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## MUSHARRAF'S FUTURE: SHOCKS OR ROCKS?

City based conflict resolution expert had predicted bids on Pak President's life. His forecast for Musharraf in 2004

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*And better skilled in dark events to come:* Homer. That's what President General Musharraf would have been had he listened to 43-year-old Sundeep Waslekar, head of the Strategic Foresight Group, a think-tank based in Mumbai, when he predicted an assassination attempt on the Pakistani President's life a year ago. At that time, very few took him seriously. However the two recent bids on the life of the General has ensured that India's most sought-after conflict resolution expert is having his last laugh.

Musharraf, in fact, forms a large part of Waslekar's recently published research paper *The Future of Pakistan*. Sitting in his plush office at Versova, Waslekar explains his findings. "It is based on a mixture of scientific methodology and insider information. We have established contacts across the border for the past 10 years and we have learnt the technique of reading between the lines," he says.

With the global war on terrorism gaining momentum, Waslekar feels that anticipating the future has never been so critical. And now, with the new year approaching, and Musharraf making wide-ranging changes in the top army brass, Waslekar foretells the future of Pakistan's President in 2004-2005.

● *Danger from colleagues:* The countdown has begun. There would be more attacks on Musharraf. There are 15 corps commanders in the Pakistani army, below whom there are 25 lieutenant generals and around 100 major generals. If any

border problems with Afghanistan. And he is positive now due to internal problems. In fact, Kazi Husain Ahmed, head of the Jamat-e-Islami, had warned trouble for him after Eid, after which he announced ceasefire with India.

● *War with India:* Risk of war arises only after 2005.

● *Economic ties with India:* The General will sanction normalisation in economic areas and also push for a free trade regime in South Asia. He would support more commercial interaction,

but will also ask for a dialogue on Kashmir as the focus.

● *Pressure from United States:* The pressure is on only over nuclear transfer to Iran. The US will not pressurize him with regard to his supporting terrorist organisations like the Lashkar-e-Toiba and Taliban operatives.

### GENERAL MUSINGS

of them decide that Musharraf is a liability, and sense this perception is being shared by the masses, it is quite likely that he would be ousted by 2005 in a coup. If it happens next year, then Mohammed Yusuf Khan will be his successor.

● *Will not step down as a army chief:* Musharraf will not step down in 2004. He has never followed up on these announcements in the past. The army chief is the most powerful post there. In fact, no one will even discuss it since the raging conflict between the pro-US and pro-jehadi factions of the Pakistan army will take centre-stage.

● *Indo-Pak peacemaker?:* Musharraf initiates peace moves only when he is in trouble. He responded earlier this year because of his



Sundeep Waslekar



Pervez Musharraf

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### Bottomline by Neelabh

