APPENDICES

APPENDIX I – NEWS-REPORTS

NEWS-REPORT NO. 1

Twin blasts in Baghdad kill 78, wound over 150

_The Indian Express_, 23 Jan. 2007

BAGHDAD, January 22 : Bombings and a mortar attack struck Shiite targets in Baghdad and north of the capital on Monday, killing at least 90 people and wounding scores in a further sign of what appeared to be a renewed campaign of Sunni insurgent violence against Shiite targets. The US military also reported the deaths of two Marines, raising the two-day death toll to 27 in a particularly bloody weekend for American forces in Iraq.

Monday’s first blast, a parked car bomb, tore through stalls of vendors peddling DVDs and secondhand clothes shortly after noon in the Bab al-Sharqi market between Tayaran and Tahrir squares—one of the busiest parts of Baghdad. Seconds later, a suicide car bomber drove into the crowd. Deputy Health Minister Hakim al-Zamili said at least 78 people were killed and 156 were wounded, making it the deadliest attack in two months. The explosions left body parts strewn on the bloodstained pavement as black smoke rose into the sky. Police sealed off the area as ambulances rushed to the scene.

Survivors were taken to nearby al-Kindi Hospital where emergency personnel worked feverishly over the bloodied and badly wounded. Bodies covered in blue and white cloth littered the outdoor courtyard at the hospital. Family members and friends were at the side of the dead, screaming in grief and crying out oaths. A suicide bomber killed at least 63 people in the same area last month. Hours later a bomb followed by a mortar attack struck a market in the predominantly Shiite town of Khalis, 80 km north of Baghdad, killing at least 12 people and wounding 29, police said. The explosions came hours after gunmen killed a female teacher as she was on her way to work at a girls’ school in the mainly Sunni area of Khadra in western Baghdad, police said, adding that the teacher’s driver was wounded in the drive-by shooting.

Later, two mortar shells slammed into a primary school in Dora, the dangerous south Baghdad neighbourhood, killing a woman who was waiting to take her child home. Eight students were wounded, police said. Meanwhile, two Government officials on Sunday said Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki dropped his protection of radical Shi’ite leader Muqtada al-Sadr after being convinced by US intelligence that the group was infiltrated by death squads. Al-Maliki’s turnaround on the Mahdi Army was puzzling because as late as October 31, he had intervened to end a US blockade of Sadr City, the northeast Shiite enclave in Baghdad that is headquarters to the militia.

Twin car blasts kill 78 in Iraq

_The Hindu_, 23 Jan. 2007

Surge in violence follows Premier Al-Maliki's security initiative

DUBAI: In the worst incident of violence this year, at least 78 persons were killed when two car bombs exploded in a crowded market dominated by Shia residents.
The blasts took place in quick succession in the crowded Haraj market early in the afternoon on Monday. The attacks followed last week's bombing outside a university in the capital, in which 70 persons were killed.

Shortly after the explosions, gunfire could be heard from the mixed Sunni-Shia Bab-al-Sharki district, on the east bank of the river Tigris. The area — one of the poorest in Baghdad — has suffered repeated attacks, and symptomises the growing sectarian rift in Iraq.

Hospital sources said between 100 and 160 persons were injured in the attacks.

At least 12 vehicles were set ablaze. Haraj market is packed with traders dealing with used electronic goods, watches, clothes and medicines.

The surge in violence follows the unveiling of a security plan by Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki. Around 3,200 American troops have also arrived in the Iraqi capital, in a bid to control the violence.

Analysts point out that after this influx, the Americans are likely to target guerilla strongholds in areas such as the Haifa street, which is close to the "Green Zone" — seat of the U.S establishment and Iraqi administration in Baghdad.

Iraqi guerillas have used areas in and around the street for bombing the three bridges on the Tigris, which connect eastern and western parts of the city. Once the bridges are secure and an assured supply route is established, it is expected that Shia strongholds such as Sadr city would be targeted. The Mehdi army — the armed wing loyal to anti-American Shia cleric Moqtada Al Sadr dominates Sadr city.

"We realise that the American strategy is against our militias. We are ready to lay our weapons down if the Government offers security," AFP quoted a source close to Mr. Al Sadr as saying.

On the U.S. side, 46 troops have been killed in January so far.

**Twin blasts in Iraq kill 78**


BAGHDAD, Jan. 22: At least 78 people were killed and more than 150 wounded today after two nearly simultaneous bombs struck a predominantly Shi’ite commercial area in central Baghdad in the deadliest attack in two months, officials said.

The US military reported the deaths of two Marines in a particularly bloody weekend for American forces in Iraq.

Today’s first blast, a parked car bomb, tore through stalls of vendors peddling DVDs and secondhand clothes shortly after noon in the Bab al-Sharqi market between Tayaran and Tahrir squares ~ one of the busiest parts of Baghdad. Seconds later, a suicide car bomber drove into the crowd. Police estimated that each car was loaded with nearly 100 kilograms (220 pounds) of explosives.

Deputy health minister Mr Hakim al-Zamili said at least 78 people were killed and 156 were wounded.

The explosions left body parts strewn on the blood stained pavement as black smoke rose into the sky. Police sealed off the area as ambulances rushed to the scene. Survivors were taken to nearby al-Kindi Hospital where emergency personnel worked feverishly over the bloodied and badly wounded. Bodies covered in blue and white cloth littered the outdoor courtyard at the hospital. Family members and friends were at the side of the dead, screaming in grief and crying out oaths.
A suicide bomber killed at least 63 people in the same area last month. The latest bombings were a further sign of what appeared to be a renewed campaign of Sunni insurgent violence against Shi’ite targets.

Last week, 142 Iraqis were killed or found dead on Tuesday alone, including 65 students at a leading Baghdad university who died in twin car bombings.

Today’s death toll made it the single most deadly attack against civilians in Iraq since 23 November, when a series of car bombs and mortar attacks by suspected al-Qaida in Iraq fighters in Baghdad’s Sadr City Shi’ite slum killed at least 215 people.

Hours earlier today, gunmen killed a teacher as she was on her way to work at a girls’ school in the mainly Sunni area of Khadra in western Baghdad, police said, adding that the teacher’s driver was wounded in the drive-by shooting.

The two US Marines were killed yesterday in separate attacks in the Anbar province, an insurgent stronghold west of Baghdad, the military said. The deaths came a day after 25 US troops were killed on Saturday in the third-deadliest day since the war started in March 2003 – eclipsed only by the one-day toll 37 US fatalities on 26 and 28 January, 2005, on the third day of the US invasion.

**Iraq bombings claim at least 100 lives**


A double car bombing wrought more carnage in Baghdad's commercial centre yesterday, killing at least 88 people and injuring more than 150 in an attack that highlighted the task facing President Bush's US troop reinforcements as they prepare a controversial new security strategy for the war-weary Iraqi capital.

Another attack, apparently aimed at Iraq's Shia community, killed at least 12 people and wounded nearly 30 shortly after dusk when a bomb exploded and mortars landed near a market in Khalis, a mainly Shia town 40 miles north of Baghdad.

The first Baghdad blasts occurred shortly after midday when a stationary car bomb ripped through rows of busy market stalls in the Bab-al Sharji area on the east bank of the river Tigris. Moments later, a suicide car bomber drove into the crowd of stunned onlookers.

As the plumes of smoke rose above the scene, the city's overstretched emergency services braced themselves for the influx of dead and wounded. State television showed pictures of the nearby al-Kindi hospital, where bodies had been placed in lines in the courtyard.

Police estimated that each car was packed with up to 220lbs of explosives. The explosions could be heard across Baghdad. A police spokesman, said: "Again it was just poor ordinary Iraqis shopping for clothes and cheap electrical goods and the terrorists designed it so they would kill as many people as possible."

Last month, a suicide bomber killed at least 63 people also in the Bab al-Sharji area. One week ago, 65 students were killed in twin car bombings at a university in eastern Baghdad.

Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki is under pressure from Iraqis and the Bush administration to prevent such attacks and improve the security situation. "The violent terrorists who committed this crime have illusions that their bloody ideology to kill large number of civilians will break the will of the Iraqis and tear their unity and to raise sectarianism," Mr Maliki said in a statement.
Politicians of all persuasions said the bombings were an attempt by Sunni terrorists to instill chaos ahead of the joint US-Iraqi security plan which is expected to kick-in at the end of the month.

The first wave of an extra 17,000 American troops scheduled to deploy in Baghdad began arriving at the weekend. The US military said in a statement that the 3,200 fresh troops from the 82nd airborne division would "assist Iraqi security forces to clear, control and retain key areas of the capital city in order to reduce violence and to set the conditions for a transition to full Iraqi control of security in the city". They will be joined in the capital by up to three Iraqi army divisions from the Kurdish north.

Critics of the plan say the presence of extra troops could inflame the situation. Doubts also remain about the willingness of Mr Maliki to take the necessary steps to halt the corrosive anti-Sunni violence in the capital, blamed by many on al-Mahdi militia which is loyal to the populist Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr. Despite repeated promises, Mr Maliki has been reluctant to confront the Shia militias, which are in effect the armed wings of various parties in his fractious ruling Shia coalition.

At the weekend, MPs loyal to Mr Sadr ended a two-month boycott of parliament in return for a deal which promised to consider their demands for an immediate withdrawal of US troops.

**Twin bombs in central Baghdad kill scores**

*The Independent*, 22 January 2007

Two bombs exploded seconds apart in a predominantly Shiite commercial area in central Baghdad on Monday, killing at least 78 people and wounding at least 156, police and Deputy Health Minister Hakim al-Zamili said.

The first blast occurred shortly after noon when a satchel bomb blew up among the stalls of vendors selling DVDs and secondhand clothes in the Bab al-Sharqi area between Tayaran and Tahrir squares. Within seconds, a parked car bomb detonated just meters (yards) away.

Police and hospital officials said at least 78 people were killed and 156 wounded.

The wounded were taken to nearby al-Kindi Hospital where emergency personnel worked feverishly over the bloodied and badly wounded survivors.

Corpses covered in blue and white cloth littered the outdoor courtyard at the hospital. Family members and friends squatted at the side of the dead, screaming in grief and crying out oaths.

On Thursday, a parked car bomb blew up as an Iraqi police patrol was traveling in the district, killing four people — two policemen and two civilians — and wounding 11 others. The blast burned many cars and shattered nearby windows.

A suicide bomber killed at least 63 people in the same area last month.

The explosions came hours after gunmen killed a female teacher as she was on her way to work at a girls' school in the mainly Sunni area of Khadra in western Baghdad, police said, adding that the teacher's driver was wounded in the drive-by shooting.

Later, two mortar shells slammed into a primary school in Dora, the dangerous south Baghdad neighborhood, killing a woman who was waiting to take her child home. Eight students were wounded, police said.
Iraq: Suicide bombings kill at least 100

The Daily Telegraph, 23 Jan 2007

A suicide bomb attack on a Baghdad market killed at least 88 people yesterday as a new video showed the deputy leader of al-Qa'eda mocking the American troop "surge" plan to secure the Iraqi capital and crack down on terrorists.

The attack on the Bab al-Sharji market in northern Baghdad came as US and British forces prepared a major operation to crush the insurgency in the lawless capital.

The market is a stronghold of the Madhi Army, the main Shia militia in central Iraq. Interior ministry sources said the attackers used two cars, each packed with 165lb of high explosives. Shops and market stalls were destroyed, creating deadly flying debris.

The bombers appeared to target an area that sold CDs of Shia songs, a witness, Ali al-Saiedy, said. "All of the people who were working there are Shia with the Mahdi Army. We believe that we have been attacked by Sunnis."

The prime minister, Nouri al-Maliki, condemned the attack and blamed groups that refused to accept a democratic state. "Those terrorists who committed this crime think in their bloody attitude that killing a large number of citizens will lead to breaking the Iraqi people's will and tearing apart its unity," he said.

In a video published on militant Islamic websites last night, Ayman al-Zawahiri, the deputy leader of al-Qaeda, mocked a new American "surge" of troops to secure Baghdad and challenged President George W Bush to send his "entire army to be annihilated".

"I ask him, why send 20,000 [troops] – why not send 50,000 or 100,000? Aren't you aware that the dogs of Iraq are pining for your troops' dead bodies? Send your entire army to be annihilated at the hands of the mujahideen," he said.

Survivors of the market bombings were treated at al-Kindi Hospital. Bodies covered in blue and white cloth littered its outdoor courtyard. Family members and friends were at the side of the dead, screaming in grief and crying out oaths.

It was the single most deadly attack against civilians in Iraq since Nov 23, when at least 215 people were killed in Sadr City, a Shia slum, by car bombs and mortars.

Hours after the attack yesterday, a bomb followed by mortars struck a market in the predominantly Shia town of Khalis, 50 miles north of Baghdad, killing at least 12 and wounding 29, police said.

President Bush's surge of US troops is designed to increase residential security but commanders around the city are not gaining additional troops to intercept explosives and weapons caches.

Colonel Michael Kershaw, commander of the 10th Mountain Division, which has the job of tackling Sunni Muslim groups in a former no-go area southwest of Baghdad known as the "triangle of death", told his troops yesterday: "We can't stop all extremists from launching attacks into Baghdad. Some will get through. What we can do is cut down their freedom of manoeuvre until it's too dangerous for them to operate."

Working alongside the Iraqi army, Col Kershaw hopes to disrupt terrorist "rat lines" that previously allowed easy passage into Baghdad. As the bombs exploded in Baghdad, Col Kershaw walked around a
market in the town of Yusifiya that was heavily bombed last year and in 2005 but has been revived since his soldiers set up a base nearby.

An Iraqi Army officer, Major Mohsen Abdul Khafik, said raiding bomb factories and detaining suspects was only a partial answer. "Until people have jobs and a future the terrorist will be able to pay them to place bombs and be foot soldiers," he said.

NEWS-REPORT. 2

Post n-deal, Koreas seek to end war

_The Indian Express, 5 Oct. 2007_

SEOUL, october 4 : Leaders of the two Koreas agreed on Thursday to try to bring peace to the Cold War’s last frontier, just a day after the North signed up to an international deal to disable its nuclear facilities.

But some analysts said the pledges at only the second summit between North and South Korea were limited, with the reclusive North clearly reluctant to break much new ground.

“North and South Korea shared the view they must end the current armistice and build a permanent peace regime,” President Roh Moo-hyun and North Korean leader Kim Jong-il said in a joint statement at the end of their three-day meeting in Pyongyang.

They will push for talks next month with China and the United States to formally end the 1950-53 Korean War, which technically is still going on because a peace treaty has yet to be signed. If Beijing and Washington did agree, it would be mark an end at last to the Cold War in the region but the United States has already made clear that one condition would be for Pyongyang to give up all nuclear weapons — something the North shows no sign of being in a hurry to do.

The summit ended just a day after North Korea agreed to disable the three main nuclear facilities at its Yongbyon site — and a source of material for atomic weapons — and provide a full declaration of all its nuclear programmes by the end of the year.

US president George W Bush was quick to praise the nuclear deal with North Korea. He even held up North Korea as a possible model for resolving the nuclear standoff with Iran.

Roh left Pyongyang, where thousands lined the streets waving plastic flowers and cheering “hurray” as his motorcade headed to the South. Roh went to the summit declaring it would make the peninsula safer and help the North’s shattered economy, but many analysts were doubtful he would be able to win concessions from the reclusive Kim.

And even Roh said he found it difficult to break down a wall of mistrust from Kim whom analysts say fears that opening up his secretive state too much to foreign influence could undermine the personality cult around his rule and threaten his own position.

Wednesday’s agreement to disable the Yongbyon complex came a year after North Korea tested a nuclear device, earning it international sanctions that analysts say have hit hard. The deal essentially puts North Korea back to where it was over a decade ago — as Kim Jong-il was taking over from his father as the North’s autocratic ruler — when it agreed to freeze its nuclear programme in exchange for aid.

But it is full of ambiguity and key issues still to be clarified include a suspected uranium enrichment programme which could be another way to make fissile material for atomic weapons.
Two Koreas agree to resolve reunification

*The Hindu*, 5 Oct. 2007

Meet sets tone and pace for a new order of peace

SINGAPORE: In a historic future-setting accord, the two Koreas on Thursday “agreed to resolve the issue of unification on their own initiative” and in accordance with “the spirit of by-the-Korean people themselves.”

After two days of intensive talks in Pyongyang, President Roh Moo-hyun of the Republic of Korea (RoK) and Chairman Kim Jong-il of the National Defence Commission of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) pledged to set the tone and pace for the establishment of a new order of peace on the divided peninsula that the two countries share. Co-prosperity was emphasised as an objective.

The “need to build a permanent peace regime” was portrayed as the centrepiece of “the reunification-oriented” agreement. Towards reunification itself, the two countries expressed readiness to “transcend the differences in ideology and systems”. Also spelt out was the willingness to associate themselves with China and the U.S., which were not mentioned by name, though, to fashion a peace structure.

Raising visions of a de-nuclearised peninsula, the two Koreas “agreed to work together to implement smoothly” the incremental accords already reached under the China-hosted six-party talks. The others in this process are the U.S., Japan, and Russia. The DPRK’s willingness to disable and eventually dismantle its nuclear facilities, as announced by China on Wednesday, punctuated the Kim-Roh summit.

In an eight-point agreement announced after only the second inter-Korean summit in over 50 years, the two leaders agreed to “oppose [any future] war”.

Referring to the 1950-53 Korean War, the two leaders said they “recognise the need to end the current armistice regime and build a permanent peace regime”.

Complex formulation

And, in a complex formulation on how to transform the armistice accord into a peace treaty, the two sides “agreed to work together to advance the matter of having the leaders of the three or four parties directly concerned to convene on the peninsula and declare an end to the war [of 1950-53].”

“The three or four parties” are the DPRK, China, the U.S., and the UN, according to diplomatic sources. As the RoK was not formally a party to the old armistice accord, the two Koreas have agreed only to “closely work together to put an end to military hostilities, mitigate tensions, and guarantee peace on the Korean peninsula.” Other salient aspects include a decision to enhance economic cooperation and create “a maritime peace zone”, a move to “expand” the reunion of divided families and even “send a joint cheering squad to the 2008 Beijing Olympics”.

Koreas’ joint declaration today

*The Statesman*, 4 Oct. 2007

SEOUL, Oct. 3: The two Koreas are scheduled to announce a joint declaration tomorrow morning to sum up the outcome of the rare inter-Korean summit underway in Pyongyang, South Korean officials
accompanying President Roh Moo-hyun on his three-day visit said today. Mr Roh decided not to accept North Korean leader Kim Jong-il's proposal to extend his stay in Pyongyang by another day and will return to Seoul tomorrow as scheduled, the officials said. "Chairman Kim Jong-il suggested to President Roh at their afternoon meeting that he extend his stay by another day to complete all the planned schedule items," senior Cheong Wa Dae public relations secretary Yoon Seung-yong told reporters at Seoul press center. After consulting with his aides, however, Roh decided to return home on Thursday as planned. The two leaders, who held two meetings yesterday, were initially expected to have drawn up by the evening a joint declaration highlighting peace and expanding economic cooperation. Mr Roh said during luncheon yesterday that he hoped he will be able to produce a deal with Kim Jong-il on ways to make peace take root on the peninsula at the end of the three-day summit.

"I had candid talks (with Kim) without concealment in the morning," he said. "(We) explicitly reaffirmed (our) firm commitment to peace." Roh said they reached an agreement that "there should be a positive agreement for the future." Although the President said there was no big argument with Chairman Kim, he said mutual mistrust had been an obstacle. Mr Roh said that through the meeting with Chairman Kim, he received the impression that the North was dubious about some issues, citing Pyongyang's reluctance on reform and market opening. In the meanwhile, South Korean First Lady Kwon Yang-suk, traveling without the North Korean first lady as her official counterpart, visited a state museum and a medical clinic in Pyongyang. Mr Roh arrived in Pyongyang on Tuesday for a three-day visit with the aim of returning home with a comprehensive agreement on peace for the peninsula and expanded economic projects. Initially low expectations for any breakthrough were quickly raised a notch following Kim's surprise proposal, which observers said was a sign that discussions could be progressing. The South Korean side had been rattled by several instances of abnormal protocol by the North, but also expressed hope for a positive outcome at the end of the talks. The Roh-Kim talks began at 9:34 a.m. (S Korean time) at the Paekhwawon State Guest House, the official accommodation for the South Korean president and his official delegates. The summit meeting carried on for two hours and 11 minutes in the morning and resumed at 2:20 p.m (S Korean time).

Sunny south meets frosty north as two Koreas try to bridge 50-year gap

Low key welcome raises fears over Kim's health
Pyongyang meeting aimed at hastening reconciliation

_The Guardian_, Wednesday October 3 2007

A brief handshake marked the start of only the second summit in more than half a century between the leaders of North and South Korea, the two sides of a peninsula that is still technically at war.

Amid low expectations for the meeting, North Korea's leader Kim Jong-il was markedly less enthusiastic in welcoming his South Korean counterpart Roh Moo-hyun than he had been with his predecessor seven years ago.

Tens of thousands of Pyongyang residents lined the streets to wave and cheer at Mr Roh's cavalcade, but Mr Kim appeared tired as he greeted his ebullient visitor in front of a military honour guard

The two shared greetings of "nice to meet you" and then barely spoke to each other, local reporters said. Unlike seven years ago, there was no embrace, singing or a shared ride in a car. Instead Mr Roh had only 12 minutes with his host at the welcoming ceremony, after which he was taken through Pyongyang in an open vehicle with the North's nominal number two leader, Kim Yong-nam. The differing treatment is likely to raise questions about Mr Kim's health, as well as the weak political position of his visitor, whose term as president has less than six months to run.

Substantive talks are scheduled for today, but even yesterday's meeting was hailed by both governments as progress. Coming almost exactly a year after North Korea tested its first nuclear weapon, it is the latest in a
series of recent diplomatic breakthroughs that have eased tensions along one of the most heavily militarised borders in the world.

Mr Roh is the first president to make the 125-mile drive between Seoul and Pyongyang. His predecessor Kim Dae-jung flew to the North Korean capital for the only previous summit between the two sides in 2000.

Although his officials have played down expectations, Mr Roh has said he wants to "hasten the slow march" towards reconciliation of the peninsula.

Stopping at the border, the South Korean leader vowed to break down the barriers erected after the bloody 1950-53 Korean war. In a symbolic step across the military demarcation line, he said, "This line is the wall that has left our nation divided for half a century.

"Our people have suffered from too many hardships and development has been held up due to this wall," Roh said. "I will make efforts to make my walk across the border an occasion to remove the forbidden wall and move toward peace and prosperity."

The crossing took place in an area that has been the focus of conflict and reconciliation. The yellow-taped border was a short distance away from the truce village of Panmunjom, where the armistice was signed that halted but never formally ended the war.

North Korean state media said the summit was of "weighty significance". The summit is aimed at "opening up a new phase for achieving peace on the Korean peninsula, prosperity common to the nation and national reunification," the state-controlled Korean Central News Agency said.

Critics accuse Mr Roh, who leaves office in February, of conceding too much for the sake of a political stunt aimed at bolstering the support for his party ahead of December's presidential election.

At the last summit, the North Korean leader promised to make a return trip to Seoul, but this has never been realised. Instead, two South Korean leaders have made the trip North, prompting some observers to suggest they are paying homage to the "real emperor" of Korea despite Kim Jong-il's acquisition of a nuclear weapon and human rights abuses.

US officials said the outcome of the summit was unlikely to affect wider regional negotiations about the future of the peninsula. No formal peace treaty can be signed without the US, which is a cosignatory to the armistice. "I certainly am not looking for those inter-Korean discussions to change the basic facts on the ground or the six-party talks," US state department spokesman Tom Casey told reporters on Monday.

Mr Roh said any meeting between the two sides represents progress. "Even if we do not reach an agreement in many areas, it would still be a meaningful achievement to narrow the gap in understanding and to enhance confidence in each other," he said. "I intend to concentrate on making substantive and concrete progress that will bring about a peace settlement together with economic development."

The focus of the formal talks, due to start today, is expected to be on economic assistance as well as steps to reduce guard posts in the demilitarised zone, ease tensions over fishing rights and establish a regular sequence of summits.

Korean leaders entertained as North pledges to disable nuclear weapons

The Independent, 4 October 2007
North Korea pledged yesterday to disable its main nuclear weapons facilities by the end of the year.

Its leader, Kim Jong Il, and his South Korean counterpart, Roh Moo-Hyun, were due to draft an agreement today, following the first summit between the countries in seven years.

In a separate accord, the North said it would allow the US to lead a group of experts to Pyongyang within two weeks "to prepare for disablement" of its nuclear facilities, the Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister, Wu Dawei, said in Beijing. Pyongyang shut down the one operating reactor at its main nuclear plant in July after years of talks. The latest agreement commits the North to make a "complete and correct declaration of all its nuclear programmes".

"This written agreement is another landmark regarding the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula," said South Korea's nuclear envoy Chun Yung-woo.

Mr Roh's spokesman said South Korea was "satisfied with the outcome of the talks" with Mr Kim.

He added that Mr Roh "raised almost all agenda items that we brought" and that Mr Kim showed a "firm will" toward peace.

"There was consensus that there should be an agreement this time that presents a future direction about peace," Roh said at a luncheon with the South Korean delegation during a pause in the summit.

Still, the leaders "didn't reach consensus on everything," Roh added. "North Korea still has some skepticism about the South, and doesn't trust it enough," he said. "We have to make more efforts to further tear down this wall of distrust."

Before the talks at a state guesthouse in Pyongyang, Roh presented the North Korean leader with gifts including a bookcase full of South Korean DVDs, featuring popular soap operas and productions starring Lee Young-ae, believed to be Kim's favorite starlet.

Kim appeared animated and smiled repeatedly Wednesday in encounters with Roh – a contrast from his dour demeanor on Tuesday, when the two met at an outdoor welcoming ceremony in Pyongyang.

**North and South Korea sign pact for peace**

*The Daily Telegraph, 4 October 2007*

North and South Korea have brought to a close half a century of hostility by agreeing to peace on the peninsula.

The leaders of both nations signed a reconciliation pact at a summit held in the North Korean capital of Pyongyang, the second ever of its kind.

The peace treaty, which followed three days of meetings, replaces the 1953 cease-fire of the Korean War and aims to reduce tension along borders.

The two nations, who have both still technically been at war since then, vowed in a summit declaration "to closely cooperate to end their military hostilities and reduce tension and secure peace on the Korean peninsula."

After North Korean leader Kim Jong Il and South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun signed the latest agreement, they shook hands and posed for cameras.
Roh then took Kim's right hand in his left and raised both their arms in the air like champion prizefighters before the two shared a champagne toast.

The countries also agreed to step up trade, travel and political exchanges, including starting a freight train between the impoverished communist North and prosperous South and flights for the growing number of South Korean tourists.

North Korea-watchers voiced some surprise at the breadth of the agreement.

"The summit produced better results than many earlier predicted, especially in economic cooperation and peace," said Kim Yeon-Chul, a professor at Korea University's Asiatic Research Center.

"If both sides implement the new one faithfully, it will open a new chapter in inter-Korean relations."

South Korea's main opposition Grand National Party called the declaration "insufficient", however.

"It's very regrettable that the South and North Korean leaders didn't take any substantial measures or show their firm commitment to nuclear dismantlement and peace on the Korean peninsula, which have been the most important issue of our nationals and the world," the party said in a statement.

"We should refrain from pushing for the declaration ending the war hastily without nuclear dismantlement."

The two Koreas held their first defence ministerial meeting in 2000, but have never had a follow-up meeting.

**NEWS-REPORT NO. 3**

**C’wealth suspends Pak again, SC upholds Emergency**

*The Indian Express, 24 Nov. 2007*

Kampala/ Islamabad, Nov 23: Taking a tough line, the Commonwealth suspended Pakistan from the 53-nation group over President Pervez Musharraf’s failure to meet a deadline to lift Emergency, doff uniform and restore democracy, rejecting a last-minute appeal by Islamabad.

Pakistan continued to represent a “serious violation” of the Commonwealth’s fundamental political values, the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG), comprising eight foreign ministers empowered to make such decisions, said after an extended sitting late last night.

Reacting angrily to the suspension, Islamabad condemned the move as “unreasonable and unjustified” and said the Commonwealth, comprising Britain and its former colonies, had failed to appreciate Pakistan’s “serious internal crisis” in demanding that it immediately restore democracy.

The Foreign Ministry said Pakistan was reviewing its ties with the group. “The pace of progress towards normalcy will be determined by ground realities and legal requirements in Pakistan rather than unrealistic demands from outside,” a ministry statement said.

The Commonwealth had earlier suspended Pakistan in 1999 after a bloodless coup by Musharraf, ousting the then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, but it was readmitted in 2004 after the Commonwealth recognised progress on the democracy front.
State-run Pakistan Television on Friday read out a message of support for Musharraf from another key ally, his Chinese counterpart Hu Jintao, who said he “completely” understood Musharraf’s efforts to stabilise Pakistan.

“I firmly believe that, under the leadership of your excellency, Pakistan is able to properly handle the internal and external challenges, realise smooth transition and continue to maintain stability and development,” Hu was quoted as saying.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court today declared that Musharraf’s seizure of Emergency powers was legal. “All acts and actions taken are also validated,” Chief Justice Abdul Hameed Dogar said.

The seven-member Supreme Court bench dismissed the two petitions challenging the Emergency and the Provisional Constitutional Order.

**Pakistan suspended**

*The Hindu, 24 Nov. 2007*

Kampala (Uganda): India on Friday joined other Commonwealth countries in endorsing the decision to suspend Pakistan from the association, “pending the restoration of democracy and the rule of law” in that country.

The decision was taken on Thursday night by the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) consisting of the Foreign Ministers, among others, of Lesotho, Sri Lanka, England, Canada and Tanzania. “Suspension” essentially means Pakistan’s exclusion from governmental Commonwealth meetings and other inter-governmental activities.

The CMAG decision was endorsed by the Heads of Delegations meeting in the first executive session, soon after Queen Elizabeth II addressed the formal Commonwealth Heads of Government Summit, 2007. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh heads the Indian delegation.

India is not a member of the CMAG and officially it was content, in a one-line statement on Friday morning, with having “noticed” the decision. There is a sense of relief that India was not called upon, nor was it in a position, to take a more precise position.

‘Treat it like Fiji’

While Pakistan was not without its friends in the CMAG, the smaller African nations are believed to have forced the suspension decision, on the plea that the same punishment be meted out to Pakistan as was done in the case of Fiji for a similar departure from the “Commonwealth principles.”

The CMAG recalled that on November 12, 2007 it was demanded that “the Government of Pakistan fulfil its obligations in accordance with Commonwealth principles.” Pakistan, accordingly, was expected to immediately repeal emergency provisions and restore fully the Constitution and the judiciary.

Mostly because the Indian delegation’s energy and attention are focussed on working for the election of Kamlesh Sharma as the next secretary-general of the Commonwealth, there was no enthusiasm to rub it in on the Musharraf regime. This is in sharp contrast to New Delhi’s anxiety in 1999 to throw the book at Pakistan after General Pervez Musharraf’s coup. The view at that time was that Gen. Musharraf consolidating himself — *a la* Field Marshal Ayub Khan and later Gen. Zia-ul-Haq — in power was not in India’s long-term interest. Though within a short period New Delhi found it expedient to try to have a
working relationship with Gen. Musharraf. However, in Kampala, New Delhi seems to have come back to the original stipulation that the Commonwealth should not become a super-moralist watchdog body.

**Commonwealth suspends Pak**

*The Statesman*, 24 Nov. 2007

Kampala, Nov. 23: Taking a tough line, the Commonwealth has suspended Pakistan from the 53-nation grouping over President Gen. Pervez Musharraf's failure to meet a deadline to lift Emergency, doff uniform and restore democracy, rejecting a last-minute appeal by Islamabad. The decision to turf Pakistan came after the CMAG expressed “disappointment” that the state of Emergency has not been lifted, the Constitution and independence of the judiciary had not been restored and that fundamental rights and rule of law remain curtailed. The Commonwealth had earlier suspended Pakistan in 1999 after a bloodless coup by Gen. Musharraf, ousting the then Prime Minister Mr Nawaz Sharif, but it was readmitted in 2004 after the Commonwealth recognised progress on the democracy front.

