

Dawn, 1 August 2007

Pakistanis feel their country made scapegoat: Aziz

WASHINGTON, July 31: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz has said that many in Pakistan feel their country is being used as a scapegoat to cover Americas shortcomings in the war on terrorism. In an interview to Washington Post, published on Tuesday, Mr Aziz also said that Islamabad was disappointed by the US legislation which tied aid for Pakistan to its performance in fighting terrorism. Asked if he thought Washington was using Pakistan as a scapegoat for its failures in the war on terror, Mr Aziz said: I dont know about that, but I know many people around the world, and in this country, feel that. Mr Aziz refused to comment on the possibility that an expected deal between the government and the PPP could see Benazir Bhutto replacing him as prime minister in the near future.

Daily Times, 1 August 2007

Re elect Musharraf to avoid martial law: Fazl

ISLAMABAD: Maulana Fazlur Rehman, the leader of the opposition in the National Assembly, said on Tuesday that General Pervez Musharraf should be given safe passage through his re election as president in uniform, to save the country from another bout of martial law. I think once again we should all deliberate on this option to avoid a repeat of the East Pakistan tragedy, Maulana Fazl told Daily Times in an exclusive interview. He was referring to the secession of East Pakistan in 1971 to form Bangladesh. Maulana Fazl, who is also head of the Jamiat Ulema e Islam JUI Fazl party and secretary general of the Muttahida Majlis e Amal MMA, said that Gen Musharraf could impose another martial law if he failed to win political support for his re election as president in uniform.

The Nation, 1 August 2007

Editorial: The deal's details

WHILE to create democratic setting for the countrys governance it is imperative to take different political sections of the people on board before the general elections, the contours of details worked out under the PPP government deal and reportedly revealed at the Presidents briefing at a high level meeting in Islamabad on Monday have raised a number of questions. For one thing, it would have given greater force to the official contention of restoring full fledged democracy had the door also been opened for PML N exiled leaders to come back to Pakistan and participate in the electoral process. For another, the Abu Dhabi deal stipulates that the PPP members of Parliament and provincial assemblies the presidential electoral college would abstain from voting when President Musharraf stands for re election to give the government and allied parties a clear majority.

Dawn, 1 August 2007

Editorial: Ending Fatas isolation

THE territory known as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas is now hitting world headlines, mostly for the wrong reasons. Its socio economic conditions and the violence that has come to be associated with its name testify to successive governments failure to address the problems of people living in the tribal belt. Even though part of Pakistan, Fata is governed not by Pakistani laws but by tribal customs and traditions, and the maliks tribal elders play a major role in it. The system was inherited by Pakistan from the

colonial days, when the British let the tribesmen govern themselves by their own laws and customs provided they maintained peace. The officer representing the government was the Political Agent, who knew the area and its people inside out and used carrot and stick to sort out erring tribesmen. Regrettably, the coming of independence made little difference to the Fata people, for most Pakistani governments continued to follow the British policy, with the Frontier Crimes Regulation being the only law in operation.

Daily Times, 1 August 2007

Opinion: Lal Masjid and Golden Temple (Ijaz Hussain)

The price that Pakistan may ultimately pay for the Lal Masjid operation is still hidden in the womb of time. One lesson is immediately discernable: history does repeat itself and humans do not necessarily learn from it. Writing recently in a Pakistani newspaper, an Indian analyst dismissed the comparison between the operation against Lal Masjid and the one against Golden Temple as a case of chalk and cheese. He did so on a number of grounds. First, he argued that in the latter situation it was a predominantly Hindu army pitted against the Sikh community, whose appeal was confined to a limited area, whereas in the former a Muslim army was fighting Muslim extremists who had an appeal across the entire country..

Daily Times, 2 August 2007

US wont go into Pakistan after Al Qaeda: Cheney

WASHINGTON: US Vice President Dick Cheney has discounted the possibility of American forces going into Pakistan to hunt Al Qaeda even as they work closely with Islamabad. Well, we work closely with President Pervez Musharraf and his government in Pakistan. Weve captured and killed a lot of Al Qaeda in Pakistan. But its obviously a sovereign state. Theyve got reason to go after Al Qaeda, he said in an interview on Tuesday with CNNs Larry King. In response to a question if Pakistan had asked the US to come in, Cheney said, Well, I dont expect that to happen. I think the relationship we have at present is a good one. We have been able to collaborate closely together on a wide range of operations. And I think well be able to continue doing that.

Dawn, 2 August 2007

Cabinet backs contacts with Benazir: Change in set up ruled out

ISLAMABAD, Aug 1: The federal cabinet on Wednesday endorsed President General Pervez Musharraf's recent contacts with PPP chairperson Benazir Bhutto and extended full support to the president for his re election for the present assemblies. The presidential election is likely to be held between Sept 15 and Oct 15. The cabinet meeting, presided over by Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, was briefed on President Musharraf's recent visit to the UAE and Saudi Arabia. It was informed that no immediate change in the present government set up was expected as a result of the political contacts and that elections would be held on time and in accordance with the constitutional requirements.

