

Dawn, 1 April 2008

Cabinet takes up judges' issue, FCR

ISLAMABAD, March 31: The federal cabinet, in its first meeting held immediately after its swearing-in on Monday, decided to form two committees to prepare recommendations for reinstatement of judges and repeal of the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR). The meeting was presided over by Prime Minister Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani. Briefing newsmen at the Prime Minister's Secretariat after the meeting, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Sherry Rahman said the two committees would be headed by the minister for law and justice and its members would be nominated by the heads of coalition parties

Dawn, 1 April 2008

Cheerless president swears in cabinet

ISLAMABAD, March 31: President Pervez Musharraf administered oath of office to 24 ministers of the federal cabinet on Monday in a seven-minute ceremony which appeared to be dull and dreary. The nine PML-N nominees in the cabinet came to the ceremony wearing black armbands and the sight made the president stiff

Dawn, 1 April 2008

Hoti only candidate for CM's post in NWFP

PESHAWAR, March 31: Amir Haider Khan Hoti of the Awami National Party emerged on Monday as the only candidate for the post of chief minister of the NWFP and he will be declared elected unopposed on Tuesday. The ANP had shared power with JUI-F in 1973 and with the PML-N in 1993, but it will be leading a coalition government in the province for the first time

Dawn, 1 April 2008

US ready to discuss Fata policy with govt

WASHINGTON, March 31: US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has reiterated her offer to discuss with the new Pakistani rulers their decision to engage the militants in the tribal areas. As is appropriate, we will now begin working with that government on the whole host of issues that are there in the US-Pakistani relationship, said Ms Rice when asked if she thought it was a good idea to hold talks with the militants. That includes, by the way, both issues concerning terrorism, which threatens Pakistanis, we've seen it threaten Pakistanis, we've seen it result in the assassination of Ms Bhutto, she told reporters on Sunday

Daily Times, 1 April 2008

Wazirs say Shariah only acceptable alternative to FCR

PESHAWAR: Ahmedzai Wazir tribes in South Waziristan opposed Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gillani's statement on Saturday that the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) in FATA will be removed, and a tribal elder said on Monday that the only acceptable alternative to the FCR, was the implementation of Shariah law

Daily Times, 1 April 2008

Editorial: Taliban conditions for talks

Welcoming the offer of negotiations by Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gillani, representatives of Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in Bajaur "shown brandishing lethal weapons on the TV channels " have told Islamabad what it has to do if it wants no trouble from them. TTP leaders, including Maulvi Faqir Muhammad, Maulvi Sher Bahadar, Dr Muhammad Ismail, and party spokesman Maulvi Omar, said they were ready for talks with the government if Pakistan were 'to give up its pro-US stance first' (Some newspapers reported it as 'sever ties with the US')

News, 2 April 2008

Hoti sworn in as NWFP chief minister

PESHAWAR: Slogans eulogising late freedom-fighter Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and describing NWFP as Pukhtunkhwa were raised for the first time at the Governor's House here on Tuesday as excited ANP invitees to the largely attended ceremony vociferously celebrated Chief Minister Amir Haider Khan Hoti's oath-taking. NWFP Governor Owais Ahmad Ghani administered oath to the 37-year-old Hoti, great grandson of Ghaffar Khan, reverentially referred to by his followers as Bacha Khan, and nephew of ANP President Asfandyar Wali Khan.

Daily Times, 2 April 2008

Force 'last option' against militants, says NWFP CM

PESHAWAR: Authorities should only use force as a last resort against militants near the Afghan border, newly elected NWFP Chief Minister Ameer Haider Khan Hoti said on Tuesday. Addressing the provincial assembly after being confirmed for the chief minister slot by Speaker Karamatullah Chagharmati, he said the use of force in the past made it harder to bring peace to the province. He said his government would, instead, promote dialogue at all levels. "We'll make every effort to restore peace in the province. We'll form traditional jirgas for peace" he said

Daily Times, 2 April 2008

Editorial: 100 days of economic challenges

The State Bank has cut its growth forecast from 7.2 percent of the GDP to 6.6 percent for the current fiscal year ending in June, and is worried about the rising annual budget deficit which is threatening to hit 6 per cent, far above the targeted 4 percent. The services sector - mostly on the consumer side - has performed well but agriculture and manufacture have slumped. In the next hundred days, the coalition government in Islamabad will be hard put to straighten out the problems faced by the people as a result of an economy which threatens to falter further

News, 3 April 2008

COAS briefs PM, coalition leaders on anti-terror policy

ISLAMABAD: In a rare but highly welcome gesture, Chief of the Army Staff General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani on Wednesday gave a detailed briefing on security issues, including the war on terror and the situation in the tribal areas, to Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani, the heads of the allied parties of the ruling coalition and key members of the cabinet at the PM House

News, 3 April 2008

PPP, MQM decide to forgive and forget

KARACHI: The PPP and MQM leaders announced that they were willing to forgive and forget the ill-will of the past and start anew to foster peace and democracy in Sindh and Pakistan. In a stirring address outside MQM headquarters Nine-Zero, Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari, after being accorded a rousing welcome earlier, promised a brighter future for the coming generations of the province and the nation. Prior to Zardari's speech, Altaf Hussain, in his address, said that the two parties had started a new journey together

News, 3 April 2008

Editorial: On the frontline

The new chief minister of NWFP, Amir Haider Hoti, has laid out his vision for the future of his province in his maiden address to the 115-member provincial assembly, which elected him unopposed. This vision is in many ways significant for Pakistan as a whole, given that events in NWFP and its tribal areas are intricately linked to internal security and to foreign policy including relations with the US. Hoti's opening message was an immensely positive one. He emphasized the need for peace, but not at the cost of the destruction of human lives and property. Importantly, he also spoke of the desire of people for an end to the unending cycle of violence that has introduced a culture of suicide bombings and death to the province

Daily Times, 3 April 2008

Editorial: The MQM factor and the PPP

There is talk on the TV channels about a planned visit by the PPP leader Mr Asif Ali Zardari to the Nine Zero headquarters of the MQM in Karachi. It is said that he also talked to the MQM leader-in-exile Mr Altaf Hussain on the phone to make sure that his party is ready to join the Sindh government. In parallel, there is talk also of the federal coalition being expanded by including four to five MQM ministers into the cabinet already announced. And the good news also is that the PMLN leader Mr Nawaz Sharif has given his assent to the inclusion of the MQM in the federal coalition

News, 4 April 2008

Zardari links judges restoration to reforms package

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan People's Party Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari said on Thursday that the PPP was committed to reinstate the deposed judges in accordance with the Murree Declaration. He said that the reinstatement would be linked to a package of reforms to ensure the independence of the judiciary and to stop future adventurers from manipulating it to perpetuate themselves in power. He was addressing a joint meeting of the Central Executive Committee and the Federal Council of the PPP at the Naudero House in Larkana on Thursday, said a press release

News, 4 April 2008

Nato seeks deeper ties with Pakistan

BUCHAREST: Nato leaders said at a summit here on Thursday they wanted to deepen ties with Pakistan and strive to boost security along its border with Afghanistan