The CMAG rejected last ditch efforts by Gen. Musharraf pleading for more time. Islamabad contended that some political prisoners had been freed and that the President has promised to hold elections early January. Commonwealth secretary-general Mr Don McKinnon said Pakistan would remain suspended from the Councils of the Commonwealth “pending the restoration of democracy and the rule of law in that country”.

However, the group said it would “review progress” after the parliamentary elections in January and affirmed “its strong commitment to remain engaged with Pakistan” to assist the return to democracy in that country.

The decision came after the foreign ministers under the chairmanship of Mr Michael Frendo of Malta, spent more than five hours locked in talks in the Ugandan capital. The other representatives in CMAG are from the UK, Sri Lanka, Papua New Guinea, Canada, Malaysia, Lesotho and Tanzania. India reacted cautiously hoping that stability and democracy would return to Pakistan soon. “We have noted the decision of the CMAG. Our hope remains that Pakistan will return to stability and democracy as soon as possible,” external affairs ministry spokesman Mr Navtej Sarna said in a two-line statement.

Australian foreign minister Mr Alexander Downer described the suspension as “quite appropriate” but felt it was ultimately “symbolic more than anything”.

**Failure to meet deadline brings fresh Commonwealth suspension**


Pakistan was suspended from the Commonwealth yesterday, for the second time in eight years, after President Pervez Musharraf failed to meet a deadline for lifting emergency rule.

Gordon Brown welcomed the decision late last night in Kampala, Uganda saying the move was necessary and justified. He said Britain would work with the Commonwealth to see that the terms on which Pakistan could be readmitted were met.

The decision came after four hours of talks in Kampala at foreign minister level, with Britain and Canada leading the call for suspension with terms for readmittance. Some of Pakistan's fellow Asian countries, such as Malaysia, opposed. Smaller countries, including African ones, backed outright suspension.
Mr Brown added: "President Musharraf has said that he will take steps necessary to restore democracy. The Commonwealth is strongly of the view that he must do so. We will work with Pakistan and the Commonwealth to ensure Pakistan returns to its rightful position in the Commonwealth once the remaining steps are taken."

David Miliband, the foreign secretary, said the international community had to pressure Pakistan into holding free and fair elections. A British minister added: "We would have looked limp-wristed in the eyes of the world if we had not acted. Musharraf says he is making changes, but it is very clear that this is not a run up to free and fair elections."

Formally the Commonwealth secretary general, Don McKinnon, announced the committee "has suspended Pakistan from councils of the Commonwealth, pending restoration of democracy and rule of law in the country". "The state of emergency had not been lifted, the constitution and the independence of the judiciary not restored and fundamental rights and the rule of law remain curtailed," McKinnon said. Pakistan was suspended from the Commonwealth for five years after Musharraf seized power in 1999, but was readmitted on condition he gave up his uniform - a condition he has yet to meet.

**Commonwealth suspends Pakistan over failure to lift emergency rule**

*The Independent*, 23 Nov. 2007

Pakistan was suspended from the Commonwealth last night, after General Pervez Musharraf failed to meet a deadline to lift emergency rule and resign as army chief.

The decision was taken by a committee of nine foreign ministers, meeting in Kampala on the eve of the Commonwealth summit, and followed hours of tough negotiations that began yesterday morning.

Emerging from the talks last night, the Commonwealth secretary general Don McKinnon announced that Pakistan had been suspended "pending restoration of democracy and rule of law in the country". The Commonwealth ministers, who met in London 10 days ago, had given Pakistan until yesterday to lift emergency rule and take off his army uniform or face being suspended from the 53-nation organisation.

"The group expressed disappointment that while there had been some progress, the conditions remain unfulfilled," Mr McKinnon said, reading a statement on behalf of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group.

"The state of emergency had not been lifted. The constitution and the independence of the judiciary not restored and fundamental rights and the rule of law remain curtailed."

Yesterday, General Musharraf cleared the final legal hurdle to ruling as a civilian president following a decision by the newly-appointed Supreme Court, stuffed with loyalist judges who validated his reelection. General Musharraf has promised to take the oath as civilian president, which according to the attorney general, Malik Mohammed Qayyum, could take place as early as tomorrow following the latest court decision.

Britain had clearly hoped that General Musharraf's actions would be sufficient to at least delay suspension from the Commonwealth – for the second time since 1999 when General Musharraf seized power. Pakistan was readmitted in 2004 after the general promised to give up his army uniform.

Gordon Brown was involved in a last-ditch appeal to the Pakistani president to avert Commonwealth action. He spoke to General Musharraf, a close ally in the "war on terror" on Wednesday night. Mr Brown said General Musharraf had promised to "do his utmost" to lift the emergency in time to allow free and fair elections and to quit the army as soon as possible.
But the Pakistani president's moves cut no ice with the majority of Commonwealth states, with African states in particular feeling Pakistan could no longer bend the rules of the organisation, which has placed democratic rule at the heart of its core values.

Pakistan suspended from Commonwealth

*The Daily Telegraph*, 23 Nov. 2007

President Pervez Musharraf suffered a humiliating blow after the Commonwealth suspended Pakistan's membership and urged the restoration of "democracy and the rule of law".

Eight foreign ministers from the club of former British colonies, including David Miliband, the Foreign Secretary, condemned Gen Musharraf's imposition of emergency rule and suspended Pakistan with immediate effect.

"This decision was taken in sorrow, not in anger," said Mr Miliband. "I'm absolutely clear that democracy and the rule of law are the best allies of stability in Pakistan."

The ministers, who met in Kampala, Uganda's capital, on the eve of a full summit of Commonwealth leaders, noted Pakistan's failure to "fulfil its obligations in accordance with Commonwealth principles".

They singled out Gen Musharraf's failure to resign as army chief, in accordance with his earlier pledges, and restore Pakistan's constitution.

Mr Miliband criticised "his determination to lock up political prisoners, his suspension of the constitution and his restrictions on the media".

The Commonwealth has now placed Pakistan in the same category as Zimbabwe, which was suspended in 2002 and later withdrew from the organisation altogether.

Don McKinnon, the Commonwealth's secretary-general, said that Pakistan had "clearly appreciated the benefits of membership and used the benefits of membership to the full and that is now lost to them".

The foreign ministers announced their decision at midnight after deliberating for an entire day. Malaysia and Sri Lanka both opposed suspension, said a Commonwealth source, attributing their reluctance to "Asian solidarity".

Britain, added the source, was also reluctant at first and only decided to adopt a tough line against Pakistan later in the day.

But Gen Musharraf will, however, take comfort from a ruling by Pakistan's Supreme Court, which gave his re-election as president a clean bill of health yesterday.

This victory came after he sacked a dozen of the court's more independent judges, including the Chief Justice, Iftikhar Chaudhry, and replaced them with his own appointees.

The handpicked judges took less than an hour to uphold his re-election as president by national and state legislatures last month.

Gen Musharraf has pledged to serve as a civilian president, requiring him to resign as army chief.

He has also promised "free and fair" parliamentary elections on Jan 8.
The key question is whether this contest will happen under emergency rule.

Now that the Supreme Court has secured his grip on power, he may choose to restore the constitution.

Gen Musharraf will be sworn in for another term as president next week. Malik Mohammad Qayyum, the attorney-general, said: "Gen Musharraf and the election commission both had to wait for the court to give a written judgment." He said that the chief justice has promised to issue it today.

Gen Rashid Qureshi, the presidential spokesman, added that Gen Musharraf had pledged to resign as commander of the 500,000-strong army "immediately" after the court's formal confirmation of his re-election.

"There is no change in that plan," he said.

**NEWS-REPORT NO. 4**

**Medvedev is Putin’s choice for President**

*The Indian Express*, 11 Dec. 2007

Moscow, December 10: Putting an end to the guessing game, incumbent President Vladimir Putin on Monday endorsed the proposal by the United Russia party, Fair Russia, the Agrarian party and the Civil Force party to nominate First Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev as candidate for President.

The announcement was made by the chairman of the United Russian party Boris Gryzlov at a televised meeting of the leaders of four parties with Putin. “I know him for 17 years and fully support this proposal,” Putin said.

After the meeting, Gryzlov said, Medvedev will be officially nominated for President at the United Russia party congress on December 17.

“The congress will nominate Medvedev for President. We hope, the other three parties will support the United Russia candidate,” he said, adding the necessary consultations on this would continue and “the party congress would give final approval”.

Medvedev, 42, a former lawyer hails from Putin’s native town St Petersburg. He managed Putin’s presidential election campaign in 2000. Later on Putin appointed him chief of the Kremlin staff.

Currently, he is the chairman of the Russian Oil and gas monopoly Gazprom and as First Deputy Prime Minister looks after key national projects including agriculture, housing, health and education.

Political analysts said the overwhelming support for Putin in Russia makes Medvedev likely to win the presidential poll when Putin steps down. Putin has made it clear he will retain a significant national leadership role after he leaves office.

After the announcement, the Russian stock market surged, led not only by Gazprom shares but also obviously boosted by the end of long uncertainty over Putin’s successor. Medvedev is seen by markets as business-friendly and less hawkish than his Kremlin peers, but analysts said Putin would be the real power in the land.
Medvedev is a trained lawyer from Putin’s hometown of St Petersburg. The two men worked together in the city administration in the 1990s. Putin brought Medvedev to Moscow as a key lieutenant shortly before he became President. If he wins the election, he will be the youngest Russian head of state since Nicholas II, the last Czar

**Vladimir Putin names a liberal as his successor**

*The Hindu, 11 Dec. 2007*

Deputy Premier Medvedev widely believed to be business-friendly

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin has backed First Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev to succeed him at presidential elections scheduled for next March.

Mr. Putin, who is barred by the Constitution from running for a third consecutive term in the March 2 election, said he “completely and fully” supported a proposal by four parties to nominate Mr. Medvedev.

Mr. Medvedev’s nomination was proposed by United Russia and three other pro-Kremlin parties at a meeting of their leaders with Mr. Putin on Monday.

Mr. Putin said his choice of Mr. Medvedev would ensure “firm authority in the Russian Federation after the March elections of 2008, and not just firm authority, but one that will carry out the course that has brought positive results over the last eight years.”

Close associate

Mr. Medvedev, a 42-year-old law expert, has been one of Mr. Putin’s closest associates since both worked in St. Petersburg mayor’s office in the early 1990s.

Mr. Medvedev moved to Moscow with Mr. Putin, working up his way to the key position of Head of the Presidential Administration in 2003.

Two years ago he was appointed First Deputy Prime Minister in charge of key national projects to upgrade housing, education, and health care.

The nomination signals the victory of the so-called liberal clan in the Kremlin that has been vying for power with the so-called “siloviki”, a group of senior security officers led by Mr. Putin’s aide Igor Sechin.

Mr. Putin has supported Mr. Medvedev over another First Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov.

Mr. Ivanov is famous for his harsh criticism of the West for NATO expansion and military build-up near Russian borders. Russian markets surged to record levels on the news of Mr. Medvedev’s nomination.

Mr. Medvedev is also chairman of the natural gas monopoly Gazprom and is widely believed to be business-friendly. The Putin-Medvedev tandem is likely to continue after the presidential election.

Mr. Putin has said he will not leave politics, and Mr. Medvedev will have to rely on Mr. Putin’s support because he does not have a power base of his own. Mr. Medvedev will be formally nominated on December 17 when United Russia holds its congress in Moscow.
Putin unveils his choice

*The Statesman, 11 Dec. 2007*

MOSCOW, Dec. 10: President Vladimir Putin today expressed support for first deputy Prime Minister Mr Dmitry Medvedev to run for President.

There have been months of intense speculation on whom President Putin saw as his likely successor in the 2 March voting, along with the wider question of what President Putin himself will do once he steps down. President Putin's popularity and steely control is so strong that most observers expect that whomever he supports would be a shoo-in.

President Putin had long been seen as trying to choose between Mr Medvedev, a business-friendly lawyer and board chairman of state natural gas giant Gazprom, and Mr Sergei Ivanov, another first deputy Premier who built up a stern and hawkish reputation while defence minister.

Although President Putin is banned by the constitution from seeking a third consecutive term in office, he has indicated a strong desire to remain a significant power figure. He has raised the prospect of becoming prime minister, and his supporters have called for him to become a “national leader” with unspecified authority.

President Putin made the statement in a meeting with representatives of the United Russia party – which is his power base and dominates parliament – and of three other parties. The parties told President Putin they all supported Mr Medvedev. “I completely and fully support this proposal,” President Putin said, according to footage shown on state television.

Although he holds powerful positions, Mr Medvedev projects a mild-mannered public image and has been widely seen as a functionary devoted to President Putin rather than as an independent thinker. President Putin reinforced that perception today by saying that electing Mr Medvedev would pave the way for a government “that will carry out the course that has brought results for all of the past eight years.”

Putin anoints deputy prime minister as heir to presidency

*Dmitry Medvedev named ruling party candidate*

*President intends to keep control of security services*

*The Guardian, 11 Dec. 2007*

President Vladimir Putin ended months of speculation yesterday by naming Dmitry Medvedev, a 42-year-old economic liberal, as his preferred candidate to win Russia's presidential election next year.

The move all but guarantees that Medvedev, a first deputy prime minister, will win overwhelmingly in the poll on March 2. “I have known him very closely for more than 17 years and I completely and fully support this proposal,” Putin said, during a meeting with leaders from four parties who announced they were all backing Medvedev's candidacy.

Medvedev, a former St Petersburg lawyer and Black Sabbath enthusiast, is regarded as more liberal and less hawkish towards the west than Sergei Ivanov, Russia's other first deputy prime minister, who was also a frontrunner for the job.
Putin is expected to retain influence over Russia's security services, including the military and the Federal Security Bureau or FSB, the successor agency to the KGB, which he headed before becoming president in 2000.

Unlike Putin, Medvedev has no links with the security services. The president, who has to step down in May, has made it clear he intends to "influence" his successor, and has not ruled out returning to the Kremlin at some point.

"It's quite obvious that Medvedev won't be the almighty president that Putin used to be," said Fyodor Lykyanov, editor in chief of the journal Russia in Foreign Affairs

Sergei Markov, a leading Kremlin analyst, said he expected three people to run the country after May: Medvedev, Putin and Viktor Zubkov, the prime minister.

"Medvedev's ideology is liberal patriotism," Markov told the Guardian. "He is more liberal than Ivanov. He has no experience of working with law enforcement agencies, who will tend to see Putin as their main political chief." Western diplomats were hopeful yesterday that a Medvedev presidency could lead to a rapprochement between Russia and the west, after a year which has seen disagreements over Kosovo, missile defence and the murder of Alexander Litvinenko in London.

Medvedev has no experience of foreign affairs. A rare speaker of English, his only appearance on the international stage was earlier this year at the annual economic forum in the Swiss ski resort of Davos.

He is largely known abroad through his chairmanship of the state gas giant Gazprom. Here, he has taken an uncompromising line in negotiations with Russia's neighbours over gas prices.

Yesterday Putin said Medvedev's candidacy represented "an administration that will carry on the same policies that have brought us results for the past eight years". His United Russia party is expected to nominate Medvedev at a party congress on Monday. After that there are no serious obstacles between him and the presidency.

Nevertheless yesterday's announcement was a surprise. Recent speculation had suggested that Putin would endorse either Ivanov or Zubkov. "The majority of Russia's political analysts thought it was going to be Zubkov," Lilia Shevtsova, a senior associate at Moscow's Carnegie centre said. "Over the last month Medvedev was nowhere to be seen. He was sitting in his lonely government office."

Asked why Putin had picked him, she said: "He has proved many times that he is loyal. But he isn't a silovik (a member of Russia's security agencies)."

Several other candidates have said they will contest the presidential election. They include the veteran communist leader Gennady Zyuganov and Garry Kasparov, the former world chess champion and leader of the opposition coalition, the Other Russia.

**Putin puts Gazprom boss on fast-track to presidency**

*The Independent*, 11 Dec. 2007

Months of speculation over the identity of Russia's next president came to an end yesterday when Vladimir Putin announced that he would back his long-term ally Dmitry Medvedev in March polls. Mr Medvedev, a
first deputy prime minister and chairman of the state energy giant Gazprom, and has long been seen as one of the front runners for the job.

"I think we have the successor. Putin's strategy has become clear today," the liberal politician Vladimir Ryzhkov told Ekho Moskvy radio. Analysts agreed it looked almost certain that Mr Medvedev would be Russia's third president.

Unlike many of Putin's inner circle, Mr Medvedev has no background in the KGB or its successor, the FSB. He is considered to be a relative liberal, and under his presidency Russian foreign policy may become less confrontational.

A vicious battle for influence has been going among the figures closest to Mr Putin, and Mr Medvedev will have these turf battles to control if and when he takes over. He is seen as a compromise candidate that will neither delight nor dismay either the "liberals" in the Kremlin or the "siloviki" hardliners.

"There is no figure who would be acceptable to all the people around the president," said Alexei Makarkin, a political analyst. "But Medvedev is not someone that will try to enact radical shake-ups or dominate everyone, and so many people will feel that he is not a dangerous option."

Mr Medvedev's candidature was suggested by a coalition of four political parties but analysts say the real decision-making would have taken place in the Kremlin, and probably by Mr Putin personally.

"I've known him more than 17 years, and have worked with him closely during this time," said Mr Putin. "I fully support his candidacy."

With the backing of Mr Putin and the machinery of the state, Mr Medvedev is almost guaranteed to win the March elections.

Mr Medvedev has long been in the picture for the top job. When he was made first deputy prime minister in November 2005 and given control of four "National Projects" aimed at rejuvenating the health, education and housing sectors many analysts believed it was the start of "Operation Successor".

But slowly, his star seemed to wane. The more hawkish Sergei Ivanov was also made a first deputy prime minister and there were rumours that their work would be compared, with the better man picked to succeed Mr Putin. Then, talk intensified of a "dark horse" successor a weak, stop-gap figure who would allow Mr Putin to return after a brief interlude. He is only banned from serving a third term if it runs consecutively with the first two.

Many thought this would be Viktor Zubkov, the little-known bureaucrat installed in September as prime minister. A dozen other names were thrown around, and with Mr Putin's oft-demonstrated penchant for surprise, everyone forgot about the former favourite.

Now though, Mr Medvedev has been given the nod by the only man who matters. "We can be clear that this is not a symbolic nomination, whereby Putin returns after a few months," said Mr Makarkin.

Mr Putin is nevertheless, expected to continue wielding influence, possibly as prime minister, and analysts said a return to the Kremlin in 2012 could not be ruled out. Mr Putin has finally laid his cards on the table, but exactly how the political landscape will look after next spring remains unclear.

Hard rock fan with close links to Kremlin

* In a country where CEOs are often in their twenties and billionaires in their thirties, Russia's probable next president is also young for the job Dmitry Medvedev is just 42. Quietly spoken and a good deal
shorter than the diminutive Vladimir Putin, Mr Medvedev is not a charismatic politician. But those who know him say he is hardworking, loyal and able to win the trust and backing of those he works with. He is also reportedly a fan of hard rock, including Deep Purple and Black Sabbath.

Like Mr Putin and most of the current Russian leadership, Mr Medvedev grew up in Leningrad, now St Petersburg. He was born into a family of intellectuals in 1965 a quiet and conscientious only child who studied hard and played sport. Former neighbours told the Russian magazine The New Times that the young Dmitry never got into fights, never used bad language and was always dressed well.

He studied law at St Petersburg State University under Anatoly Sobchak, who a decade earlier had also taught Mr Putin. He completed a doctorate at the university in 1990. In 1991, when Mr Sobchak became mayor of St Petersburg, Mr Medvedev took up a post as his adviser, and worked in the city administration's Committee for External Relations. His boss was Mr Putin.

In 1993, he helped set up the Ilim Group, one of Russia's largest pulp and paper manufacturers. When Mr Sobchak lost elections in 1996, Mr Medvedev fully entered the business world, but immediately after Mr Putin was nominated as president by Boris Yeltsin on New Year's Eve 1999, Mr Medvedev was made deputy head of the presidential administration. "He's from the same city, the same team and the same university as Putin," says the Kremlin-linked analyst Sergei Markov. "But he doesn't have the same stature."

Since 2000 he has been chairman of Gazprom, the state natural gas monopoly which is often seen as an arm of Russian foreign policy, but analysts say that major Gazprom decisions are likely taken by Mr Putin himself.

He was made first deputy prime minister in 2005, and went from a politician with very little media exposure to one of the main characters featured on state television news.

**Putin backs Dmitry Medvedev as his successor**


President Vladimir Putin revealed yesterday that a pliant but relatively liberal protégé would succeed him as president of Russia in the Spring.

Eschewing his fellow KGB veterans and other hawks in the Kremlin, Mr Putin said he would support Dmitry Medvedev, a deputy prime minister and chairman of the state energy monolith Gazprom, during presidential elections in March.

"I have known him closely for 17 years and I completely and fully support this proposal," Mr Putin said in televised comments broadcast after four pro-government parties backed him as their candidate.

The endorsement all but guarantees that Mr Medvedev will be Russia's next president, a development that will delight foreign investors impressed by his pro-business credentials.

While the move also brings an end to two years of frenzied speculation over the identity of Mr Putin's chosen heir, it also raises new questions over Mr Putin's future.

"This is not the end of the intrigue," said Yevgeny Kislyov, a leading political commentator.
Mr Medvedev's appointment follows a highly convoluted presidential end-game replete with decoys, subplots and intrigue that commentators said yesterday was designed to ensure Mr Putin's retention of power beyond his official retirement date.

Constitutionally obliged to step down, the president was expected either to change the law and stay on or appoint a malleable puppet who could be controlled from behind the scenes and relied on to step aside should Mr Putin choose to return.

Mr Medvedev, an early front runner whose prospects appeared to have tailed off in the past few months, appears to be a compromise choice.

Mr Putin's blessing appeared to be a rare conciliatory gesture to the West. Instead of opting for an outright hawk like another leading contender Sergei Ivanov, also a deputy prime minister, Mr Putin has chosen a figure regarded as more palatable by the West while simultaneously devoting himself to Mr Putin's nationalist course.

"Medvedev has the image of a liberal, but he will continue to repress what is left of the opposition," said Stanislav Belkovsky, an expert on the Kremlin. "He is also a weak figure who does not like to make decisions."

The heir apparent is known as an ardent disciple of the president. Contributors on internet forums refer to him as "Putin's Teddy Bear", a sobriquet that plays on the fact that Medved means bear in Russian.

Mr Medvedev owes his political career to his mentor. He worked for him in the St. Petersburg city administration during the 1990s and was subsequently rewarded with influential Kremlin positions when Mr Putin became president.

Former school teachers also suggested that he could have exactly the attributes that Mr Putin was looking for, describing him as a "swot" who ingratiated himself with his school mistress by perfectly mimicking her handwriting.

Kremlin observers say it is a talent Mr Medvedev has not lost, claiming he has aped both the president's style and habits - even down to swimming a mile a day.

As head of Gazprom and a man intimately familiar with the intricacies and intrigue of Kremlin politics, Mr Medvedev will also - crucially perhaps - be seen as someone who will guarantee the financial security of Russia's ruling elite.

Even so, some believe Mr Putin has taken a gamble, arguing that he could have found an even more malleable successor in Viktor Zubkov, a 66-year-old bureaucrat who was almost totally unknown until his surprise appointment as prime minister in September.

Mr Medvedev, at 42, is considerably younger and, for all his protestations of loyalty, may grow confident enough to resist Mr Putin's influence and could even resist any attempt by his former mentor to take his old job back.

Mr Putin is only barred constitutionally from serving two consecutive terms and has hinted he could return in 2012 - or sooner if his successor were to stand aside early.

Although Mr Medvedev, who made no comment on his anointment yesterday, has seen his popularity grow in the past two years many Russians regard him with suspicion.
"He is not charismatic enough to be a leader," said Daniela, 22, a student at Moscow State University. "He is a token coin who will probably retire after a year and transfer his duties to Putin."

A fellow student, Ekaterina, 21, agreed. "He is a boy in Putin's hands. He will do everything he is asked to do."

**NEWS-REPORT NO. 5**

**Benazir Killed, Pak On Edge**

Suicide bomber shoots her, blows himself up at rally in Rawalpindi, sets off waves of worry across the world

*The Indian Express*, 28 Dec. 2007

**RAWALPINDI, December 27:** Pakistani Opposition leader Benazir Bhutto was assassinated in a suicide attack this evening as she drove away from a campaign rally just minutes after addressing thousands of supporters. The death of the charismatic former Prime Minister threw the campaign for the January 8 election into chaos and stirred fears of mass protests and a wave of violence that had already erupted by Thursday night. Pak President Pervez Musharraf blamed Islamic terrorists for the killing.

“This is the work of those terrorists with whom we are engaged in war,” he said in a nationally televised speech. “Today, after this tragic incident, I want to express my firm resolve ... we will not rest until we eliminate these terrorists and root them out.”

Bhutto’s death left a void at the top of her Pakistan People’s Party, the largest political group in the country, and threw into turmoil U.S. President George W. Bush’s plan to bring stability to this key US ally by reconciling her and Musharraf.

Speaking to reporters at his ranch in Crawford, Texas, a tense-looking Bush condemned the killing and demanded that “those who committed this crime must be brought to justice.” Musharraf convened an emergency meeting with his senior staff, where they were expected to discuss whether to postpone the election, an official at the Interior Ministry said, speaking on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the talks. He also announced three days of mourning for Bhutto.

Next to Musharraf, Bhutto, 54, was the best known political figure in the country, serving two terms as prime minister between 1988 and 1996. She was respected in the West for her liberal outlook and determination to combat the spread of Islamic extremism, a theme she returned to often in her campaign speeches.

As news of her death spread, supporters at the hospital in Rawalpindi smashed glass doors and stoned cars. Many chanted slogans against Musharraf, accusing him of complicity in her killing. In Karachi, shop owners quickly closed their businesses as protesters set tyres on fire on the roads, torched several vehicles and burned a gas station, said Fayyaz Leghri, a local police official. Gunmen shot and wounded two police officers, he said.

One man was killed in a shootout between police and protesters in Tando Allahyar, a town 190 kilometers (120 miles) north of Karachi, said Mayor Kanwar Naveed. In the town of Tando Jam, protesters forced passengers to get out of a train and then set it on fire. Violence also broke out in Lahore, Multan, Peshawar...
and many other parts of Pakistan, where Bhutto’s supporters burned banks, state-run grocery stores and private shops. Some set fire to election offices for the ruling party, according to Pakistani media.

Akhtar Zamin, home minister for the southern Sindh province, said authorities would deploy troops to stop violence if needed.

Nawaz Sharif, another former premier and leader of a rival opposition party, rushed to the hospital and addressed the crowd.

“Benazir Bhutto was also my sister, and I will be with you to take the revenge for her death,” he said. “Don’t feel alone. I am with you. We will take the revenge on the rulers.”

Speaking to the BBC, Sharif also questioned whether to hold the elections.

“I think perhaps none of us is inclined to think of the elections,” he said. “We would have to sit down and take a very serious look at the current situation together with the People’s Party and see what we have to do in the coming days.”

Afghan President Hamid Karzai, who met with Bhutto just hours before her death, called her a brave woman with a clear vision “for her own country, for Afghanistan and for the region — a vision of democracy and prosperity and peace.”

Suspicion for the blast fell on resurgent Islamic militants linked to al-Qaeda and the Taliban who hated Bhutto for her close ties to the US and her support for the war on terror. A local Taliban leader reportedly threatened to greet Bhutto’s return to the country in October with suicide bombings.

The attacker struck as Bhutto was leaving a rally of thousands of supporters in the garrison city of Rawalpindi.

“She was inside the vehicle and was coming out from the gate after addressing the rally when some of the youths started chanting slogans in her favor,” said Sardar Qamar Hayyat, a leader from Bhutto’s party who was about 10 yards away. “Then I saw a smiling Bhutto emerging from the vehicle’s roof and responding to their slogans.”

“Then I saw a thin, young man jumping toward her vehicle from the back and opening fire. Moments later, I saw her speeding vehicle going away. That was the time when I heard a blast and fell down,” Hayyat said.

At least 20 others were killed in the blast, an Associated Press reporter at the scene saw.

Bhutto was rushed to the hospital and taken into emergency surgery. A doctor on the team that attended to Bhutto said she had a bullet in the back of the neck that damaged her spinal cord before exiting from the side of her head. Another bullet pierced the back of her shoulder and came out through her chest, he said on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media. She was given an open heart massage, but the main cause of death was damage to her spinal cord, he said.

“At 6:16 p.m. she expired,” said Wasif Ali Khan, a member of Bhutto’s party who was at Rawalpindi General Hospital.

Sen. Babar Awan, Bhutto’s lawyer, said, “The surgeons confirmed that she has been martyred.”
Bhutto’s supporters at the hospital exploded in anger, smashing the glass door at the main entrance of the emergency unit. Others burst into tears. One man with a flag of Pakistan People’s Party tied around his head was beating his chest.

“I saw her with my own eyes sitting in a vehicle after addressing the rally. Then, I heard an explosion,” said Tahir Mahmood, 55, as she sobbed. “I am in shock. I cannot believe that she is dead,” he said.

Some at the hospital began chanting, “Killer, Killer, Musharraf.” A few began stoning cars outside. “We repeatedly informed the government to provide her proper security and appropriate equipment including jammers, but they paid no heed to our requests,” Malik said.

Bhutto had returned to Pakistan from an eight-year exile on Oct 18. Her homecoming parade in Karachi was also targeted by a suicide attacker, killing more than 140 people. On that occasion she narrowly escaped injury. Bhutto was killed just a few kilometers (miles) from the scene of her father’s violent death 28 years earlier. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, a former prime minister and the founder of the party that his daughter would later lead, was executed by hanging in 1979 in Rawalpindi on charges of conspiracy to murder that supporters said was politically motivated by the then-military regime. His killing led to violent protests across the country.

As Bhutto addressed the rally Thursday, she was flanked by a massive picture of her father. Minutes later, as she drove away from the rally, the area was awash in blood. An Associated Press reporter at the scene could see body parts and flesh scattered at the back gate of the Liaqat Bagh park where Bhutto had spoken. He counted about 20 bodies, including police, and could see many other wounded people.

Police cordoned off the street with white and red tape, and rescue workers rushed to put victims in ambulances as people wailed nearby. The clothing of some of the victims was shredded and people put party flags over their bodies. Police caps and shoes littered the asphalt. On Thursday, hundreds of riot police had manned security checkpoints to guard the venue. It was Bhutto’s first public meeting in Rawalpindi since she came back to the country. In November, Bhutto had also planned a rally in the city, but Musharraf forced her to cancel it, citing security fears. In recent weeks, suicide bombers have repeatedly targeted security forces in Rawalpindi, a city near the capital where Musharraf stays and the Pakistan army has its headquarters.

BENAZIR BHUTTO ASSASSINATED

The Hindu, 28 Dec. 2007

A first-person account by The Hindu’s Pakistan Correspondent who was close at hand

Rawalpindi: Benazir Bhutto, 54, chairperson of the Pakistan People’s Party, was killed in a gunfire attack-cum-suicide bombing minutes after she finished addressing an election rally here on Thursday.

Ms. Bhutto had descended the stage at Liaquat Bagh, the venue of the rally, and got into a waiting car behind the stage. The vehicle, accompanied by several other escort cars with her supporters and PPP bodyguards, was leaving the venue when the explosion took place, about 5-20 p.m.

