

President's Interview to CNN

Host: Veronica Pedrosa

Pakistani President Musharraf has wrapped up his three day visit to the Philippines. His visit came after the trip to New Delhi where new signs emerged of improves ties between Pakistan and India. This is an Interview in the Manila Hotel in the capital of Philippines with the Pakistan President Musharraf who is here for state visit meeting with officials. President Musharraf is seen as linchpin in the war on terrorism and crucial for regional stability. Just days ago President Musharraf held important meetings in Delhi after watching a one day international cricket match between Pakistan and India which incidentally Pakistan won.

Thank you very much Mr. President for joining us.

Ques: When you met with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh you declared that the process of peace with India was now irreversible. Why?

Ans: I said because the people have overtaken the governments and the leaders, the people have got involved and they showed a desire and wish that peace and harmony may prevail in the Sub-continent and therefore I say it was irreversible. All leaders will have to push it forward because the people force is behind this.

Ques: But how can you bridge the divide over such as that over the future status of Kashmir. What future you see for the Kashmiri People?

Ans: Well we have to workout for the solution but clearly a parameter for the solution which is acceptable top Pakistan India and most of all to the people of Kashmir we have to deal with it sincerely so that we are not bluffing with each other we have to do it with flexibility because I keep on saying that the diplomats teach us to adopt maxima list course on all issue but when we adopt maxima list course agreement can only be reached if we step back. Obviously every one of us has to step back so therefore the degree of flexibility and lastly boldness and courage will be required because extremist will create obstacles on all sides so therefore these three qualities have to be shown by all leadership and we have agreed that we need to do that.

Ques: Boldness keeping an eye on a larger vision of peace obviously very important but what about specific idea recently you brought an idea of demilitarizing certain areas of Kashmir. How it was viewed because it was viewed with some skepticism when you first suggested it?

Ans: No there is no doubt that the area to be negotiated, I have been saying that geographically Kashmir on our side and on Indian side can be divided into seven regions that I have identified and I said that we need to identify and agree on a region to the entire region and demilitarized that identified region and then change its status this is what I have been saying. Now quite clearly what it implies is that whatever the region that we identify is mutually acceptable to all has to be demilitarized because that will give comfort to the people. The people are suffering at the hand of large amount of forces That are deployed there and while on the other side the Indians blame that there is terrorism going on while we say that there is freedom struggle going on so all this can be resolved if there are no forces and there is no terrorism or the freedom struggle and the people of Kashmir themselves look after their own security.

Ques: Do you see a day when you yourself will be placing an order to your soldiers in the Pakistan administered area of Kashmir to go back to the barracks. When?

Ans: In Pakistan, Well if it mutually agreed they can return to the barracks as you have said but since we are occupying the line of control on both sides the Indian troops and our troops, the Indian troops on the Line of Control are about may be five times more than the Pakistani

troops so this can be mutually agreed that we must demilitarize the area to give comfort to the people.

Ques: How was your idea received in India and what would be the next step?

Ans: I think it is received well. Well I can't really go into the steps because it will be too premature, and if we start discussing options, I would allow the media and I would allow the people to discussing options so that we can learn from them. If we show our cards now may be the process will be derailed before it is initiated

Ques: lets move on to the war on terrorism. What are your priorities now in this war under that u are asked the question that where Osama Bin Laden is and why he hasn't been caught very often I would like to ask you once again?

Ans: well I can't say where he is. May be he is still in the mountains on the borders of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Why he hasn't been caught because the area is inaccessible, it is extremely mountainous, high mountains between 9 thousand and 15 thousand feet, there is no communication infrastructure. We are developing the communication infrastructure now so therefore it is very difficult to locate a person who may be hiding in some place on the border on either side or for that matter since so much time has gone, he may have left the area one cant guarantee with 100% surety that he is in the area.

Ques: How valuable on your side do you think the offensive in your stance last year. This was unprecedented move by the Pakistani military into tribal ruled area, wasn't it?