Dawn, 4 April 2008

What's minimum deterrence? (Ayesha Siddiq)

IN one of his first speeches after taking oath, the new prime minister affirmed his faith in Pakistan's minimum deterrence. However, can Yusuf Raza Gilani explain the concept to the simple people of Pakistan? For ages it was explained as the capability to defend ourselves. This was done even at the times of Operations Gibraltar and Kargil or when new weapons were purchased despite the fact that we have never really won a war

Daily Times, 5 April 2008

Editorial: NATO, Afghanistan and Pakistan

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the 26-member military alliance, meeting in Bucharest, Romania, has stated its policy on Afghanistan, which should also alert Pakistan to developments in its neighbourhood in the days to come. Despite lack of agreement on NATO expansion into the Balkans, the level of agreement on Afghanistan was higher than the last summit. Canada, which had threatened to quit Kandahar last month has extended its troops' stay in Afghanistan to 2011, and France has committed an additional battalion of 800 to the 'active' Eastern Afghanistan battlefront, thus freeing up American troops for deployment elsewhere in the country

Dawn, 6 April 2008

PML-N gets 21, PPP 13 cabinet posts in Punjab

LAHORE, April 5: The Pakistan People's Party and the Pakistan Muslim League-N on Saturday agreed to follow the same power arrangement in Punjab that they had reached at the centre. Under the formula, the PPP will get 13 ministries in a 35-member cabinet

Dawn, 6 April 2008

Restitution of the judiciary (Dr Tariq Hassan)

ONE must compliment the Pakistan People's Party for initiating the process to resolve the continuing judicial crisis through its prime minister who, even before being sworn in, gave orders for the immediate release of illegally detained judges. One must equally praise the Pakistan Muslim League-N for keeping the restoration of judges, who refused to take oath under the Provisional Constitution Order promulgated on Nov 3, 2007, on top of its agenda in its 2007 manifesto. These actions are commensurate with the parties earlier commitment to preserve the independence of the judiciary as expressed in their Charter of Democracy in 2006

Dawn, 6 April 2008

The displaced Baloch (Shehar Bano Khan)

DADO had lived happily with her seven siblings in Koho, Dera Bugti, until that fateful day which changed her life for the worse. Soon thereafter the 16-year-old found herself, along with her brothers and sisters, seeking refuge in different parts of Balochistan to escape the conflict that annihilated her home, her village and her school in Dera Bugti

News, 6 April 2008

The tasks ahead (M B Naqvi)

Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani his first-100-days programme, which he unveiled last Saturday, is an amalgamation of sound conservatism as well as populism. He gets good marks for adhering to the Charter of Democracy and the Bhurban Declaration, involving the eventual restoration of the PCOed judges, including the CJP, without being too emphatic. Also for axing FCR, necessarily as a part of reviewing the fight against Islamic extremism and reforms in tribal areas in NWFP. That student unions stand revived and trade union movement has been freed from IRO 2002 are all to the good. That freedom of the media, including the press, has been affirmed is reassuring, though shifting of Pemra to the Information Ministry does not signify much. Improving the right to information legislation is also good news

News, 7 April 2008

Standing firm with China (Ikram Sehgal)

The manner in which events have unfolded recently in Tibet suggests that this was no happenstance; there was method in the madness as properties of the Han Chinese were singled out for destruction. By March 14, large scale attacks on non-Tibetan ethnic groups unleashed a pillage of rioting, looting and burning. James Miles of The Economist who returned from Tibet confirmed that this was pre-planned and orchestrated. To quote his interview with CNN, "What I saw was calculated targeted violence against an ethnic group, or I should say two ethnic groups, primarily ethnic Han Chinese in Lhasa, but also members of the Muslim Hui minority in Lhasa. Any doubts about the unrest being anything other than organised activity were put to rest by the calculated manner in which many Chinese embassies and consulates were attacked by Tibetan protestors in several countries almost simultaneously"

Dawn, 8 April 2008

Dr Khan says he confessed to save Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, April 7: Detained nuclear scientist Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan has said he took the blame four years ago for passing atomic secrets to Iran, North Korea and Libya in order to save his country. Mr Khan added that the country's new government had not yet contacted him about his possible release. Dr Khan was pardoned by President Gen (ret'd) Pervez Musharraf after his confession but has remained in detention. Mr Musharraf denied any state involvement in Dr Khan's activities, but has rejected international requests to quiz the scientist

Dawn, 8 April 2008

Editorial: Constitutional package

NOW that a constitutional package is reportedly under consideration, we should note that the need for amendments to the 1973 Constitution is independent of the ongoing controversy over the powers enjoyed by President Pervez Musharraf. There is a whole range of articles that needs revision. They range from the powers the president derives from Article 58-2(b) and the appointment of the judges and the services chiefs to a sensitive issue like provincial autonomy. Article 58-2(b) is perhaps the most obnoxious article in the basic law. Three presidents used it four times to dismiss elected governments and dissolve the National Assembly. Each time the three violated a

condition laid down in the article 113 that is, the president must exercise this power only when he is convinced that 113a situation has arisen in which the government of the federation cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the constitution and an appeal to the electorate is necessary 113. The dismissals served no purpose, for the government that followed was in turn sacked before it could complete its term

News, 8 April 2008

Qaim elected as CM unopposed

KARACHI: PPP leader Syed Qaim Ali Shah was elected unopposed as the Sindh chief minister, while Nisar Khuhro and Shehla Raza took oath as Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Sindh Assembly, respectively, on Monday. The Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) boycotted the session, summoned for the nomination of Shah as the chief minister and taking oath by speaker and deputy speaker, in protest against the manhandling of former chief minister Arbab Rahim in and outside the House

News, 8 April 2008

Peace in Balochistan

With 62 MPAs in Balochistan having taken oath, the most positive sign emerging from the province is the call by the provincial assembly for a ceasefire and an end to the military operation which has continued there for over two years. On the eve of the swearing in of members of the Balochistan Assembly, Governor Nawab Zulfiqar Ali Magsi and the nominated chief minister Nawab Muhammad Aslam Raisani, who is to be elected unopposed, both stressed the need for a new era of peace. Raisani has indeed already initiated a process of talks with militants and said that Nawab Akhtar Mengal, the jailed leader of the Balochistan National Party (BNP) would soon be released. These are of course positive signs. The ball was set into motion by the apology PPP Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari sought from the Baloch people. The key to solving the conflict in Balochistan that has simmered for years is to win over the trust of people and engage them in a process where they can play a part in decision-making. The bombing of villages or the killing of nationalist leaders can create only more hatred and lead to greater bloodshed