I was about 30 feet away from the blast in a crowd of people waiting to leave the rally from a parallel gate. A wall separated the two gates. The police had stopped us so that Ms. Bhutto’s convoy could leave. I heard two rounds of automatic gunfire, which I mistook to be firecrackers at first. In the next second, a huge ball of flame went up in the air, accompanied by a massive explosion. People screamed and ran in all directions. I ran away from the blast first, and then went back towards it, quite apprehensive that there would be a second blast.
Daylight was fast fading but the first thing I saw was a dismembered head, face down, lying just outside the gate where I had stood hours earlier. The road was spattered with blood well beyond the gate where I had stood seconds earlier.

A little distance away, where the bomber had struck, lay several bodies, many of them dismembered. There was thick blood on the road and people were surging back and forth from the scene. Many of them were crying some shouting slogans against President Pervez Musharraf. The police were trying to keep the crowds away — without much success. Some dazed PPP activists stood among the bodies, beating their heads and wailing. Ms. Bhutto’s car had apparently sped away from the scene, and PPP workers at the spot believed she had got away. Sherry Rehman, her spokesperson, who was in a car behind Ms. Bhutto’s, also thought the PPP leader had escaped the attack. But people had doubts. As I moved here and there talking to eyewitnesses, many asked me: “Is Bibi okay?, “How is Benazir?” It was only later I found out that she died of bullet wounds from the gunfire that I had heard. The car took her straight to Rawalpindi hospital, where her death was announced by PPP senator Babar Awan to an angry and grieving crowd.

Back at the scene of the blast, there was chaos with ambulances rushing in, their sirens screaming the police trying to keep people away and the wounded trying to make sense of what had happened to them. On the pavement sat a man dressed in a brown suit, his trouser leg rolled up and blood gushing out of a wound. He was clutching his head in shock. One of Ms. Bhutto’s bodyguards, wearing a T-shirt in the red and green PPP colours with “Benazir Jan Nisar” written on it, stood screaming. His face was covered with blood. “I was on the footboard of her vehicle. There was a man who came towards the car, there was an explosion, I don’t know anything after that,” said the man, identifying himself as Ayyaz Pappu of the Pakistan Students’ Federation, the youth wing of the PPP. He was escorted away by his friends. Inside the gate from where Ms. Bhutto’s vehicles had begun to roll out, lay two bloodied people. Someone rolled over one of them, and as the man breathed his last, the person who had rolled him over whispered to him: “Say the name of Allah, quickly, say the name of Allah.” As I drove back to Islamabad from Rawalpindi with a friend, the text messages started coming in: “Shaheed Benazir.” On the main road to Islamabad, at two places where the PPP had put up stalls to welcome Ms. Bhutto to Rawalpindi, her first visit for a public meeting in perhaps 10 years, activists had started gathering to mourn as the news of their leader’s assassination began trickling in.

**Bhutto Assassinated**


RAWALPINDI, Dec. 27: Pakistan's charismatic Opposition leader Benazir Bhutto was assassinated today in an attack by a suicide bomber and gunmen who shot her in the neck and chest as she was leaving an election rally here. At least 14 people died across the country in the violent aftermath and her political rival and another leading member of the Opposition Mr Nawaz Sharif announced that his party, the Pakistan Muslim League-N would boycott the 8 January parliamentary polls.

The 54-year-old Bhutto, who served as the country's Prime Minister twice and who was bidding for the post in the next month's elections, succumbed to her wounds on the operation table at Rawalpindi General Hospital at 6.16 p.m. (local time). Amid utter confusion, it was stated that a suicide bomber attacked the rally at the Liaqat Bagh park killing some 30 people as Bhutto was leaving the venue. About the same time, shots were fired at her from two directions, injuring her grievously.

Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf condemned the killing and called for calm, according to the state-run Associated Press of Pakistan. Gen. Musharraf also called a high-level emergency meeting to discuss the government's response, the agency said. “He urged the people to stay calm to face this tragedy and grieve with a renewed resolve to continue the fight against terror,” the agency reported. The Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) chief was rushed to the hospital in a conscious state but could not not survive the second bid on her life in 10 weeks.

The first one was made on 18 October at Karachi in which 140 people died on her return from exile abroad.
Her assassination, in the same park where Pakistan's first Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan was killed in 1951, puts a question mark on the 8 January elections. The Oxford-educated mother of three children was a member of Pakistan's political dynasty which had suffered many tragedies.

At least 14 people were killed, including 10 in Karachi as rioting broke out tonight in several parts of Pakistan following the assassination. Television channels reported 10 deaths in different parts of Karachi in incidents of firing, looting and arson involving vehicles, shops and petrol pumps by enraged activists mourning the death of Bhutto. Police could not confirm the number of the dead but said over 100 vehicles had been torched. PPP activists at the hospital chanted “Dog, Musharraf, dog, Musharraf!” and “Killer Musharraf!” as news of her death spread like wildfire. Bhutto's security adviser Mr Rehman Malik said she had been shot in the neck and chest whilst getting into the car after addressing thousands of supporters to canvass votes for the 8 January elections. Before her supporters could realise what had happened, a suicide bomber blew himself up killing, police say, at least 30 people and injuring several others. Her car was badly damaged in the explosion. Several people who were around it were blown to pieces. A TV reporter at the scene said the suicide bomber's head had been found almost 70 feet from the site of the blast. Eyewitnesses said body parts were strewn across the area. Ambulances rushed the injured from the spot to nearby hospitals.

Tension gripped parts of Karachi, including Lyari, which is a stronghold of Bhutto's PPP, and Jacobabad. Shopkeepers in many commercial areas of Karachi, such as Clifton, closed their shops. Pakistan's interior ministry also confirmed that Bhutto was dead. Bhutto's close aides Ms Sherry Rehman and Ms Naheed Khan are among the injured. “We sought proper security and the appropriate equipment, including jammers, from the government but in vain,” Mr Malik said.

Mr Nawaz Sharif, Bhutto's long-time political rival and another former premier, visited the hospital and sat silently next to her body. Limbs ripped apart in the explosion, pieces of clothing and party banners were seen strewn in the blast area. Some of them smashed the glass door at the main entrance of the emergency unit, others burst into tears. One man with a PPP flag tied around his head was beating his chest. Mr Sharif said he himself felt very insecure and accused President Musharraf of not providing adequate security. “It is the most tragic incident in the history of Pakistan. Did Musharraf not know about it?” Ms Asma Jahangir, chairperson of the Pakistan Human Rights Commission, blamed the army for the attack. India today expressed “shock and horror” at the assassination of Bhutto, whom it described as a brave and outstanding woman leader of the sub-continent. Prime Minister Dr Manmohand Singh and President Pratibha Patil mourned the death of Bhutto and said it was a tragedy for the entire region. President George W. Bush said: “The USA strongly condemns this cowardly act by murderous extremists who are trying to undermine Pakistan's democracy,” he said. Condemnations poured in from the world over including the UK and the UN.

**Bhutto assassinated**

*Shot twice, then bomb exploded
Riots across country
Fears over election*

**The Guardian, 28 Dec. 2007**

The assassination of the Pakistani opposition leader Benazir Bhutto last night triggered violent convulsions across the country, casting grave doubts on elections scheduled for January 8 as well as marking a dark finale to a tragedy-strewn life.

Angry scenes erupted in cities across the country, where enraged supporters torched businesses and trains, attacked police and blocked roads with burning tyres. Gunfire rang out on the streets of Karachi, the port city where Bhutto spent much of her life.
Two months after her triumphant return from exile, a gunman fired several shots at Bhutto as she left an election rally in Rawalpindi, hitting her in the neck and chest. Seconds later a fireball caused by a suicide bomb engulfed her bulletproof car and killed at least 20 supporters.

The former prime minister was rushed to a nearby hospital where distraught supporters burst through doors, smashed windows and tried to storm into the operating theatre where surgeons struggled to save her life. She was pronounced dead shortly afterwards. Supporters wept and crumpled to the ground outside the hospital. Cries of "Musharraf is a murderer" and "Long Live Bhutto" rang out.

Initial suspicions for the attack fell on Islamist militants who had previously threatened to kill the 54-year-old scion of Pakistan's greatest political dynasty. Late last night there were unconfirmed reports that al-Qaida had claimed responsibility on an Islamist website. In October, Bhutto survived a suicide attack on her homecoming parade in Karachi that killed 140.

The assassination is the climax of an extraordinary chain of crises to have rocked Pakistan in the past nine months as President Pervez Musharraf sought to consolidate his grip on power amid sieges, suicide bombings, high political drama and a surge in Islamist violence.

In a brief televised address Musharraf declared three days of mourning. "This is the work of those terrorists with whom we are engaged in war," he said. "We will not rest until we eliminate these terrorists."

Analysts said Musharraf might seize on the turmoil to postpone the January poll and possibly reimpose the emergency rule he established on November 3 but lifted shortly before Christmas.

Riaz Malik, of the opposition Pakistan Movement for Justice party said many fingers would be pointed at the Musharraf regime. He said: "The impact will be that Pakistan is in more turmoil - it will be the start of civil war in Pakistan. There is a very real danger of civil war."

The UN security council held an emergency session to discuss the assassination in the nuclear-armed country, which it described as a threat to international peace and stability. The UN secretary general, Ban Ki-moon, said he was "shocked and outraged". In a statement urging countries to cooperate with the Pakistani authorities, the security council "underlined the need to bring perpetrators, organisers, financiers and sponsors of this reprehensible act of terrorism to justice".

Pakistan's alarmed western allies mixed condemnation and tributes with calls for restraint and a continuation of the fragile political process. In Britain, Gordon Brown hailed Bhutto as "a woman of immense personal courage and bravery". The prime minister said: "She risked everything in her attempt to win democracy in Pakistan. Benazir Bhutto may have been killed by terrorists, but the terrorists must not be allowed to kill democracy in Pakistan."

A sombre President George Bush, speaking near his ranch in Crawford, Texas, condemned the killing as a "cowardly act by murderous extremists who are trying to undermine Pakistan's democracy".

In Moscow, President Vladimir Putin sent a telegram to Musharraf saying Bhutto's murder was "a challenge thrown down by forces of terrorism, not only to Pakistan but also to the entire international community," Russian news reports said.

The Indian prime minister, Manmohan Singh, said the subcontinent had "lost an outstanding leader".

The murder is the latest catastrophe to befall the Bhutto family. Benazir Bhutto's father, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, was deposed by a military dictator in 1977 and hanged two years later. Her two brothers were killed in murky circumstances in following decades.
Bhutto became the Muslim world's first female prime minister in 1988, but a second term of office ended amid corruption allegations in 1996. She returned from exile last October in the garb of a democratic champion but was criticised for holding power-sharing talks with Musharraf.

Yesterday her killer struck as she left Liaqat Bagh, a public park in Rawalpindi where she addressed thousands of supporters at an election rally. As she was driven out of the park - standing from the sunroof of her bulletproof vehicle wearing her trademark white headscarf and waving to supporters - a young man leapt forward brandishing a gun. Several gunshots rang out and Bhutto fell back inside. Seconds later a blast rocked the vehicle, showering it with shrapnel. Rescuers found Bhutto lying in pool of blood on the back seat. A senior party official, Amin Fahim, who had been sitting beside her, said he heard "between three and five shots".

Amir Qureshi, a bodyguard from Bhutto's youth wing who had been jogging alongside her vehicle, said she was shot first in the neck, then in the head. "This is a black day not only for Pakistan but also the rest of the world," he told the Guardian from his hospital bed, where he was being treated for leg wounds.

Doctors administered open heart massage but Bhutto died from a bullet that severed her spinal cord, one medic at the Rawalpindi hospital said. The opposition leader Nawaz Sharif, also recently returned from exile, arrived at the hospital and sat by Bhutto's body. "Benazir Bhutto was also my sister, and I will be with you to take the revenge for her death," he said later. "Don't feel alone. I am with you. We will take the revenge on the rulers." Earlier, a Sharif rally in Rawalpindi had come under fire from a gunman, who killed at least four people and wounded several more. Sharif told the BBC: "I think perhaps none of us is inclined to take up the elections. We'll have to sit down and take a very serious look at the current situation."

Late last night Bhutto's body, in a plain wooden coffin, was flown to her home province of Sindh accompanied by her husband Asif Zardari and their three children, who had flown in from Dubai. She may be buried as early as today near her ancestral village in Larkana.

Bhutto's resting place will be inside a mausoleum built in recent years to house her father and two brothers. Now, in the latest chapter of Pakistan's most cursed political dynasty, she will join them.

She represented a faint hope but now even that has gone.

*The Independent*

Benazir Bhutto, twice Prime Minister of Pakistan and the leading contender to win the forthcoming election there, has been assassinated. She was struck by bullets, then by shrapnel from a suicide bomb in Rawalpindi that killed at least 16 others. With her died the fragile hope that Pakistan might drag itself from the grip of the military and the jihadists and find its feet once again as a functioning democracy.

She had just finished speaking at a political rally yesterday and was waving to supporters from her car when she was targeted, first by gunshots then by a suicide bomb. Ms Bhutto was taken to hospital but died soon afterwards. "She has been martyred," Rehman Malik, a party official, said tersely outside the Rawalpindi hospital as party supporters roared their grief, beat their breasts, smashed windows and threw stones at cars.

Pakistan is not new to political assassinations; a red vein of violence runs through its short history. Yet there was a cruel symmetry about Ms Bhutto's death coming in the same garrison town where her father was executed nearly three decades ago. In 1979, the military dictator was General Zia ul-Haq who had Benazir's father - the former prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto - hanged in Rawalpindi District Jail. She was only 26 at the time and was smuggled news of his death via their lawyer. She went on to inherit his party, his popular standing and his fate. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had faults and made mistakes but, like his daughter, he enjoyed huge popular support; as Prime Minister he made peace with India, improved ties...
with China and gave Pakistan some standing and legitimacy in the world. When, on General Zia's orders, he was sentenced to death, pleas for clemency poured in from world leaders. All to no effect.

General Zia was pitiless because Pakistani politics has never left much space for tolerance and forgiveness. The same logic has condemned Zulfiqar's daughter to a terrible death. The reverberations from her murder were felt immediately and worldwide. Condemnations and tributes from world leaders poured in and Pakistan braced itself for a violent backlash from her supporters.

As fires burned in cities across Pakistan last night, fears mounted that this country of 167 million, the only Muslim nation with nuclear weapons, might begin to tear apart at the seams.

As Prime Minister twice before, Ms Bhutto had performed without distinction and had been hounded out of the country by her successor, Nawaz Sharif, with a sheaf of court cases. But no one could question her courage or her democratic credentials. Like her father, she held Pakistan's frail hopes in her hands. Like him, she has been killed.

"It is not a sad day," said Nawaz Sharif, her former nemesis and main rival for power in the forthcoming election, "it is the darkest, gloomiest day in the history of this country." He blamed the government for "a serious lapse in security". Mr Sharif announced last night that his Muslim League party would boycott the elections planned for January.

"It is the act of those who want Pakistan to disintegrate," said Farzana Raja, a senior official in Ms Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party, "because she was a symbol of unity. They have finished the Bhutto family. They are the enemies of Pakistan." President Musharraf condemned the killing and declared three days of mourning.

Aged 54, Ms Bhutto returned from voluntary exile in the West with a good prospect of winning a third term in power in the election scheduled for 8 January. But, from her arrival, assassins dogged her steps. In Peshawar this week, hundreds came to hear her when thousands had been expected, fear of more bombings keeping the crowds away. Yesterday, in the garrison city that is President Musharraf's headquarters and should be the safest city in the country, the killers caught up with her.

Hope has never been plentiful in Pakistan, an artificial nation created by wrenching the majority Muslim states of the British Raj out of India and smashing them together into a single country. Every step of its way has been punctuated by death and disorder. Benazir was the fourth leader in 60 years to die violently. Liaqat Ali Khan, Prime Minister from 1948, was also killed in Rawalpindi, shot down while addressing a meeting in 1951, three years after coming to power. The crowd overpowered his assassin and lynched him.

Zia ul-Haq, Bhutto's executioner and Pakistan's military ruler in the 1980s, oversaw the country's Islamisation: he was the front line in the proxy war in Afghanistan, which saw billions of US dollars funnelled by Inter-Services Intelligence, Pakistan's military intelligence agency (itself staffed increasingly by the devout), to Afghan and Arab mujahedeen fighting Soviet troops in Afghanistan. The Taliban and al-Qa'ida were only the most obvious fruits of his rule.

But Zia also died violently, killed in a plane crash in 1988, the probable victim - although blame has never been ascribed - of rival army factions. Civilian rule was restored and Ms Bhutto was elected Prime Minister later the same year, aged 35. As the first democratically elected female leader of a Muslim nation at a moment when the world was on the cusp of seismic political change, her victory seemed charged with significance. But Pakistan remained divided and, despite her brains and eloquence, Ms Bhutto had none of her father's gift for ramming through reforms. The hope she held out may have been a fragile one. But now even that has gone.

Another exhausting election rally behind her, Benazir Bhutto waved to the crowd one last time, her head and torso sticking up through the open sun roof of her white jeep. Shots rang out. She slumped back in the
vehicle and fell to one side just as there was a huge explosion to her left. Blood poured from her head. She never regained consciousness.

Eyewitnesses to yesterday's massacre said that the assassin was jumped by Ms Bhutto's squad of bodyguards and promptly detonated his explosives, ripping those around him to shreds. All ambulance crews could do was gather pieces of human flesh from the blood-red street.

Farhatullah Babar, Ms Bhutto's spokesman, was travelling one car in front when the attack took place and recalled the final moments of the woman seen by the West as Pakistan's democratic darling.

"We were leaving the rally, and Ms Bhutto was in the car behind me with her security personnel and her political secretary," Mr Babar said. "Just 50 metres from the gate, she opened the sun roof and stood up to wave to the crowds. Then we heard shots being fired and a blast."

As news of her death spread, supporters at the hospital in Rawalpindi exploded in anger, smashing the glass door at the entrance to the emergency unit. Others burst into tears. One man with a flag of Pakistan People's Party tied around his head beat his chest. Pushing their way in, they wept and shouted with no doubt in their minds about who was to blame. "Musharraf is a dog," they chanted. "Musharraf murderer," they yelled. Others just wailed. "Baji Bibi", sobbed one woman. "Sister Bhutto".

Nawaz Sharif, another former premier and leader of a rival opposition party, rushed to the hospital and addressed the crowd.

"Benazir Bhutto was also my sister, and I will be with you to take the revenge for her death," he said. "Don't feel alone. I am with you. We will take the revenge on the rulers." Inside the operating room, the former prime minister's body lay on a stretcher, covered with a white sheet, a white bandage wrapped around the neck.

On the streets of Rawalpindi, victims of the bombing, their clothes blown off, lay on the road, with party flags used to cover the bodies. Two were face down. All that remained of one was a severed hand. The more fortunate, with minor shrapnel wounds, wandered dazed near the Liaquat Bagh Park.

At the hospital, a frail old man reflected on the day's tragic events, tears rolling down his cheeks. "I am 70," Saqib Hussain said, "but today I feel like an orphan."

Ms Bhutto's body was last night flown to the south of the country, to her home town of Larkana, where her father's body lies in a giant mausoleum.

Police reports say that security is deteriorating in many cities as people take to the streets in violent protest at the assassination.

**Seconds from assassination** * Benazir Bhutto is shot by suicide bomber  
* Pakistan faces 'very real danger of civil war'.

*The Daily Telegraph*

PAKISTAN was facing the spectre of civil war last night after Benazir Bhutto, the former prime minister, was assassinated in a suicide attack.

The nuclear-armed state faced its worst political crisis in decades, which could threaten President Pervez Musharraf's grip on power and his role in the US-led war on terrorism.
Miss Bhutto, 54, who had twice served as prime minister, was killed as she left an election rally in Rawalpindi. Witnesses said a man opened fire as Miss Bhutto stood through the sunroof of a car, hitting her in the throat and chest.

Seconds later, he detonated a bomb, leaving Miss Bhutto critically injured and dozens of her followers killed or wounded. Police said 16 others died in the blast.

The former prime minister had an emergency operation at Rawalpindi General Hospital but died within an hour. Her funeral is expected to attract thousands of mourners in her home town of Larkana today.

Miss Bhutto had addressed thousands of supporters in Liaqat Bagh park, her first public meeting in the garrison city since her return from exile. Hundreds of riot police manned checkpoints outside.

She spoke to the crowds flanked by a massive picture of her father, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, who was Pakistan's first popularly-elected prime minister. He was hanged in Rawalpindi in 1979 after being deposed in a military coup.

As the rally finished, images captured her being mobbed by wellwishers as she waved from her vehicle. To great cheers, Miss Bhutto stood up through the sunroof, as she had done in previous weeks to greet followers. The last picture of the opposition leader shows her wearing garlands of flowers and spreading her arms wide to wave at her supporters. Seconds later, the joyous scene became a massacre.

Sardar Qamar Hayyat, a leader from Miss Bhutto's party, was about 10 yards away. "I saw a smiling Bhutto emerging from the vehicle's roof," he said. "Then I saw a thin, young man jumping towards her vehicle from the back and opening fire."

Two shots hit Miss Bhutto. She ducked back into the vehicle, which began to speed away but her attacker then detonated his bomb. The device was believed to have been packed with lead pellets.

Flames engulfed the area and people fled screaming in panic, splashing through puddles of blood in the race for safety. The screams of the wounded and the wail of ambulance sirens filled the air. Many of those killed were believed to have been security officers. Police caps and shoes littered the asphalt.

"The whole ground shook," said Mohammed Haider, who attended the rally. "Clothes were just ripped off people from the force of the explosion. I tried to help, shifting the wounded into ambulances. 30. But it was horrendous."

"There was an enormous explosion," said Mirza Fahin, a professor at a local college. "When the dust cleared, I saw mutilated bodies lying in blood."

Wasif Ali Khan, a member of her party, said Miss Bhutto died at 6.16pm while Rehman Malik, another official, said: "She has been martyred."

A doctor who attended to Miss Bhutto said the main cause of death was a bullet that entered the back of her neck and damaged her spinal cord before exiting through the side of her head. Another pierced the back of her shoulder and came out through her chest.

Mr Musharraf called on the country to stay peaceful "so that the evil designs of terrorists can be defeated."

The country was put on "red alert" amid reports that the regime would declare emergency rule and postpone the elections. Riaz Malik, of the opposition Pakistan Movement for Justice party, warned: "The impact will be that Pakistan is in more turmoil. There is a very real danger of civil war in Pakistan." Mr
Musharraf chaired an emergency meeting with senior officials "to consider all aspects of the tragic national incident".

President George W Bush denounced a "cowardly act by murderous extremists who are trying to undermine Pakistan's democracy"

He added: "We stand with the people of Pakistan in their struggle against the forces of terror and extremism.

"We urge them to honour Benazir Bhutto's memory by continuing with the democratic process for which she (a) so bravely gave her life."

Gordon Brown called Miss Bhutto a "woman of immense personal courage and bravery". The Prime Minister added: "She risked everything in her attempt to win democracy in Pakistan and she has been assassinated by cowards afraid of democracy."

The reaction of Nawaz Sharif, another former prime minister of Pakistan and once Miss Bhutto's deadly rival, heralded more political turmoil.

He hounded Miss Bhutto out of the country after defeating her in the 1996 elections but yesterday he called her "my sister" and said her death was the saddest day in the history of Pakistan".

He told supporters of her Pakistan People's Party: 47. "I will be with you to take the revenge for her death. 48. Don't feel alone. 49. I am with you. We will take the revenge on the rulers."

Many of Miss Bhutto's supporters blamed Pakistan's regime for her murder and Mr Sharif, who is now Mr Musharraf's most prominent opponent, signalled that he intended to mobilise this anger behind a campaign to remove the president.

He said the president must resign to "save" the country. "I demand that Musharraf quit power, without delay of a single day, to save Pakistan," he said. "There will be a total strike tomorrow," he added. "Every Pakistani is shocked. Whoever joins this strike will display solidarity with the country."

As news of Miss Bhutto's death spread, supporters at the hospital in Rawalpindi smashed glass doors and stoned cars. Many chanted slogans against Mr Musharraf.

Riots spread across the major cities and the interior ministry said last night that at least 10 people had been killed and dozens wounded.

Police said two people were shot dead in the eastern city of Lahore amid sporadic gunfire and two more in the southern province of Sindh, Miss Bhutto's birthplace and stronghold.

In Karachi, at least 70 vehicles were set on fire by protesters and two police officers were wounded by gunfire.

A curfew was imposed in the north-western valley of Swat, which has been troubled by months of religious militancy.

Police used tear gas and batons to break up a demonstration in Peshawar, where a police station was pelted with stones and billboards supporting Mr Musharraf were burned down.

In the town of Tando Jam, passengers on a train were forced to flee as it was set on fire.
Miss Bhutto’s supporters targeted state-run grocery stores and banks throughout the country.

Some set fire to election offices for the ruling party, according to Pakistani media.

Akhtar Zamin, the home minister for the southern Sindh province, said authorities would deploy troops to stop violence if needed.

**NEWS-REPORT NO. 6**

Scores dead as Kenya erupts post results

*The Indian Express, 1 Jan. 2008*

NAIROBI, December 31 : Kenyan police battled protesters in blazing slums on Monday after disputed elections returned President Mwai Kibaki to power and triggered turmoil that a local TV station said had killed at least 124 people.

Fatal riots convulsed the nation, from opposition strongholds in the west near the Uganda border to Nairobi’s shanty-towns and the port of Mombasa on the Indian Ocean Coast.

Reuters reporters estimated at least 70 deaths, based on witnesses and body counts. But broadcaster KTN said mid-afternoon the toll had reached at least 124.

In the western town of Kisumu, a hotbed of opposition support, 21 bodies lay in and around a hospital mortuary, brought in overnight and in the morning, witnesses said. Most had gunshot wounds.

In Nairobi’s Mathare slum, police threatened to shoot people coming out of their homes, witnesses said. “Police are saying on loudspeakers from trucks that anyone found outside will be shot dead,” said taxi driver Argwings Odera.

The violence threatens to deter investors from east Africa’s largest economy and damage Kenya’s reputation as an oasis of relative stability in a volatile and war-scarred region. Much of the fighting pitched Luos, who support defeated opposition leader Raila Odinga, against Kibaki’s ethnic Kikuyu group.

Odinga called for a mass rally later this week in Nairobi’s main park to protest the vote. “We are going to call for a meeting at Uhuru park on January 3, where we expect a million Kenyans to attend,” he told a news conference.

“No Raila, No Peace!” chanted youths in Nairobi’s Kibera slum — one of Africa’s largest. In Korogocho slum, rocked by clashes between protesters and police, a witness reported seeing 15 bodies. Trying to defuse one of the most volatile moments in Kenya since 1963 independence, the Government flooded the streets with security forces and kept a ban on live TV broadcasts.

**Scores killed in riots across Kenya**

*The Hindu, 1 Jan. 2008*

*Police given shoot-to-kill orders to check spiralling violence*
NAIROBI: Police battled thousands of opposition supporters across Kenya who charge President Mwai Kibaki stole his way to re-election, and several officers said on Monday they had orders to shoot to kill to quell the violence that has killed at least 94 persons.

The violence started in the days after Thursday’s vote, stretching from Nairobi’s shantytowns, which are home to tens of thousands of opposition supporters, to the Rift Valley and the tourist-friendly coast.

“We have been rigged out, we are not going to accept defeat,” 24-year-old James Onyango, who lives in Nairobi’s Kibera slum, said on Monday. “We are ready to die and we’re ready for serious killings.”

Teams of riot police fired shots into the air and tear gas into homes and businesses; in one home, a woman and her four young children ran out, retching.

“We were just hiding from the shots,” said Dorothy Nyangasi, frantically pouring water over the eyes of her 6-month-old son Daniel.

Other residents said that they had not been able to find food since shops closed for elections on Thursday and trouble began over the delayed vote-counting. A woman shouted “hungry! hungry!” at passing journalists.

The violence has killed at least 94 persons since Saturday across the country, police and witnesses said, although the tally was likely far higher. Three police officers said independently that they had been ordered to shoot to kill to stop the rioters. “Yes there is a shoot to kill order,” said one police official, who like the others asked that his name not be used because he is not authorised to speak to the media.

Raila Odinga, the fiery opposition leader who came in second according to the official results, compared Mr. Kibaki to a military dictator who “seized power through the barrel of the gun.”

Mr. Odinga, who had been leading early results and public opinion polls, also postponed a planned rally on Monday in Nairobi. Police had warned the opposition not to hold the rally. Mr. Odinga instead called on 1 million people to gather on Thursday. — AP

50 burnt to death in Kenya

The Statesman, 2 Jan. 2008

NAIROBI, Jan. 1: A mob torched a church sheltering hundreds of people fleeing post-election violence today, killing up to 50 people ~ including many children ~ as four days of rioting and ethnic clashes marked one of the darkest times in Kenya’s history.

President Mwai Kibaki, sworn in on Sunday after a vote opponents said was rigged, said political parties should meet immediately and publicly call for calm. The violence has killed at least 270 people in what had been east Africa’s most stable and prosperous democracy. The opposition candidate, Raila Odinga, said he would refuse to meet.

“If he announces that he was not elected, then I will talk to him,” Mr Odinga said. He accused the government of stoking the violence and said Mr Kibaki’s administration “is guilty, directly, of genocide.”

The violence has erupted throughout Kenya, from the shanty towns of Nairobi to resort towns on the sweltering coast, exposing tribal resentments that have long festered in the country. Mr Kibaki’s Kikuyu people, Kenya’s largest ethnic group, are accused of using their dominance of politics and business to the detriment of others.
Mr Odinga is from the Luo tribe, a smaller but still major tribe. In the slums, which are often divided along tribal lines, rival groups have been going at each other with machetes and sticks, as police fire tear gas and live rounds to keep them from pouring into the city centre. The church fire in Eldoret, some 300 kilometers (185 miles) from the capital, killed at least 50 people, said a Red Cross volunteer who counted the bodies and helped the wounded. But she asked that her name ~ which would identify her tribe ~ not be published, saying gangs were even checking on the tribal affiliations of aid workers.

Anne Njoki, a 28-year-old Kikuyu, said she fled her home in the slums after she saw Kikuyus being attacked and their homes looted. She was camped out near a military base with her sister, three-year-old nephew and seven-year-old niece. “They have taken our beds, blankets, even spoons,” she said of the looters. The children had not eaten for days. The European Union and the USA have refused to congratulate Mr Kibaki, and the EU and four top Kenyan elections officials have called for an independent inquiry. British Prime Minister Mr Gordon Brown urged Mr Kibaki and Mr Odinga to hold talks.

Kenyans riot as Kibaki declared poll winner

The Guardian, 31 Dec. 2007

Kenya was plunged into crisis yesterday after President Mwai Kibaki was declared the winner of a presidential election, amid allegations of fraud and vote rigging. Violence erupted in various parts of the country as opposition supporters took to the streets at the news that Kibaki had been sworn in for a second five-year term.

In Nairobi's slums, protesters clashed with hundreds of riot police who had sealed off the election commission headquarters ahead of the result announcement, evicting party agents, observers and the media.

As unrest spread, television and radio stations were instructed to stop all live broadcasts.

Kibaki, who had trailed in all the opinion polls and all but the final count yesterday, was given 4,584,721 votes to the 4,352,993 tally of the opposition leader Raila Odinga. Odinga, a fiery former political prisoner, rejected the result, claiming massive rigging by the government.

A joint statement by the British Foreign Office and Department for International Development cited "real concerns" over irregularities, while international observers refused to declare the election free and fair. The European Union chief observer, Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, cited one constituency where his monitors saw official results for Kibaki that were 25,000 votes lower than the figure subsequently announced by the electoral commission.

"Because of this and other observed irregularities, doubt remains as to the accuracy of the result of the presidential election as announced today," he said.

The US, however, which enjoyed close cooperation with the Kibaki government on anti-terrorism matters, congratulated the president on his reelection and said it supported the electoral commission's decision.

State Department spokesman Robert McIntruff said: "The United States congratulates the winners and is calling for calm, and for Kenyans to abide by the results declared by the election commission"

Kibaki, who was sworn in less than an hour after the result was declared, said: "I call upon all candidates, all Kenyans, to accept the verdict of the people. With the election now behind us, it's time for healing and reconciliation."

