

Move for seeking US envoy on Kashmir scuttled

Dawn, 1 February 2009

ISLAMABAD, Jan 31: The Foreign Office and a federal minister have scuttled a move for adoption of a resolution in the National Assembly asking US President Barack Obama to appoint an envoy on Kashmir or include the settlement of the dispute in the mandate of the US envoy on Afghanistan and Pakistan. A top official of the Foreign Office blocked the move by setting aside a joint resolution approved by members from both the sides of the aisle, and came out with another version, excluding the call for sending a US envoy on Kashmir

FBI wants to question Ansari

Hindu, 2 February 2009

New Delhi: The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has made a request to interrogate two militants arrested by the Uttar Pradesh police and questioned by the Mumbai police in connection with the 26/11 terror strikes. The FBI made the request through proper channels for questioning Fahim Arshad Ansari and Sabbuddin of the banned Lashkar-e-Taiba, who were taken to Mumbai in December last as a follow-up to the probe into the 26/11 attacks, official sources said

Pakistan key to fixing Afghan problem: UK military chief

Daily Times, 2 February 2009

LONDON: Peace will only come to Afghanistan if Pakistan can sort out the Taliban on its side of the border, where US strikes are not helping, the head of Britain's armed forces told The Sunday Times newspaper. Air Chief Marshal Sir Jock Stirrup said only politics, long term, could bring peace on both sides of the frontier. The chief of the defence staff said weaknesses in Afghan President Hamid Karzai's government "worries me considerably".

Predator strikes unhelpful: UK military chief

News, 2 February 2009

LONDON: Peace will only come to Afghanistan if Pakistan can sort out the militants on its side of the border, where the US strikes are not helping, the head of Britain's armed forces told The Sunday Times newspaper. Air Chief Marshal Sir Jock Stirrup said only long term politics could bring peace on both sides of the frontier. The chief of the defence staff said that weaknesses in Afghan President Hamid Karzai's government were causing difficulties for the 8,300 British troops battling Taliban in the troubled south of the country. "The weakness of governance in Afghanistan worries me considerably," Stirrup told the weekly broadsheet

Zardari seeks more US aid to fight terror

News, 3 February 2009

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday stressed the need for financial support from the United States and said that the war against terrorism could not be won without the financial support of the US. The president was speaking at a luncheon meeting hosted by him for a US congressional delegation at the Presidency. The delegation members discussed bilateral relations and the regional situation with the president. The delegation comprised Representatives John F Tierney, George Miller, Chris Van Hollen, Chris Welch, Christopher Murphy and Ron Kind. Minister of

State for Foreign Affairs Nawabzada Malik Amad Khan, Adviser to the PM on Interior Rehman Malik, Finance Adviser Shaukat Tarin and US Ambassador to Pakistan Anne W Patterson were also present in the meeting

Obama orders additional troops for Afghanistan

Dawn, 3 February 2009

WASHINGTON, Feb 2: US President Barack Obama on Monday ordered three more brigade combat teams for Afghanistan. The decision was announced after a meeting of America's three most powerful men — President Barack Obama, Vice President Joe Biden and Defence Secretary Robert Gates — met at the White House earlier on Monday. The three reviewed a new strategy for dealing with the insurgency in Afghanistan and Fata

Nato supplies cut as bridge blown up in Khyber

News, 4 February 2009

BARA: Supplies to the Nato troops in Afghanistan were halted temporarily when militants blew up a 110-year-old bridge on the Pak-Afghan Highway in Katakashta area of the Khyber Agency in the wee hours of Tuesday. Sources said explosives were planted beneath the bridge that went off early in the day, damaging the bridge partially. However, the structure collapsed later in the day when the driver of a cement-laden truck tried to cross it, the sources added

Taliban torch 10 NATO supply trucks

Daily Times, 5 February 2009

JAMRUD/LANDIKOTAL: Army engineers on Wednesday built a temporary alternate route for traffic, including NATO trucks bound for Afghanistan – a day after the Taliban blew up a key bridge in Khyber Agency – as suspected Taliban torched 10 containers they thought were loaded with NATO supplies near Landikotal. According to an ISPR statement, the army engineers also continued repairing the bridge destroyed by the Taliban in Khyber Agency's Ali Masjid area

US offers to assist in manning sea borders

Daily Star, 9 February 2009

The US will assist Bangladesh in protecting its mineral-rich sea areas in the Bay of Bengal, US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Richard A Boucher said yesterday. But Boucher said the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (Tifa) provides some basics and principles for further discussions to see what further steps could be taken to improve bilateral trade and investment. "Truly, it is not an issue for us right now; surely not an issue for Bangladesh," he said at a news briefing at the Zia International Airport, wrapping up his two-day official visit to Bangladesh

Obama puts brake on troops surge in Afghanistan

News, 9 February 2009

WASHINGTON: United States President Barack Obama has demanded that the US defence chiefs review their strategy in Afghanistan before going ahead with a troop surge. There is concern among senior Democrats that the US military is preparing to send up to 30,000 extra troops without a coherent plan or exit strategy. The Pentagon was set to announce the deployment of 17,000 extra soldiers and marines last week

but Robert Gates, the US defence secretary, postponed the decision after questions from Obama. The US president was concerned by a lack of strategy at his first meeting with Gates and the US joint chiefs of staff last month in "the tank", the secure conference room in the Pentagon. He said: "What's the endgame?" and did not receive a convincing answer

Afghanistan will be 'much tougher' than Iraq: Holbrooke
News, 9 February 2009

MUNICH: The United States warned its allies on Sunday that fighting the insurgency in Afghanistan could prove tougher than in Iraq and appealed, along with Britain, for more troops and equipment. US Ambassador Richard Holbrooke insisted that a new approach was required to turn the strife-torn country around, involving all of Afghanistan's neighbours and in particular Pakistan. "It is like no other problem we have confronted, and in my view it's going to be much tougher than Iraq," he said at an international security conference in Germany. "It is going to be a long, difficult struggle."