Dawn, 9 April 2008

Editorial: A disturbing episode

THREE provincial assemblies have so far met, and completed their business with parliamentary decorum, except the Sindh Assembly. This is astonishing because, relatively speaking, Sindh is the most literate of the three provinces and has produced some exceptionally brilliant politicians and parliamentarians. The enormity of the fracas on two consecutive days has implications that go beyond the person of Dr Arbab Ghulam Rahim and has the potential to wreck the friendship which the PPP and the MQM were professing with great warmth last week. The most disturbing of the developments is the MQM's decision to boycott the assembly session indefinitely. The MQM leadership's anger over the manhandling and humiliation of their chief ally in the last coalition government can be understood. The Karachi-based leadership condemned it, and from London Mr Altaf Hussain called it 'an act of terrorism'. The PPP also denounced the

incident without any reservations but blamed, perhaps unconvincingly, the caretaker government for it by claiming that it still controlled the police and officialdom. However, an indefinite boycott of the assembly, when it has just begun its session and the task of government formation has not even started, seems unwarranted

Dawn, 9 April 2008

Raisani to be sworn in as Balochistan CM today

QUETTA, April 8: Nawab Mohammad Aslam Raisani of the PPP was elected unopposed chief minister of Balochistan on Tuesday because no other nomination papers had been filed for the post. Nawab Raisani had filed nine nomination papers which were proposed and seconded by parliamentary leaders of all parties allied with the PPP. Balochistan assembly Secretary Mohammad Khan Mengal, who acted as the presiding officer, announced that Mr Raisani had no competitor

Dawn, 9 April 2008

NWFP sets up committee for dialogue with Swat militants

PESHAWAR, April 8: The NWFP government launched a fresh peace process for the violence-hit Swat district on Tuesday by constituting a ministerial committee to initiate dialogue with different groups of militants. Provincial Information Minister Sardar Hussain Babak said that the provincial cabinet in its first meeting had decided to reactivate the jirga system to resolve the issue of militancy through peaceful means

News, 9 April 2008

Editorial: Dr Qadeer again

Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan is again in the news. After remaining under effective house arrest since 2004, when he was made to confess on national television to being involved in the proliferation of nuclear technology, the new government has stated it plans to reduce the restrictions on his movement and other freedoms. In a telephonic interview, Dr Qadeer has meanwhile claimed that he made his confession only to save Pakistan and that he had in fact also previously saved the nation through the nuclear weapons tested in 1998, converting the country into the world's first Muslim state with nuclear capability

Daily Times, 9 April 2008

Should Musharraf quit? (Ijaz Hussain)

The country is deeply divided on the question of whether or not Pervez Musharraf should stay as president. The PMLN, the APDM and civil society, including the legal community, favour his departure. The PMLN feels so strongly about it that the other day at the oath-taking ceremony, its ministers refused to remove black armbands that they were wearing to register their rejection of Musharraf as legitimate president. Similarly, the APDM parties have such an intense aversion towards him that they boycotted the general elections

News, 9 April 2008

Pakistan's western front (Zeenia Satti)

Three factors jeopardized Pakistan's security on the western front. a) Musharraf allowed military action against Afghanistan from Pakistan's soil without first sealing its western

border. b) NATO failed to reconstruct Afghanistan, which rendered its occupation illegitimate and produced an inevitable domestic insurgency for end to occupation. c) During the war that followed, the Taliban's vengeance, Washington's displeasure with Pakistan's nuclear weapons, Indo-Afghan irredentist claims over Pakistan's territory, each found FATA to be an easy conduit of furtherance of their respective designs. Furthermore, the Musharraf regime's domestic legitimacy gap rendered it vulnerable to a myriad of political and military onslaughts, producing an international uproar, often orchestrated, that Pakistan was a failed state and a dangerous nation

Daily Times, 10 April 2008

The road to peace (Talat Masood)

One of the major tasks of the new democratic government on the foreign policy front would be to revive the composite dialogue with India and initiate talks on Kashmir. During last year, the peace process had stalled due to Islamabad's preoccupation with its internal crisis. Fortunately, all coalition partners in the present government want to pursue a policy of improving relations with India and seek a political resolution for Jammu and Kashmir. Their past record also bears testimony to the fact that when in power they did make earnest efforts at improving relations with India

News, 10 April 2008

Editorial: Punjab Assembly

About 353 newly elected MPAs to the Punjab Assembly finally took oath Wednesday, nearly six weeks after the February 18 general election. As has been the case within the National Assembly and each of the other three provincial assemblies, slogans for the late Benazir Bhutto were raised as the session began. While elections for the speaker, deputy speaker and chief minister are scheduled over the coming few days, the results are virtually a foregone conclusion. With the PML-N and the PPP, the two largest parties in the house, having reached a power sharing agreement the nominees for all three posts will be from the PML-N. The young Dost Muhammad Khosa, who enters the assembly for the first time, will take over as CM during the interim period before Shahbaz Sharif can win a by-election and formally take command in the province. It has, however, already been made clear that Shahbaz will be managing affairs even before this take-over

News, 10 April 2008

Musharraf leaves for China today

ISLAMABAD: President Pervez Musharraf will be leaving today (Thursday) on a six-day state visit to China accompanied by two senior cabinet ministers of the PDA government, at the invitation of President of the People's Republic of China, Hu Jintao. This is the first overseas visit of the president after the new PDA government took over. Both the foreign minister and defence minister, who will accompany the president, belong to the PPP. Other high level officials of the delegation are the chairman Higher Education Commission, chairman Trade Development Authority of Pakistan and the deputy chairman Planning Commission

News, 10 April 2008

Six lawyers burnt alive in Karachi

KARACHI: Eleven people were killed, at least six of them feared to be lawyers, and several others injured when violence broke out in various parts of the city following a clash between two groups of lawyers outside the City Courts on Wednesday afternoon. The most horrifying incident took place at Tahir Plaza, where six charred bodies including those of two women were recovered. The police said that the six bodies were of lawyers. The rioters also torched around 50 vehicles in different parts of the metropolis

News, 11 April 2008

Nawaz-Zardari agreement: Constitutional package not linked to judges' restoration

ISLAMABAD: Coalition leaders Asif Ali Zardari and Nawaz Sharif are in constant touch and have agreed that there will be no linkage of the judges' restoration issue with any constitutional package. They have also agreed to meet in a few days to announce the plan for the restoration of the deposed judges

Daily Times, 11 April 2008

Editorial: Violent blowback of lawyers' movement

It appears that some particularly aggressive and intolerant elements in society are bent on stirring up trouble. After the thrashing of Dr Sher Afgan in Lahore by a combination of 'rebel' lawyers and political workers of the PMLN, Jama'at-e Islami and Tehreek-e Insaf, Karachi was plunged into violence on Wednesday by activists of the MQM. This is what happened. While lawyers of the Karachi Bar Association were holding a meeting in its office, a couple of lawyers belonging to the lawyers wing of the MQM were staging a protest outside the building at Tuesday's manhandling of Dr Sher Afgan Niazi in Lahore. A scuffle broke out when these two MQM lawyers decided to enter the premises of the Bar Association and were challenged by some lawyers of the lawyers' movement, following which two busloads of armed hooligans arrived on the scene, opened fire and set ablaze two floors of a nearby building in which the offices of some lawyers belonging to the PMLN and others from the lawyers movement are based