But outside the president's home province, where he officially secured 97% of the vote, that message went unheeded. There are fears that the perceived stolen election will greatly inflame ethnic tensions. Kibaki's
Kikuyu ethnic group has remained close to power since independence, while Odinga's Luo constituency has been sidelined. Odinga's promise to end the Kikuyu dominance had attracted support from across Kenya's 43 ethnic groups. Some of last night's violence, which had already claimed 10 lives by the time Kibaki took his oath, was directed at Kikuyus.

Odinga called for the president to step down. "It is a shame that a few people are robbing Kenyans of the democratic progress they have achieved," he said. "The train of democracy in Kenya is unstoppable, like the flow of the Nile."

His campaign team sent out text messages last night to supporters announcing that a mass rally to inaugurate "The People's President" would be staged in downtown Nairobi this afternoon.

Police declared the meeting illegal, and said people trying to attend "will face the full force of the law". But aides to Odinga, who was imprisoned for eight years under Daniel arap Moi, said he would not be intimidated.

Odinga, who had helped Kibaki win the presidency in a historic election in 2002, won the popular vote in six of Kenya's eight provinces in the presidential election. His Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) party is believed to have won nearly three times as many seats as the ruling Party of National Unity in the parallel parliamentary vote, which means it will be extremely difficult for Kibaki to govern.

The ODM maintains that Kibaki was only able to win the presidential vote because corrupt electoral officials significantly inflated the results in areas where there was little opposition support. The EU observer mission cited the example of Molo constituency, where its monitors saw the official tally for Kibaki in the presidential poll marked at 50,145. But when the national election commission announced the results on television yesterday Kibaki was given 75,621 votes.

Unrest across the country continued to grow last night. Police shot dead five men in western Kenya, where youths set petrol stations on fire and were reported to have vandalised the power and water supply in Kisumu, on the shores of Lake Victoria. In Nairobi, where more than a million people, mostly Odinga supporters, live in densely packed slums, shops and shacks were torched while protestors waved clubs and machetes, chanting anti-Kibaki slogans as a police helicopter hovered overhead.

A blackout plunged the city's Kibera slum into darkness as police fired live rounds and teargas to disperse demonstrators. In the eastern port city of Mombasa, bonfires were lit as demonstrators clashed with police. And in the central town of Naivasha, pro-Kibaki youths torched an ODM office, witnesses said.

**Kenya in flames over 'stolen election'**

*The Independent, 31 Dec. 2007*

As black smoke billowed from the slums of Nairobi, Kenya was plunged into widespread rioting last night after President Mwai Kibaki was declared the winner in elections that observers claim were stolen.

Days of tension gave way to angry scenes as international observers were locked out of the final count and the 76-year-old incumbent confounded early results from Thursday's voting to cling on to power.

At least a dozen people were killed as violence erupted and thousands of opposition supporters took to the streets in the Nairobi slum, Kibera, and the western city of Kisumu. Riots were also reported in Ongata Rongai, Kakamega, the Eastlands district of Nairobi, and Kisii.
Within minutes of the official result, Mr Kibaki was sworn in at a hasty ceremony at State House. While observers and opposition leaders complained of a fix, the President insisted the election had "raised Kenya's democratic profile throughout the world" and set a "good example to the rest of the continent".

The beaten opposition leader, Raila Odinga, who appeared for much of the weekend to be on course for the presidency, accused the electoral commission of "doctoring" the results. "Kibaki has flooded this commission with his cronies and they are putting pressure on the chairman of the commission to announce fraudulent results," he said.

President Kibaki appointed 19 of the 21 electoral commissioners earlier this year. One of the new commissioners is Mr Kibaki's personal lawyer.

International election observers were locked out of the tallying rooms as counting dragged into an unprecedented third day. "They are cooking the books," said one Western observer who had been barred entry.

Koki Mulli, the head of the Institute of Education in Democracy, said: "This is the saddest day in the history of democracy in this country. It is a coup d'etat. It is not about who wins, it is about the legitimacy and the credibility of the process."

Election monitors said the counting process had not been credible. "We have doubts regarding the accuracy of the results," said the chief EU observer, Alexander Graf Lambsdorff.

The opposition Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) claimed there were irregularities in 48 out of the 210 constituencies. In some constituencies the results announced bore little resemblance to those read out in regional tallying centres.

In Molo constituency, where European Union observers were present, Mr Kibaki won 55,145 votes. When Samuel Kivuitu, head of the electoral commission, announced the result, it had shot up to 75,261. In Kangara, the number of votes for Mr Kibaki rose from 33,835 to 70,443. In Juja it more than doubled from 48,293 to 100,390.

In London, the Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, said Britain had "real concerns" about the result. Mr Miliband tried to speak to Mr Kibaki several times during the day but Mr Kibaki's handlers refused to accept the call.

The announcement of the results by Mr Kivuitu descended into farce as opposition leaders tried to shout him down. Sat in front of a banner proclaiming "free and fair elections", he began to read out results from the disputed constituencies. As ODM leaders arrived they were engulfed in a mêlée and one senior party member was hit over the head with a baton by a policeman.

Dozens of paramilitary police officers armed with machine guns and 3ft-long wooden poles moved in and Mr Kivuitu was whisked out. He called on Mr Odinga to take his case to the courts. The High Court in Nairobi has yet to hear cases arising from disputed results from the 2002 election.

"This has taken us back 15 years," said Maina Kiai, chairman of the Kenya National Human Rights Commission, referring to Kenya's first flawed attempt at multi-party elections in 1992. "It is a crying shame. It is very, very painful. This is like Nigeria for crying out loud."

Mwai Kibaki's Kenya election 'win' brings riots (31,dec2007)

The Daily Telegraph, 31 Dec. 2007
Riots erupted across Kenya last night after the unpopular sitting president was swiftly sworn into power following an election widely seen as rigged.

Black smoke billowed from shacks across Nairobi's slums as thousands of protesters marched following the announcement that Mwai Kibaki, 76, had been returned to power.

Less than an hour after the result was declared, Mr Kibaki was sworn back in as president and called for "national healing".

Police shot dead seven demonstrators, bringing to 20 the number of people to have died in poll-related violence since Thursday's ballot. The president ordered a ban on all live television reports.

The election result came after days of delayed counts and widespread allegations that voting had been rigged in favour of the incumbent.

No fewer than 20 of Mr Kibaki's cabinet members - some of whom had faced corruption allegations - had lost their seats in parallel parliamentary elections.

The electoral commission declared that Mr Kibaki had won a second term with 4.6 million votes to Raila Odinga's 4.4 million, a day after partial results showed the challenger in the lead.

Mr Odinga, 62, immediately rejected the result, claiming that a quarter of constituencies had been "doctored" by the commission. He said he would today stage an alternative inauguration making him president, a move likely to provoke a heavy police reaction.

The European Union observer mission said that the commission had "not succeeded in establishing the credibility of the tallying process".

David Miliband, the Foreign Secretary, said in a statement that Britain had "real concerns at the irregularities reported by the EU observers and others".

The violence will raise concerns that Kenya, which has long been seen by Western powers as the stable hub of restive East Africa, could itself fall into chaos.

Tens of thousands of soldiers and armed police set up road-blocks as rumours flashed across the country of a state of emergency and a three-day curfew following the result.

"The people's will has not been heard and we can see that there will be so much trouble and violence because of that," said Frederick Dawo, 26, a teacher from Nairobi.

"There is a very heavy police presence outside. There are many people shouting and screaming and getting agitated, but we are just staying indoors with hopes and prayers."

Kipkomei arap Komei, a returning officer turned whistleblower, told a crowd in the capital that "there was shameless, blatant and open alteration of results" by electoral officers once verified tallies had arrived at the commission's Nairobi headquarters.

"My conscience will not let me see what I have seen and not speak out," said Mr Komei, as those listening to him cried "hero".

Earlier, Mr Odinga said: "If they go ahead and declare Mr Kibaki the winner, they will do the biggest injustice to the people of this country, with the gravest consequences."
His Orange Democratic Movement party is likely to contest the results through the courts. With the majority of MPs in the new parliament, it can also force an early vote of no confidence in Mr Kibaki.

**NEWS-REPORT NO. 7**

**Zimbabwe Opposition claims victory in election**

*The Indian Express*, 3 April 2008

HARARE, April 2: Zimbabwe’s Opposition said on Wednesday it had defeated veteran President Robert Mugabe in both presidential and parliamentary elections, but would accept a runoff vote.

Party Secretary-General Tendai Biti told a news conference that tallies based on totals posted outside polling stations showed Movement for Democratic Change leader Morgan Tsvangirai had won 50.3 per cent of the vote and Mugabe 43.8 per cent.

Biti said a second round runoff was not necessary but the MDC would accept one “under protest”. Election rules say any candidate needs an absolute majority for an outright first round victory.

Biti appealed to Mugabe, president for the last 28 years, to concede defeat and avoid “embarrassment”. Mugabe, 84, faced an unprecedented challenge in Saturday’s elections because of the economic collapse of his once prosperous country.

Mugabe’s Government immediately rejected the MDC victory claim as “mischievous”.

Deputy Information Minister Bright Matonga told Sky television: “President Mugabe is going nowhere. We are not going to be pressurised into anything.”

The Government has warned that victory claims before an official result would be regarded as a coup d’état. Matonga said in a telephone interview with Sky: “No-one is panicking around President Mugabe. The army is very solidly behind our president, the police force as well.” He added: “We are not going to be rushed by anybody. They can make statements left right and centre, but they are merely wasting their time.”

No official results of the presidential poll have been issued four days after the election and Mugabe has not been seen in public since voting, despite speculation he would make a television address on Tuesday night.

Biti said MDC tallies showed it had also won the parliamentary vote, taking 99 seats to the ruling ZANU-PF’s 96. The latest official results gave ZANU-PF 93 seats to 91 for the MDC with five for a breakaway Opposition faction.

**Mugabe’s party loses Parliament**

*The Hindu*, 3 April 2008

Opposition claim of victory of presidency contested

HARARE: President Robert Mugabe’s party lost control of Zimbabwe’s Parliament, the latest official results showed Wednesday, hours after the opposition claimed it also won the presidency.
Electoral Commission results appear to confirm the unravelling of a regime that has ruled this southern African country since independence from Britain three decades ago, in recent years overseeing the collapse of the economy and accused of stifling democracy.

The official results gave the opposition Movement for Democratic Change 105 seats to 93 for Mr. Mugabe’s ZANU-PF in the 210-seat House of Assembly. One seat went to an independent. That means that even if ZANU-PF wins all the remaining seats, it will not have the 206 seats needed for a majority. Seven of Mr. Mugabe’s Cabinet Ministers have lost their seats, according to official results.

The opposition had 41 of the 120 seats in the old, smaller assembly.

At a news conference earlier on Wednesday, Movement for Democratic Change general secretary Tendai Biti said party leader Morgan Tsvangirai won 50.3 per cent of the vote in the presidential race held alongside parliamentary balloting on Saturday, compared to 43.8 per cent for Mr. Mugabe. “We maintain that we have won the presidential election outright without the need for a runoff,” Mr. Biti said.

Discrepancy

The opposition said it tallied individual polling station totals posted outside the stations across the country. The figures Mr. Biti gave at the news conference for votes cast and those garnered by the candidates did not back up his contention that his candidate won 50.3 per cent of the vote. Mr. Biti said 2,382,243 votes were cast, Mr. Tsvangirai received 1,171,079 — about 49 percent — and Mr. Mugabe 1,043,349 — just under 44 per cent. Contacted by the Associated Press soon after the news conference, Mr. Biti could not immediately explain the discrepancy.

ZANU-PF rejected the opposition’s presidential victory claim, saying it was being “irresponsible” and “mischievous.” Britain’s Foreign Secretary David Miliband, speaking to British lawmakers in London on Wednesday, hailed Mr. Tsvangirai’s behavior as “statesmanlike,” but stopped short of backing opposition claims of victory. Britain has long been a sharp critic of Mr. Mugabe, and Mr. Miliband said he did not want to hand Mr. Mugabe’s party propaganda points by endorsing a candidate and was not going to pre-empt official results. — AP

Mugabe’s party loses majority

The Statesman, 3 April 2008

HARARE, April 2: President Robert Mugabe’s party has lost its majority in parliament, the Zimbabwe Election Commission says.

It says President Mugabe’s Zanu-PF party has taken 94 of the 207 contested seats, while Opposition parties have won 105. One seat has gone to an independent. Earlier, the Opposition MDC said its leader Mr Morgan Tsvangirai had won the presidential election. Zanu-PF said this was “wishful thinking”. The official presidential election results not yet been declared.

The MDC released its own results to back up its claim of victory in the presidential poll.

MDC Party Secretary General Tendai Biti said Mr Tsvangirai had won 50.3 per cent of the vote to President Robert Mugabe's 43.8 per cent, so avoiding a run-off.

Deputy Information Minister Mr Bright Matonga said the claim of victory was irresponsible and could incite violence.
In his news conference, Mr Biti said there was "anxiety and disappointment" at the failure of the Zimbabwe Election Commission to declare presidential results. This had produced a vacuum, he said, giving room for all sorts of rumours.

**Mugabe's party loses control of parliament**

*The Guardian*, 3 April 2008

Robert Mugabe's government was dealt another blow yesterday when the ruling Zanu-PF party lost control of parliament to the opposition for the first time since independence 28 years ago.

But with no count from the presidential race released four days after the vote, impatient opposition leaders defied government warnings not to pre-empt the state's election commission and announced that its final tally of returns gave the Movement for Democratic Change candidate, Morgan Tsvangirai, an outright majority over Mugabe.

However, the MDC's calculation that Tsvangirai won just above the 50% of the ballot required to avoid a run-off election means another round of voting is likely if Mugabe wants it.

The trickle of official results from Saturday's election delivered the two wings of the MDC an outright majority in the lower house of parliament with 114 of the 210 seats. Zanu-PF took 94. Seven of Mugabe's cabinet ministers lost their seats.

In the presidential race, the MDC figures gave Tsvangirai 50.3% of the vote to 43.8% for Mugabe. A third candidate, Simba Makoni, a former finance minister, took nearly 6%.

The state-run Herald newspaper added to speculation that Mugabe would hold out for a second round by saying the presidential results that have yet to be released by the election commission pointed to a run-off. The MDC secretary general, Tendai Biti, said the official results should be released immediately, and should reflect Tsvangirai's outright victory, but that the MDC is ready for a second round of elections "under protest".

"One of the key pillars of the state, the legislature, is now controlled by the opposition," he said. "What these results show is everyone in Zimbabwe is ready for change. It appears the state media is preparing the public for a run-off... A run-off really serves no purpose other than to embarrass certain elderly quarters."

Mugabe's spokesman, George Charamba, who previously warned that the MDC announcing it had won would amount to "a coup", again threatened the party.

"You are drifting in very dangerous territory and I hope the MDC is prepared for the consequences," he said.

Zanu-PF's deputy information minister, Bright Matonga, called the MDC's declaration "mischievous" and accused it of trying to provoke a reaction from the security forces.

Before the election, the country's police chief and a hardline Mugabe loyalist, Augustine Chiuri, warned the opposition not to declare victory before the official results were released.

A former senior Zanu-PF official who retains close contact with elements of the party said that Chiuri is one of the top security officials opposed to recognising defeat and favours declaring victory or going to a second round of voting in the hopes of changing the outcome.
But there are dangers for Mugabe in a run-off. Most of those who voted for Makoni can be expected to swing behind Tsvangirai, particularly in Matabeleland, where Makoni did well and Mugabe is hated for the military campaign and massacres there in the 1980s. That would easily deliver Tsvangirai victory based on the MDC presidential election figures.

But the next round may not be like the first. The opposition says two new factors were among the most important in changing the conduct of this election - the posting of results at each polling station, which made it harder to rig the final results, and the relative absence of violence.

Killings and beatings of opposition activists and supporters in previous elections scared people away from rallies and the polls, particularly in rural areas. This time Tsvangirai was able to take his campaign into areas that were traditionally strongly Zanu-PF and no-go areas.

That helped the MDC make inroads into Zanu-PF's rural heartland. The opposition won three out of four parliamentary seats in Manicaland. Three years ago it took just two seats out of 16 in the province. In another mostly rural province, Masvingo, the MDC won more than half the seats; in 2005 it had almost no showing.

But the opposition recognises things might not be the same second time round. While it would be too blatant to refuse to post the results at polling stations again, the MDC fears a desperate Zanu-PF will again unleash the war veterans and its militias against activists and voters.

With Mugabe apparently holding out against admitting defeat, there are also growing questions over the reaction of the military rank and file, which is likely to have voted largely for the opposition.

The former senior Zanu-PF official said there were increasing concerns among mid-ranking army officers over the loyalty of troops if they are asked to put down popular protests against any attempt by Mugabe to overturn election results.

But Matonga said: "The army is behind President Mugabe. The police force is behind him. President Mugabe is going nowhere."

Endgame for Mugabe

As election results go against Mugabe, reports suggest he is in talks that may bring to a close his 28-year rule of Zimbabwe

*The Independent*, 2 April 2008

Whisper it quietly, but Zimbabwe may be witnessing the final days (if not hours) in office of the only leader it has ever known. While the people of this ruined country waited last night for their electoral voice to be heard, reports from high-level talks between aides of Robert Mugabe and the opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai suggested they were edging closer to accomplishing the previously impossible.

After 28 years of seemingly unshakeable authority – in which all opponents have been sidelined, exiled or killed – the "old man" as Zimbabweans call him, was reported to be considering relinquishing power. Saturday's elections went so strongly against the ruling party, that it is understood he has been advised to quit now rather than face a humiliating second round against his hated rival, Mr Tsvangirai.

Sources close to the talks said that an "exit package" was being negotiated that could see the 84-year-old retire or even, according to one scenario, leave the country. While an agreement was far from settled, Mr
Mugabe was believed to be seeking immunity from prosecution as well as guarantees relating to millions of pounds worth of assets held in a number of countries.

A US State Department official confirmed negotiations were under way, saying they followed indications that Mr Tsvangirai would secure a majority in the presidential election but fall short of the 51 per cent required to avoid a run-off.

However, both the ruling party and the opposition were at pains to quash the rumours. "Any speculation about deals and negotiations is speculation, because the results have not been announced," said Mr Tsvangirai in his first public appearance since Saturday's vote. "Let's wait for [the electoral commission] to complete its work, then we can discuss the circumstances that will affect the people."

And a junior minister in Mr Mugabe's government said: "There is no need for a deal ... there are no negotiations whatsoever."

As speculation swirled, Zimbabwe's electoral commission continued its theatre of the absurd. The official results, released at a trickle, continued to show the ruling Zanu-PF party and the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) running neck-and-neck in terms of parliamentary seats. However, these results contradicted both the findings of independent election observers and the results amassed by opposition polling agents nationwide.

Three days after the poll, there had still been no official results concerning the presidential vote. A second round, which would have to be held within 21 days, appeared unlikely, after massive resources were poured into Saturday's poll, much of it in the form of crude vote-buying by Zanu-PF.

One scenario is that Mr Mugabe would stand aside and allow an alternative candidate from Zanu-PF to contest a second round. But that also carries the risk that the opposition would unite and the angry populace would give an even more resounding "No" to Zanu-PF than they did four days ago. "There is no way that Mugabe wants a second round. He would lose badly and be humiliated," said a senior diplomat close to the election crisis. Mr Mugabe himself ruled out a run-off before the weekend, saying there was no "second round in this boxing match".

Zimbabwe's two main cities remained calm, although riot police have been dispatched for nightly patrols, and roadblocks mounted outside all major towns. But Harare was awash with wild rumours. The wildest of those – that "Comrade Bob" had already fled the country – was quashed after he was spotted in the suburbs by foreign diplomats.

Political and business cronies will be dreading any departure of Comrade Bob. "I was talking to some of the bigwigs in the ruling party and they are also concerned about the possibility of a change of guard," Marwick Khumalo, the head of the Pan-African Parliament observer mission, told local radio in South Africa.

"Zanu-PF has actually been institutionalised in the lives of Zimbabweans, so it is not easy for anyone within the sphere of the ruling party to accept that 'Maybe we might be defeated or might have been defeated'."

Were Mr Mugabe to negotiate his exit now, he would leave behind him a country of 90 per cent unemployment; life expectancies of 34 and 37 for women and men respectively; 4,000 dead per month from Aids; and four million close to starvation. Yet no statistic encapsulates the turmoil of Zimbabwe as completely as the rate of inflation: 200,000 per cent and climbing.

The staunch Catholic emerged from more than a a decade in a Rhodesian prison to lead one faction of the liberation struggle against the white rule of Ian Smith, then won a resounding victory in the first elections
to follow independence in 1980. Cast in the role of liberator, Mr Mugabe was initially the darling of the liberal world. Now he is the man who perfected the art of democratic dictatorship. The full extent of his fall may be apparent to him as he mulls the shrinking list of countries that might entertain him in exile in his dotage.

**Robert Mugabe loses Zimbabwe parliament**

*The Daily Telegraph*, 3 April 2008

Robert Mugabe has lost control of Zimbabwe's parliament in a major blow to his hopes of holding on to power. The ruling Zanu-PF party lost its majority for the first time in 28 years to the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).

The MDC claimed that it had won the separate presidential poll, with its leader Morgan Tsvangirai taking 50.3 per cent of the vote to Mr Mugabe's 43.8 per cent.

But the government refused to release the official result and suggested that neither man had won the 50 per cent necessary to avoid a second round in three weeks' time. If Mr Mugabe insists on the run-off, he faces an embarrassing defeat.

Aides of Simba Makoni, the third presidential candidate who took 7 per cent of the vote, told The Daily Telegraph: "We are going to side with Tsvangirai. We have taken a decision already as a movement."

Tendai Biti, MDC secretary general, said: "Put simply Mr Tsvangirai has won this election. He is the next president of the Republic of Zimbabwe, without a run-off."

He added the party would accept a second round "under protest", in the expectation of victory. "It is unlikely that the will of the people will in any way be reversed in that run-off."

"If anything, there will actually be an embarrassing margin in favour of the opposition. There is no question about that."

The official Herald newspaper, a mouthpiece for the Mugabe regime, predicted neither he nor the MDC leader had scored 50 per cent.

The front-page report is the clearest possible indication that Mr Mugabe is determined to keep fighting.

In return for his support, Mr Makoni would be seeking the deputy presidency or prime ministership in a Tsvangirai-led government of national unity. He would also want undertakings on a new constitution and fresh elections in a year's time, his aides said. Official parliamentary results showed that Zanu-PF had lost its majority for the first time since independence in 1980.

The two factions of the MDC had a combined 105 seats in the 210-member house of assembly, with Zanu-PF on 93 and one independent. The regime's willingness to concede a second round in the presidential election indicates that declaring first-round victory had become politically impossible, with the results from each polling station posted up for the public to read.

But analysts cautioned that in the face of potential humiliation, Mr Mugabe could fight to the last for his position.

There is speculation that a huge rigging operation will be attempted after a ruling party spokesman claimed that Mr Makoni's supporters would flock back returned to Zanu-PF in a second round of voting.
Mr Mugabe can still call on an army of so-called war veterans of the independence struggle and the feared youth brigade if he decides on a violent final last stand. "He is not the type that quietly walks away into the sunset," said a senior Western diplomat.

But Eldred Masunungure, professor of political science at the University of Zimbabwe, said: "I just don't see how he is going to recover from this now because psychologically there is a momentum building up for the final blow.

"Mugabe will go into any re-run a very desperate man, and I see him being beaten very badly, getting humiliated." An election analyst said: "I think a second round will be extremely violent. They will just smash people into submission." There are fears in Harare's business community that a hardline Zanu-PF faction would mount a violent purge of the party to ensure it had "undiluted" capacity to eliminate Mr Tsvangirai, with widespread violence used to prevent the MDC from taking power.

"This faction will purge the party of the Makoni faction first, then purge the country, and do anything, no matter how brutal or bloody, to ensure Mugabe will be declared president," a businessman said.

**NEWS-REPORT NO. 8**

**Nepal power shift: King on way out, Prachanda PM, Koirala President**

*The Indian Express*, 28 May 2008

Kathmandu, May 27 : Tuesday was a day of quick political developments in Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal. A new Constituent Assembly was sworn in, the political parties sorted out the issue of who would be the heads of state and Government after the kingdom became a republic, and the King is believed to have decided not to resist the abolition of monarchy.

The hurdle over who would move the motion on making Nepal a republic was sorted out after top leaders of three major parties—Nepali Congress, Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M) and the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) — agreed on a power-sharing formula, paving the way for formation of the new government.

Since the installation of a new government will take some time, caretaker Prime Minister G P Koirala will move the official resolution to declare Nepal a republic on Wednesday.

In an emergency meeting of the palace officials in the afternoon, King Gyanendra (61) is believed to have said he tried to serve the country to the best of his ability and that he is always available for the people in whatever capacity required. Sources said he also decided not to leave the country.

With the new members of the Constituent Assembly sworn in, the House will have its first formal session on Wednesday and will then go into recess for a week immediately afterward. A three-day national holiday has been declared to celebrate the ushering in of a republican system.

The delay in coming to an agreement on power-sharing among the three parties had also raised some technical and constitutional questions like whether Koirala, chosen as the interim Prime Minister in 2006, could act as the Prime Minister after the CA elections and move official resolutions.

The Maoists were demanding that Prachanda must be either made the executive President or the Prime Minister with the power of head of the state vested in him. However, the three parties agreed that while Prachanda would be executive Prime Minister, Koirala would be the ceremonial President with emergency powers. In all likelihood, the post of the Speaker would go to the CPN-UML.
It is not yet known when the King will move out of the palace, but the Government seems to be ready to offer him a reasonable time to make alternative arrangements. The Maoist leadership has made it clear that it will ensure the King’s position as an ‘honourable citizen’, but has not quite spelt out the status and privilege that he will be entitled to once he bows out and leaves the Narayanhity Palace that has been a royal abode for five kings so far.

**Nepal to be declared republic**

*The Hindu, 28 May 2008*

KATHMANDU: The deck to declare Nepal a republic is now clear. Political parties have decided to declare the nation a republic at the Constituent Assembly meeting on Wednesday. They are also close to a sealing a power-sharing deal.

On Tuesday morning, the three parties — the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists), Nepali Congress (NC) and Communist Party of Nepal (UML) — were discussing the details of an agreement over two of the most contentious issues: Amendment of interim Constitution and power-sharing.

The deal will be a compromise for the three parties. The NC and UML would give up their demand for amendment of the interim Constitution to allow removal of the Prime Minister by a simple majority instead of the existing two-thirds vote-out. The Maoists, on their part, have agreed to elect a ceremonial President immediately after the monarchy is abolished.

Though the parties were still discussing the nitty-gritty of the agreement, including the power and responsibility of the ceremonial President, till late on Tuesday evening, the general spirit of the agreement is to enter into a power-sharing deal and move ahead collectively. A senior leader told *The Hindu* that the top four parties would now share the post of the Prime Minister, President, Vice-President, and Chair of the Constituent Assembly. That means candidates from the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists), NC, UML and Madhesi Peoples’ Rights Forum would now take the post of Executive Prime Minister, ceremonial President, Chair of the CA and Vice-President, respectively.

The parties have also agreed that Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala would table a proposal for declaration of the republic when the CA meeting commences on Wednesday. Once the House passes the proposal, Nepal will be declared a republic on Wednesday itself, ending the 240-year-long monarchy.

**Three-day holiday**
The government has declared a three-day public holiday, starting Wednesday, to celebrate the declaration of republic.

**Nepal: Exit King, enter President**

*The Statesman, 28 May 2008*

KATHMANDU, May 27: Nepalese leaders today agreed to create a ceremonial President, with the executive powers in the hands of the prime minister ahead of a key Constituent Assembly meeting tomorrow that is set to abolish the 240-year-old monarchy and declare the country a republic. Overcoming a deadlock in the formation of a coalition government, the CPN-Maoist in principle agreed to the demand of the mainstream parties to create a separate post of a president with a ceremonial role.

“The Maoists have agreed to create a separate post of president after abolishing monarchy,” Mr Gopalmohan Shrestha of Nepali Congress said after the crucial meeting of parties ended. “However, a formal agreement to is yet to be signed,” he said. The high-level meeting of the top leaders of the major political parties are yet to decide whether both the executive and ceremonial posts will be held by a single party or will be
distributed among the coalition partners. The parties have agreed to table the republican motion to abolish the monarchy during the first meeting of the House tomorrow. n PTI

**Fall of the house of Shah: end of an era for the world's last Hindu monarchy**

*Public unpopularity sees a dynasty bowing to a new constitutional assembly*


Smearing red sandalwood paste on a line of worshippers gathered outside the main pagoda of the Nepali capital's imposing Pashupatinath temple complex, Hindu priest Raju Baje explains that the 400-odd shrines contain all but one of the religion's 330,000 deities.

Through the smoke of funeral pyres are stone statues of roaring lions, a giant bronze cow, endless wooden images of the divine and framed pictures of the 11 monarchs from the Shah dynasty that ruled Nepal in the last 240 years - except the current king, Gyanendra. The present ruler, says Baje, is a god who has been thrown out of his own temple. "We consider the king a divine figure. He is the incarnation of Lord Vishnu. But if we put a picture of him up it will be ripped down. The people don't love him." Today, Nepal's new constitutional assembly will hold its first meeting and end the monarchy, a key part of a 2006 peace deal with Maoist guerrillas who gave up the bullet for the ballot box on the condition that the country becomes a secular republic. The civil war lasted a decade and cost more than 13,000 lives.

The Maoists, who won last month's elections to become the largest party in Nepal's assembly, say that the monarch will have an "honourable exit", but the fall of King Gyanendra and the disappearance of the world's last Hindu monarchy has been dramatic.In the past few months the word "Royal" has been dropped from the army and national airline. Gone from the national anthem are any references to the king. The royal family, consisting of the king, the queen, the queen mother, the crown prince and his wife and children, left their pink-hued palace in the centre of the capital last week for the last time.

There is little doubt that royal belts will have to be tightened. The monarch's state salary of $3m (£1.5m) has been revoked and the royal family's seven palaces are to be turned into museums. Even the queen was forced to give up her retinue of beauticians.

After today's vote the king, who once ruled by divine right, will be reduced to a commoner - albeit an extremely wealthy one with tea estates and tobacco holdings in the 12th poorest country in the world.

The transformation from kingdom to republic still leaves unanswered the questions of what an ex-royal will be allowed to do.

The king still enjoys support from Hindu extremists and elements in the armed forces, a small fringe perhaps, but enough for the politicians not to go too far in humiliating the palace.

A previously unknown Hindu nationalist group, angry with the removal of royalty, said it was responsible for a series of pipe-bomb explosions that rocked the capital on Monday.

Bhekh Thapa, a former foreign minister under the king, says the royal family will have to be "guarded" and probably have a "privy purse".

"This is a poor country with an large, uneducated population for whom the institution of monarchy is a symbol of unity. You have to tread carefully in dismantling it," he said. The Nepalese Maoists, said Mr
Thapa, cannot replicate what their ideological mentor Chairman Mao did to China's last emperor, Puyi, whom he met in the mid 60s as a young diplomat.

"I was introduced to this tall man in a plain cotton suit sweeping the leaves in a palace in Beijing. The last emperor had been a keen gardener and so Chairman Mao let him stay on to prune trees and plant flowers. That could not happen in Nepal which is why our Maoists have been calling for a dignified exit."

Unfolding tragedy

The fall of the house of Shah is a story of bloodshed, betrayal and intrigue. For almost two-and-a-half centuries the monarchy persisted, buttressed by the central role the king played in the national religion, Hinduism. Even when the palace ceded power to a parliament in 1990, the king remained in charge, retaining the right to dissolve parliament and control the army. The sudden collapse of the monarchy in the span of a few years, say even former royalists, is not a victory for communism but a failure of the 60-year-old King Gyanendra. He was unable to win over his subjects, suspicious of a monarch enthroned after the worst royal slaughter since the Romanovs were murdered during the Russian civil war.

