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**TV THOUGHTS: MUSIC AMID INSECURITY ON INDEPENDENCE DAY:  
AIWAN-E-SADR SAY; ASLAM JINNAH'S HARDSHIPS**

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The Independence Day of the country was the principal theme on the TV channels in the country, and also a prominent one on foreign channels like the BBC. It was the sixty factor that appeared to have made all the difference.

And one of the questions that was being discussed by a host of new and familiar faces on the TV channels was regarding the state of Pakistan today.

A major dimension of the discussion was whether security fears had dampened the celebrations for the day Pakistan came into being in 1947. And if so, to what extent was there insecurity in the country, in the capital and principal cities in particular?

Said one report that " the fear of terrorist attacks marred nation-wide Independence Day celebrations forcing President General Pervez Musharraf, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and other top government functionaries to organise official functions inside closed doors."

"Even the traditional main flag hoisting ceremony, performed by Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, was confined to the heavily guarded Convention Centre of the federal capital and President General Pervez Musharraf hosted official functions, first at Artillery Mess, Rawalpindi and the second at Aiwan-e-Sadr Islamabad."

All the TV channels which had been celebrating the Independence Day theme since the first of this month brought their programmes to a climax with serious, thought provoking current affairs themes, emphasising the freedom factor, and the participants, including politicians, reviewed the state of the nation. There was courage and candour in several of the panel discussions and ranging from the joy of freedom to the disappointment with the way in which the country had fared, were evident in the content of the shows.

There was more than normal pressure on TV viewers to watch TV channels on the 14th of August, and it was so obvious that even with the TV commercials Independence Day was a subject that was used for commercial good to the fullest. And as always music was apparently the best way for promoting and projecting the Independence Day, yet another

time. And it needs to be said again that keeping pace with the impressive variety of programmes of the special day, as well as the normal flow of news and current affairs that go with our unusual times is more than an uphill task.

There is a general feeling that there will be more news in the country after the Independence Day, as major decisions are expected, particularly from the judicial world. We will have to be that much more tuned into the media, to say the least Even this week, there is so much to say, and which I have been unable to dwell upon.

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#### CHIEF JUSTICE LAYS FOUNDATION STONE:

The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, Mr Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry, was in the news on the TV channels on Independence Day when he addressed the audience on the foundation stone laying ceremony of the phase two of the Supreme Court building. He emphasised that the "recent struggle of the legal fraternity which was duly participated in by the civil society, reaffirms our commitment to the Constitution of Pakistan."

The Chief Justice also said: "It has served to give us strength and made everyone realise that all actions taken in the higher echelons of power will be subject to the supreme law of the land. People have expectations of the judiciary; so the judiciary has to strive to meet these expectations".

Referring to the Independence Day he told the audience that "on this auspicious day let's re affirm the task of nation building that is entrusted to us as members of the judicial system, as the final arbiter of the law and the Constitution."

Media reports also indicated that the Chief Justice also denied that he had met Lieutenant General Hamid Javed (Retired), chief of staff to President General Pervez Musharraf as reported in a section of the press. He told reporters that "you should ask the person whom he (Hamid Javed) met. He told reporters who kept repeating the question that "I have not met anybody".

Online reported that the Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry did not attend the flag hoisting ceremony at the Convention Centre in the morning on Independence Day. It was further said that he did not attend the Independence Day celebrations at the President House on Monday night where he was invited with his wife.

A news report said that the Chief Justice, after his reinstatement, has decided that he will not meet or socialise with government officials, and would not attend any official engagements.

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## THE EMERGENCY THEME:

We talked about the night there came the news of the emergency that was likely to be declared in the country. That didn't happen. The TV channels (Ary One World) reported that Foreign Minister Khursheed Mahmood Kasuri had said that the phone call from US Foreign Secretary Condoleeza Rice to President General Musharraf had stopped the emergency from being declared in the country.

The Foreign Ministry a day later denied that the statement attributed to him by the ARY One World about Condoleeza Rice and the emergency being imposed. She did phone call and the subject was the Pak-Afghan Peace Jirga in Kabul. The emergency issue also came up during the conversation.

And Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz "doesn't rule out the imposition of the emergency, which he said is declared after the prime minister has given this advice. He said that he gave no such advice". The Prime Minister said that there were suggestions given to impose the emergency on the basis of poor law and order, but there were no plans to do that at this point in time. The situation is under constant review, he added.

AIWAN-E-SADR SAY On the eve of the 60th Independence Day of Pakistan, there was a special interview of President General Pervez Musharraf that was telecast live ( Aaj TV ) from the President's House. A young lady acted as the compere and there was an invited gathering of well known people from different professions and background who asked questions, to which the President responded with his familiar confidence and fluency.

While he stated that elections would bring political stability to Pakistan, he agreed that the case of the reference against the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court had brought about a fall in his popularity.

To another question, the President said that the media in the United States is as free as it is in Pakistan. He said, "Let them speak. I am fully confident and very sure that there will be no action from across the border. If there is an action it will be conducted by the Pakistani forces and we will do it ourselves ". The President's interview was discussed by other TV channels in the country later on.

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**US ACTION INSIDE PAKISTAN:** The subject of US military action inside Pakistan if there is actionable intelligence that high ranking members of the al Qaeda can be captured or killed continues to be mentioned or discussed on various channels, with responses from the Pakistan government and the people.

The results of a poll carried out by the Opinion Research Corporation and released by the CNN (according to a report on the Angus Reid Global Monitor) have figured prominently on the channels, and in the print media also.

The findings of this survey indicate that two in five adults in the US believe that their armed forces should enter Pakistan. Under specific circumstances; - that 42 percent of respondents think that the US should take military action in Pakistan if there is a chance to capture or kill high ranking al Qaeda members; even without the consent of the Pakistan government;

-- 52 percent of the respondents disagreed with the plan when they were asked whether the US should or should not take military action in Pakistan if there is a chance to kill or capture al Qaeda leadership in Pakistan, even if the government of Pakistan refuses permission to do so.

It may be kept in mind that the "US authorities and intelligence believe that the Afghan-Pakistan border where there is little state authority, remains a safe haven for terrorists to train and regroup.

It also needs to be mentioned here that President George W. Bush has said that the United States fully respects Pakistan's sovereignty. A report quoted him as saying that " that such statements about action inside Pakistan by the US armed forces did not serve the interests of either country."

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**BLACK DAY IN TRIBAL AREAS:** As a contrast to the outpouring of emotion (even undisciplined and rowdy) on the streets of the country, the Independence Day was marked a "black day" by tribesmen in the tribal areas.

This was to protest against the stepped presence of military forces in "the region near the Pakistan-Afghan border". This was one of the many stories that the news channels carried on the Independence Day, for which there were special programmes and extended transmissions too.

Demanding the army pull out from the tribal areas, there were reportedly no Independence Day celebrations in Swat due to security fears. One thought of the times when Swat was a major tourist attraction in the country. I am told that the roads in that beautiful part of Pakistan have not been built or maintained for the last two decades almost.

Reports have indicated that "Many tribesmen in Khyber Agency and 25 disputed villages adjacent to the Mohmand Agency observed the Independence Day by hoisting black flags on their homes. There were similar reports from South Waziristan, North Waziristan and Bajaur agencies. There were other details also that reflected the tense conflict ridden mood of that part of the country.

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**ASLAM JINNAH'S HARDSHIPS:** Once again TV viewers saw Aslam Jinnah, a relative (grand nephew?) of the Father of the Nation Quaide Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah talking about his misfortunes and his financial problems on Independence Day. This was on the Aaj TV and it made one reflect on the sorrows of such people who have remained steadfast.

According to the report, Aslam Jinnah's wife and daughter have serious medical problems (one of them has cancer if I remember right), and he has no job... he lives in a rented house and he is paid Rs 20000 every month by the government which is insufficient to meet his needs. Every year on national days like Pakistan Day and the Quaid's birthday he is sent official transport to enable him and his family to visit the Mazar of the Father of the Nation.

The television report showed footage of Aslam Jinnah and his family in his modest abode and it was said that he had been promised help by the Sindh Government last year and that nothing had materialised so far.

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