News, 12 April 2008

21-member Sindh cabinet takes oath

KARACHI: An initial 21-member Sindh cabinet took oath at the Governor House here on Friday. Sindh Governor Dr Ishrat-ul-Ebad Khan administered the oath at an impressive ceremony held at the Darbar Hall of the Governor House. The new cabinet includes four women ministers, two ministers from minority members and one from the Awami National Party (ANP)

News, 12 April 2008

Bill tabled to repeal media-gagging laws; Nov 3 Pemra amendments to go: Sherry

ISLAMABAD: The coalition government of the Pakistan Democratic Alliance introduced its first piece of legislation in the National Assembly on Friday by tabling a bill to repeal the draconian amendments in Pemra that were enacted through an ordinance on Nov 3 last year when emergency was imposed on the country

News, 12 April 2008

Pakistan, China to boost ties; MoUs signed

SANYA: President Pervez Musharraf and his Chinese counterpart Hu Jintao on Friday vowed to enhance cooperation in defence, energy and trade, and hoped that these would be further strengthened with the coming into power of a new government in Pakistan. The two rounds of talks held here covered a wide-range of issues, including cooperation in fighting extremism and terrorism. President Hu Jintao reiterated that his country would always support Pakistan in whatever manner necessary in defence or its security, to assure social progress and to support economic development in Pakistan

News, 12 April 2008

Kurram killing toll reaches 17

SADDA: Two more people were killed and three injured in sectarian clashes in the Kurram Agency on Friday, taking the toll from the week-long fratricidal fighting to 17. Rival combatants used heavy weapons as hostilities raged on unabated. A mortar shell hit the main chowk of Sadda town, killing two persons Ismail and Sado on the spot and injuring three including Ajmal, Yousaf and Naseeb

Daily Times, 12 April 2008

Editorial: Politics of dissension again?

Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gillani has dubbed the violent incidents in Lahore and Karachi this week as 'a conspiracy of dictatorship' but he has not specified the source of this dictatorship. However, the word 'conspiracy' is being used by all manner of politicians to explain something that was clearly seen on their TV screens and condemned by most Pakistanis. One can therefore sense that all the political parties are trying to explain away their persistent dissensions by designating an unidentified 'third party' for what has happened. There may even be a half honest effort in this to divert the general feeling among the public that politicians are once again at their usual wasteful game of pulling one another down

Dawn, 13 April 2008

Editorial: Talking to Taliban

GOING by what US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher said in an exclusive interview with Dawn, America seems to have reconciled itself to Pakistan's talks-oriented strategy vis-à-vis the Taliban. In fact, Boucher said he found Pakistanis 'across the spectrum' in favour of a negotiated solution. Previous 'deals' did not work. The most celebrated deal with the militants on Sept 5, 2006, was almost a capitulation. We can ill afford to repeat this mistake because it gave the Taliban time to regroup in what became a virtual sanctuary for them. Their ability to spew death and destruction became evident after the Lal Masjid crackdown last July when they struck at targets even in high-security zones

Dawn, 13 April 2008

Bush calls Fata most dangerous region

WASHINGTON, April 12: President George Bush has said that Pakistan, and not Afghanistan or Iraq, is now the most likely place where a plot could be hatched to carry out any 9/11-type attack in the US. In an interview with ABC News, Mr Bush described

the tribal region along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border as one of the most dangerous areas in the world today where "Al Qaeda had established safe havens and was plotting attacks against the United States". Asked to comment on an assessment of US intelligence reports that if there was another 9/11 plot being hatched, it was probably in Afghanistan and Pakistan and not in Iraq, Mr Bush said: "I would say not in Afghanistan. I would say in... ."

News, 13 April 2008

PPP, PML-N agree to cabinet panel on judges

ISLAMABAD: After the strong reservations of the PML-N on the constitution of a parliamentary committee for the deposed judges, both the PPP and PML-N have agreed on the formation of a cabinet committee to finalise the issues connected with the issue to restore the judiciary within the timeframe agreed to in the Murree Declaration. Credible sources of both PPP and PML-N confirmed to The News on Saturday that after the PML-N's reservations on constituting a parliamentary committee, the PPP had proposed a cabinet committee to which the PML-N had agreed

News, 13 April 2008

Five more killed in Kurram fighting

PARACHINAR/ SADDA: Army gunship helicopters hovered over the troubled areas of the Lower Kurram Agency as the ongoing sectarian fighting left five more people dead and 15 injured on Saturday. The fatalities were reported from the Marokhel area of the Lower Kurram when armed men kidnapped two people from the rival tribe. The tribal Lashkar came to know about the incident and gave a chase to the kidnappers. "The abductors opened fire on the Lashkar, killing Qadir Gul and Hamid Hussain, stated to be brothers," sources said

News, 13 April 2008

Editorial: Altaf Hussain and the MQM

The dramatic scenes at the Muttahida Qaumi Movement headquarters at Nine Zero on Friday night may have moved TV viewers around the globe but the spectacle of Mr Altaf Hussain first excusing himself from the MQM leadership and then withdrawing his decision within a couple of hours, after some emotional sloganeering by workers and offers of mass resignations by all elected MQM cadres, should raise some serious questions. Mr Hussain has been compelled to resort to this typical form of protest at least four times in the past two years or so. Whenever he thinks the MQM leadership has failed to perform, he comes forward to quit the movement and then reverses his decision on the unanimous and vociferous demand of his seemingly nervous workers. The fact is that Mr Hussain is, and has always been, in total command and control of whatever the MQM does, at the political, government, parliament, district and even the street level

Daily Times, 13 April 2008

Sustaining democracy (Dr Hasan-Askari Rizvi)

The lawyers' movement was a remarkable development in 2007 that facilitated Pakistan's progress on the road to fuller democracy. It also contributed to reinvigorating societal groups that gained confidence in their capacity to trigger socio-political changes through

collective action. The February 2008 general elections were another significant development that rejected the centralised and authoritarian government led by President General (ret'd) Pervez Musharraf and backed by the army top brass. The popular consensus was in favour of the political parties and leaders that had faced the wrath of the Musharraf government during 1999-2007

Daily Times, 14 April 2008

This is what happened during PPP-MQM talks

KARACHI: The MQM and PPP sat down to talk in 2008 after a gap of six years. The meetings ran for about 45 days from February 28 to April 12 and officially ended without any conclusive results on April 13. During these days, around five to six rounds of talks were held. A rough formula for power sharing started to form in which the PPP agreed to share four to six ministries in Sindh with the MQM. The two parties also conducted talks following the deadlock caused by the manhandling of Arbab Ghulam Rahim and the April 9 violence. According to sources, the MQM demanded a 35 percent share in the Sindh government and four ministries at the Centre. fareed farooqi