The beginning of the end for the Shah kings came in the summer of 2001 when then king Birendra and his family were assassinated in the palace by the drunk crown prince who later turned the gun on himself. Ten members of the royal family died. Birendra's younger brother Gyanendra, a chain-smoking royal with a penchant for astrology and expensive cars, ascended to the throne and made no secret of his disdain for the parliament. He sacked the government first in 2002 and then seized absolute power three years later, saying only a strong leader could end the Maoist insurgency raging in the countryside. "Trying to restore the absolute monarchy was a disastrous error of judgment, instead of negotiating with the Maoists and bringing them into the peace process," said Lieutenant General Vivek Shah, King Gyanendra's former military secretary. "This was his arrogance. He did not listen to views he disagreed with."

Two years ago street protests forced the palace to concede to a coalition of political parties and Maoist rebels, who joined hands to oust the King. The popular dissent with his rule was exacerated by the perception the king was interested in enriching himself rather than his subjects. This was a fatal flaw in a country that presents a striking picture of contrast between extreme poverty and vast wealth.

Public anger

"I used to suggest to the king: 'Why not convert a few of the royal residences into hospitals and schools?' I thought it would improve the palace's image," said Gen Shah. "But he took no notice. Instead he brought a Daimler limousine for 50m rupees (£365,000). "While the king's high-handedness never won the hearts of Nepalis, it was the behaviour of his playboy son, Paras, which infuriated the public. The crown prince was a regular on the Kathmandu party circuit, carrying a gun and a bad attitude. He allegedly killed a popular singer in a hit-and-run accident but was never charged.

"I once had to rescue him when he shot up a nightclub and attacked some members of the public," said Gen Shah. "I arranged military training to instil some discipline in him but he just never showed up to the classes."

The departure of the king leaves open the question who will be the country's next head of state and what sort of political model the country will adopt. The Maoists campaigned for a presidential system, with their leader Prachanda as the candidate. The other smaller parties would prefer a Westminster-type parliament with an eminent person "selected" as head of state.

Diplomats in the capital say that the Maoist proposals have raised fears of a communist takeover. "The Maoists like to compare their suggestions to an American-style presidency. But in Washington the White House is balanced by Congress," said one Kathmandu-based diplomat. "The Maoists don't want that. They
prefer to control things through a strong centre. However, nobody wants to see a royal dictatorship replaced by a communist one."

**Item one on the agenda for Nepal's new parliament: evicting the King**

*The Independent*, 28 May 2008

Nepal's last king has been told to leave the palace that his family has occupied for almost 240 years as the Himalayan kingdom last night prepared to become the world's newest republic.

The first matter of business for 575 members of a new parliament who were sworn in yesterday is to formally declare Nepal a republic. After that, the king – the last Hindu monarch in the world – is expected to leave the palace and return to his private home. "A republic will be declared tomorrow. Once a republic is declared, the king will automatically lose his position and place in the palace," said Baburam Bhattarai, deputy leader of the majority Maoist party. "He has no choice but if he refuses to leave the palace we will use the law to force him out of there."

These are tense times for Nepal. Just last month saw a remarkable election in which former Maoist rebels, who had led a 10-year guerrilla war, won the majority of votes. They are preparing to form a coalition government, which they will head. But while the Maoists have insisted they are committed to peace and that their armed struggle is over, uncertainty still hangs over the country as it prepares to enter a new era.

Part of that is related to the constant threat of violence. In the past two days, a series of bombs have been detonated in the capital, Kathmandu, wounding two people. Reports have suggested that the bombs targeted pro-republic politicians and activists but that remains unclear, as do the identities of those who carried out the blasts. About 10,000 police have been dispatched around the city to tighten up security.

Ian Martin, head of the UN monitoring mission in Nepal, told reporters yesterday that he hoped the swearing in of the assembly would help usher in new security for the country and that politically motivated killings would stop. However, he admitted he was not overly hopeful.

"This is a time for all political parties to show that they have the political will to bring to justice those responsible for violations of human rights, and not intervene as they are accustomed to do to protect their own supporters while calling for justice when their supporters are the victims," he said. "I hope that but it is a little hard for me to expect that, because it is now more than three years since I came to Nepal and in all those three years there has not been a single case where the perpetrators of [political killings] ... have been brought to justice before the civilian courts."

Nepal's journey towards becoming a republic has been inextricably linked to the peace process established with the help of the international community to end a 10-year civil war, responsible for the deaths of 13,000 people. In late 2006, the Maoists agreed to re-enter the political mainstream and join an interim government. But their unwavering demand for that co-operation was that the royal family would have to be abolished.

Just five years earlier, the other political parties may have been disinclined to go along with the Maoists' demands. But the monarch, King Gyanendra – catapulted on to the throne by a 2001 massacre at the palace in which his brother, King Birendra, and eight other members of the royal family died – had never been popular with the public. His unpopularity reached new depths in February 2005 when he suspended parliament and seized power for himself, returning Nepal to a state of affairs not seen since 1990 when absolute rule was ended. His decision resulted in widespread public demonstrations against the king and gave the Maoists ammunition for their argument that the political infrastructure was in need of a wholesale transformation.
In addition to scrapping the monarchy, the Maoists say they want to make Nepal a federal state and improve conditions for its impoverished citizens. The challenges are huge; until the 1950s Nepal was virtually closed to the outside world and parts of the country remain utterly undeveloped. Poverty is widespread. In preparation for the abolition of the monarchy, King Gyanendra's image has already been taken off Nepal's currency and the title "royal" has been removed from the name of the army and the national airline. All references to the monarch have also been taken out of the national anthem. By the end of today, the monarch should also be gone from the royal palace.

Two centuries of royal rule

The Shah family has ruled Nepal since 1768 when the country first became unified. Once considered "living gods", the family's absolute rule over the country only came to an end in 1990. But for the 2001 palace massacre when Crown Prince Dipendra shot dead eight members of his family before fatally injuring himself, the current political turmoil might not be taking place as the then reigning monarch, King Birendra, was popular. Legislation to abolish the monarchy – the process to be formally taken today by the Constituent Assembly – was tabled by an interim government last December. The current king, Gyanendra, is expected to continue to live in Nepal, despite some reports he might move to India where he has supporters among the Hindu right wing.

Nepal to abolish monarchy as Maoists dominate assembly

The Daily Telegraph, 28 May 2008

Nepal is expected to formally abolish its once-revered monarchy, creating a new republic in the Himalayas led by an assembly dominated by Maoist rebels responsible for a decade-long insurgency.

Although some royalists may oppose the motion to be put to the assembly, it will almost certainly be passed and the unpopular King Gyanendra is expected to vacate his palace in the capital Kathmandu soon after the vote.

"This is an epoch-making event that has become possible after a long struggle of the Nepali people," said Prachanda, the Maoist chief, referring to the insurgency that began in 1996 and killed more than 13,000 people.

"For the first time Nepal is being declared a republic. This is not an ordinary thing."

Abolishing the 239-year-old monarchy was a key part of the peace deal with Maoist former rebels, who emerged as the largest party in elections to the 601-member assembly in April.

Security was tight in the capital last night, after a series of bomb blasts, some blamed on pro-royalist groups, in the city over the past few days.

Despite a ban on rallies, thousands of anti-monarchists are expected to defy authorities and take to the streets to celebrate.

The rapid demotion of Gyanendra from king to citizen is in stark contrast to his predecessors, who were revered traditionally revered as Lord Vishnu, the Hindu god of protection.

But much of the royal family's mystique dissipated in 2001, when King Birendra and eight other royals were killed by then Crown Prince Dipendra, who later turned the gun on himself.
In 2005, the King Gyanendra fired the government and assumed absolute powers, only to be humbled by weeks of anti-monarchy protests a year later.

**NEWS-REPORT NO. 9**

**American dream**

*The Indian Express*, 5 Nov. 2008

**Los Angeles, November 5**: Barack Hussein Obama, the son of a father from Kenya and a white mother from Kansas, was elected the 44th President of the United States Tuesday, breaking the ultimate racial barrier to become the first African American to claim his country’s highest office.

A nation founded by slave-owners and seared by civil war and generations of racial strife delivered a smashing electoral college victory to the 47-year-old first-term Senator from Illinois, who forged a broad, multiracial, multietnic coalition. His victory was a leap in the march toward equality: When Obama was born, people with his skin colour could not even vote in parts of America, and many were killed for trying.

“If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible, who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our time, who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer,” Obama told more than 240,000 celebrants gathered along Chicago’s waterfront. Many had tears streaking their faces.

“It’s been a long time coming,” said Obama, who strode on stage with his wife, Michelle, and their two daughters, Sasha and Malia. “But tonight, because of what we did on this day, in this election, at this defining moment, change has come to America.”

Obama beat Republican John McCain in every state the Democrats carried four years ago, including Pennsylvania, which McCain had worked vigorously to pry away. Obama also made significant inroads into Republican turf, carrying Ohio, Colorado, Indiana and Virginia; the latter two voted Democratic for the first time in more than 40 years. He won the swing states of Florida, Iowa and New Mexico, which backed President George W. Bush in 2004.

In winning the White House, Obama modified the electorate: About 1 in 10 of those casting ballots Tuesday were doing so for the first time. Though that number was about the same as four years ago, most of the newcomers were younger than 30, about a fifth were black, and a fifth were Latino. That was greater than their share of the overall population, and those groups voted overwhelmingly for Obama.

He also won large majorities of female, black and Latino voters. Although he lost among white voters, Obama did better than Democratic nominee John F Kerry in 2004.

Voters also handed Obama a fortified congressional majority, as Democrats picked up at least five seats in the Senate and 19 in the House. The party knocked off at least two GOP incumbents, including North Carolina Senator Elizabeth Dole.

With Obama leading every pre-election poll, his hometown of Chicago was primed for a celebration. Downtown skyscrapers stayed lighted for the occasion on an improbably warm November night. At Grant Park, giant video screens were tuned to CNN, and raucous cheers erupted each time a state fell Obama’s way, until finally victory came just a few moments after polls closed on the West Coast.

Shortly after, Arizona Senator McCain called the president-elect to concede. President Bush then telephoned with his congratulations. In Phoenix, McCain, 72, delivered a gracious concession speech that
noded to history and his erstwhile foe. “We have come to the end of a long journey,” a sombre McCain said. “The American people have spoken, and they have spoken clearly. This is an historic election, and I recognize the special significance it has for African Americans and the special pride that must be theirs tonight.”

He shushed the crowd when they booed Obama — “Please,” McCain said, motioning for silence — and urged them to join him in working with the incoming president for the greater good of the country. “Whatever our differences,” McCain said, “we are fellow Americans.”

McCain, burdened by his party’s frayed image, prevailed in a band of states that make up a shrinking Republican base, mainly in the South, the Plains and parts of the interior West. Two of the hardest-fought states — North Carolina and Missouri — were too close to call.

For most voters, the sagging economy was the topmost concern — a dynamic that played strongly to Obama’s favour. Six in 10 voters said the economy was the most important issue facing the nation, according to exit polls — far more than cited energy, Iraq, terrorism or healthcare.

Obama alluded to those worries and others in his victory speech, offering a note of sobriety amid the celebration.

“The road ahead will be long,” he said. “Our climb will be steep. We may not get there in one year, or even one term. But America, I have never been more hopeful than I am tonight that we will get there. I promise you, we as a people will get there.”

Voters flocked to the polls in record numbers Tuesday, continuing a pattern of electoral exuberance that started in the primary season.

There were scattered voting problems reported throughout the day, including long lines, malfunctioning voting machines and mislaid ballots. But there was nothing like Florida’s infamous “butterfly ballot” fiasco, which sent the 2000 presidential contest into several weeks of overtime before the US Supreme Court stepped in to settle the race.

Mostly, there was patience, good cheer, and for many, pride in taking part in a slice of history, whatever the result; had McCain won, his running mate, Alaska Governor Sarah Palin, would have been the first woman to serve as vice president.

Lines began forming across the country before the sun had risen, with queues starting at 4 a.m. in New York City. The outcome across most of the Democratic-leaning Northeast was never in doubt, but many felt it was their responsibility — and privilege — to vote.

“I needed to cast my own ballot today, not just because it’s my duty as a citizen but because for once it feels like it counts,” said Eric Schwartz, 36, a computer specialist on New York’s Upper West Side. “It’s a more global feeling. Like I needed to make a mark on a day when things matter. Today, everyone matters.”

Obama will be one of the youngest presidents in American history, the first born outside the continental United States (in Hawaii) and only the third to move directly from the Senate to the White House.

He burst on the national political scene just over four years ago, with an electrifying keynote address to the Democratic National Convention in Boston. His soaring speech previewed themes he would reprise in his presidential bid, including a call to end the partisanship symbolized by a country divided into Republican red and Democratic blue.
Months after that address, Obama won his Senate seat, and there was immediate talk of a run for president. The speculation, however, vastly understated the challenge facing Obama, who by his own admission entered the crowded Democratic field as an underdog. His victory over New York Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton after a long, contentious primary season was in itself a major political upset.

Contrary to the wisdom at the time, the battle did not sap but rather strengthened Obama. He built campaign organizations in traditionally Republican states, such as Nevada, North Carolina, Colorado and Indiana, that came into play in the fall thanks to the groundwork laid in the spring.

Obama also became a better, more substantive candidate and a much stronger debater, which served him well in his three match-ups with McCain. Obama’s unflappable performance on stage and steady response to the Wall Street meltdown helped allay voter concerns about his judgment, maturity and readiness to assume office, undercutting what was perhaps McCain’s strongest argument against the freshman lawmaker.

For all the wild celebration — in Los Angeles, New York, Kenya and outside the gates of the White House — there were quieter moments Tuesday that captured the weight of history.

Former UN Ambassador Andrew Young, a veteran of civil rights protests in Selma and Birmingham, Alabama, and other racial flash points, was among hundreds of black Atlantans who crowded the pews for an election-watch party at the Rev. Martin Luther King’s Ebenezer Baptist Church. When CNN called Pennsylvania, an early harbinger, Young pulled out a handkerchief and dabbed away tears.

Later, in Chicago, Obama recalled images of that turbulent time: “the buses in Montgomery, the hoses in Birmingham, a bridge in Selma, and a preacher from Atlanta who told a people, ‘We shall overcome.’”

He spoke of other triumphal moments: landing a man on the moon and winning the Cold War. “America, we have come so far. We have seen so much. But there is so much more to do,” Obama said. “This is our chance to answer that call. This is our moment. This is our time.”

AMERICA MAKES HISTORY

The Hindu, 6 NOV. 2008

Overcoming racial divide, Americans give Barack Obama runaway win: 364-174 First African-American to be elected President proclaims: ‘Change has come’ Wars and financial crisis prepared the ground for momentous shift

CHICAGO: An unhappy and unsettled America picked an unlikely President on Tuesday night — Barack Obama, a young African-American lawmaker from Illinois who sparked a sweeping political movement with an eloquent promise of change and, most important, hope.

“Yes, we can,” Mr. Obama said repeatedly during a quest for the presidency that lasted almost two years, through bruising Democratic party primaries, a costly war on two fronts, economic woes rivalling the Great Depression of the 1930s and partisan smears on his patriotism.

And in the end, despite lingering questions about his scant experience, especially on the world stage, he did in fact win, defeating Republican John McCain in an election heralding a very special — and perhaps redefining — moment in America’s life.
In the State-by-State contest that, under the U.S. Constitution, determines the presidency, Mr. Obama needed only 270 votes to win. He sailed to victory with 364 to Mr. McCain’s 174. Voter turnout has shattered records.

Television networks declared Mr. Obama the winner at about 10 p.m. (local time) as polls closed on the vote-rich West Coast, where he was heavily favoured, after he steadily moved toward the threshold needed to win and to become the first African-American President in U.S. history. A huge crowd in Grant Park erupted in jubilation. Some wept.

Accompanied by his wife, Michelle, he appeared before the crowd shortly after midnight. Set to become the 44th President of the U.S., Mr. Obama said the challenges his administration would face were “the greatest of a lifetime.” But he declared that “change has come to America” and urged his supporters to join him in “remaking America.” They responded by chanting his signature slogan: “Yes, we can.”

Mr. Obama’s victory marked the rise of a new generation of American leadership, after 16 years of Presidents who came of age during the Vietnam War era. Mr. Obama, 47, was still a child when most of the U.S. troops came home. It was also the Americans’ final, symbolic rejection of George Bush’s presidency. Mr. Bush’s popularity soared after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, then collapsed with his administration’s bungled response to Hurricane Katrina, the war in Iraq, and to the regulatory lapses that many think led to the U.S. financial crisis.

The race was the longest, most expensive and most riveting in memory. Both Mr. Obama and Mr. McCain had been on the campaign train for almost two years.

In a gruelling primary battle, he managed to raise more money and outmanoeuvre the front-runner, the former first lady, Hillary Rodham Clinton. After Mr. Obama’s victory, she called and pledged her support. Americans, she said, “voted for change, and refused to be invisible any longer.”

In his race, Mr. Obama was steady and focussed on the economy — the voters’ biggest concern — and linking Mr. McCain to Mr. Bush.

Mr. McCain had an uphill fight. He tried without success to portray Mr. Obama as too radical and inexperienced, casting him as an advocate of high taxes and socialism. Mr. McCain also tried to shake up the race by naming Alaska’s young conservative Governor, Sarah Palin, as his vice-presidential running mate. The choice energised much of the Republican base, but her lack of experience and poor performance in interviews worried many voters.

Preparations for an Obama presidency were already under way on Wednesday. With just 76 days until the inauguration, Mr. Obama is expected to move quickly to begin assembling a White House staff and selecting Cabinet nominees.

**DREAMS COME TRUE**

*The Statesman*, 5 Nov. 2008

WASHINGTON, Nov. 5: Forty-five years after Martin Luther King Jr laid out his dream of racial equality in America, President-elect Barack Hussein Obama smashed through the “colour line” to be elected USA’s first black, and its 44th, President. He will take office on 20 January 2009 with his vice president-elect Mr Joe Biden at a White House ceremony.

As the world watched in awe, President-elect Obama got an overwhelming mandate in the electoral college ~ 359 votes to Mr John McCain's 162 at last count – exorcising the lingering ghosts of racism 145 years after the US abolished slavery. “Change has come to America,” Mr Obama said, addressing the country as
the President-elect from an open blue stage before an ocean of people in his hometown of Chicago. “It's (been) a long time coming, but because of what we did on this day, at this defining moment, change has come to America,” he said to deafening roars from his supporters, many of whom, particularly blacks, wept at the achievement.

After an acrimonious campaign, Mr Obama and Mr McCain were gracious in their moments of victory and defeat respectively. “He has endured sacrifices for America that most of us cannot begin to imagine,” President-elect Obama said of his vanquished rival and Vietnam war veteran, calling Mr McCain “brave and selfless”. Mr McCain, in turn, praised the winner's inspirational and precedent-shattering campaign. “We have come to the end of a long journey,” he told supporters in Phoenix, Arizona. “I urge all Americans who supported me to join me in not just congratulating him but offering our next president our goodwill.”

Mr Obama's win comes at the end of an epic 21-month-long campaign in the most expensive-ever election, an election, also, that show record-shattering voter turnout.

Mr Obama polled 52 per cent of the popular vote against 47 per cent for Mr McCain.

His terrific showing, riding a wave of discontent against incumbent President George W Bush's policies, swept aside Republicans in the battleground states of Ohio, Virginia Pennsylvania, Florida and California and made major inroads into Republican strongholds to gain a monopoly of power in Washington – the White House and both the chambers of the US Congress – in the 435-member House of Representatives, Democrats won 251 seats and the Republicans 171, while in the Senate, Democrats got 56 seats and Republicans 40.

Mr Obama will assume the leadership of a nation facing a daunting economic crisis and mired in two wars - factors that pushed a nation looking for change away from the unpopular President George W Bush's Republican Party.

"The road ahead will be long. Our climb will be steep. We may not get there in one year or even one term, but America – I have never been more hopeful than I am tonight that we will get there," he said in a rousing speech that was heard by millions around the world.

Mr Obama's extraordinary feat a mere 43 years after American blacks won full civil rights – and 138 years after they got the vote – in large measure stemmed from what the New York Times called his "improbable, unshakable conviction that America was ready to step across the colour line". It was a realisation of the dream of assassinated civil rights leader Martin Luther King. Forty-five years ago, he had declared his dream that one day people would be "judged not by the colour of their skin, but by the content of their character".

News of Obama's win set off celebrations by supporters around the country and the world, from Times Square in New York to the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, civil rights leader Martin Luther King's home church, and to the hamlet of Kogelo in Kenya, home of Mr Obama’s late father. Rev. Jesse Jackson, civil rights leader and one-time presidential contender, joined celebrations in Chicago, tears streaming down his cheeks, as fellow blacks throughout the USA wept and danced in the streets, declaring that a once-reluctant nation had finally lived up to its democratic promise.

**America's historic verdict**

*Exit polls predict decisive Obama win*

*Six out of 10 say economy biggest issue*

*The Guardian, 5 Nov. 2008*
Barack Obama was on course for a victory over John McCain last night to win the White House and become the first African-American president, according to exit polls.

He was projected to hold on to all the states the Democrats took in 2004 and win half a dozen or more of the battleground states that had been held by the Republicans.

After scrutinising the exit polls, the Obama campaign team urged caution, fearful that a late surge of voters casting their ballots on their way home might yet cause upsets in key states, as happened to the Democratic candidate, John Kerry, in 2004.

But fears that many white voters would fail to vote for a black candidate when in the privacy of the polling booth appeared to be unfounded, suggesting that race is becoming less of an issue in the US.

Americans voted in epic numbers throughout the day as they finally got the chance to turn their backs on eight years of George Bush and choose a new president at the end of one of the longest and costliest election campaigns.

From the eastern shores of Virginia, across the industrial heartland of Ohio and on to the Rocky mountain states of Colorado and New Mexico and beyond, poll workers and voters reported long lines and waits of several hours in the most eagerly anticipated US election for half a century.

Turnout was at levels not seen since women were first given the vote in 1920. Election officials predicted turnout would come close to 90% in Virginia and Colorado, and 80% in Ohio and Missouri.

Exit polls gave Obama double-digit leads in states that had been bitterly contested and on which the outcome depended.

The odds had been stacked against McCain from the start, linked as he was to President George Bush, with his near-record-low popularity ratings, hostility towards the Iraq war and an impending recession. But McCain managed to hold his own until mid-September when the Wall Street crash saw Obama open up a commanding lead.

Early signs last night were that McCain had managed to hold on to West Virginia and South Carolina. Kentucky, the first state to call a result, also went to McCain, suggesting the true red state heartland was staying loyal to the Republicans.

The next president will inherit horrendous economic problems that will limit the scope of his ambitions. In his final rallies, Obama was already tempering his early promise of change with warnings about how he would have to curb some of his more ambitious plans, trying to lower expectations that he would be able to move quickly on healthcare and education reform.

The stockmarket experienced its biggest election day rally in 24 years on expectation of an Obama victory.

Exit polls nationwide provided an early suggestion that it was going to be Obama's night showing that the top concern of 62% of voters was the economy, the issue on which voters said they trusted him more than McCain, and blame much of the financial crisis on the Bush administration.

Other early exit poll figures also appeared to be good indicators for Obama, with 57% saying they felt he was more in touch with them than the 40% who said the same about McCain. Early expectations were of record turnout levels, with the morning bringing long lines at polling stations.

However, exit polls later in the day saw voters under 30, the target demographic of the Obama camp, voting at about the same levels as in 2004.
That would be a disappointment for the Obama camp which had been hoping that young voters would buck the tradition of showing enthusiasm for a candidate and then failing to turn out on the day.

Exit polls did, however, chart a rise in African-American turnout.

CNN, based on the exit polls, projected that Obama would win Vermont, no great surprise as it is traditionally Democrat.

Independent election monitors reported sporadic instances of delayed openings of polling stations, broken voting machines, ballot shortages, voter confusion and occasional abuse in a number of battleground states including Florida, Ohio, Colorado, Pennsylvania and Virginia.

The McCain camp raised its own charges of irregularities, accusing Black Panther activists carrying nightsticks of standing outside Philadelphia polling stations in an attempt to intimidate white voters.

McCain also accused out-of-state Obama volunteers of casting votes in Florida, and of voters casting multiple ballots in Florida.

Reflecting the intensity of the campaign, Obama and McCain put in a final burst of campaigning after casting their own votes. Obama made a final dash from his home in Chicago to neighbouring Indiana, which was Republican in 2004.

Reporters travelling with him reported that the candidate was in a subdued rather than celebratory mood, perhaps reflecting the news of the death of his grandmother on Monday.

Obama told them that whatever happened, the campaign, the longest in US history as well as the costliest at more than $1bn, had been "extraordinary".

**Barack Obama wins his place in history**

The US elects Barack Obama as its first African-American President as he storms to victory over John McCain - leading by 349 Electoral College votes to 162

*The Independent*, 5 Nov, 2008

Barack Obama completed his journey from young first-term senator to the president-elect of the United States last night taking the stage before a sea of excited faces in a downtown Chicago park and declaring to them and the rest of the world that "change has come to America".

The election that began almost two years ago ended in the dwindling hours of the evening when the US networks projected Mr Obama the winner. A vanquished John McCain, his Republican foe, conceded from a hotel in Phoenix, leaving Mr Obama to stand before the huge crowd in Grant Park.

"The road ahead will be long, the climb will be steep," Mr Obama warned, mixing a promise of progress and reconciliation with warnings of the challenges ahead. "We may not get there in one year or even in one term but America tonight I have never been more certain that we will get there," he continued, triggering chants of ‘Yes, we Can’ – the signature slogan of his campaign – from his audience.

While the results in two important states - Missouri and North Carolina – were still on a knife edge this morning, the returns from the rest of the country had given Mr Obama 349 votes in the Electoral Collage versus 162 for Mr McCain. It was a margin that by any reckoning was a landslide. In his sweep, Mr Obama
captured states that have usually voted Republican, including Indiana and Virginia. He moreover prevailed in arguably the two most critical states of all in this race, Florida and Ohio.

As tears wetted a thousand cheeks in the Chicago crowd, it was clear that the significance of Mr Obama’s victory may take some while to sink in. Only 47 years old with limited experience of government, he will become the first black American to be elected to the country’s highest office.

"It’s been a long time coming, but tonight, because of what we did on this day, in this election, at this defining moment, change has come to America," Mr Obama said against a curtain of American flags. "If there is anyone out there who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer." His speech over, he lingered on the stage with his wife, Michelle, in a striking black dress with red splashes, and their daughters as well as his running mate Joe Biden, now the Vice President-elect.

It was a night that also saw significant shifts towards the Democrats in the US Congress, although it seemed early today that the party’s hope of gaining a filibuster-proof 60-seat majority in the US Senate may not have come to pass.

As the dreams and hopes of millions of Democrats – as well as African-Americans – at last danced towards reality, celebrations spontaneously erupted in cities across the country, from Times Square in New York to the beaches of Waikiki, where Mr Obama once surfed, and to the casino floors of Las Vegas.

In Atlanta, Georgia, the birthplace of the civil rights movement, a crowd some 3,000 strong massed at the tomb of Martin Luther King and held a candlelight vigil led by the Reverend Al Sharpton, a veteran campaigner for black equality, before crammering into the Ebenezer Baptist church to pray, to sing and to watch the results unfold on giant screens. Whole families clambered up the windows of the church to see the latest election news, and people cried out and wept as Pennsylvania was called for Mr Obama.

Earlier, standing beside the tomb, which floats atop a pool of water that reflected the candle flames and the moonlight, Rev Sharpton – flanked by Bernice King and Martin Luther King III, children of the slain civil rights leader – told the crowd that the opportunity to have voted for the nation’s first black president was Martin Luther King’s "gift" to a new generation.

And America will be changed too by the passion of the vote and the turnout seen yesterday. From Ohio to California, from Illinois to Oklahoma, officials reported queues forming even before dawn as Americans seized their chance to determine the outcome of an election that was set to make history, if not by sending the first ever black American to the Oval Office, then by picking the first woman vice-president.

They came before work. They snuck out from work. Some had newspapers in hand to read the final reports from the campaign trail as they waited their turn for the booths. Some had coffee to keep them alert. Older folk brought chairs, worried that the wait might be too much. Others had music to pass the time. When they were done, some had tears in their eyes. If history was about to happen, they had been part of it.

For African Americans, the sensation of ticking the box for Mr Obama was especially intense. "I want to tell the American people that today we see God’s hand and the sun is now shining in the darkness," said Velma Pate, a pool worker in Glenwood, near Chicago. Mrs Pate is old enough to remember segregation in America – a time, she recalled, when she could not drink from the same water fountain as a white person.

Team Obama knew the voter surge was good news. The senator’s path to victory was predicated on bringing millions of first-time voters to the polls, particularly the young and members of minorities.

For America, it was yet more profound. Call it the demise of cynicism or the end of apathy. The country that pretends to be the standard-bearer of the democracy and presumes, indeed, to export it to the other
countries around the world was living up to its own standards. Uncle Sam, after years of lethargy, had caught election fever.

Both candidates did the traditional thing, casting their votes in their home cities – Mr Obama in Chicago and Mr McCain in Phoenix – at the start of the day before the glare of the cameras. In a break with tradition that reflected the desperation in the Republican camp, Mr McCain attended election-day rallies in two western battleground states, Colorado and New Mexico.

"Fight for our country! Fight for what you believe in!" he told supporters at a rally at Grand Junction, Colorado. "Fight for America. Fight for the ideals and culture of free people! Fight for our future! Fight for justice for all! Stand up, stand up and fight!"

Mr Obama dawdled for several minutes with his wife and daughters at the voting machine at a polling station in a south Chicago school gymnasium. While the senator was set to appear at a huge election night party in Chicago’s Grant Park late last night – after playing basketball in the afternoon – a quieter event was set for Mr McCain at the Biltmore Hotel in Phoenix.

Glitches in voting seemed to be fairly limited, although reports were coming in from some precincts in the critical state of Virginia of scattered problems with voting machines. Elsewhere, polling personnel said most problems, mostly mechanical, stemmed from the sheer high volume of voters.

Financial markets seemed to be looking forward if not to Mr Obama winning then at least all suspense ending. US stocks had their biggest election day rally ever, while global credit markets showed more signs of a thaw.

Democrats have suffered cruel disappointment before, not least when George Bush snatched victory from Al Gore in 2000. Mr Obama had said the polls would narrow in the last days of the race – but they hadn’t. Even Karl Rove, the dark master of political strategy for Mr Bush, was predicting a convincing win for Mr Obama.

An Obama win is one thing. If, by this morning, it is clear he has polled more than 50 per cent, however, he will be the first Democrat to break that threshold since Jimmy Carter. His mandate to govern will be solid, helped also by the increased majorities expected for Democrats on Capitol Hill. Party officials were looking particularly for gains in the US Senate, perhaps taking the party to the 60-seat mark that would protect it from Republican filibusters.

Among those expressing confidence was the former president, Bill Clinton, who voted early in Chappaqua, New York, with his wife, Hillary. But he had a warning: "Our party tomorrow will wake up with an enormous opportunity but an enormous responsibility."

The managing of expectations will be the first order of business today. Mr Bush remains the land’s chief executive until the inauguration of his successor on 20 January. Thereafter, the new president will inherit a country beset by economic difficulties and mired in wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

It is, in part, because of those multiple challenges that so many voters felt compelled to take part in the election. But the turnout was, of course, driven by an election strewn with drama and juiced by an unusually compelling cast of candidates. It was the first election since 1928 when neither an incumbent president nor vice-president had sought the nomination of their parties.

Barack Obama elected next President of the United States after defeating John McCain
Barack Obama has won a historic victory after appearing to have collected enough electoral votes to defeat Senator John McCain and become the first black President of the United States.