Ans: Yes I think it was extremely affective in that we move into one of the agencies out of the seven agencies that is South Waziristan agency and we operated there because we knew that the al-Qaeda is holding valleys there, having them as their sanctuaries as there bases and we moved against those bases. Now they are dispersed in the hills and mountains in small pini packets but they lack their homogeneity as a force. The homogeneity that was provided by these bases is no more there. Therefore in military terms when you break the horizontal and vertical homogeneity of a force the communication homogeneity the linkages, that force ceases to exist as a unified force able to act in unison under direction from one source. So that is what we have done.

Ques: I would like to move to another topic Pakistan has come under criticism for the way it's handled the issue of international interrogation or questioning of A Q Khan to find out the extent of his illegal nuclear material. You have said first of all that Pakistan will provide IAEA centrifuges that might clear up some questions it has about providing technology to Iran's programme. When will you do that also why don't you like to allow the international inspectors to speak directly to Mr. Khan?

Ans: I think when you say that internationally we have come under criticism, we haven't come under criticism by the governments internationally, now the issue related to proliferation is very clear to all governments, state is not involved and this is an individual who has been involved and that is Dr. A Q Khan, he proliferated but the state is not involved and this is very very clear to everyone. Now there is an issue with Iran nuclear development capabilities. On this issue it is quite clear that there is a agree of proliferation which took place by A Q Khan into Iran now there is no doubt and no secret about this, we have accepted this and we have said, yes indeed there was proliferation to Libya, there have been proliferation to Iran. Now what has come about is that there is contamination located in Iran and they want to trace this source of this contamination so the issue is not with Pakistan, the case is not of investigating on Pakistan, there is no investigation going on in Pakistan. The investigation is going on in Iran whether they are enriching Uranium. Now when you ask why we are not allowing interrogation of Dr AQ Khan, its doubting our capabilities and its doubting our intentions. We have given out all the intelligence information that we have extracted from Dr.A Q Khan and we have also said whenever an additional piece of information comes do tell us and we will

cooperate all their way, we will ask him again and we'll again feed the information. So either it is a lack of trust in our capabilities and we think that the IAEA can do a better job interrogating him than us and secondly a lack of interest in our intentions that may be we are hiding something, both ways it is not acceptable to me and therefore please tell us and we will tell you and we are going to cooperate and we won't proliferate. What more do you want. Why should we think that we are incapable of doing this and why are we not being trusted.

Ques: Mr. President you have survived at least two assassinations attempts. What is it like for you to be living under this threat?

Ans: Well it has certainly restricted my freedom of action to an extent but not at all completely and in a meaningful manner. I still go around and travel all around the country and also do what ever I feel like I go to hotels I roam around in the evening for a casual cup of coffee in a hotel so I haven't allowed this to restrict me because I believe that nothing can be done about this so while we do take security measures I don't think one should become a hermit. I don't believe in that kind of security that you don't do that you ought to be doing. The other issue is that we have succeeded in breaking the back of terrorist as I just told you therefore we have a certain degree of confidence that may be these terrorists do not have that kind of capability to put in attacks as they use to do before, and the proof of it the manifestation is that since the last ten months or more there has not been a terrorist attack in Pakistan.

Ques: But does your fear perhaps of personnel safety affect the way that you make decisions?

Ans: No not at all not the least. How does it affect decisions, no not at all.

Ques: When you came to power you were a general, you are still a general despite your promise of taking off the uniform that was suppose to happen at the end of last year. When do you think this is going to be possible for you to leave the military and if you wish to expect to run for President in elections?

Ans: Well as far as the uniform is concerned, yes indeed I had thought that I will be able to leave this post as the army chief end of last year but when I see the issues confronting Pakistan the disputes the problems confronting us I realized that there is dire necessity of keeping three institutions, the political institution, the politicians, bureaucrats and the military in unison well-coordinated under unity and that whether one likes it or not being provided by me to deal with all the issues confronting Pakistan the dangers confronting us and the demands on progress and prosperity required for pushing Pakistan forward therefore against my wishes I did not take the uniform off. Now when do I intend doing that the constitution allows me to hold two offices till 2007 and as I said I don't violate constitution it stands there whether I run for presidency or not that is to be seen later, we will stick to constitutional arrangements.