Daily Times, 14 April 2008

Editorial: Threat 'from' and 'to' Pakistan

In an interview to a US TV channel President George W Bush has said that "if another September 11 style attack is being planned, it probably is being plotted in Pakistan and not Afghanistan". He thought that if the plotters had been located in Afghanistan they would have been "routed out" by the US-NATO forces by now. He described the tribal region (FATA) along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border as one of the most dangerous areas in the world today where "Al Qaeda has established safe havens and is plotting attacks against the United States"

Daily Times, 14 April 2008

All sacked judges will be restored

ISLAMABAD: A final formula for the restoration of the sacked judges will be devised during Tuesday's meeting between Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) chief Nawaz Sharif, Federal Law and Justice Minister Farooq H Naek said on Sunday

Dawn, 14 April 2008

MQM's power-sharing talks with PPP fail: Suddle's appointment as IG opposed

KARACHI, April 13: Blaming Pakistan People's Party for what it called lack of seriousness in talks, the Muttahida Qaumi Movement announced on Sunday that it would sit in the opposition in the National Assembly and the Sindh assembly. "We tried our best to make the dialogue fruitful but the PPP adopted a non-serious attitude. Therefore, we believe that the PPP is responsible for the failure of the talks," MQM leader Dr Farooq Sattar told a press conference here

Dawn, 14 April 2008

Another kind of change (S. Akbar Zaidi)

Perhaps the most important factor that, sadly, many Pakistani social scientists still do not

comprehend is that Pakistan is neither a so-called feudal, agricultural, rural or even a traditional society or economy. Only those social scientists who write their papers on anecdotal evidence still talk of Pakistan as being feudal. Even a cursory examination of any kind of economic data suggests that this is not so. With the share of agriculture as part of the GDP falling drastically from 26 per cent in 2000 to 20 per cent in 2007, agriculture has lost its predominance in the economy

News, 14 April 2008

Who killed basant? (Ahmad Rafay Alam)

It takes some skill to kill a cultural phenomenon. Last week, we were told that the District Kite Flying Association decided to cancel its plans for basant. They were in no mood to shoulder the blame for any casualties this year, and in no mood to be rounded up and hauled to the nearest thana because someone else breaks the law. This will be first year the city of Lahore will not witness the kite-flying festival that heralds the arrival of spring. basant is, for all practical purposes, dead

Daily Times, 15 April 2008

Musharraf pushes China to build IPC oil, gas pipelines

BEIJING: President Pervez Musharraf said on Monday that he was lobbying Beijing to build oil and gas pipelines linking Pakistan with western China, as the two longtime allies expand commercial ties. China is sharply increasing oil and gas imports to fuel its booming economy, and Musharraf said he hoped it would see Pakistan as an "energy and trade corridor" to the Middle East

Daily Times, 15 April 2008

Editorial: Politics of revenge again?

The ongoing talks for a coalition government in Sindh between PPP and MQM have broken down. The MQM has accused the PPP of being non-serious while the PPP says the events of April 9 in Karachi have cast a shadow over the parleys. The MQM, suspicious of what the PPP might do after the April 9 violence, has objected to the posting of Dr Shoaib Suddle as IG Police Sindh. The two parties have begun issuing mildly hostile statements and if this exchange should become more inflamed with the passage of time it would not augur well for the future of governance in Sindh. In the event, the two parties could divide along ethnic lines to restart their vendetta which has dark roots in the violence of the early 1990s. Both sides have grievances and the public mind has been formed on both sides by the chronology of death and mayhem that party culture has kept alive. That they are sitting astride a large ethnic vote was realised after the assassination of Ms Benazir Bhutto when the province experienced a historically unprecedented destruction of property and looting directed against certain ethnicities

Dawn, 16 April 2008

New free trade accord with China soon: Musharraf

URUMQI, April 15: President Pervez Musharraf said on Tuesday that Pakistan and China were close to signing another Free Trade Agreement (FTA) on trade and services that would further boost their economic and commercial ties. Addressing the China Xinjiang-Pakistan Economic Forum in Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang autonomous

region, he urged closer cooperation in trade and commerce and investment. The president informed the business leaders that there was immense scope for investment in Pakistan in the energy sector, particularly in coal-powered and solar and hydro-electric plants

Dawn, 16 April 2008

Two FC men among four killed in Balochistan

QUETTA, April 15: Two security personnel were gunned down in Quetta and two other people were killed in landmine explosions near Dera Bugti on Tuesday. Police sources said that some Frontier Constabulary personnel were standing in front of a shop on the Sabzal road on the outskirts of Quetta when two armed men on a motorcycle opened fire on them

Dawn, 17 April 2008

Torch relay a dazzling spectacle

ISLAMABAD, April 16: Pakistan welcomed on Wednesday the Olympic Torch on what was seen as a positive and trouble-free leg of its world tour. Protests have marred the torch's passage through western cities, and Pakistan went to great lengths to avoid any repeat during its stay in the capital city

Dawn, 18 April 2008

Tense calm in Jamrud after fierce clashes

LANDI KOTAL, April 17: The Jamrud sub-district of Khyber tribal region was calm but tense on Thursday after a night of gunbattle between an armed vigilante group and a tribal clan had left at least five people dead and several others wounded. An undeclared ceasefire took effect on Thursday morning between Lashkar-i-Islam, led by Mangal Bagh, and the Kukikhel sub-clan of the Afridi tribe in Jamrud, not far from Peshawar

News, 18 April 2008

US offers Pakistan \$7 bn in non-military aid

WASHINGTON: The US has promised to curb air strikes by drones against suspected militants in Pakistan as part of a joint counter-terrorism strategy agreed with the new civilian government in Islamabad, the Guardian has learnt. That strategy will be supported by an aid package potentially worth more than \$7 billion (£3.55 billion), which is due to go before Congress for approval in the next few months. The package would triple the amount of American non-military aid to Pakistan, and is aimed at "redefining" the bilateral relationship, US officials say

News, 19 April 2008

Bajaur militants offer sanctuary to Osama, Omar

PESHAWAR: Militants of Bajaur Agency on Friday offered general amnesty to all their opponents, except alleged US spies and those involved in adultery, and announced the formation of various committees for settling people's conflicts

Dawn, 20 April 2008

3 publicly executed in Waziristan

TANK, April 19: Supporters of militant commander Baitullah Mehsud publicly executed

on Saturday three people, including an Afghan national, in the Makin bazaar of South Waziristan tribal region, witnesses said. They said the three men had been kidnapped from a restaurant in the bazaar three days ago for allegedly killing Intizar Khan, Mehsud's comrade

Dawn, 20 April 2008

Militants tie kidnapped envoy's fate to Taliban leader's

PESHAWAR, April 19: The kidnapers of Pakistan's ambassador to Afghanistan have come up with a demand for the release of a key Taliban leader and a few other Pakistani and Afghan colleagues, a highly placed source told Dawn on Saturday

News, 21 April 2008

Miliband supports reconciliation process

PESHAWAR: British Foreign Secretary David Miliband has said his country will support the reconciliation process being initiated by Pakistan government with those who believe in non-violence and negotiations. "We have been a strong supporter of reconciliation both in Afghanistan and Pakistan but that must be on the basis of some clear bottom-lines," Miliband said in a brief chat with the media at a hotel here on Sunday