The Daily Telegraph, 05 Nov 2008

Mr Obama, 47, whose electoral landslide also expanded his party's majorities in both chambers of Congress, will be sworn in as the 44th president of the United States on Jan 20, 2009.

The Democratic nominee was projected as the winner in the swing states of Pennsylvania, New Hampshire and Ohio, all but dooming the chances of his Republican opponent.

The loss of Ohio, which gave President George W Bush a narrow victory in 2004, was a bitter blow for the 72-year-old former Vietnam prisoner of war, and almost certainly snuffed out his presidential ambitions.

Networks also projected Mr Obama as the winner in California; Hawaii; Oregon; Washington; Vermont; Massachusetts; Illinois; Maine; Connecticut; Delaware; Rhode Island; New Jersey; Maryland; Wisconsin; Michigan; New York and the District of Columbia.

Mr McCain was projected the winner in Idaho; Kentucky; South Carolina; Oklahoma; Tennessee; Alabama; Arkansas; Wyoming; North Dakota and Georgia, all expected to be comfortable wins for him.

David Axelrod, Mr Obama's chief strategist, told CNN that "good things" were happening for the Democrat and trumpeted the result in Pennsylvania: "We like what we see around the country. We like the turnout. We like the early returns." An aide to Mr McCain told CBS that "at this point we need a miracle".

In what was shaping up to become a dismal night for Republicans, they lost Senate contests in New Hampshire, North Carolina and Virginia, and were battling to hold on to at least another five seats in the 100-member body.

A win for Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell in Kentucky was one of the few bright spots of the evening for Republicans, and kept alive their hopes of preventing a 60 to 40 majority for Democrats, which would make it impossible to block legislation without some Democratic help.

Obama supporters were already beginning to celebrate as they gathered in Grant Park in Chicago, where the young Illinois senator was preparing to give what his advisers anticipated would be a victory speech.

With just over half the votes counted in Indiana, a conservative state that has voted Republican since 1964, Mr Obama was just three percentage points behind and performing much better than expected in areas Mr McCain was counting on.

Virginia also appeared very close, with Mr McCain leading by one percentage point with 70 per cent of the vote counted and the Republican underperforming badly in conservative rural areas.

A win there for Mr Obama would almost certainly signal a convincing overall victory for him. The Democrat was also leading in Florida, won by President George W Bush in 2000 and 2004.

One early disappointment for Mr Obama, however, was that black voters made up just 13 per cent of all voters, only a narrow increase over 2004. The black vote was unchanged in Virginia, but up by five percentage points to 30 per cent in Georgia, a target state for Mr Obama.

Six out of 10 voters said in an Associated Press exit poll that the economy was the most important issue facing the country, a concern Mr Obama has made the centrepiece of his campaign.
Officials said the long queues and heavy early voting in more than 30 states pointed towards a turnout of between 130 million and 140 million people, up from 121 million four years ago, and 65 per cent of those registered.

This would represent the highest percentage turnout since 1908. Mr Obama's campaign, which heavily outfought Mr McCain's in terms of the number of volunteers, fund-raising and enthusiasm had poured immense resources into registering new voters. High turnout was a key sign that David Plouffe, Mr Obama's campaign manager, had succeeded.

As well as facing the likely loss of the White House, Republicans, who surrendered control of both houses of Congress two years ago, feared the loss of about 30 more seats in the House of Representatives. Democratic gains of up to nine seats in the Senate would give Democrats the 20-seat majority they need to withstand Republican filibusters and herald a new period of untrammeled one-party rule in Washington.

A victory for Mr Obama, who began his bid for the White House nearly two years ago as an unlikely outsider, would be a landmark in the long struggle for racial equality in America. When he was born in Hawaii to a black Kenyan father and a white mother from Kansas in 1961, many American states banned interracial marriages. Four years later, blacks in many Southern states were disenfranchised.

McCain aides said they were "stoic" and "realistic", pointing out that Republicans had faced a very tough electoral environment because of President George W Bush's unpopularity and the ailing economy.

The mood inside Mr Obama's camp, in contrast, was one of controlled ebullience with the contender playing a game of basketball – a now traditional election day activity for him – with old friends from Chicago. Mr Obama, the overwhelming front-runner in opinion polls, and Mr McCain, who would have been the oldest man ever to be first elected to the presidency, cast their ballots in their home cities of Chicago and Phoenix respectively. People cheered Mr Obama as he held up a validation slip after voting with his wife and their daughters Malia, nine, and Sasha, seven. "The journey ends but voting with my daughters, that was a big deal," he said.

Mr McCain voted with his wife Cindy at a church before flying to Colorado and New Mexico for final rallies. "I'm very happy with where we are," he said before voting. "We always do best when I'm a bit of an underdog."

**NEWS-REPORT NO. 10**

**India hits back, all terrorists killed, Taj freed**

*The Indian Express*, 29 Nov. 2008

**Mumbai**: Security forces on Saturday ended the Terror siege of Mumbai killing four terrorists in Taj hotel, the last theatre of action where 22 bodies were found, after 60 hours of intense battle with the band of ultras who struck the country's financial capital killing 183 people.

"All operations are over. The NSG has formally reported that the operations are complete and now Taj, Oberoi and Nariman House are being sanitised. There are no more terrorists now in Mumbai. All have been liquidated or captured alive," M L Kumawat, Special Secretary in the Union Home Ministry, said in Delhi.
The magnitude of the attack by suspected Lashkar-e-Toiba elements, who are believed to have come by the sea route from Karachi, could be gauged from the statement of Deputy Chief Minister of Maharashtra R R Patil who said with the ammunition the terrorists had, they could have killed 5,000 people.

NSG Chief J K Dutt, who announced the end of ‘Operation Black Tornado’ in which his commandos took on the heavily-armed ultras, said in all they eliminated eight terrorists--four in Taj, two in Trident-Oberoi and two in Nariman House. Another terrorist was killed by the Mumbai police on Wednesday night while one was captured alive.

The elimination of the four terrorists in Taj came on Saturday morning after intense battle between the commandos, who believed there was a lone gunman holding out, and the terrorists who kept exploding grenades at periodic intervals.

The security forces rescued 250 people in Oberoi, 300 in Taj and 12 families of 60 people in Nariman House.

Dutt said five bodies were recovered alongwith those of some terrorists in Taj and there was indication that these five were killed in the initial part of the hostage crisis.

**Endgame in Mumbai, death toll could be 200**

*The Hindu, 29 Nov. 2008*

**Fighting continues, Jewish centre witnesses carnage; 200 people rescued from Trident and Oberoi hotels**

MUMBAI: Even as the special forces and the police succeeded in freeing 200 people who were holed up inside the Oberoi and Trident Hotels for the third day, four Israeli and United States nationals held hostage in a south Mumbai Jewish religious centre were found dead when commandos stormed the building late on Friday evening.

A National Security Guards officer in the rank of a Major, who was not officially identified, gave his life in the attempt to rescue the four hostages held by terrorists at the Chabad-Lukovich religious centre in Nariman House in the Colaba area. The two terrorists who had taken over the centre were also killed.

NSG commandos had engaged in periodic exchanges of fire through Thursday in the course of efforts to rescue the Nariman House hostages. Early this morning, the NSG used a helicopter to lower commandos on to the roof of Nariman House. Several explosions were heard soon afterwards.

In the evening, the NSG, backed by specialists from the Indian Army’s Engineers Regiment, blew several holes in the building’s walls in an attempt to facilitate access into the premises.

When the NSG entered the building, though, they discovered the bodies of the terrorists and the hostages lying on the second, third and fourth floors of the five-storey building. The dead hostages were officially identified as Rabbi Gavriel Holtzberg, the head of the Chabad-Lukovich centre, and his Israeli wife Rivka Holtzberg. Sandra Samuel, a Mumbai resident who worked as a cook for the Holtzenberg family, had helped their child, Zvi Moshe, escape the building soon after the terrorist attack began.

Earlier, NSG commandos succeeded in eliminating two suspected Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists who had taken positions inside the Oberoi Hotel and Trident Hotel in the Nariman Point area. The NSG operation opened the way for the rescue of upwards of 200 guests and visitors who were trapped in the adjoining hotels during the fighting. Mumbai Police officials said the survivors included nationals of over 20 countries.
The police recovered the bodies of 24 people killed in the fighting, most of whom are thought to have died when terrorists burst into the building firing from assault rifles and lobbing grenades. Six other bodies were recovered from the buildings earlier. NSG officials said two assault rifles, a pistol and several unexploded grenades were recovered from the two terrorists killed during the fighting. Around midnight, the NSG was still engaged in sanitising the building and conducting checks for hidden explosives. Maharashtra Director-General of Police A.N. Roy said 155 civilians have so far died in the terror attacks which began on Friday. Another 318 people have been injured. However, speaking to journalists in the evening, Union Minister of State for Home Sripriyaksh Jaiswal said the final death toll could go up to 200.

There was no word on fatalities from the Taj Mahal Hotel, where fighting continued to flare periodically through Friday. A city journalist and a bystander were injured when a terrorist opened fire on crowds who had assembled in the Gateway of India plaza, adjoining the hotel, defying police instructions to maintain a safe distance from the building.

NSG officials said one of the two terrorists holed up in the Taj Mahal Hotel, who was believed to have been injured earlier in fighting, was killed. The other terrorist, an NSG source said, was moving constantly up and down the higher floors of the Taj Mahal Hotel’s new building. An NSG officer gave his life in the fighting. There was no official word, though, on fatalities inside the Taj. NSG Director-General J.K. Dutt said the “stage had been set for the final phase of the operation.”

Nine terrorists have so far been killed in fighting, while one — Pakistani national Ajmal Amir Kamal — has been arrested.

**Battle won, war begun?**

*The Statesman*

MUMBAI/NEW DELHI, Nov. 29: Having reclaimed Mumbai from the terrorists who had taken it over by late last night, security forces wrapped up their operations this morning, eliminating the last four terrorists in the Taj Mahal hotel, the last theatre of action, after 60 hours of intense battle with the band of desperate men who had brought the country's financial capital to its knees.

“All operations are over. The NSG has formally reported that the operations are complete and now Taj, Oberoi and Nariman House are being sanitised. There are no more terrorists now in Mumbai. All have been liquidated or captured alive,” Mr ML Kumawat, special secretary in the Union home ministry told reporters in Delhi.

At the end of perhaps the longest 60 hours in Independent India's history, authorities put the death toll in the terror attacks at 195, including 15 foreign nationals. 295 people were injured, 23 of them foreign nationals.

The magnitude of the terror strike by suspected Lashkar-e-Tayyaba elements, who are believed to have come by the sea route from Karachi, can be gauged from the statement of deputy chief minister of Maharashtra Mr RR Patil who said with the ammunition the terrorists had, they could have killed 5,000 people.

The possibility that the terrorists intended to blow up the Taj Mahal Hotel like they did the JW Marriott at Islamabad some months ago, is not being ruled out.

NSG chief Mr JK Dutt, who announced the end of “Operation Black Tornado”, said in all his commandos eliminated eight terrorists ~ four in Taj, two in Trident-Oberoi and two in Nariman House. Another terrorist was killed by the Mumbai police on Wednesday night while one was captured alive.

The elimination of the last three terrorists holed up in the Taj Mahal came this morning after an intense battle between the commandos, and the terrorists who kept exploding grenades at periodic intervals.
Two NSG commandos, 15 Maharashtra police personnel, one RPF constable and two home guards were killed while taking on the terrorists. Six NSG men were injured. The security forces rescued 250 people in Oberoi, 300 in Taj and 12 families of 60 people in Nariman House. NSG commandos found the bodies of 22 guests at the Taj while securing the 105-year-old landmark after overwhelming the terrorists. Security forces also recovered two AK-47 rifles, nine magazines, two pistols and mobile phones from Nariman House, while in Trident-Oberoi two more AK-47 rifles, eight magazines and two pistols were seized. Mr Patil said the state government had “enough proof” that the terrorists were in constant touch with their masters in Pakistan, giving updates and taking orders.

In his Press conference, Mr Kumawat said the arrested terrorist was being interrogated about his associates and their plans to strike Mumbai. Yesterday the security forces had regained control of the Oberoi-Trident hotel and the Nariman House where five Israeli hostages were killed. The terrorists had also been cleared from the Taj Mahal hotel's new building but four of them had held out through the night in the heritage wing of the Taj and the battle escalated in the wee hours today. The final assault began at the crack of dawn and the last shot was fired shortly after 0800 hours. As journalists and onlookers moved closer for a first look inside the devastated landmark hotel, an NSG commando gave a thumbs-up from the second floor, signaling the horror saga was over.

Smashed glass panes, damaged furniture, overturned chairs, burnt curtains and blood-spattered rooms with black scars of the raging fire bore testimony to the three-day terror rampage. Two staffers who were caught in the thick of the gun battles, were ushered out by the security personnel. Mr Dutt said five bodies were recovered along with those of some terrorists in the Taj and there was indication that these five were killed in the initial part of the hostage crisis. He said the terrorists were well organized and professionally trained to handle sophisticated weapons and explosives and the operations took time as they were very committed Mr Patil identified the arrested terrorist as Mohammad Aslam Kasam. Police found a large quantity of hand grenades, bombs and hundreds of rounds with the terrorists, he said. Two boxes containing eight kg RDX each were found near the Taj hotel, he said.

The terrorists had access to modern communication like GPS, satellite phone and mobile phones, Mr Patil said. Asked about the reports that terrorists had worked in the city from the past few months, Mr Patil said “they were not staying here. They came in the city on the day of the attack”. “They had maps of the hotels but got directions over phone from another country,” Mr Patil said, refusing to disclose the name of the country. Mr Patil also denied any local involvement in the attacks or locals helping terrorists.

Crime Branch sources meanwhile said Mauritius identity papers recovered by NSG commandos in the Taj operation could be linked with the visits of some of these terrorists who were still in their early 20s some months ago as “students.” They might have visited Mumbai’s strategic places to conduct survey, the sources said. Whether any suspicious guest checked in at any of these places can only be ascertained once the police investigators study the official registers.

Guns, grenades, then a battle to the death in 105-year-old hotel

*Special forces units called in to regain control after police realised extent of attacks*


Fifteen Air France workers remained among a number of guests and workers trapped inside a luxury hotel in Mumbai last night after commandos freed hostages elsewhere in the city. An official at the French consulate said a flight crew was in the Oberoi Trident hotel, which was among those targeted by gunmen in attacks that began on Wednesday.

A government official said the siege had ended at the Taj Mahal hotel and the last three gunmen there had been killed. There were conflicting reports about the fate of hostages held at the Mumbai headquarters of
the ultra-orthodox Jewish outreach group Chabad Lubavitch, with diplomats denying a government claim that eight hostages had been freed.

As the attacks began, the authorities had been content to rely on conventional police methods to deal with the threat. However, as flames erupted from the Taj Mahal hotel it became clear that India was confronting an enemy unlike anything it had met in the past. To begin with, police had battled on the streets with militants wearing backpacks on their shoulders and with guns and grenades in their hands. This was a street war they were losing: in the early hours, a gunfight erupted under the glittering lights of Marine Drive, near the lobby of the Trident hotel. A top Mumbai police chief was killed.

The tide of battle only turned with the arrival of the elite national security guard, who landed in Mumbai six hours after the terrorist attack began. They were joined by heavily armed army para commandos and the navy's marine commando force. These commandos, who train with US navy and British special forces, retook the lower floors of both the Trident and the Taj in the early hours. Soldiers speaking to the Guardian said their plan was to "secure the lower floors and set up a safe perimeter", and then to make their way up "level by level". "We are interested in getting the job done. We will not do that by sitting downstairs," said one "black cat" commando, wearing the trademark dark fatigue of the elite unit.

However, army officers acknowledged that they faced difficult opponents whose intention was to kill and then be killed. This remorseless battle to the death pockmarked and pitted the luxury hotels. Three times flames raged over the roof of the 105-year-old Taj Mahal, reducing much of it to ashes and cinder. By 11.20pm yesterday, army sources told Indian television that "all terrorists have been eliminated". Columns of troops were sent into the Trident complex late yesterday. The upper-floor windows of the hotel were blown out in a shower of flames, glass and bullets just hours after 40 people had been led from the building.

"We came up against highly motivated terrorists," Vice-Admiral JS Bedi told NDTV news channel. He said his commandos had exchanged fire with terrorists on the second floor of the Taj hotel, and showed pictures of recovered hand grenades, tear gas shells, AK47 magazines, knives and credit cards.

The commandos' work was made even more difficult by the fact the hotel guests fearful of being taken hostage were still barricaded in their rooms at both the Taj Mahal and Trident. In the Trident alone it was estimated that 200 people may have locked themselves in. Like the Taj, the Oberoi Trident is popular with international visitors. Previous guests have included the News Corporation chairman, Rupert Murdoch, and Microsoft's founder, Bill Gates.

As the battle against the terrorists entered its second day, many called for a swifter and harder response from the authorities. "By now we should have learned to put a crisis management infrastructure in place which could snap to attention and cope with such attacks if we don't want lots of innocent people to suffer," Ratan Tata, head of the Tata Group, which owns the Taj, told reporters. "This action [by the authorities] has not come together fast enough." Indian security officials reply that this new breed of hardened militant is not open to negotiated settlement. "Neither have they tried to talk, nor made any contact with us," RR Patil, the interior minister of Maharashtra state, told journalists. "Unlike earlier terror strikes, they are making no attempt to run either. The terrorists clearly want to stay and fight."

At the heart of the matter lies the question of whether the police can deal with terror on the streets of Indian cities. The police are poorly equipped with primitive body armour and carbines, and are also hamstrung by the absence of a national anti-terror force. As a result, the fightback remains uncoordinated nationally, and fragmented at the provincial level.

**India troops mop up last Mumbai militants**

*The Independent*, 29 Nov. 2008
Indian commandos killed the last Islamist gunmen holed up at Mumbai's Taj Mahal hotel early today, ending a three-day battle across the financial capital that left at least 195 dead.

"Taj is under our control," Mumbai police chief Hasan Gafoor told Reuters, shortly after the building was raked by heavy gunfire as flames leapt from windows.

At least three militants and one trooper were killed after a running gunbattle through a maze of corridors, rooms and halls, the country's commando chief, Jyoti Krishna Dutt, told reporters. The gunmen had set parts of the hotel ablaze as they played cat and mouse with scores of India's best-trained commandos, known as the Black Cats.

Sniffer dogs were taken into the iconic 105-year-old hotel and ambulances arrived. Some commandos did a final sweep of the rooms, while others boarded buses to pull out, looking exhausted.

Ratan Tata, the chairman of the Tata Group of companies which owns the hotel, arrived at the premises later in the morning. He may be shocked by what he finds when he is finally let inside. "The lobby is an absolute mess," said Manish Mundra, a volunteer who was bringing food to security forces and had been inside the hotel. "The furniture is broken, there is water everywhere they are never going to to be able to reuse any of that stuff." Black streaks of soot stained the grey bricks, white balconies and red-tiled roofs of the hotel's facade. Two of its corner stained-glass windows were broken.

The Taj Mahal was the last battleground after three days of intense fighting in various parts of the city of 18 million. Several newspapers said some of the militants had checked into the Taj hotel some days or weeks before the attacks, while the Times of India said they had rented an apartment in the city a few months ago pretending to be students.

On Friday, an army general said the gunmen appeared to be "very, very familiar" with the layout of the hotel, giving them a crucial advantage over his men. They were also well trained. "At times we found them matching us in combat and movement," one commando told the Hindustan Times. "They were either army regulars or have done a long stint of commando training." Mumbai police said that at least 195 people had been killed and "we are still counting" as bodies were collected from the luxury Taj and nearby Trident-Oberoi hotels, scene of another siege that ended on Friday.

Well-dressed but haggard-looking guests were let back to their rooms in the Trident wing of the hotel on Saturday morning to collect their belongings. Staff said they would re-open that wing on Wednesday, but not the Oberoi wing which was badly hit by a long gunbattle. The Trident lobby was covered in broken glass, with bullet holes in the glass stair bannisters and in the doors leading into the Opium bar. A grand piano was left unscathed, but cars parked outside were also riddled with bullet holes.

Mumbai attacks: Taj Mahal siege ends as total death toll rises to 195

*The The Daily Telegraph*, 29 Nov 2008

*The siege at the Taj Mahal Hotel in the centre of Mumbai, formerly known as Bombay, has ended, bringing a halt to more than three days of terror in the city.*

At least two more terrorists were killed in the final stages of a battle with Indian commandos, following attacks throughout Mumbai.

The official death toll rose significantly today to 195, from 155 yesterday. At least 295 others have been injured in the assault on India's economic capital.

370
The hotel siege was brought to a close today as security and political sources in the UK tried to play down suggestions that up to seven of the terrorists had strong British links, and that some of them were British-born men of Pakistani origin.

Sources in India are reported to have indicated that some of the men came from the north of England, including from Leeds, Hartlepool and Bradford.

Erika Mann, a European Union trade official, escaped from the Taj Mahal hotel through an underground passage.

She told the Times of India: "The attacks appear to have an European dimension.

"We've heard from journalists and other people we were with that English citizens were involved in the attacks."

However, a spokesman for the Foreign Office in London said: "We have spoken to Indian authorities at a high level and they have said that there is no evidence that any of the terrorists either captured or dead are British."

Gordon Brown also played down such a link after speaking to Manmohan Singh, the Indian Prime Minister. "At no point has the Prime Minister of India suggested to me that there is evidence at this stage of any terrorist of British origins, but obviously these are huge investigations that are being done and I think it will be premature to draw any conclusions at all," said Mr Brown.

"We remain steadfast and firm, standing with India and all other countries against any form of terrorist activity, and we will be vigilant in both helping the Indian authorities and in making sure that in every part of the world we support those who are fighting terrorism."

Mr Brown said his thoughts were with those who had died, including British yachting tycoon Andreas Liveras. Mr Liveras, the 73-year-old Cypriot-born founder of a luxury yacht business, was pronounced dead on arrival at St George's Hospital in the city.

A team of detectives from Scotland Yard is flying to Mumbai to help Indian authorities with the investigation. Officers are also meeting Britons returning on flights to London's Heathrow Airport and handing out leaflets appealing for information.

More of those Britons caught up in the terror attack were due to fly home to London today.

Some in the Indian government have suggested that the attack could have been planned or launched from Pakistan. Pranab Mukherjee, the Indian External Affairs Minister, said: "According to preliminary information, some elements in Pakistan are responsible for Mumbai terror attacks."

Pakistan has backtracked on a decision to send the chief of its spy agency to India to help with the Mumbai attack investigation, in a move likely to revive questions about who is in charge of the shadowy agency. The Prime Minister's office in Islamabad said today that a representative of its Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency would now go to India instead of its director general.

APPENDIX II – EDITORIALS
EDITORIAL NO. 1

Daughter of destiny

The Indian Express

This time they have succeeded in killing the Daughter of the East. Just two months ago, she had returned to Pakistan after eight years of forced exile. The home-coming was seen as Pakistan’s best hope for a stable and democratic future and nothing underlined that better than the unprecedented crowds that had turned up to greet her in Karachi. In that moment was both hope and despair. Within a few hours of that arrival, a bomb tore through the homecoming cavalcade. It killed over 150 people but spared Bhutto herself. This time, tragically, neither she nor indeed Pakistan was as lucky.

For Pakistan, the implications of this assassination will be felt for many years to come. The Benazir assassination is only more evidence that what Pakistan needs most of all is stability and democracy. But it also indicates how difficult it will be to achieve this. Certainly, the general election slated for January 8 has now been rendered devoid of all meaning. The democratic process, dictated by Pervez Musharraf, was a deeply flawed one; but the enthusiasm that Benazir Bhutto brought to the process had breathed new life into it. In fact, unlike the other main contender for power, Nawaz Sharif, Bhutto was of the opinion that boycotting the polls would only strengthen Musharraf’s hands. The fortitude with which she underwent the Musharraf-imposed house arrest, the courage with which she faced the obvious dangers to her life and the commitment she invested in her public campaigning, will long be remembered by her compatriots who have had few instances of public figures taking on an entrenched establishment in quite such an energetic fashion. And it was not as if she had not assessed the strength of her opponents. As she observed recently, “The extremists need a dictatorship and a dictatorship needs extremists.”

Benazir Bhutto’s place in history is secure. The eldest child of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Benazir learnt politics in the nursery. People in this country still remember her as a gawky teenager by her father’s side, when he had come for the Simla talks with Indira Gandhi in July 1972. When she was sworn in as prime minister in 1988, she became the first woman to lead a modern Muslim state and came to symbolise both modernity and democracy. The promise of that interregnum may have withered away quite early, but Benazir Bhutto never gave up her personal pursuit of the democratic challenge. On Thursday, that pursuit cost her life.

Pakistan at the edge

The Hindu

“I am not afraid,” Benazir Bhutto declaimed at her father’s mausoleum two months ago, “of anyone but Allah.” In the last weeks of her life, Benazir demonstrated that she possessed a depth of conviction that was, beyond dispute, exceptional. When she returned to Pakistan earlier this year after long exile, she made clear to family and confidantes that she was well aware of the great dangers lying ahead. She was undeterred by the murderous bombing that greeted her on her return home. During her two tenures as Prime Minister of Pakistan, she was charged by adversaries and critics with corruption, with sponsoring Islamist terrorism directed at India, with diletantism. Whatever be the truth in relation to these accusations, the Pakistan People’s Party chief showed, in word and deed, that she possessed the raw courage needed to set past wrongs right. In his last interview before his execution by the military regime of General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto said: “I am not afraid of death. I am a man of history and you cannot silence history.” Democrats across Pakistan will recall these words as they ponder how best to respond to a despicable act by terrorists who made no secret of their loathing at the prospect of a progressive, secular woman emerging as Pakistan’s ruler. With this body blow to democracy in Pakistan, what is clear is that epic struggles lie ahead for its hard-pressed people. Some analysts fear the assassination will spell the end of the tentative movement towards
democracy witnessed in recent months. While such an outcome will suit the military establishment as well as the Islamists, it will have dangerously destabilising consequences. As Benazir pointed out movingly in a recent interview, “people are just being butchered and it has to stop, somebody has to find a solution and my solution is, let’s restore democracy.” It was this combination of extraordinary courage and well-reasoned commitment to democracy that made Benazir stand out among Pakistan’s political leaders. Her death illustrates in stark relief the failure of Pervez Musharraf’s regime, which continues to be underwritten by the United States, to confront al-Qaeda- and Taliban-linked religious neoconservatives who are working to obliterate the last traces of democracy in Pakistan. It is one of the grimmer ironies of history that Benazir was killed at the gates of Rawalpindi’s Liaquat Bagh — the very location where a gunman shot dead Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan in 1951, an action some believe was provoked by his opposition to clerics’ calls for Pakistan to be declared an Islamic state. In the decades since, the country has lurched ever closer towards the abyss. All those who care for its future — and for the future of our shared region — must join hands to ensure it is pulled back from the edge. The Hindu shares the deep grief of the people of Pakistan over this terrible loss during a time of troubles.

Daughter of the East

The Statesman

Blowing off the candle in the wind

There was not another person in the world last Thursday whose death could have shocked so many people in so many lands as Benazir Bhutto. South Asia was quite totally stunned. A family is finished. Pakistan is a terror state under a failed presidency. The military stands discredited. The election is irrelevant; democracy has met its eclipse even before it was given a try. And the liberal face of Islam has been shattered. Irreparable must be the country’s moral defeat. Tragedy has once again struck a family that has learnt to live with violence, assassination, hanging and murder perhaps ever since Pakistan’s creation. Barring Benazir’s mother, Nusrat, who was for a time the head of the PPP, whoever has dabbled in politics has had to pay with his/her life. For all her shortcomings in her previous stints as Prime Minister, Benazir had over the past few months emerged as a powerful symbol against tyranny. There was no ambiguity in her choice between military rule and democracy and arguably she had what it takes to lead a middle Pakistan. She seemed set for a third term as Prime Minister, though perhaps notional under a self-elevated and omnipotent President, almost a megalomaniac. One must give it to Benazir ~ Pinky to her friends at Oxford ~ that she had offered a faint ray of hope in the time of Pakistan’s overwhelming darkness. That hope was extinguished in Rawalpindi on Thursday evening much like the flickering candle in the wind.

The place of the killing is critical for she was gunned down by the fidayeen in a historic garrison town that is home to the Pakistan army’s general headquarters (GHQ). Never was the internal failure of the military so profoundly catastrophic and General (retd) Musharraf must accept total responsibility for this terrorist outrage. Most particularly because he and his handpicked establishment had been studiously pussyfooting in investigating the earlier attempt on Benazir’s life in Karachi on 18 October, the day she returned home. She had demanded a full-fledged investigation, with repeated appeals to the government to involve international experts. She had even hinted at the involvement of the ISI, once again under a Musharraf protege. The outrage two months ago was never probed with the seriousness it deserved, a contrived failure for which the President owes an explanation to the world at large. Terrorists have now struck within his cantonment constituency. Parvez Musharraf has failed the country. Pakistan stands disgraced in the comity of nations. It’s time for him to pack up as the world sounds the The Last Post in honour of Benazir Bhutto.

A nation convulsed
**The Guardian**

As Benazir Bhutto was buried yesterday beside the grave of her father, the profound implications of her assassination were only just starting to sink in. Everyone sensed this was a transformational moment, and the bar is set high in a country which lurches from one national crisis to another. But into what mutation of military rule would the country now be plunged? Even Bhutto's enemies spoke of their deep sense of foreboding. Outside, her furious supporters ransacked banks, waged shoot-outs with police and burned trains. More than 30 died, including four policemen, as the country was convulsed in one of the worst waves of political violence it has seen for some time. Troops were called out and paramilitary rangers given orders to shoot on sight. The violence was worst in Bhutto's native Sindh province, where protesters shouted: "Bhutto was alive yesterday. Bhutto is alive today."

The deep, seething resentment in Sindh may not be, as Islamabad hopes, a passing phenomenon. Bhutto was the last popular national leader to come from a smaller province. The way her supporters see things, if the Pakistan military establishment killed the entire Bhutto clan - the father, the two sons and now the sister - it is because they were Sindhi. The territorial integrity of Pakistan will be maintained by the army, but one large pillar of its political integrity crumbled with her death. One of the targets of the rioters' rage was the railway line that connected Karachi, the capital of Sindh province, to the eastern Punjab province. If Bhutto had lived to fight the election, she would have been a strong enough national figure to straddle the divide with the Punjab.

Pervez Musharraf now has to pacify an angry nation in the knowledge that declaring another state of emergency would only ignite more fires. This time it is not the middle-class rage of the liberal establishment - judges, lawyers and journalists - that he has to face, but the popular wrath of a movement deprived of a leader who promised deliverance from his misrule. Mr Musharraf may call for calm, but he has few means at his disposal, other than applying more force, to deliver it. He may have had no personal hand in the killing of Pakistan's most popular politician, but in the popular mind (and not just a Sindhi one) he has a general in his ranks who has. Unable to guarantee the security of the most high-profile terrorist target in the land, other than him, the president now has the blood of a Bhutto on his hands. Mr Musharraf is about the last man who can stage the act of national reconciliation needed to pull the nation together.

So, it was with some haste that the government released claims that they had intelligence intercepts indicating that one of Pakistan's most wanted militant leaders in South Waziristan, Baitullah Mehsud, was behind the assassination. This could well be the case, but it will not be the full story and Mr Musharraf is unlikely to cede to opposition demands for a genuinely independent inquiry into Bhutto's killing. Mr Musharraf remains the linchpin of Washington's and London's counter-terrorism strategy in the region. For all the unrest he has fermented, he is still thought of as the cornerstone of that strategy and the guarantor of regional stability. He is instead becoming an increasingly powerful magnet for instability.

He should go and the west should stop supporting him. The army should guarantee the stability of the country and its nuclear arsenal, if necessary under foreign supervision. All political parties should be invited to convene a national conference whose task would be to form a government of national unity. The government would restore the judiciary, appoint an independent election commission and hold free elections. If the military establishment wanted an orderly transition to democracy, this would be one way of securing it. This is far from happening. Mr Musharraf was last night playing for time, time which he has not got.

