

# TO ARMS

FAREWELL



**He calls himself a catalyst in resolving conflicts. Sundeep Waslekar who develops innovative approaches to achieve global peace tells Smita Deshmukh that dialogue is very important in this age of war and terror**

"There are 15 corps commanders in the Pakistani army, below whom there are 25 lieutenant generals and around 100 major generals. If anyone of them decide that Musharraf is a liability and sense this perception being shared by the masses, it is quite likely that he would be ousted in late 2002 or early 2003. However, his successor would make no difference to Pakistan's security policy," he remarks confidently.

Times News Network

He's perhaps the most sought-after expert voice on Pakistan — from the PMO to the home ministry, the US Embassy and even in the media. However, given a choice, Sundeep Waslekar, India's leading conflict resolution expert, would prefer to engage in research work at his beachside apartment in Versova, Mumbai.

The founder of the International Centre for Peace Initiatives (ICPI) 12 years ago, which aims to develop innovative approaches to achieve peace globally, 42-year-old Waslekar is now in the news for his research paper *The Future of Pakistan*. It's not only crucial for India in terms of understanding the political, social and economic aspects of the neighbour, but is a perfect example of scientific methodology used to predict the future.

Widely travelled in Pakistan, Waslekar knows the rank and file in the country and has, in the past, brought out a joint paper on Kashmir with the Institute of Regional Studies across the border. "My staff has also travelled there in the last one year and collected records, which are all official. So, there is no question of anyone questioning us," he smiles.

The Oxford-educated Waslekar is also the author of *Dharmaraja*, a book dealing with good governance. Specialising in economics, politics and philosophy, he dubs himself as a catalyst in resolving conflicts. His *mantra*: Conflict management can be done by taking cue from the Indian classics like *Mahabharata*. "Dialogue is very important in this age of war and global terror. It leads to better understanding of the issue and then leads the path for resolution," he adds.

The ICPI report predicts

the virtual collapse of Pakistan somewhere in 2005-06. Will it actually happen?

"I hope all our predictions are proved wrong. But, the present economic conditions, high unemployment rate, *Jehadi* culture and above all, the heavy dependence on external aid, point towards a total collapse," he states.

Shuttling between Mumbai, Delhi, Islamabad and Washington, Waslekar, however maintains a strict balance between home and work. "I never work over the weekends. Also, at the slightest opportunity, I like to go to the mountains or the seaside for a break. Nature helps to contemplate, to reflect. Also, it makes one humble. You realise how powerful the higher forces are and the greatest of human effort would still be like a drop in the ocean."

The analyst also loves visiting historic places. "Two of my favourite places are the palaces in Rajasthan and Skansen, a historical village in Sweden. The Rajasthan forts show how rich India was a few centuries ago and how much we have lost. On the other hand, Skansen shows how poor parts of Europe were 300 years ago and how much they have gained," he says.

But, when it comes to Indo-Pak relations, there's only a slim chance of building trust with the neighbour, feels Waslekar. So what is the future of Pakistan? "Either it can turn into a progressive Islamic state, or continue with a strong battle internally between the fundamentalists and the liberals. There is also a possibility of the military takeover, which would then plan a war against India or a Taliban-like state."

However, his assessment on the future of Pakistan President General Musharraf is what makes for interesting reading.