Editorial: Holbrooke lands in troubled waters
Daily Times, 10 February 2009

Richard Holbrooke, US President Barack Obama's special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, arrived yesterday in Pakistan for a 4-day official visit. The duration of the visit is significant, as also the fact that Mr Holbrooke has chosen to kick off his itinerary with Pakistan before visiting India and Afghanistan. Not just geographically but, it seems, also geopolitically, Pakistan lies at the centre of the special envoy's brief. This can both be positive and negative depending on how the game is played by all the actors in the days and months ahead

US drones fly from base in Pakistan?
Daily Times, 14 February 2009

WASHINGTON: CIA's unmanned Predator aircraft striking terrorist targets in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas are flown from an airbase inside Pakistan, a senior US lawmaker said on Thursday. The disclosure by Senator Dianne Feinstein, chairwoman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, marked the first time a US official had publicly commented on where the Predator aircraft patrolling Pakistan take off and land

Pakistan must allay Indian fears: US spy chief
News, 14 February 2009

WASHINGTON: Pakistan holds the key to defusing tensions with nuclear rival India by executing a serious clampdown on Islamic militants, US Director of National Intelligence Dennis Blair said on Thursday. Without such action from Islamabad, President Barack Obama's new chief of intelligence told Congress, New Delhi could feel compelled to ignite a wider conflict in a region already fraught with security risks. The best efforts of Indian and Pakistani leaders to improve relations "could unravel unless Islamabad takes sustained, concrete, meaningful steps to allay Indian concerns about Islamabad's support to anti-Indian militant groups."

Drone mows down 28 in S. Waziristan

Dawn, 15 February 2009

WANA, Feb 14: Two missile strikes on a site suspected to be housing militants loyal to Baitullah Mehsud killed 28 people and injured 15 others in Ladha sub-division of South Waziristan on Saturday. Official and local sources said that a missile strike by drones flattened a 'hujra' (guest house) of Roshan Mehsud, an associate of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan chief Baitullah Mehsud, in Showngai Naserkhel area. The compound was situated in an isolated area. Residents said that three unmanned aerial vehicles were hovering over the area when two loud explosions were heard at about 8.30am. This is the third and the deadliest drone strike in the tribal region near the Afghan border since US President Barack Obama assumed power on Jan 20.

Afghanistan will take part in US strategic review

Daily Times, 16 February 2009

KABUL: The Afghan government will take part in a US strategic review of the war in Afghanistan, President Hamid Karzai said on Sunday in a sign of increased cooperation at a time of strained relations. Karzai recently sent President Barack Obama a letter with a proposal that Afghanistan join the war review currently underway. The US special envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan, Richard Holbrooke, said at a joint news conference that Obama had "welcomed the suggestion". Karzai and Holbrooke held talks on Saturday. Karzai said his foreign minister, Dadfar Rangin Spanta, would head the Afghan delegation scheduled to leave for Washington next month. agencies.

Pakistani bases not being used for drone attacks: Qureshi

News, 16 February 2009

MULTAN: Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi said on Sunday that Pakistani bases were not being used for drone attacks. Talking to media persons at the airport before his departure for the federal capital late on Sunday night, he said drone attacks were affecting Pakistan's sovereignty and made it clear that they did not fly from Pakistan. He said Pakistan has always condemned the drone attacks, adding that, neither "we have allowed it nor there exists any understanding". Qureshi said Pakistan took up the issue of drone attacks with the Special US envoy to Pakistan and Afghanistan, Richard Holbrooke, during his recent visit. The minister said he honestly conveyed the sentiments of the people of Pakistan and parliament to the envoy on the drone issue and its negative impact. He said that drone attacks were causing collateral damage and proving counter productive. He said that these attacks were also causing loss of lives of innocent people

Taliban safe havens in Pakistan expanding: US

News, 20 February 2009

WASHINGTON: US Special Representative to Pakistan and Afghanistan Richard Holbrooke said on Wednesday those who were involved in the 9/11 incident and the Mumbai attacks, and the people who seized Swat all come from the same roots and all are located in the same area. Talking to an American TV after a five-hour-long meeting of the committee set up by US President Barack Obama to review US policy on Pakistan and Afghanistan, Holbrooke said the Taliban are resurgent. They have an increasingly large sanctuary in Pakistan and the events in Swat only highlight that.

Editorial: US-Pak perceptions of anti-terror war should not differ

Daily Times, 21 February 2009

The US special envoy to Pakistan and Afghanistan, Mr Richard Holbrooke, has told a meeting in Washington that the "militants involved in 9/11, the Mumbai attacks and unrest in Swat have common roots" and that "the US was troubled and confused about the development in the Swat valley". Some other reports appearing in the press on

Friday implied that Mr Holbrooke was “not sure if the Pakistan military and the ISI backed President Zardari’s commitment to eradicate terrorist sanctuaries from the NWFP”.