**A killing that reverberates far beyond Pakistan**

**The Independent**

There was an appalling sense of inevitability about the death of Benazir Bhutto at an election rally in Rawalpindi. The risk she had taken in returning to Pakistan was brutally apparent from the moment her plane touched down. The failed attempt on her life during the interminable procession that day showed how
inadequate her protection would be if she continued her campaign. That she did so nonetheless showed admirable, if perhaps foolhardy, courage. An accursed symmetry had it that she died yesterday in the same garrison city where her deposed father was executed. Her quest to avenge his death and return elected government to Pakistan came to naught.

Ms Bhutto had powerful enemies, and there were damaging accusations against her: of corruption, nepotism and entitlement. But there could be no doubting either her sense of personal destiny or the seriousness with which she plied her politics. While lineage played its part, she was one of the first women to be elected prime minister of an Islamic country. The gamble she took in accepting the deal President Musharraf offered her an end to exile, an election campaign and, if her People's Party won, the prime ministership was not an unreasonable one for her to make. When she, rightly, broke with Mr Musharraf over his failure to lift martial law, she took the more difficult course. Rather than returning to exile, she stayed to fight.

In a way, her gamble was rewarded. Mr Musharraf lifted the state of emergency. Before his re-inauguration as President, he made the formal move into civilian life. When she died, an election campaign not entirely unworthy of the name was in progress. Whether it would have been strictly constitutional for Ms Bhutto to accept a third term as Prime Minister was a question that lurked only a little uneasily in the wings. At the time, it was just possible to believe that Mr Musharraf and Ms Bhutto might be able to bury their differences for the sake of a stable Pakistan and a rapid transition to democracy.

Those hopes now appear wildly unrealistic. But if, with the false wisdom of hindsight, yesterday's assassination seemed inevitable, the consequences can only be unpredictable and highly dangerous. It seems unlikely that any of the gains of recent months can be maintained. Disturbances broke out in cities across Pakistan within minutes of the announcement of Ms Bhutto's death. The language of martyrdom in which her assassination was condemned bespoke conflict and bloodshed to come.

These will be perilous days for Pakistan. The return to civilian rule and the parliamentary elections, now less than two weeks away, are both surely threatened. Mr Musharraf's position is as shaky as it has been since he seized power. His call for calm "so that the nefarious designs of terrorists can be defeated" smacked of desperation, the national security card ever the last resort of the weak leader. And even if, as is probable, he had no part whatever in her death, there will be many among her supporters who will believe he did.

As the urgent words of tribute and warning showed yesterday, however, Ms Bhutto's assassination will reverberate far beyond her native land. The United States, and to a lesser extent Britain, had encouraged Ms Bhutto to return in the expectation that she would be Pakistan's next Prime Minister. They envisaged her as a moderating and pro-Western force in a country where Islamic extremism is never far from the surface. They hoped an electoral mandate would bring stability. At a time when the Taliban are advancing in Afghanistan, violence still plagues Iraq, and Iran's intentions are uncertain, new volatility in the region can be in no one's interests. Benazir Bhutto might not have been able, as she aspired, to save Pakistan for democracy, but now she will not have the chance.

Benazir Bhutto and the danger in Pakistan

The Daily Telegraph

Pakistani politics was already in a state of febrile transition between the dictatorship of President Pervez Musharraf and the restoration of democracy. The assassination in Rawalpindi yesterday of Benazir Bhutto adds immeasurably to the volatility of that unhappy country.
After eight years of self-exile, she had returned to Karachi, her political base, in October to be greeted both by an ecstatic crowd and suicide bomb attacks that killed 139 people.

The first was a measure of her popularity and that of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) founded by her father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, in 1967. With hindsight, the second can be seen as an ominous dress rehearsal for what happened in Rawalpindi.

It was also testimony to her physical courage. Like Zulfikar Ali a hate figure to the security services - let alone murderous fundamentalists - she knew the risks she was running in trying to restore democracy after eight years of dictatorship.

Following the death in an air crash of her father's executioner, Gen Zia ul-Haq, in 1988, Miss Bhutto became the first democratically elected female leader of a Muslim nation. Unfortunately, her room for manoeuvre was tightly circumscribed by the military, which in 1990 engineered her sacking by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan on charges of corruption.

During her second term as prime minister (1993-96), she was more her own mistress. However, the appointment of her husband, Asif Ali Zardari, as a minister demonstrated a contempt for public opinion worthy of the scion of a feudal Sindhi family; Mr Zardari was already known as "Mr Ten Per Cent" on account of the kickbacks he had allegedly received. It was not surprising that she was again dismissed.

Despite these setbacks, the desire for political office, awakened by her father's hanging in 1979, never left her. That was the impetus behind her tortuous and compromising negotiations with Gen Musharraf and her subsequent return home to fight parliamentary elections at the head of the PPP.

Whatever her failings - and they included arrogance, tolerance of corruption and administrative incompetence - she epitomised resistance to military hegemony in a country that has known only brief periods of democracy. Her assassination casts into doubt the restoration of representative rule.

In such circumstances, Gen Musharraf, who resigned last month as army chief but remains president, may decide to postpone or cancel parliamentary elections due on January 8.

If they are held, with Miss Bhutto murdered and the other political heavyweight, Nawaz Sharif, disqualified from running, they could well be rigged to favour the general's party, the Pakistan Muslim League (Q).

The situation may deteriorate to the extent that the army decides once again to intervene, this time removing the author of the 1999 coup, Gen Musharraf.

The general's declining value as an ally had led America and Britain to press for Miss Bhutto's return to fight elections, in the hope that a broader political base would better enable the government to tackle terrorism.

That hope was shattered yesterday by the assassin's bullet. Having doffed his uniform, the general will be even less able to control his country than before.

Power will be dispersed between the president, the new army chief, Gen Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, and whoever emerges on top after parliamentary elections.

A nuclear-armed, fundamentalist-threatened Pakistan will continue to be one of the most dangerous countries in the world.

EDITORIAL NO. 2
Those stolen African elections

The Indian Express

The mayhem that killed hundreds of people following Kenya’s election on December 27th completes a depressing cycle of democratic abuses in Africa’s biggest countries. Nigeria held its own mockery of an election last April. Scores were killed and observers pronounced it the most fraudulent poll they had ever witnessed. Congo held a more or less peaceful election in October 2006, since when the main opposition leader has been hounded into exile. And the year before that, flawed elections in Ethiopia resulted in the deaths of 199 protesters. Needless to say, the incumbents all won.

So it is easy to be angry, as well as gloomy, about African leaders’ continual betrayal of the democratic values they say they hold so dear. And all the more so in the case of Kenya, which has a strong tradition of holding elections, a vibrant political culture, a relatively free press and a sophisticated economy. Given these advantages, Kenya had an opportunity to “set an example” to Africa and hold free and fair elections. But (it) blew it.

Or, more precisely, the political elite blew it. A small cabal of politicians almost certainly stole the result by fraud. In the parliamentary vote, President Mwai Kibaki’s ruling party was routed. Yet in the presidential vote Mr Kibaki emerged victorious at the last moment and had himself sworn in only a few minutes later, forestalling pleas from all sides... for a pause to investigate mounting claims of malpractice. The report of the European observers was unusually strong in its condemnation of the count...

Initially, America, which sees Kenya as a front-line ally in a war against Islamist militias in neighbouring Somalia, made the mistake of endorsing the president’s re-election. Now Britain, America and the African Union are urging Mr Odinga and Mr Kibaki to talk in an effort to stop the bloodletting. That lets Mr Kibaki off the hook far too easily. All the violence should certainly be condemned, but most of the diplomatic pressure should be exerted on Mr Kibaki’s supposed new Government to annul the results and organise a recount — or a new vote.

Kenya’s stolen election

The Hindu

The presidential election in Kenya has triggered major violence. Tribal rivalries have been ignited, taking upwards of 300 lives so far. The incumbent President, Mwai Kibaki, has claimed victory over Raila Odinga. Strangely, the parliamentary and presidential contests, which were held simultaneously, produced impossible-to-reconcile outcomes. The Orange Democratic Movement led by Mr. Odinga, which led in every opinion poll except one, unseated most members of the incumbent Cabinet and took 100 out of 210 parliamentary seats while Mr. Kibaki’s Party of National Unity won just 35 seats. In the presidential election, the early counting trends heavily favoured Mr. Odinga and media computations also had him ahead. But the three-day counting process lacked transparency and suffered unexplained delays in vote tallying. In some constituencies the votes polled exceeded the number of registered voters. All this naturally fuelled allegations of rigging. The head of the Electoral Commission himself has publicly doubted whether Mr. Kibaki actually won, and the Attorney General has called for an independent investigation. The European Union’s Electoral Observation Mission has issued a damming report on the election process, saying it fell short of “key international and regional standards for democratic elections” and calling for a swift, independent investigation of the results. The United States initially welcomed the election result but has now joined Britain, the former colonial ruler, in questioning its credibility and accuracy.

Sadly, hopes of a true democratic revival in Kenya, which has East Africa’s largest economy, have been shattered. Mr. Odinga, a former political prisoner under the dictatorship of Daniel Arap Moi and son of
nationalist hero Oginga Odinga, has been projected as an agent of progressive change. The voter turnout was huge and the polling broadly transparent and peaceful. What is clear is that the presidential election was stolen in the counting and tallying process. Mr. Odinga’s demand that the President must admit the brazen fraud is wholly just and seems to imply one of two things: Mr. Kibaki must step down or the presidential election process should be gone through all over again. In either case, an independent review and scrutiny, under credible supervision, of what went wrong would be a requirement. At this vital moment for democracy in Africa, the African Union, the European Union, and the Commonwealth need to do all they can to help Kenya come out of this crisis with its head held high. The only way to overcome this huge setback to democracy in Africa and for “national healing,” which Mr. Kibaki has called for, to have a chance is for him to go.

Kenya in a cauldron

The Statesman

End to bloodletting must precede diplomacy

The bedlam and butchery in Kenya ~ would “genocide” be the apt expression? ~ has relegated the declared victory of Mwai Kibaki as President to the footnotes. The enormity of the massacre of 300 people since Sunday will be of far greater moment to future historians than the spurious proclamation of Kibaki’s presidential victory in a country widely regarded as the continent’s success story. Whether or not the opposition’s defeated candidate, Raila Odinga, and his Orange Democratic Movement have masterminded the mayhem, the raging tribal warfare is embedded in the country’s lethally dangerous electoral system. Even with the most honest of intentions and the wishful thinking of Britain’s Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, it will be hugely difficult for Ghana’s President, John Kufuor, to broker a peace as the head of the African Union. Kenya has been sliding in turmoil and bloodshed since the day the result was declared with an estimated 100,000 having fled. The civil war has reduced the country to flames and it is an open question whether a government of national unity will be able to douse the fire just yet. Confusion gets worse confounded with the country’s election commission, that proclaimed Kibaki as the victor on Sunday, now claiming that it could not be sure who had won. It would be an understatement to dismiss the process as vote-rigging; Kenya’s presidential election has been a fraud on the nation with consequences almost genocidal.

A dark chapter has been scripted in African history and a political settlement will not be easy to achieve. The hasty swearing-in of Kibaki confirms suspicions of a gigantic electoral cover-up. Escalation of the violence is bound to have an impact throughout the continent. A national government is of course a way out, an option that has been buttressed with the stout appeal by Britain’s foreign secretary, David Miliband, and the US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, to “all political leaders to engage in a spirit of compromise that puts the democratic interests of Kenya first”. The bloodletting must end before diplomatic finesse can be given a try.

A stolen election

The Guardian

Halfway through the count in Kenya's presidential and parliamentary elections, the opposition leader, Raila Odinga, was so far ahead - by 700,000 votes - that analysts predicted it would take a minor miracle for the incumbent, Mwai Kibaki, to survive. Last night, that miracle duly came to pass. Mr Kibaki was declared
the winner with a comfortable majority, and the pro-opposition shacks in the south of Nairobi went up in flames.

The result defies more than 50 opinion polls giving Mr Odinga the lead, the fact that more than half of Mr Kibaki's cabinet had lost their seats, and that Mr Odinga's Orange Democratic Movement had won three times as many seats as Mr Kibaki's Party of National Unity. It also defies what EU election monitors saw with their own eyes in one constituency, Molo, where the result declared in their presence was 25,000 votes short of that subsequently announced by the Election Commission of Kenya. As a result, the chief EU observer, Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, pointedly refused to call the election fair and free, saying "some doubt" remained over the accuracy of the result.

There were other oddities about the count - the unnatural delay in results from Mr Kibaki's heartland, or the impossibly high turnout figures at two polling stations in Mr Kibaki's own Othaya constituency. Within minutes of the result being declared, black smoke was billowing from the Nairobi slum Kibera, and within an hour Mr Kibaki was sworn in again as president at State House. The ceremony was performed with unseemly haste, and in it Mr Kibaki promised to form a government free of corruption. This may be easier to promise than to deliver, because with only 33 seats to his party's name in the 210 member parliament it will have to be a minority government even with the help of other parties. But that is the least of Mr Kibaki's problems.

This election promised so much, not only to Kenya but to Africa as a whole. It would have been the first time that a Kenyan president would have lost through the ballot box, and the first time an incumbent would have been voted out of office. It would have been, in the best sense of the word, a revolution. Many of the old guard who had dominated politics since independence were swept out of office by a younger generation of politicians who owed their popularity to votes rather than tribal loyalty or patronage. Instead. Kenya appeared last night to be stepping back several decades. Deprived of power in the way that his late father - the Luo nationalist hero Oginga Odinga - was, Raila Odinga darkly predicted a stormy future for a nation that could once again split on tribal lines

President without moral authority

*The Independent*

When Mwai Kibaki won a landslide victory in Kenya's presidential elections five years ago, the country's future seemed bright. Daniel Arap Moi's corrupt 24-year grip on power had finally been broken in the country's first truly democratic election. And the new President, a trained economist, had campaigned on an anti-corruption ticket. Mr Kibaki seemed to be the leader to unleash Kenya's economic and human potential.

But Mr Kibaki has been a grave disappointment in power. The President shamelessly emasculated Kenya's anti-corruption commission. And the clique around him, dubbed the "Mount Kenya mafia", has been as venal as those who enriched themselves so greedily under President Moi. According to some estimates, more than $1bn in international aid donations has gone missing in the past five years. The extent to which the regime truly changed in 2002 is also questionable. Mr Kibaki's campaign in this month's national elections was actually bankrolled by his old rival.

In the light of this wretched record, it is no surprise that President Kibaki struggled to maintain his grip on power. When vote counting began last week, the leader of the opposition, Raila Odinga, shot into a strong lead. Twelve cabinet ministers lost their seats, including the Vice-President Moody Awori. But then the momentum suddenly (and suspiciously) began to switch back to Mr Kibaki. Mr Odinga alleged fraud. But despite widespread doubts over the soundness of the narrow result, Mr Kibaki was named yesterday by the Electoral Commission of Kenya as the victor and awarded a second term in power.
Some will argue that this is not such a terrible outcome, as Kenya has registered healthy economic growth (around 6 per cent a year) under President Kibaki. But despite widened access to education and healthcare, the fruits of this growth are not reaching the poor. Most Kenyans still live on less than $1 a day. Nairobi is now one of the most violent cities in Africa and the city's sprawling Kibera slum is the largest on the continent. Moreover, Kenya's large and well-educated middle classes are hungry for change. And after his government's sweeping electoral reverses, President Kibaki has lost the moral authority to rule.

It is now difficult to be optimistic about Kenya's future. There is likely to be a violent reaction from Mr Odinga's supporters. The rancour will be exacerbated by the tribal divide between Mr Odinga's Luo political base, and Mr Kibaki's mainly Kikuyu constituency.

Kenya, for all the manifest faults of its political class, has long been regarded by the outside world as an oasis of relative calm in a volatile region. After this dubious result and yesterday's bloodshed, it may lose even this saving grace.

**Commonwealth should take lead against Kenya**

*The The Daily Telegraph*

Kenya is the one African country where this shouldn't happen. Stable and - by the standards of its neighbours - prosperous, it should have been the best hope for that vast, beautiful, pitiless continent.

Mwai Kibaki was elected in 2002 on an anti-corruption ticket. His National Rainbow Coalition promised reform after 24 years of autocratic rule under Daniel arap Moi.

With his courteous manner, his British education and his fondness for PG Wodehouse, President Kibaki seemed as likely as any African leader to relinquish power voluntarily.

Yet he now turns out to be just another strongman: self-serving, arrogant and ready to plunge his country into civil unrest rather than give it up.

More than 100 Kenyans have so far died in rioting, and curfews are in force across the state. Under Moi, Kenya was authoritarian but at least stable. Après Moi, le déluge.

What is shocking about the rigged poll is not the fact of electoral manipulation, but its blatancy. President Kibaki's partisans barely troubled to cover their tracks.

In one instance, observers saw one total being recorded at a local polling station, and a different one reported to the national electoral commission.

Government supporters would have us believe that Kenyans voted decisively against the ruling party's parliamentary candidates, that they turfed out the vice-president, but that they then split their tickets to return Mr Kibaki.

It is as though President Kibaki is flicking two fingers at the international community. Yup, I stole the poll: what are you going to do about it?

We must ask ourselves the same question. No one else has as much influence in Kenya as the United Kingdom: we are the former colonial power, the country's chief trading partner and its main donor. What we say carries a certain weight in Nairobi.
The Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, has, to his credit, expressed serious doubts about the integrity of the ballot (and yesterday America saw fit to withdraw its initial congratulations to the re-elected Kibaki). But what can we practically do?

The fact is that our powers of unilateral intervention are limited. We could in theory refuse to recognise President Kibaki’s regime.

But a gesture of this kind, unsupported by action, would risk making matters worse, emboldening the supporters of the opposition candidate, Raila Odinga, and inflaming tensions between Mr Kibaki’s largely Kikuyu followers and Mr Odinga's Luo clansmen (Mr Odinga coincidentally shares his Luo ethnicity with Barack Obama).

No, if there is to be practical action against President Kibaki, it must be concerted and multilateral; and the obvious medium for such action is the Commonwealth. This is precisely the kind of crisis that the organisation exists to address.

Commonwealth leaders should suspend Kenya from their ranks and retain the option of further sanctions unless the election is re-run. If the Commonwealth fails, all Africa will fail with it.

EDITORIAL NO. 3

A vote for possibility

_The Indian Express_

The good that men do is often interred with their bones, but the good that certain elections do seems close to magical. Whatever the final outcome of Zimbabwe’s cliffhanger, the fact that Robert Mugabe may either be decisively routed or even almost routed is a marvel of our time — one that he himself had no way of knowing when he said, confidently casting his vote, that “if you lose an election and are rejected by the people, it is time to leave politics”.

Well, about time. Mugabe is the classic “when good leaders go bad” case — from the glory years when he waged a people’s war against the white minority rulers of erstwhile Rhodesia, a Mandela-like symbol of his people’s aspirations, to a power-crazed despot who has run his once-thriving country to the ground. Even official data now put the Inflation rate at more than 100,000 per cent. Anyone who can make it out of Zimbabwe does, as Mugabe crushed internal opposition and imputed dark colonialist motives to any international voice that disapproved. He also justified the economic devastation he brought to Zimbabwe as a plucky refusal to run by any “capitalist” script. His cynical appropriation of this language is a travesty of all the genuine struggles for self-determination waged by the colonised countries (including Zimbabwe) and the daily suffering of the poor. But unfortunately, the world community failed to call him on his lie. Now, it looks like the people of Zimbabwe might finally wrest their well-being back.

So, this electoral challenge by the Movement for Democratic Change is a grand tectonic shift for Zimbabwe and Africa (which has so far shielded Mugabe’s megalomania and bought into his third world solidarity rhetoric). Zimbabwe’s institutions have been twisted before they even got a chance to form. Mugabe bludgeoned the newborn nation’s media into submission, forcibly seized land, rigged election rules and entrenched police torture. The question is, even if a peaceful transition can be effected and Morgan Tsvangirai does get to form the next government, how long will it take for this traumatised country to clamber back to normalcy?
A patriarch’s bitter winter

*The Hindu*

The tense political drama unfolding in Zimbabwe is best captured in five words: ‘The tragedy of Robert Mugabe.’ The man who provided steely, astute leadership to the African majority in the land between the Zambezi and Limpopo rivers in the victorious struggle against a racist, pro-colonial regime has, over the past few years, transmogrified into a symbol of oppressive misgovernance. Mr. Mugabe’s Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front, which has held power since 1980 (with some changes in name and the leader’s designation) is notoriously corrupt and inefficient. A country that should have prospered post-independence has turned into a basket case. The annual rate of inflation is estimated to be 100,000 per cent; the unemployment rate is among the highest in the world; and the AIDS epidemic has slashed female life expectancy at birth to something in the 40s. Without remittances from the hundreds of thousands of Zimbabweans who have fled, mainly to other countries in southern Africa, life would be quite unbearable. A people desperate to rid themselves of a rapacious regime believed they had voted it out in the general election of March 29. Polling data from the constituencies showed that the opposition Movement for Democratic Change had won more than half the 210 seats in the lower house. The data also suggested that in the parallel presidential election, Mr. Mugabe had been defeated by the MDC’s Morgan Tsvangirai. However, with the ZANU-PF-controlled Election Commission failing to notify the results, there is widespread suspicion that it will fiddle with the figures.

A second round of voting in the presidential election appears unavoidable since independent observers are of the view that Mr. Tsvangirai has not won the 50 per cent necessary under the rules. If the second round is conducted with the relative fairness of the first, or perhaps under closer international monitoring, Mr. Mugabe’s defeat seems virtually guaranteed. But ZANU-PF does not appear to be in any mood to take its chances in a fair contest. It is reported to have launched a campaign to terrorise rural voters in the Mashona tribe’s homelands. A nasty and escalating confrontation can still be avoided if the patriarch looks back to the ideals of his prime, the anti-racist and anti-imperialist struggle he led so inspiring. South Africa and the other countries around Zimbabwe’s rim are the only international actors who can exert some constructive pressure on the veteran. Mr. Mugabe must be persuaded to bow out with a shred of dignity rather than endure a bitter winter of alienation from his own people.

Endgame in Zimbabwe

*The Statesman*

Coping with the internal turmoil

A phase ends in the history of Zimbabwe with Robert Mugabe ~ “the old man” as Zimbabweans used to call him ~ eventually accepting defeat and agreeing to take the bow after 28 years. The consummation is now official and Wednesday’s announcement by the Election Commission comes after four days of strenuous efforts not to be upfront with the final outcome. That the world ~ both black and white ~ was kept guessing confirms that Mugabe was loath to give up power. In the event, his Zanu PF has lost and the country must now gear up for the dispensation under Morgan Tsvangirai and his Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). The latter’s margin of victory is far from convincing, 105 in a House of 207 contested seats. That Mugabe’s party managed to secure 94 seats indicates that for all his failings, he may yet boast a modest support base. However, the victory margin must be tempered with a more than reasonable suspicion that as the man in place, Mugabe must have tried everything possible to achieve victory. The singular upshot, that he may now have grudgingly accepted, is that he has lost the majority and the defeat must be resounding after close to three decades. With the economy almost irredeemably blighted, Tsvangirai succeeds to an incredibly depleted inheritance. Mugabe bequeathes a Zimbabwe that grapples with 90 per
cent unemployment; life expectancies of 34 and 37 for women and men respectively; 4,000 deaths from AIDS every month; four million verging on starvation and a 200,000 per cent rate of inflation.

Mugabe's last stand

*The Guardian*

No one can predict what is going to happen next in Zimbabwe. One would need to be able to read minds - especially Robert Mugabe's mind. The opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) laid its cards on the table yesterday by claiming victory, but it had been sensibly advised. It claimed victory in a way that could not be regarded as provocative or unconstitutional. By claiming that the party's leader, Morgan Tsvangirai, had won 50.3%, compared to 43.8% for Mr Mugabe, the MDC left wide open the possibility of a second-round run-off. Tendai Biti, the MDC general secretary, said Mr Tsvangirai had won the election outright but would participate in a second round if one were ordered.

This is what the state-controlled Herald newspaper hinted at yesterday by claiming that neither candidate would garner more than 50% of the votes. It appears to be the course on which the hardliners around Mr Mugabe have decided. The results of the election have been so cataclysmic for Mr Mugabe that the ruling elite has been sharply divided about what to do. The heads of the army and air force were reportedly in favour of recognising defeat and arranging a peaceful transition of power. The military chief of staff and the police chief - the two who were quoted before the election as saying they would never recognise an opposition victory - were for fighting on. They appear to have won out.

Under the law, the state-run Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) has six days to announce the result. Yesterday it said the MDC had won control of the House of Assembly, winning 103 seats to Zanu-PF's 93. But the ZEC could continue the water torture, the steady drip of partial results, until Friday. As the ZEC has allocated parliamentary seats, it has been loading the number of Zanu-PF votes, and currently gives the ruling party over 100,000 more votes than the opposition. An announcement on Friday that Mr Mugabe had won the presidential poll but failed to get more than 50% of the vote would come as no surprise.

A second round could be viewed as humiliating for a man who thinks of himself as father of the nation. But in dire circumstances like these it would allow him to deploy a weapon which has been absent from the first round: political violence. In 2002 Zanu-PF-sponsored violence prevented the MDC from campaigning in the rural heartlands. It kept opposition supporters at home. The election on Saturday was freer of violence, but that does not mean a second round would be. Both the regime and the old man who created it may be going down kicking, but each still retains tremendous destructive powers.

The people have spoken. Mr Mugabe must listen

*The Independent*

The silence from the ruling party in Zimbabwe could mean one of two things. It might mean that a massive rigging operation is taking place at the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission to turn around what looks like a resounding electoral defeat for President Robert Mugabe -- and make it look like he has just scraped past the 51 per cent of the vote needed to avoid a second round of voting, and give his party a majority in parliament. Or it might be that the ruling elite is engaged in a frantic process of negotiation over who will tell the ageing despot that the time has come when he really does have to step down. We can be hopeful it is the latter since the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) has said privately that its leaders have put out feelers to the faction of Zanu-PF which is least sympathetic to its boss to try to arrange a peaceful transfer of power.
Mr Mugabe has fiddled the result in at least two previous elections, in 2002 and 2005. But things are different this time. On previous occasions the majority of the MDC leader, Morgan Tsvangirai, was narrow and the vote-rigging required was possible to disguise or deny, at least to the extent that a good percentage of the electorate remained in a state of doubt. This time his defeat has been so thundering that vote-rigging would be seen to be blatant. The Mugabe regime can stay in power only with a heavy show of force from the army and police, whose chiefs were, as recently as Sunday evening, publicly declaring that they would not allow a victory by Mr Tsvangarai.

Opposition politicians have been canny this time in getting the results published in individual constituencies as soon as the counts were complete. It will be much harder for the Electoral Commission to cook the books in the final reckoning. The MDC has claimed, on the results declared in 128 of the country's 210 parliamentary districts, that Mr Tsvangirai has around 60 per cent of the votes, almost double what Mr Mugabe has mustered. Observers inside Zimbabwe say privately that almost 80 per cent of the result is known and that six Cabinet ministers, including several of Mr Mugabe's closest cronies, have lost their parliamentary seats.

Even Mugabe strongholds which in the past bought his rhetoric about the endless war of liberation, and his constant attacks on the British Government, have turned away from him. They clearly would have preferred it had he stepped aside last October when his Zanu-PF colleagues urged him to stand down while he was still the revered liberation hero and allow another of their gang to take over. Mr Mugabe gambled and he has lost.

The leader of neighbouring African countries must now make clear that the will of the Zimbabwean people must be upheld. The opposition must not be persuaded to go to the courts, a strategy they tried last time without success. Nor is there now a case of international mediation of the kind that Kofi Annan conducted in Kenya, where so many ballot boxes were destroyed that it was impossible to know the outcome of the poll. The vote in Zimbabwe has already been recorded locally.

The key may lie with the army chiefs whom Mr Mugabe consulted on Sunday night, fearful of their possible reaction to a defeat. They pledged their loyalty then. But now that the people have spoken so decisively they should change their minds and force the change that the voters require, if necessary initially through a government of national unity pending properly free elections. For one thing is clear, whatever happens in the days ahead, things can never go back to how they were a week ago. A turning point has been reached in Zimbabwe. And not before time.

**Zimbabwe's voters give their verdict on Robert Mugabe**

*The The Daily Telegraph*

The last time Robert Mugabe lost a vote was in 2000, when he failed to get through a draft constitution designed to fortify presidential powers.

He immediately unleashed the "war veterans" on to white-owned farms, thus beginning a process that has wrecked the economy and driven more than a third of the population into exile. Eight years on, he has suffered a much more significant defeat in parliamentary elections at the hands of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).

The electoral commission, which has been notoriously sparing with information since the poll took place five days ago, announced the MDC's two factions had won a sufficient number of seats in the House of Assembly to deprive Mr Mugabe's Zanu-PF of a majority.
On the even more contentious presidential election, the commission has remained silent, strengthening suspicions of vote-rigging. Given the outcome of the parliamentary poll, it would appear that Mr Mugabe has lost the presidency as well, or at least failed to gain enough support to preclude a second round.

Having ceded control of parliament, he will not be able to handpick his successor. If he does not exceed the 50 per cent plus one vote for an outright win in the presidential contest, he could find himself facing not only the supporters of Morgan Tsvangirai, the MDC leader, but also those of Simba Makoni, a former finance minister who stood as an independent.

Parliamentary and presidential setbacks are terrible humiliations for a man who has dominated Zimbabwe for nearly three decades. His dithering over announcing polling results suggests he has lost his nerve; compare his behaviour, for instance, with that of Mwai Kibaki, who had himself re-inaugurated as Kenya's president three days after a rigged election last December.

Perhaps Zimbabwe's octogenarian despot has finally wearied of maintaining his iron grip. It would be unwise to count on it, though, because of both his hitherto tenacious attachment to power and the urging of those within Zanu-PF who have much to lose through his political demise.

While we wait for what could be the final act to play out, it remains to congratulate the electorate for turning out despite the apparent hopelessness of the opposition case, for eschewing the violence that erupted after the Kenyan election, and for bearing with amazing fortitude the depredations wreaked on their country by Mr Mugabe over many years.

The West is keeping up its pressure on the president to step down. More important is that Zimbabwe's neighbours, in particular South Africa, finally speak out against a man who has brought the whole continent south of the Sahara into disrepute.

**EDITORIAL NO. 4**

**Anything’s possible**

*The Indian Express*

Americans,” Barack Obama said during his election campaign, “still believe in an America where anything’s possible. They just don’t think their leaders do.” It is the achievement of the 47-year-old president-elect to have convinced the rest of the world too of the possibility of that America. In a world stricken too long with exasperation with, and even anger at, the United States, Obama’s victory is a moment significant for the fascination it holds. By his very election, by his forceful bid for the most powerful job around, just by the victory, he has repaired so much. The US has been these past years a country divided, and also a country seen to have the potential to be divisive. This, for a country that’s still perceived to be the only possessor of the power, wherewithal and will to take a global lead on issues ranging from the financial crisis to counter-terrorism, and hopefully now climate change. Obama has still to fulfil his promise, but his carefully engaging campaign has righted his country’s image and drawn the confidence that he can bring, well, change.

To watch Obama conduct an inclusive campaign is to be nonetheless mindful of the identity of the next incumbent of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, DC. The election of the US’s first black president is historic. To see parts of the segregationist south vote him in, as our columnist notes, is to understand the ability of democracy to fix ugly stains in a country’s history. To see the way he’s managed it is, also, to understand the benefits of keeping the highest standards in one’s campaign. This is why Obama’s victory is significant not just for its representational value. Obama has addressed his country’s divides by engaging in depth with difficult issues. On his controversial, and now former, pastor for instance — with one of the
most remarkable speeches ever on the roots and remnants of racial hatred in otherwise good people. This is the quality of engagement Obama has brought to many contentious issues, America’s many and wayward wars, its conduct of foreign policy, its under-regulated financial system. Great leaders make their case, in part, by keeping the conversation as big as can be. If Obama has reclaimed his country’s lost authority, it is by hinting at a stamina and heart for big conversations.

