial Review of
Shaheed Benazir Bhutto
**AVAILABLE AT
ALL BOOK SHOPS**

Distributor:
Sultan News Agency
Ph: 042-7249813

For Home Delivery Call: Islamabad 051-2890054 | Lahore 042-5750732 | Karachi 021-4584361
Email: ahopeislost@gmail.com



Islamabad: Asif Ali Zardari flanked by his Afghan counterpart Hamid Karzai as he addresses a joint press conference on September 9, 2008.



ISLAMABAD: March 28 - PPP Co-Chairman Senator Asif Ali Zardari warmly receive Richard A. Boucher Assistant Secretary, US Department of State at Zardari house.



Islamabad: Newly sworn-in President Asif Ali Zardari listens to a question at a joint press conference with Hamid Karzai (unseen) on September 9, 2008.





Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Bakhtawar and Asifa witness the oath-taking ceremony of their father Asif Ali Zardari as President of Pakistan on September 9, 2008.



Islamabad: Asif Ali Zardari takes the oath from Chief Justice Abdul Hameed Dogar, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani and Mohammad Mian Somro are also sitting.



Asif Ali Zardari takes oath of the President of Pakistan from Chief Justice Abdul Hameed Dogar at The Presidential Palace.



Asif Ali Zardari addresses during the Iftar reception hosted by Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani at Prime Minister House on September 6, 2008.



September 06 – Daughters of President elect and Co-Chairman PPP Asif Ali Zardari attending an Iftar reception hosted by Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani at Prime Minister House



Islamabad: Asif Ali Zardari shakes hands with PM Yousaf Raza Gilani shortly after his election on September 6, 2008.



Islamabad: President Asif Ali Zardari is flanked by his party leader Raza Rabbani as he listens the speech of PM Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani.



President elect and Co-Chairman PPP Asif Ali Zardari and PM Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani attending an Iftar reception hosted by the at Prime Minister House.



Islamabad: Mr Zardari smiles joyfully as he sits with Primer Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani.



executive offices

World leaders

DAWN

•An arduous journey from prison to presidency •Victory by 60% **All eyes on President Zardari**

Saeed and Mushahid

INTERNATIONAL THE NEWS

ON SUNDAY **Zardari lands on top of hill**

35 die as suicide bomber runs down police post



Sweeps presidential poll, pledges to triple exports, end loadshedding



Islamabad: A man arranges newspapers carrying pictures of President-elect Asif Ali Zardari on September 7, 2008.



President elect Asif Ali Zardari on his arrival at Aiwan-e-Sadr with Bakhtawar, Asifa and Sherry Rehman on September 8, 2008.



Islamabad: President Asif Ali Zardari arrives in the Presidential buggy to review guard of honour after taking oath at President House on September 9, 2008.



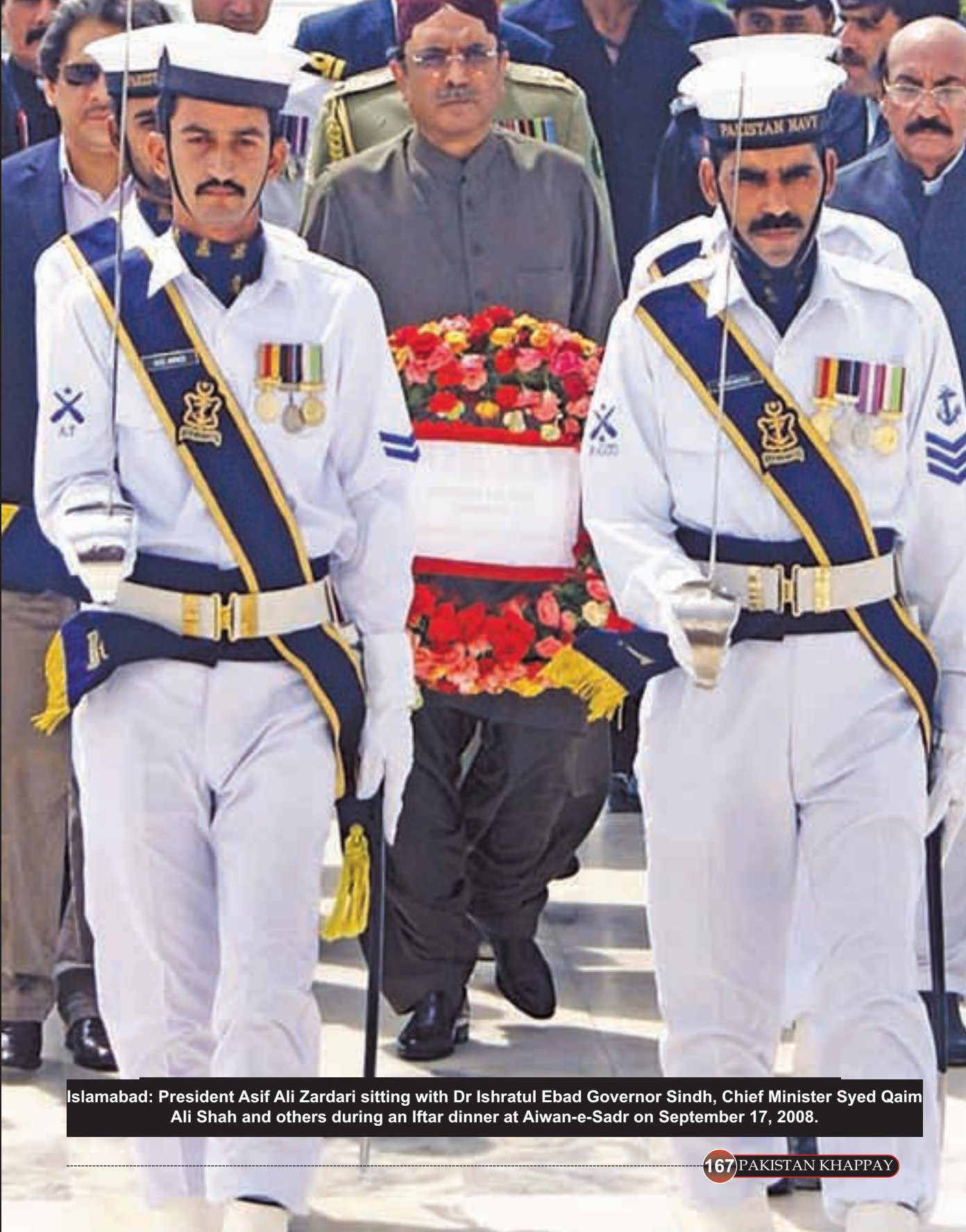
Islamabad: President Asif Ali Zardari, PM Yousaf Raza Gilani and Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi walk for a briefing at the Foreign Ministry on September 10, 2008.