News, 21 April 2008

Govt orders winding up operation in tribal areas: Saad Rafiq

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Cultural and Youth Affairs Khawaja Saad Rafiq has said the government has ordered for halting the entire military operation and the withdrawal of forces from the tribal areas. Talking to Geo News on Sunday, Saad Rafiq said the intensity of the military operation had been lowered to a great extent following the February 18 polls, while the government had now ordered for winding up the entire operation. He said the resolution for the restoration of the judges would be presented in parliament within the next two weeks and no constitutional package would be brought along with it

Daily Excelsior, 22 April 2008

Pak currency can never be used in J&K: Farooq

NAGROTA, Apr 21: Former Chief Minister and National Conference patron Dr Farooq Abdullah today charged PDP patron Mufti Mohd Sayeed with "selling dreams" to the people which were far from reality and "resorting to petty politics for short term gains. "All of us know that Pakistan currency can never be used in J&K. The Mufti's demand to this effect is a deliberate attempt to mislead innocent Kashmiris who have already seen enough violence and bloodshed in the State", Dr Abdullah said addressing a public rally here this afternoon

Dawn, 22 April 2008

TNSM renounces militancy; Sufi Mohammad freed

PESHAWAR, April 21: The NWFP government has released Maulana Sufi Mohammad, chief of the banned Tehrik Nifaz Shariat-i-Muhammadi (TNSM), who had been in detention for more than six years. He was released on Monday following an agreement with leaders of the banned organisation who denounced militancy and

Dawn, 22 April 2008

Militants' bid to kidnap WFP employees foiled

Landi Kotal, April 21: Militants took eight militiamen hostage after the Frontier Corps foiled an attempt by them on Monday to kidnap two employees of the World Food Programme. A heavy exchange of fire between the two sides left two FC troops dead and five others wounded

Hindu, 23 April 2008

Indian kidnapped in Afghanistan

New Delhi: An Indian national has been kidnapped by some armed men in Afghanistan, in yet another incident targeted at nationals from this country in the trouble-torn nation. A Nepali was also abducted

Indian Express, 23 April 2008

Militants meet in PoK again, vow to pursue jihad in J-K

Srinagar, April 22 : In the second meeting of its kind in the past one month, Pakistan-based militant groups and secessionist leaders on Monday held a conference in Muzaffarabad in PoK to resolve their commitment to revive 'jihad' in Kashmir. The conference, attended by United Jihad Council chief Syed Salahuddin, LeT chief Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi and leaders of PoK-based Hurriyat factions, made no secret of their growing disillusionment with the new Pakistan establishment, and indicated a resolve to strike on their own

Daily Excelsior, 23 April 2008

LeT, JeM involved in most terror attacks

NEW DELHI, Apr 22: The hand of Pakistan-based outfits has been observed in most of the terror attacks in India as groups from across the border continue to sponsor terrorist and subversive activities in the country, a Government report said today. This has come to light following apprehension of people suspected to be involved in subversive and terrorist activities in various parts of the country, the Union Home Ministry said in its Annual Report for 2007-08. "The hand of Pakistan-based terrorist organisations-LeT and JeM-and, increasingly of the Bangladesh-based HuJI, known to have close links with ISI, has been observed in most of these cases," the 167-page report said

Dawn, 23 April 2008

PPP, PML-N set up committee on plan for judges' reinstatement

ISLAMABAD, April 22: The leadership of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) met again on Tuesday and decided to form a committee to finalise proposals about reinstating deposed judges in consultation with lawyers. Addressing a joint press conference after the meeting at the Punjab House, PPP co-chairman Asif Zardari and PML-N chief Nawaz Sharif said there was a 'complete harmony' among coalition partners on all issues and the deposed judges would be reinstated in accordance with the Bhurban Declaration

Dawn, 23 April 2008

Peace accord finalised with Mehsuds

PESHAWAR, April 22: The government is close to an agreement with warring Mehsuds that seeks an end to militant activity, exchange of prisoners and gradual withdrawal of the military to restore peace to the volatile South Waziristan tribal region. The 15-point draft agreement, seen by Dawn, has been thoroughly discussed and approved at the senior political leadership level in Islamabad and also enjoys the backing of the military establishment

Dawn, 23 April 2008

14-member Punjab cabinet takes oath

LAHORE, April 22: The first phase of government formation in Punjab was completed on Tuesday with 14 ministers, eight of the PML-N and six of the PPP, taking oath of office. The PPP's parliamentary leader Raja Riaz had earlier taken oath as senior minister. When Governor Khalid Maqbool administered the oath the venue reverberated with 'Go Musharraf Go' slogans

Dawn, 23 April 2008

Pakistan to buy only 18 F-16s

WASHINGTON, April 22: Pakistan has decided to halve the number of F-16 fighter jets it's buying from the United States due to financial constraints, according to some diplomatic sources. Pakistan had earlier agreed to buy 36 of these aircraft at a total cost of \$5.1 billion, which included associated weapons, spares and upgrading of an earlier fleet purchased in the 1980s.

Daily Times, 23 April 2008

Editorial: After Sufi Muhammad's release

Editorial: After Sufi Muhammad's release The leader of Tehreek-e Nifaz-e Shariat-e Muhammadi (TNSM), Maulana Sufi Muhammad, is a free man after nearly seven years of incarceration in Peshawar. He was set free shortly after those who had allegedly kidnapped the Pakistani ambassador to Kabul, Mr Tariq Azizuddin, from Khyber Agency had demanded his release. But Prime Minister Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani told a foreign news magazine the same day that his government would not talk to any militant without first obtaining his commitment to lay down arms. Therefore the 'peace agreement' reached with the banned TNSM by the NWFP government makes clear that Maulana Sufi Muhammad has renounced all militancy and agreed to pursue the enforcement of sharia 'by peaceful means'

Dawn, 23 April 2008

Balochistan govt drops cases against Mengal

QUETTA, April 21: The Balochistan government has withdrawn all cases registered against former chief minister and president of Balochistan National Party Sardar Akhtar Mengal. The decision was taken at a meeting presided over by Chief Minister Nawab Mohammad Aslam Raisani here on Monday. Chief Secretary Nasir Mehmood Khosa, Home Secretary Furqan Bahadur and IGP Saud Gohar attended the meeting

News, 23 April 2008

Release of Benazir's assassins demanded

PESHAWAR: The BBC Urdu Service has reported that the kidnappers of Tariq Azizuddin, Pakistan's Ambassador to Afghanistan, are demanding the release of 12 prisoners, including five Afghan Taliban and seven Pakistanis presently in the custody of the government. According to the BBC, the seven Pakistanis in the list included the Lal Masjid cleric Maulana Abdul Aziz, the Tanzim Nifaz Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM)'s jailed founder Maulana Sufi Mohammad, and the five men accused of involvement in Benazir Bhutto's assassination. They were Sher Zaman Mahsud, Razaqat, Aitzaz Shah, Hasnain and Noor Khan