Will that translate into concrete benefit? This question should be kept for later. For now, also applaud the electoral system that produced this result, that enabled a man with no influential patrons to win the confidence of a formidable political party and then his country.

A famous victory

The Hindu

Barack Obama’s runaway victory in the 2008 presidential election begins a new political era in the United States. In their historic act of sending an African-American to the White House — with an emphatic six percentage point popular vote advantage and no less than 364 electoral college votes to his white opponent’s 174 — American voters showed that they had, for the most part, put the shameful legacy of racism behind them. But the historic verdict of November 4 went far beyond race. It was simultaneously a rejection of the George W. Bush legacy — marked by two disastrous wars and a financial crisis — and an embrace of a positive message of change. Mr. Obama’s political genius lay in discovering and navigating a highly improbable path to the presidency. This he did by seizing the rarest of rare opportunities; hitting the right political note at the right time; conjuring up a credible multi-racial coalition from the grass roots; and building the most resourceful, disciplined, and Internet-enabled campaign organisation seen anywhere in recent times. A new generation of enthusiastic voters thirsting for socio-political change powered the Democratic candidate to his famous victory. They even enabled Mr. Obama to overcome the decades-long divide between Blue and Red States. He held on to all the territory won by his party in the 2000 and 2004 cycles, decisively took swing States, and flipped six from the Republican to the Democratic columns. With countrywide support of this order, the President-elect has the mandate to implement his campaign promise of a fundamental transformation of U.S. domestic and foreign policies.

True, Mr. Obama got lucky. Public opinion polls showed that the Republican and Democratic parties were roughly on a par until the point in mid-September 2008 when crisis struck the financial markets. From then on, the campaign story was largely about the economy although the candidates differentiate themselves on other issues, notably the Iraq war. John McCain tried desperately to cut his links with President George Bush but could not prevent the incumbent’s 70-plus per cent job disapproval rating from pulling him down. The Republican candidate hoped that the success of the ‘surge’ in Iraq (a course he advocated) would convince voters about his superior qualifications to handle national security. But a majority of Americans refused to change their opinion that the withdrawal proposed by Mr. Obama was the correct option. Many of them seem to have finally decided that after eight years of arrogant belligerence, which made a mockery of international law and simultaneously endangered the lives of American soldiers, it was time to project a more sensitive image of their country. The circumstances were highly congenial but it still took Mr. Obama’s political genius to pull the various elements together.

Team Obama ran a master-class in the political use of the internet and other forms of new media. Aside from ensuring that a good part of Mr. Obama’s $600-million-plus war chest came from small donors, the strategy enabled his campaign to identify volunteers through the length and breadth of the country. As a result, the Democrats outgunned the Republicans in hotly contested districts. The volunteer army also played a huge role in voter registration and door-to-door stumpng, and in turning out the vote. The difference the voter registration drive made in this election cannot be underestimated, with the bulk of minority voters and new voters identifying themselves as pro-Democrat. Not content with this, the Obama team adopted and fine-tuned the Republican-innovated technique of micro-targeting. This enabled outreach to suburbs and rural pockets not traditionally considered Democratic territory. Even where the party failed
to win these non-urban counties, it was able to build up its popular vote tally in one non-Blue State after another.

Democratic Party chairman Howard Dean may have been the instigator of the 50-State strategy but a less imaginative candidate than Mr. Obama would have lacked the boldness to implement it. This was an astute move since demographic changes over the years had put new territories into play. For instance, the migration of professionals into the Virginia counties adjacent to Washington, D.C. has changed the overall voter profile of a State that was once the centre-piece of the old Confederacy. Similarly, the increase in Hispanic populations in New Mexico, Nevada, and Colorado has helped loosen the Republican grip on the West. The Obama wave has helped his party make substantial gains in the House of Representatives and the Senate. In theory, this could make for a monolithic Obama presidency though analysts caution that a person who has not completed even one term in the Senate will have quite a job keeping potentially factious Congressional party colleagues in order.

Finally, it must not be overlooked that the incoming President has presented only broad-brush strokes of the policies he will follow in key areas, including the current financial markets crisis. The excuse for this perhaps was that in a fluid situation, Mr. Obama had to play safe and any major misstep would be politically fateful. Appointments to the key cabinet posts and the White House staff will be watched with keen interest. For now at least, the international community, which overwhelmingly voted Mr. Obama U.S. President much before the American people did, will be mightily relieved. The President-elect is, like his predecessors, a believer in American exceptionalism. However, the hope is that his unique personal history will make him understand better than his predecessors that other countries too have their special character.

Yes, he can

The Statesman

Obama’s dream fulfilled; will he fulfill America’s?

The cynic will say it took eight years of George W Bush to ensure that Americans would vote their first non-white President to office. Pollsters had said they would, but many people around the world remained sceptical until the result was confirmed on Wednesday morning. The Senator from Illinois will take charge of the world’s leading superpower from a man whose presidency was arguably the blackest in American history. No single individual since Adolf Hitler has done as much to divide the modern world as the incumbent of the Oval Office. To add to the catastrophic misadventures in the Middle East, President Bush oversaw and in the opinion of many was responsible for the economic emergency that holds the world in its grip. Senator Obama talked of change; his opponent, the vastly more experienced John McCain, represented continuity. In electing Mr Obama, Americans joined other civilized people around the world in agreeing that change was indeed needed.

The President-elect conducted a campaign that was methodically surgical, and brilliantly executed. He was unflappable; to the point of seeming occasionally emotionless especially when he met his opponent in debate. For the first time in a modern election, Mr Obama harnessed the power of the Internet to mount a multi-media battle plan that often left Senator McCain gasping. The Republicans played their part by picking a running mate who was politically flat-footed, and raised dreadful visions of what might happen should a McCain presidency face an emergency. To top it all, Senator Obama brought to the rostrum oratorical skills of the highest order; manifest through the campaign and in his thanksgiving speech in Chicago on Wednesday.

But a successful campaign does not always lead to a successful Presidency, and Mr Obama, who seems an intensely intelligent man, must realize that. While his supporters cheered, and his Vice-President elect beamed, as did members of their families, Mr Obama seemed pensive, as if he were already reflecting on the challenges ahead. Iraq seeks closure; America needs to be perceived less harshly by the world. The US
economy is in a mess and threatens to pull the world down with it. Domestically, Mr Obama has to deal with unemployment, and deliver on the welfare measures he promised. He was careful to remind his country that all this might take more than a year, indeed more than a single term. If, however, Mr Obama has planned for the next four years as well as he did for the past 21 months, there is hope.

President Obama

The Guardian

They did it. They really did it. So often cruelly caricatured by others, the American people yesterday stood in the eye of history and made an emphatic choice for change for themselves and the world. Though bombarded by a blizzard of last-minute negative advertising that should shame the Republican party, American voters held their nerve and elected Barack Obama as their new president to succeed George Bush. Elected him, what is more, by a clearer majority than one of those bitter narrow margins that marked the last two elections.

Having snatched defeat from the jaws of victory in 2000 and 2004 it felt at times fated that the Democrats would somehow complete a hat-trick of failures on election day 2008. Instead, fuelled by unprecedented financial support, the key things went right for them yesterday, from the moment just after midnight when Dixville Notch voted 15 to six for Mr Obama (the first time the early-voting New Hampshire hamlet had gone for a Democrat in 40 years), through to the early Obama success last night in the prized swing state of Pennsylvania and on into the battleground areas of middle America.

In the last two presidential elections, the American people divided down the middle, producing a both a geographical and a demographic divide that seemed increasingly set in stone. Blue Democratic America consisted of the west and the east coasts plus the upper Midwest. Red Republican America covered the swaths in between. Women, minorities, the poor and the highly educated voted Democratic. Men, white people, the rich and the religious delivered for the Republicans. In the mind of Mr Bush's strategist Karl Rove this division was the template of 21st century American politics, a base for a conservative counter-attack against 20th-century liberalism.

Rove's America was not just turned on its head yesterday. It was broken up and recast in a very different mould. One of Mr Obama's many achievements has been his refusal to accept the permanence of the blue-red divide. He has reached out across the divide to states and voters that the embattled Democratic party of the Reagan-Bush years had forgotten about, places like the South and the Rockies, voters like farmers and small business people.

With the Democrats powerfully consolidating their position in both houses of Congress yesterday, the shift was consolidated at state and district level. This marks the end of the conservative ascendancy of the past 30 years. Whether it now marks a new, sustained era of American liberalism of the sort which followed the election of 1932 must remain to be seen. What is not open to doubt is that Mr Obama's win is a milestone in America's racial and cultural evolution. It is 45 years since Martin Luther King, in the greatest of all late-20th century American speeches looked forward to the day when his children would not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character. Almost unbelievably, that dream has now become a reality in the shape of America's first African-American leader and its first black first family. It is a day many thought they would never see. It is hard to know whether to weep or shout for joy now that it has arrived - probably both - but it is a lesson to the world.

Mr Obama will take office in January amid massive unrealisable expectations and facing a daunting list of problems - the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the broken healthcare system, the spiralling federal budget and America's profligate energy regime all prominent among them. Eclipsing them all, as Mr Obama has made clear in recent days, is the challenge of rebuilding the economy and the banking system. These,
though, are issues for another day. Today is for celebration, for happiness and for reflected human glory. Savour those words: President Barack Obama, America's hope and, in no small way, ours too.

**Leading article: The pendulum has swung - and America has changed**

*The Independent*

But Barack Obama will face immense challenges in the White House

Barack Obama's victory in yesterday's presidential election is a watershed for his country. His triumph is historic not merely because he is the first African-American – indeed the first representative of any of the minorities who now account for a third of the US population – to secure the nation's highest political office. It also comes at an extraordinary confluence of turning points: political, generational and economic.

The advent of a Democratic president, supported by enlarged Democratic majorities in both chambers on Capitol Hill, signifies the end of the conservative era that began with Ronald Reagan's victory in 1980. Today, the three traditional pillars of that winning Republican philosophy – a robust approach to national security, a blind faith in the market, and conservative social views – are each to varying degrees under challenge.

The 2008 election is likely to be seen as marking the moment when the pendulum swung back towards bigger and more interventionist government, towards a focus on action to reduce America's disparities of wealth, and provide more help to the less fortunate members of society.

Hastening this process is the economic and financial crisis, caused by the bursting of the greatest credit bubble since 1929. The 2008 election thus also draws a line under the boom that began under Reagan in the mid-1980s and, barring a couple of very shallow recessions, has continued since. This time however, the US may be entering a long and deep recession, with only sluggish growth to follow. This will change the social and geopolitical landscape in which President Obama (and probably his successors) will operate.

The third change is generational. Born in 1961, Mr Obama technically belongs to the baby-boomer generation of Presidents Bill Clinton and George W Bush. But he is a man whose formative years were not the self-indulgent 1960s but the late 1970s and early 1980s. That difference is compounded by his upbringing, exceptional for a US President, indeed the leader of almost any country. The impact will be most evident in his foreign policy.

Having spent his childhood in Hawaii, on the very edge of America proper, and in Indonesia, the most populous Muslim country, Mr Obama is better placed than any US leader before him to grasp how the rest of the world sees America. Mr Bush's inability to do so was a major reason for the failure of his presidency on the world stage. Mr Obama's very background, coupled with a relative decline in US global power, means diplomacy will make a welcome return as America's preferred method of conducting foreign policy.

The tasks facing the new President are immense. The national coffers are virtually empty. Yet an economic crisis with few precedents must be confronted, two unpopular wars must be resolved. At home, much infrastructure is second rate or crumbling. The education America offers its children is falling behind that of its rivals. A healthcare system needs to be rebuilt, while social security must be shored up so it can cope with the demands of baby boomers as they retire.

Mr Obama comes to office with a fund of goodwill, at home and abroad. He may prove a disappointment, not least because expectations have been set unrealistically high. But the greatest presidents – George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and Franklin Roosevelt – were great precisely because they overcame huge challenges. Today's fraught circumstances mean Barack Obama has the chance to join their number.
America has spoken, now comes the real test

The Daily Telegraph

We have had the champagne of the campaign - now comes the hangover. As the President-elect savours the sweetness of victory this morning, he will be only too aware that he is entering into the bleakest legacy to face any incoming Commander-in-Chief since Ronald Reagan in 1980, with an economy in recession, two unfinished foreign wars, and America's standing in the world brought low by the Bush presidency. It is going to be uphill all the way. But he should first take time to offer up thanks for the rude good health of American democracy that was so dazzlingly on display in this campaign.

It is not so much the spectacular, stage-managed jamborees of the conventions or the stadium rallies of both the Obama and McCain campaigns - though the crowds they attracted put European politics to shame. Rather it is the humbling spectacle of voters standing in line for two, three or four hours to cast their vote - patient, good-natured, proudly doing their civic duty.

It is the extraordinary number of volunteers who have worked for the better part of two years to maintain their man's momentum. And it is the mind-boggling amount of cash that has been raised to keep the bandwagons rolling - hundreds of millions of dollars, most of it coming in small contributions from an army of ordinary supporters (not from dodgy donors). On this side of the Atlantic, where we frequently view our American cousins with weary condescension, we would do well to look and learn how politics can still engage, excite and inspire.

But the memories of the campaign, be they ever so uplifting, will fade swiftly enough as hard reality bears in. The new president does not have the luxury of the traditional 10-week transition before his January 20 inauguration - he has precisely 10 days to get to grips with the most pressing problem that confronts him: the financial and economic crisis. On November 15, as Adrian Michaels writes on this page, there will be an emergency Washington summit which will try to forestall a full-blown global depression. All else pales into insignificance. This is no longer President Bush's problem, it's his problem. And the slump will colour everything. A long era of great prosperity and cheap energy has not achieved what it should have in America. Specifically, its social provision - notably healthcare - and its basic infrastructure are both in trouble. This is a country where bridges collapse into rivers. Burdened as he is with the electorate's great expectations of change, the new president will have scant resources to meet them.

Overseas, the challenge is every bit as daunting. Iraq is no longer the immediate foreign policy priority. The focus has shifted to Afghanistan where General David Petraeus is finalising a "surge" strategy that he believes can replicate the success he achieved in Iraq. That remains to be seen. America and its allies must prevail in Afghanistan but history suggests it is not going to be easy. And the new president also knows that the threat posed by a nuclear-arming Iran will have to be dealt with on his watch. This will prove the severest test of all of his mettle.

Yet it must not distract him from that other piece of unfinished business, the Middle East peace process. George W Bush was fatally tardy in turning his attention to the Palestinian problem (understandably, perhaps, given September 11 and its aftermath). The president-elect must engage immediately and not allow the issue to slip off his radar. He would do well to appoint a powerful special envoy to maintain momentum in the pursuit of this great prize.

For success, there would be a giant step towards achieving the other great prize he must strive for. The United States, a force for great good in the world, has rarely been more reviled. The September 11 attacks should have been the pivotal moment when America started to win back its moral authority - but the Bush/Cheney White House unforgiveably fumbled it. The new president cannot afford to make the same mistake.
EDITORIAL NO. 5

City by the sea

*The Indian Express*

No other city in India is confronted by its own legend with as much verve and as brutal honesty as Mumbai has been. Now a bunch of individuals, of still unknown affiliation but clearly possessed of clockwork innovation, has alerted this country yet again that to strike at its cities and its commerce is to threaten the idea of India. It is easy to say after the event what the terrorists targeted: by attacking the comfort zones of South Mumbai and singling out foreign travellers, they have not been ambiguous. They have also been spectacularly successful, not just in the toll they have taken, but in the questions they have asked of the Indian Growth Story. Can India secure itself against randomly executed acts of organised terror? Can it be trusted to provide the sense of security that global business expects? Can it cope on the day after?

That last question has been asked of India, and of Mumbai, many times before. And the answer has always been emphatically affirmative. There is little reason to suspect it will not be so again. There is also the sobering thought that this time it will not be easy. The questions are too disturbing. What are the intelligence mechanisms that failed to pick up a terrorist plan with as much micro-planning as this one? What can be done so this does not recur? Because without working through this question, there can be no closure. And most importantly, because the answers to this one provide the clues to what it is that India has been confronted with: what hideous design did the terrorists have for the aftermath? To disengage Indians from the world. To undermine India’s confidence in itself, and its capacity to command confidence. To cause outrage and provoke a self-destructive recklessness.

The investigations would have begun even before the encounters in South Mumbai were over. The picture will, hopefully, soon become clear. But through all this, the challenge is to our politics. This is a defining moment. The Mumbai attack renders petty and pointless the discourse on terrorism that has thickened the electoral air. Politics has to rise to the occasion, because it is only through a saner politics that India will defeat the challenge posed to its globalised, growing potential. A saner, more engaged politics is also the only way for this country to constructively ask itself what it can do better to keep its people and its aspirations safe.

An affront to the Indian state

*The Hindu*

The multiple terrorist attacks that have left over 100 dead and several hundred injured and the prolonged standoffs between the terrorists and the security forces in Mumbai are at once a grievous tragedy and an attack on the spirit of India. In its method and scale, the shooting down of innocent people and courageous police officers in 11 different places across the city represents an affront to the Indian state of a type not seen in the recent past. Among the dead is the head of the Maharashtra police’s anti-terrorism squad, Hemant Karkare, who led his men from the front in engaging the terrorists and was shot. That military commandos and National Security Guard commandos joined in the effort of the police in countering the terrorists demonstrates the magnitude of the challenge that the desperadoes posed. The sophisticated arms that they used and the manner of the attacks point to a well-funded, well-trained group that bears the signature of the Lashkar-e-Taiba and its several variants. Unlike in the case of many of the other terror attacks where bombs were placed stealthily in crowded places, this was a fidayeen attack like the one on Parliament in 2002. The targeting of well-known landmarks and high profile places, including the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, the Taj Mahal and Trident hotels, and Nariman House, shows some foreknowledge of the place obtained by prior reconnaissance or through local collaborators.
The Hindu shares the grief and the shock of the families, Indian and foreign, whose members were killed in the dastardly attacks. The immediate task before the Maharashtra government should be to remove the sense of insecurity that has gripped the people of Mumbai on the streets, in public places, and within their homes. A greatly stepped up vigil, a visibly larger presence of the police on the ground together with the military and security forces, should go some way in restoring public confidence. The Government of India, which has been quick to rush the army and the naval commandos to help contain the situation, should come to the aid of the State in a massive way in creating a sense of security in the immediate term. Mumbai as the country’s financial and business centre has always been an obvious target for those seeking to destabilise the Indian state, and terrorists attacks have been occurring in the city with a distressing frequency in the recent past – among them the serial bombings of 1993 and the train blasts of 2006. The State’s fractious and often bitter religious politics has not helped in keeping religiously motivated terrorism in check.

To maximise international attention, the terrorists have targeted Café Leopold and Nariman House, both frequented by tourists, besides the hotels. Some reports speak of their seeking foreign nationals, mainly American and British, for hostage-taking. While some of the terrorists were killed, some have been injured and are in custody while yet others could have escaped after the shootings. The interrogation of those in custody should provide some details of the people and the organisation behind the attacks. The use of the sea route by the terrorists who could have landed on a small boat from out of a larger vessel in the high seas off the coast of Mumbai opens up the possibility of their coming in from Karachi. While the Government of Pakistan appears to be serious in putting any form of support that its Inter-Services Intelligence provided for terrorism behind and in its pursuit of improved relations with India, there are several groups in the country that go about quite openly recruiting and training people for terrorist attacks in India. Given the series of attacks within Pakistan itself, its government’s determination and ability to contain terrorist elements within is no doubt open to question. Nevertheless, Islamabad needs to be reminded once again to live up to the commitment made by President Pervez Musharraf to Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on January 6, 2004 not to “permit any territory under Pakistan’s control to be used to support terrorism in any manner.”

The political fallout of the attacks is difficult to gauge right now. The Maharashtra and central governments, which have much to answer for, will obviously come under pressure to act decisively on the terrorism front. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has spoken of using existing laws such as the National Security Act, of amending the laws to close loopholes that could be used by terrorists, and of a Federal Investigative Agency to go into terrorist crimes. The United Progressive Alliance government would do well not to lurch towards the legal route, seeking to introduce draconian provisions drawn from the repealed and discredited Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) that lend themselves to easy abuse against the innocent and would hardly deter fidayeen attacks. In any case, the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act with equally stringent provisions has obviously not served as an effective deterrent. The focus instead should be on strengthening security through surveillance of public places, screening of entry, and more policemen on the ground. The Prime Minister’s stress on preventive measures, including strengthening the police and intelligence machinery and curbing the flow of funds to suspect organisations, is welcome. Owners of public places such as hotels need also to step up their vigil and put stronger security and screening measures in place. The strengthening of the intelligence machinery with increased manpower and more sophisticated equipment, which is promised every time a terrorist attack takes place, brooks no further delay. All this will no doubt constrain an open society and involve some inconvenience and costs but it is a price that has necessarily to be paid for security in dangerous times. The long term task should of course be to avoid the bitterness of religious politics and promote harmony among different sections.

**Systemic failure**

*The Statesman*

Unprecedented, unprepared no synonyms
It is much too early to find answers to the several questions thrown up by the terrorist strikes in Mumbai but an incontrovertible conclusion is that the system of governance has crumbled. As finance minister Dr Manmohan Singh coined the term "systemic failure" as an alibi for governmental incompetence to avert the stock market scam, he enjoys no such luxury this time around. For having remained powerless to respond to the string of terrorist forays during his UPA regime ~ he couldn’t even replace his utterly inept and equally shameless home minister ~ he certainly cannot expect that the people will respond positively to the pleas and promises made during his post-Mumbai address to the nation.

Totally irrelevant now are those routine calls for unity, that contention that this is not the time to apportion blame, so on and so forth: there have been just too many outrages to permit such philosophic platitudes. Equally irrelevant is the sentimental slurp that the “spirit of Mumbai” will prevail, that the commercial capital will rise as it has done in the past: pray, what alternative do the people have but to resume the business of living? Sure there have been countless exhibitions of valour, humaneness, brotherhood over the past 72 hours, the state cannot take credit for that. It only served to expose official indifference.

Even as we salute the commitment, courage and fortitude of the personnel of the many security services, we cannot shy away from asking if the operations were as professionally slick as desired. To talk of intelligence failures is to re-state the obvious. As pointless as pointing to the familiar foreign hand. Did the Mumbai police not have its own squad of commandos trained and equipped to throw an immediate counter-punch, not await the specialists of the National Security Guard and the army and navy? What about those disaster management plans we have spoken about for so long ~ there was no evidence of the local authorities having any idea of the layout of the two hotels, or evacuation plans that had been formulated in advance. True the nature of the terrorist action was unprecedented, but that is no excuse for being unprepared. That the pressure in the water mains was insufficient for firemen to train their hoses on one of the upper floors of the iconic “original” Taj hotel, by no means a tall structure, tells a sick story in a city where skyscrapers come cheaper by the dozen.

Who is responsible for such shortcomings? Not just the professionals but mainly the politicians who have never accorded due priority to disaster-management, counter-terrorism and the nitty-gritty of national security. Undoubtedly the politicians speak a lot about terrorism, but essentially to garner the dubious political advantage that secures votes but not the life and property of the common man. Hence we continue to debate TADA/POTA etc, squabble over Islamic, Hindu and Sikh (maybe Christian too in the near future) terrorism, but only to further fragment society rather than disarm the gunmen.

Almost every indigenous terror outfit has its political godfather, the alien ones also enjoy local support. The netas do nothing to address basic problems. As a reputed Mumbaikar said on TV, some months from now votes will not be sought on the promises of good governance but on commonality of religion, community and caste. Is there a single political leader who can honestly declare that he enjoys the respect of the people at large?

That decline in political standards, tragically, translates into administrative incompetence. Does the cream of Indian youth opt for a career in public service ~ as politicians, administrators, soldiers? Therein lies part of the answer to the questions that a bleeding Mumbai throws up these days ~ but which have been asked by the hapless nation at large over the past several years.

**India's 9/11**

**The Guardian**

The attacks in Mumbai were as horrific in scale and as cold in execution as the bombings of Madrid or London. This was India's September 11. It was of a different order from other mass assaults on civilians that India has suffered ~ the attack on its parliament, the bombings of trains and crowded market places. The attackers arrived in commando boats from a mother ship: they shot up a crowded railway station and
hospital, before targeting Americans, Britons and Jews. Military-style planning had gone into an operation designed to soak the glitziest haunts of India's richest city in pools of blood.

Indians had every right to be angry yesterday, and their first reaction was to point the finger at Pakistan. The Indian prime minister, Manmohan Singh, said the attackers had "external linkages". Whoever planned this barbarous assault made the central security challenge of this century brutally clear. Weak states, or sub-state groups operating from within their territory, have become bigger security risks than strong ones, as a report sponsored by the left-leaning thinktank the Institute for Public Policy Research said yesterday. That shakes the central assumption of post-cold-war world: that nuclear deterrence is a sound basis on which the long-term security strategy of the world rests.

Whether the attackers came from Pakistan or not, the slaughter in Mumbai is likely to have immediate regional consequences. Just a month after coming to power, Pakistan's president, Asif Ali Zardari, launched a major - and to some ears risky - attempt to restart the peace process that his country and India began in 2004. He said India had "never been a threat" and described Islamic militants in Kashmir as terrorists. His words were greeted as eagerly by India as they were condemned by anonymous sources within the Pakistani army, which - after three wars and six decades of hostility - sees as fundamental the need to protect itself from India. Mr Zardari was right to attempt to pacify his eastern front to deal with the major threat facing his nation, militants operating in the tribal areas in the west. But it is not difficult to see how Islamic militants could use a major attack on India to disrupt a rapprochement between two nuclear powers - all the more so because the first two phases of elections in Kashmir appear to be passing off peacefully.

In the long run, the future for global jihadi does not look promising, as a recent report by the National Intelligence Council, the thinktank of the US intelligence community, made clear. It said that al-Qaeda's weaknesses - its unachievable objective of establishing a global Islamic caliphate, its inability to attract broad-based support, and self-destructive actions like killing fellow Muslims - might cause it to decay sooner rather than later. But that is the long view. In the short run, the task the Indian government faces is to be seen to be taking effective action against the threat, while at the same time managing the domestic backlash. There will inevitably be a reaction from Hindu fundamentalists, especially in the run-up to elections. In Mumbai, look no further than the city's uncrowned monarch, Bal Thackeray, the founder of the Shiv Sena party, and the man accused of inciting the 1992-93 communal riots.

India, naturally shaken by the slaughter of its civilians, must not allow the rapprochement with Pakistan to be derailed, for this is exactly what the militants want. The governments of India and Pakistan will need to strain every sinew to stay on the path of detente. India is currently seeking the extradition of militants from Pakistan. If Pakistan allowed militants to face justice in India it would be a major step on the path to normalisation of relations between two countries that are pointing nuclear missiles at each other. The next step would be to get rid of the nuclear arsenals. As this attack suggests, they do not help when it really matters.

A terrorist atrocity with tangled regional roots

*The Independent*

The implications of the Mumbai massacre stretch beyond India

The ghastly terror attacks in Mumbai, which have so far left more than 110 people dead and at least 300 wounded, echo previous atrocities by al-Qa'ida. The strikes on India's financial capital were multiple and synchronised, symbolic targets were chosen and witness accounts suggest the terrorists had a specific aim of killing foreigners.
But there are differences too. This does not appear to have been a suicide attack. Small bombs went off, but no spectacular blasts. This attack could just as easily have been "inspired" by al-Qa'ida, rather than directly organised by it.

Whatever the truth, it is impossible for the Indian authorities to draw any comfort. The episode has demonstrated, once again, how vulnerable India is to this kind of assault. In a televised address yesterday, the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, said the perpetrators were based "outside the country". He also promised that India would not tolerate "neighbours" that provided a haven for those who plan such attacks.

It takes no great powers of deduction to grasp that this is a reference to Pakistan. This pattern is clear. It was alleged that Pakistani militants had a role in the multiple train bombings in Mumbai in 2006, which killed more than 180 people. US intelligence agents pointed the finger at their Pakistani counterparts for facilitating the bombing of the Indian embassy in the Afghan capital, Kabul, earlier this year.

It is impossible to be sure who is responsible at this stage but, if there does turn out to be a Pakistani connection, it will underline the imperative for the international community to prevent that state exporting militant violence. President Asif Zardari's administration in Islamabad seems sincere in its determination to crush the militants in its lawless western territories. But a big question mark hangs over whether his government has the ability to purge the powerful Pakistani intelligence service of its extremist elements.

It has been suggested that this attack might have been designed as an early test by Islamist militants for the incoming US president, Barack Obama. Whether this was the case or not, the killings in Mumbai certainly emphasise the scale of the challenge facing the new American administration of restoring stability in southern Asia. The President-elect has promised to make Afghanistan his new foreign policy priority. But without stability in neighbouring Pakistan, where the Taliban finds support and shelter, it is hard to see how progress can be made.

There is another challenge laid down by this attack. Trading on the Indian stock market was suspended yesterday. That is not the kind of shock the global financial markets need in their present traumatised state. Indian investors are likely to weather the storm. Mumbai has been through terror attacks before. But there is a danger that outside investors will be scared off, particularly as foreigners seem to have been a specific target of Wednesday's terror attack.

Much will depend, in the immediate term, on the success of the Indian government in restoring order and disrupting cells of militants. The Congress Party, already criticised for failing to get a grip on the insurgent threat, will be desperate to show it is making progress by next year's general election. But in the larger scheme of things, the lesson of this atrocity would seem to be that the world cannot expect to eliminate the scourge of terrorism until it gets to the roots of the problem – and that means helping to pull Pakistan back from the brink of extremism.

**We must stand shoulder to shoulder with India**

*The Daily Telegraph*

The attack by Islamist terrorists on Mumbai was the eighth such outrage in India since May, but by far the most sophisticated and bloody. In targeting two of the city's best-known international hotels and seeking out American and British passport holders to take hostage, the perpetrators ensured the global media coverage they deem so vital to their malign ambitions. Early assumptions that this elaborate, co-ordinated attack was the work of al-Qa'eda may have to be revised. The terrorists were Hindi speakers and there is a growing suspicion that this was a home-grown operation, for all Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's wishful assertions that the attackers were "based outside the country".
Trying to assess the motives of such extremists is somewhat futile. Driven by paranoia and a highly developed sense of victimhood, who knows what feeds their warped world view? What is not in doubt is the threat to stability they pose to the world's largest democracy. There are 200 million Muslims living in India, the biggest Muslim population of any country in the world, and if these attacks were designed (such is the perversity of the terrorist mind) to create an anti-Muslim backlash, the outcome could be horrific – India's history tells us that.

For once, the finger of suspicion is not pointing at Pakistan, whose intelligence services have in the past been suspected of sponsoring terrorist activity in India because of tensions over Kashmir. Relations between the two countries have warmed of late, and this week Pakistan's new president, Asif Ali Zardari, signalled he was ready to end the half-century-old dispute over the contested region. For jihadists, India's strong support of President Hamid Karzai's Western-backed regime in Afghanistan is an obvious provocation. So is India's blossoming friendship with America – the two countries signed an important nuclear co-operation agreement this year. And given that the attack struck at India's business powerhouse, it can also be seen as an attempt to destabilise one of the world's fastest growing economies.

Yet grievances, real or imagined, are not the point when confronted by atrocities of this kind. What matters is the response. The evil that was on display in Mumbai is the same evil that brought bloodshed to the streets of London on July 7, 2005, that is being challenged by British soldiers in Helmand Province and by American drones in the badlands of the north-western Waziristan tribal region of Pakistan. This is not a battle that will ever be resolved through diplomacy or negotiation, but only through force of arms. Islamist terrorists, wherever they are, must be hunted down. India's fight is our fight.