Islamabad: President Asif Ali Zardari during a discussion with Prime Minister Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani on September 10, 2008.



Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari (L) speaks to army Chief General Pervez Kiyani at The President House in Islamabad on September 10, 2008



Islamabad: President Asif Ali Zardari sitting with Dr Ishratul Ebad Governor Sindh, Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah and others during an Iftar dinner at Aiwan-e-Sadr on September 17, 2008.



Islamabad: Newly elected President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari reviews the guard of honour during a ceremony at The Presidential Palace.



Karachi: Asif Ali Zardari prays at the tomb of Muhammad Ali Jinnah.



Karachi: President Asif Ali Zardari is flanked by Governor of Sindh Ishrat-ul-Ebad as he arrives at the tomb of Muhammad Ali Jinnah.



Islamabad: President Asif Ali Zardari sitting with Dr Ishratul Ebad Governor Sindh, Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah and others during an Iftar dinner at Aiwan-e-Sadr on September 17, 2008.



Islamabad: President Asif Ali Zardari shakes hand with Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan H.E. Ali Awadh Asseri at President House on September 10, 2008.



President Asif Ali Zardari talks to British High Commissioner to Pakistan H.E. Robert Edward Brinkley during a call on meeting at President House on September 10, 2008.



Mr Zardari with Chairman Senate Mohammedmian Soomro at President House.



Islamabad: Asif Ali Zardari exchanging views with Chinese Ambassador H.E. Luo Zhaohui at Zardari House on August 18, 2008.



Mr Zardari cheerfully exchanging ideas with the Speaker National Assembly Dr Fahmida Mirza at President House on September 10, 2008.



Islamabad: President Asif Ali Zardari shaking hand with Chief of Army Staff General Ashraf Parvez Kayani prior to a meeting at Aiwan-e-Sadr.



Asif Ali Zardari talking to Admiral Muhammad Afzal Tahir Chief of Naval Staff who called on him at Aiwan-e-Sadr.