News, 23 April 2008

PPP sets up body to convene APC on Balochistan

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan People's Party Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari on Sunday set up a reconciliation committee to convene an All Parties Conference (APC) on Balochistan to address the grievances of its people and bring them into the mainstream. The committee, to be headed by the Party's co-chairman, will consist of its Secretary General Jahangir Badr, Balochistan PPP President Mir Lashkari Raisani, MNA Ejaz Jakhrani, Senator Dr Babar Awan and Balochistan party Deputy General Secretary Saadullah. The committee has been tasked to contact leaders of other political parties and stakeholders for participation in the APC to launch a concerted effort for bringing normalcy to the province

Daily Times, 24 April 2008

FC troop, 10 militants killed in border clash

KHAR: A Frontier Constabulary (FC) soldier died and another sustained injuries on Wednesday in an exchange of fire between Pakistani security forces and the Afghan army 'due to a misunderstanding' at the Pak-Afghan border at Nawa Pass in the Bajaur Agency. Up to 10 militants of a group which attacked the Afghan checkpoint and caused the 'misunderstanding' were also killed in the clash

Daily Times, 24 April 2008

Editorial: The fate of APC on Balochistan

Mr Asif Zardari's proposal to hold an all-parties conference (APC) on the troubles in Balochistan 'within the next ten days' has not received a positive response. The Balochistan National Party (Mengal) and National Party say they are not ready to attend the PPP-hosted conference. So, in the expectation of receiving negative responses also from other Baloch parties, the PPP has reinforced its reconciliation committee which will now presumably talk to the estranged Baloch leaders

Dawn, 24 April 2008

Pressing issues identified Balochistan committee of PPP holds first meeting

ISLAMABAD, April 23: Pakistan People's Party co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari on Wednesday presided over the first meeting of the newlyformed National Reconciliation Committee for Balochistan. The committee has been renamed as 'Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Committee for Balochistan' and Senator Dr Babar Awan has been appointed its secretary-general. Dr Awan was asked to draft a paper on ways of resolving the

Balochistan issue in the light of the speech Ms Bhutto made in Quetta in December last year

Daily Times, 25 April 2008

Editorial: Truce with Taliban won't last

The Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) chief, Baitullah Mehsud, has ordered his militants not to attack Pakistani security forces henceforth and warned that anyone violating his orders would be punished publicly. The TTP distributed pamphlets saying that 'offensives' against the Pakistan army in Waziristan, Tank, Gomal and Dera Ismail Khan should be abandoned, and anyone who doesn't obey the order would be 'hanged upside down in the bazaars'

News, 25 April 2008

TAPI gas pipeline finalised

ISLAMABAD: The 10th steering committee of oil ministers from Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India on Thursday agreed to start construction work on the much-delayed TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) pipeline project in 2010. This was stated at a joint press conference by Minister for Petroleum and Natural Resources Khwaja Muhammad Asif, Turkmen Minister for Oil and Gas Industry Dr Baymurad Hojamuhamedov, Afghan Minister of Mines Mohammad Ibrahim Adel and Indian Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Shri Murli Deora here after the conclusion of the steering committee meeting

News, 25 April 2008

No headway in talks on judges

ISLAMABAD: The PPP-PML-N ministerial committee failed to sort out the snags relating to the resolution likely to be tabled in the National Assembly for restoring the deposed judges here on Thursday. The coalition government was set to bring a resolution in the National Assembly but a consensus could not be reached on the issue. The committee members held a meeting in the chamber of Federal Minister for Law Farooq H Naek for two hours but failed to break the deadlock

News, 25 April 2008

A sell-out in the making

ISLAMABAD: A tamed judiciary suiting the Presidency and the PPP-led government is being tailored to give the shock of their lives to those who simplistically took the Murree Declaration seriously and trusted the words of the top political leaders. Background interaction with some of those involved in negotiations on the constitutional package between the PPP and PML-N reveals that the constitutional amendments being negotiated, if finally approved by parliament, would clip the chief justice of Pakistan's authority to constitute benches besides restricting his discretionary power to take suo moto notice on public interest litigation cases

News, 25 April 2008

Militants pouring into Afghanistan from Pakistan: US general

KABUL: Insurgent violence in Afghanistan could reach record levels this year as

militants increasingly target police and development projects, a top US general said on Thursday. Maj-Gen Jeffrey J Schloesser, who commands US forces in the country, said a large number of insurgents are still pouring into Afghanistan from Pakistan. Schloesser said violence this year "may well reach a higher level than it did in 2007". "What I have seen so far is the level of violence is more directed toward ... innocent Afghan people or ... not military forces, but forces such as police, and other security forces that are out trying to protect development projects," Schloesser told reporters in Kabul. "I think they are afraid to attack ... coalition forces and so they are going for what is an easier target," said Schloesser, who heads the 101st Airborne Division

Dawn, 25 April 2008

Peace talks under way in Fata, Balochistan

ISLAMABAD, April 24: Prime Minister's Adviser on Interior Affairs Rehman Malik has said the government is holding talks with all tribal leaders in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata) and Balochistan, including local Taliban chief Baitullah Mehsud, for lasting peace in the country. 'We will give the nation good news very soon regarding the peace initiative,' he told journalists during a visit to National Database and Registration Authority (Nadra) headquarters on Thursday. The adviser lauded the declaration of a ceasefire by Baitullah Mehsud and expressed the hope that he would not back out

Daily Times, 25 April 2008

Govt, Army hail truce offer by Mehsud

ISLAMABAD: The government and the army on Thursday welcomed a unilateral truce offered by Taliban commander Baitullah Mehsud. 'Any cessation of hostilities is a welcome step,' chief military spokesman Major General Athar Abbas told AFP. 'If they cease militant activities it is a good development,' General Abbas added. However, he said the military had not been informed about the development. 'We have not received anything from them,' he said, adding that tribal elders were negotiating with government officials

Dawn, 26 April 2008

Bombers back in Mardan, kill three

MARDAN, April 25: A police officer and two civilians were killed and 37 people were injured when an explosives-laden car exploded near a police station here on Friday morning, ending respite from terrorist attacks since the new government took power last month. The car parked in front of a restaurant between the Mardan police station and a market exploded at about 6am, killing sub-inspector Farukh Sher and civilians Sher Mohammad and Subhan Uddin, on the spot and injuring 22 policemen and 35 other people, District Police Officer Tahir Khan told Dawn

News, 26 April 2008

China to help Pakistan fight terrorists

ISLAMABAD: China has agreed to provide Pakistan with equipment to fight terrorist activities. "Beijing will further cooperate with Pakistan in dealing firmly with terrorists," Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi told the media during a joint press conference with his Pakistani counterpart Shah Mehmud Qureshi at the Foreign Office here on Friday.

Qureshi said: "Pakistan will purchase equipment from China to fight terrorist activities. Pakistan has expressed the desire to purchase some anti-terror equipment from China to which they have agreed. China has indicated that it will be happy to supply this equipment to us, which will strengthen our arms in dealing with the terrorist activities."