Ques: The question of development in Pakistan is one you have spoken about in Philippines. The question of educational reforms has come up with regard to Pakistan also. What is your approach to those two issues how important are they to you?

Ans: Yes educational reform is most important. I think quality of human resource development ultimately in the long run is the major factor for progress of a nation and there is no doubt in my mind therefore we are approaching education from that point of view and we have taken a very holistic view of education and we have strategies how to move forward on education. Our literacy level is very low; we need to enhance the literacy level through universalizing education and adult literacy which we are doing. We have seen that our primary and secondary education is quality is very poor, we have modified the examination system. We have introduced new teachers training and we are changing the curriculum course and syllabus and then in this whole effort we see another area that is the madrassas. We have introduced a madrassas strategy where we are encouraging the madrasas to teach all subjects

other than religion and take normal board examination so that the children studying there are mainstreamed into life and in the country.

Ques: Mr. President Pakistan is sandwich between two global giants in the economic interpretation of the world and in population interpretation of the world, China and of course India, it is also right next to Afghanistan which is still I would say is the region of instability. What vision do you have for Pakistan in next five years? What role do you see carving out for it both geopolitically and economically?

Ans: Yes you are right although we are large country with a population of 150 million but in comparison with China and India we are small. however if you see the location of Pakistan and you see this location in relation to the rapid development of the western region of China the Sin kiang region and developing economic relationships, commercial and trade interest between China and India the shortest route between these two countries is through Pakistan. If you relate Central Asian publics they are all landlocked and they are all looking to have access to the world, their route is through Pakistan and India is looking towards dealing with Afghanistan and with Central Asian Republics having their route is through Pakistan. If you see the gulf India is interested in getting gas from Iran, the route is through Pakistan. This is the geo-strategic significance, so our geo strategic significance can not be reduced this is the dictate of geography and we need to realize that we have understood that and therefore we have constructed a new port at Gwadar which is at the mouth of the gulf almost. We are constructing a road and rail communication infrastructure as we already have and we are improving it northwards to have linkages with Afghanistan through Central Asian Republics to improve our linkage with China through Karakoram highway and therefore we are a hub of all economic interaction in this region.

Ques: I actually wanted to follow-up by asking you whether those kinds of issues are the kind you would like to be seen as your legacy by the rest of the world. What do you think its more a question of the war on terrorism that 9/11 inextricably linked your name and Pakistan with terrorism.

Ans; Well I consider myself fortunate from one point of view although the danger and the risk and problems had to be faced by me. But I consider myself fortunate to be at time and place where one can do something to contribute not only for the nation but also to the region and the Islamic world and also the world at large so the legacy that you are talking of that I would like to leave is first of all is certainly for my nation. All my actions are dictated for the betterment of Pakistan, its progress and prosperity of its people that is the first legacy that I would like to leave. The second legacy is for the region because South Asia and Central Asia are the two regions which are not cooperating for economic prosperity they are not linked with East Asia which is cooperating and going forward on economic growth. I would like to leave a legacy of interregional and inter-regional cooperation within the region for mutual benefits. Then is the issue of Muslim Ummah. Pakistan is important part of Muslim World. I would like to leave a legacy where we contribute to the emancipation to the socio-economic development of the Muslim world which is at the worst moment of social indicators and last of all the world is suffering, the world at large is in turmoil is in a state of destabilization. If at all one can contribute to bring stability and harmony in the world and that is what I have done when I propounded this idea of enlightened moderation. So these are the legacies that I want to leave and I am very fortunate that I have the opportunity being located at a place and being at a time at helm of affairs where I can contribute.

Veronica Pedrosa: It's been real pleasure speaking to you.

President Musharraf: Thank you very much.