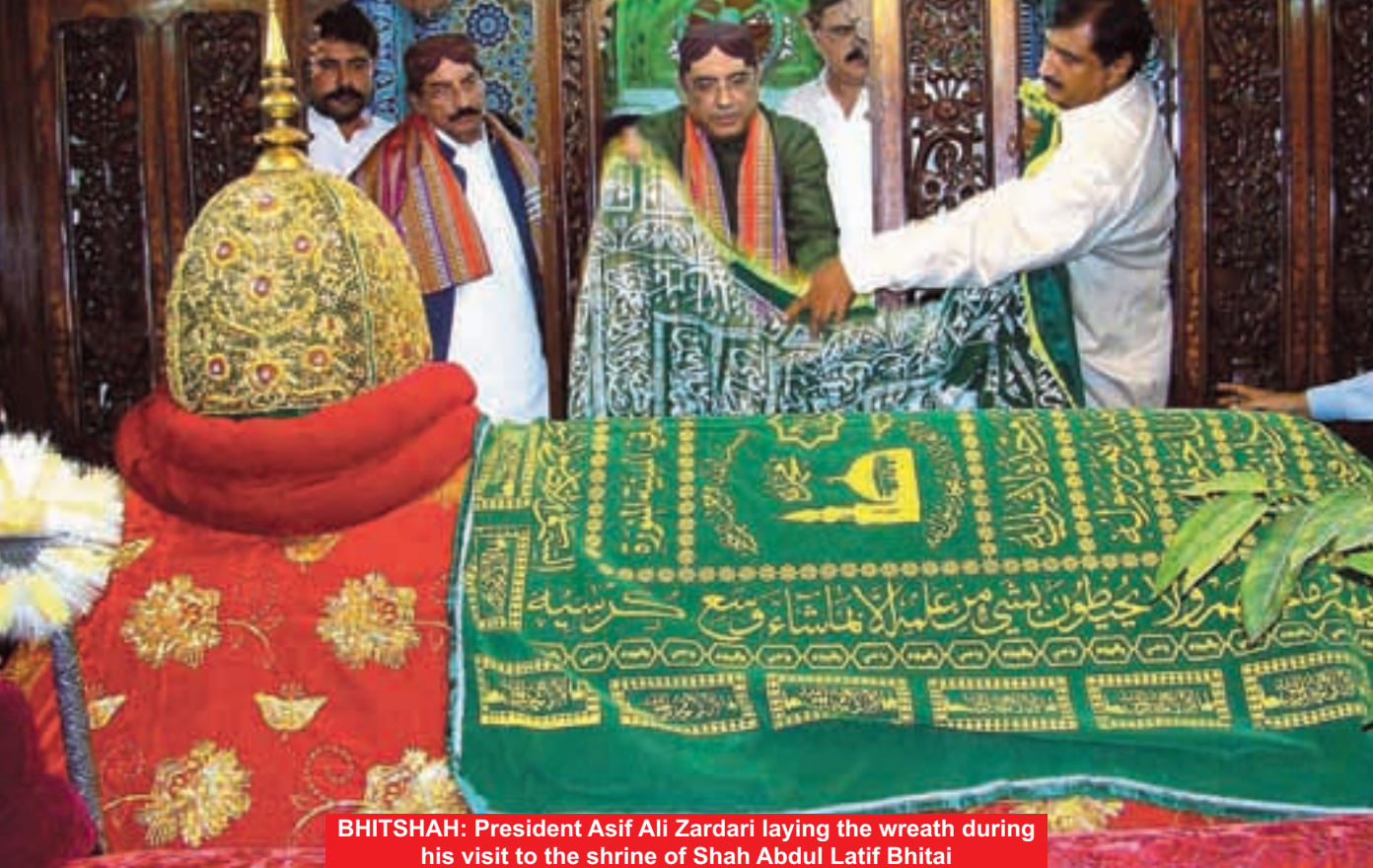
President Asif Ali Zardari in a good mood with Air Chief Marshal Tanvir Mahmood Ahmed Chief of Air Staff at Aiwan-e-Sadr.



Ghari Khuda Baksh: Mr Zardari offering Fateha for the departed soul of his beloved wife Shaheed Benazir Bhutto.



President Asif Ali Zardari showering the rose petals during his visit to the shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai



BHITSHAH: President Asif Ali Zardari laying the wreath during his visit to the shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai



President Asif Ali Zardari during his visit to the shrine of Hazrat Lal Shahbaz Qalandar.



London: President Asif Ali Zardari shakes hand with the leader of MQM Altaf Hussain on September 16, 2008.



London: British Prime Minister Gordon Brown greets President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari on the steps of 10 Downing Street on September 16, 2008.

President consoles the nation on Marriott tragedy

The suicide attack on Marriott Hotel, Islamabad, on September 20, 2008 happened after Mr Zardari's address to the Parliament. Later on he consoled the nation in his address, "My dear brothers, sisters, elders and friends, today when our nation was busy in celebrating democracy, a very brutal attack was made on our sovereignty. I know what this grief is. With PPP, we have uplifted the corpses of many friends. I have myself buried the dead body of my wife.



My heart cries tears of blood. I can feel your pain in my veins. I ask you to turn this pain into strength. It is a cancer which we are determined to eliminate. We must not bow to such cowardly acts. We are a brave and unwavering nation. We look at our lives as an extension of God. We don't care about death. It has to come one day but we will Inshallah cure Pakistan of this cancer. The day will soon come when all these powers will bow to us. This is our country and we will save it. These are not Muslims who commit such cruelty acts in the holy month of Ramazan. I assure the injured and the relatives of victims of my complete support. I am always there for you. May Pakistan live long!"