News, 26 April 2008

Accord with Mehsud ready

NEW YORK: The government has drafted a 15-point accord to broker a deal with the tribal militants through their elders, under which the military troops would be gradually withdrawn from South Waziristan and the prisoners swapped. More than 100 military, paramilitary and government officials are in the custody of Baitullah Mehsud group, according to its spokesman who said these prisoners would be released through the tribal Jirga once the deal was done

Daily Times, 26 April 2008

Editorial: How can TAPI and IPI save Pakistan?

Pakistan, Afghanistan and India have signed a 'Government Framework Agreement' in Islamabad to initiate the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project to supply gas to the three 'downstream' countries. India has formally joined a project that was earlier called TAP without India. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is pushing the project whose feasibility was already approved in 2003. Later, it was discovered that the project would be profitable to Turkmenistan only if India joined to take 60 percent of the supply. India wanted to join the project but was sitting on a see-saw about actually formalising its entry into the deal

News, 27 April 2008

Taliban sanctuaries in Pakistan must go, says Karzai

NEW YORK: Afghan President Hamid Karzai criticised the US and British conduct of the war in Afghanistan, telling The New York Times in an interview published on Saturday that his government must be accorded the lead in policy decisions. Karzai told the newspaper that he wanted the US forces to stop arresting suspected Taliban members and their sympathisers, saying fear of arrest, along with past mistreatment, were discouraging them from coming forward and laying down their arms

News, 27 April 2008

Foreigners hiding in Fata: Musharraf

LAHORE: President Pervez Musharraf on Saturday said Pakistan did not have any offensive designs against anyone and was at peace with its neighbours, which was its strength. Addressing the participants of the 88th National Management Course (BPS-18) and third Senior NMC (BPS-19 and above) at the National Management College here, he said Pakistan was facing internal security threats emanating from terrorism and extremism. On arrival in Lahore, Musharraf was received by Governor Khalid Maqbool, Lahore Corps Commander Lt-Gen Shafaat Ullah Shah and General Officer Commanding Maj-Gen Shaukat Sultan. Not a single member of the Punjab government received the president. When contacted, a PML-N spokesman said they did not consider Musharraf as a constitutional president and so they would not welcome a dictator

Dawn, 28 April 2008

Shahbaz to remind Asif of deadline on judges

LAHORE, April 27: A PML-N delegation headed by the party's president Mian Shahbaz Sharif was to leave for Dubai on Sunday night to 'remind Mr Asif Ali Zardari of the approaching deadline set for reinstatement of judges'. Accompanied by federal ministers Khwaja Asif and Chaudhary Nisar Ali Khan besides Khwaja Haris, Mr Shahbaz will hold talks with PPP co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari on the draft resolution formulated by a committee comprising representatives of both parties. Sources in the PML-N said Mr Zardari had gone to Dubai with a promise to return home by Sunday afternoon

Dawn, 29 April 2008

Taliban execute 'outlaw' in public

GHALANAI, April 27: A man was executed in public by Taliban militants in the Rahim Korona area of the Mohmand Agency on Sunday. The Taliban had sentenced Zaiver Khan to death after finding him guilty of hijacking vehicles and killing a number of people. After the execution, the death toll in the ongoing clashes between the local militants and tribesmen rose to 13. Three militants, three children and a woman were among the dead

Dawn, 29 April 2008

Way cleared for gas pipeline accord: Foreign ministers to decide signing date

ISLAMABAD, April 28: Pakistan and Iran on Monday cleared way for the signing of the \$7.5 billion Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) gas pipeline agreement after removing the hitches that had stalled the accord. The progress was achieved at a meeting between President Pervez Musharraf and his Iranian counterpart Dr Mahmoud Ahmadinejad who made a brief stopover here on way to Sri Lanka on the first leg of his South Asian trip that will also take him to India

Dawn, 29 April 2008

PPP, MQM strike deal

KARACHI, April 28: After a series of talks, the Pakistan People's Party and the Muttahida Qaumi Movement finally struck a power-sharing deal and agreed to form a coalition government in Sindh. Apparently because of the fragile political situation, the parties were reluctant on Monday to divulge details of the power-sharing formula. Sources confirmed that an accord had been reached under which the MQM would get eight ministries and five advisers in the Sindh cabinet

Dawn, 29 April 2008

Baitullah abandons peace negotiations

KHAR, April 28: Commander Baitullah Mehsud of Pakistani Taliban has stopped peace talks with the government because of the latter's refusal to withdraw army troops from tribal areas. Baitullah's spokesman Maulvi Umar said on Monday that the talks were stopped because the government had refused to pull out troops from Waziristan, Darra Adamkhel and Swat. He blamed the government for the breakdown in negotiations facilitated by tribal interlocutors

News, 30 April 2008

Nawaz rushes to Dubai to salvage coalition

RAWALPINDI: PML-N Quaid Mian Nawaz Sharif said late Tuesday night that he rushed into Dubai to get the Murree Declaration implemented in letter and spirit, Geo News reported. Talking to newsmen at the Dubai International Airport, he said that he did not have any personal agenda in coming to meet PPP Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari. When told that the deadline set in the Murree Declaration had almost approached as only one day was left, Nawaz said sometimes the work is done in a minute

News, 30 April 2008

PPP-PML-N coalition pushed to verge of collapse

ISLAMABAD: The PPP-PML-N coalition has been pushed to the brink of collapse in the wake of a serious standoff in their talks on the reinstatement of the deposed judges, with the PML-N left with no option but to quit the federal cabinet. 'We have been pushed to the wall where we have no alternative but walk out of the cabinet,' a PML-N minister told The News on condition of anonymity

News, 30 April 2008

Three cops gunned down near Kohat

KOHAT: Three policemen were killed and one was injured on Tuesday night in an exchange of fire with outlaws in Sumari Bala area, some 30 kilometres from here. Sources said unidentified persons hired a taxi (Peshawar-U2316) from a stand near the Company Bagh, Kohat, and went towards Sumari Bala. They bundled out the taxi driver, Shaukat, on the way, who brought the incident to the notice of the Lachi police station

News, 30 April 2008

Talks offer to militants still intact: minister

PESHAWAR: NWFP Information Minister Mian Iftikhar Hussain on Tuesday said the government's offer of talks to militants for peace was still intact despite the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) announcement about the failure of the process. "It is perhaps the last chance for every stakeholder to the country's peace and our party would not allow anyone to hinder the process nor we discontinue our efforts for the purpose," the Awami National Party leader told journalists at the press club here

Daily Times, 30 April 2008

Editorial: Clearing the fog on the judges issue

The PPP and the PMLN have been compelled finally to clarify their positions on the restoration of the judges deposed on 3 November 2007. The talks at Dubai between the two parties on the draft of the 'judicial package' are still inconclusive after the first round; but the nation has been offered a glimpse into what the two parties are talking about even as they insist that the Murree Declaration will be honoured. Clearly, there are un-stated points of convergence and departure in the public posture each party has so far adopted