The Nation, 2 August 2007

Editorial: Pak-US ties

WHILE Washington designates Pakistan as a close ally in the war on terror, issues continue to crop up indicating that the relations between the two countries are more of a

patron client nature than those between friends. The bill to tie US aid to Pakistan with progress over cracking down on Al Qaeda and other militants passed by the Congress is another indicator of the type of relations. While talking to US ambassador designate Anne W. Patterson, President Musharraf has reportedly sought the review of the bill on the ground that it could adversely impact Pak US ties. It is unlikely that President Bush will veto the bill to assuage the sensitivities of the government. Earlier several statements by key American officials indicating that the US troops might undertake strikes inside Pakistans tribal territory had led to the Senates Foreign Relations Committee passing a strongly worded resolution that called for ending cooperation in the war on terror in case US or NATO troops were to undertake an adventure of the sort.

Dawn, 2 August 2007

Editorial: Another Lal Masjid?

WHO knew that history would repeat itself so quickly? On Sunday gunmen occupied a shrine in Ghaziabad in the Mohmand Agency and announced their decision to continue Lal Masjid cleric Rashid Ghazis mission. How the government reacts will tell us what lessons it has learnt from the Lal Masjid episode. For instance, had the government reacted differently to the women students of Jamia Hafsa who occupied a childrens library in Islamabad way back in January, perhaps the situation would be different. Instead, Lal Masjid is now a symbol of obscurantist resistance and the government finds itself faced with the same dilemma, this time in a tribal agency that has been wrought with unrest for the past few years. The government has always found it difficult to extend its writ. Today, it is being confronted by 60 or so militants who want to enforce their own version of Islam there.

Daily Times, 2 August 2007

Opinion: US alliance with one man (Paula R Newberg)

The current US Pakistan alliance clearly acts against Pakistans constitution, continues the structural disruptions that military rule visits on the state and ultimately undercuts the substance of alliance between the two countries. Trouble, were told, comes in threes. But for Pakistan, this year has brought twice this number of problems with more, no doubt, to come. Rising border instabilities with Afghanistan, renegade Islamic militancy in the heart of the capital, and a resurgent Taliban the bread and butter of Pakistans relationship with the US have been overshadowed by the deepening problems of Pakistans failing governance. General Pervez Musharraf's claimed prerogative has already provoked the judiciary to crisis. Rising civic opposition to the militarised executive branch exposed deep cracks in the armys edifice, and the mangled political system is ill prepared to accommodate the return of civilian politics.

Dawn, 3 August 2007

New US threat to use force: Al Qaeda sheltering in Waziristan, Taliban in Balochistan: Burns

WASHINGTON, Aug 2: The United States wants Pakistan to defeat Al Qaeda in the battlefield and will not hesitate to use its own forces to achieve this objective, says Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns. In a detailed review of the US policy towards Pakistan, Mr Burns observed that Al Qaeda had built a safe haven in

Pakistan, while the Taliban leadership operated from bases in and around Quetta. The US policy, as explained by Mr Burns, favours a democratic change in Pakistan, which brings a government that is friendly to Washington and is a judicious custodian of the countrys nuclear weapons. Mr Burns said linking US aid to Pakistans performance in the fight against terror was justified because as a friend Washington had the right to expect Islamabad to fight the terrorists who attacked the US on Sept 11, 2001.

Daily Times, 3 August 2007

Sharifs move SC for return

ISLAMABAD: Former prime minister Nawaz Sharif and his brother Shabaz Sharif on Thursday filed identical constitutional petitions with the Supreme Court, asking that they be allowed to return to Pakistan and participate in the upcoming general elections. The petitions, filed under Article 184 3 of the Constitution, ask the apex court to stop the federal and provincial governments from obstructing, hampering or resisting the return of the petitioners and their family. The fundamental right of a citizen to remain in Pakistan is absolute and unqualified under Article 15 of the Constitution, therefore, a citizen cannot under any circumstances be expelled or banished from the country, said the petitions.

The Nation, 3 August 2007

Grand jirga asked to woo Taliban

KHAR The political administration of Bajaur Agency has asked all the tribes in the Agency to persuade the local Taliban to abide by the law and cooperate with the government, otherwise force would be used against them. This was conveyed to a grand jirga of chieftains of all the tribes and elected representatives of Bajaur Agency was held here on Thursday. After daylong negotiations, the participants of the jirga agreed on formation of a 150 member representative delegation to hold peace talks with the local Taliban. The jirga, besides others, was attended by MNA Maulana Muhammad Sadiq, Senator Abdul Rashid, Malik Abdul Aziz, Mian Masud Jan, Malik Muhammad Akbar, Maulana Saeedullah, agency councilors, ulema and representatives from Utmankhel, Tarkhani and other tribes living in the Agency.

Dawn, 3 August 2007

Editorial: Obama's loud-mouthing

MR Barack Obama, a Democratic presidential hopeful, has joined the chorus of voices demanding or threatening American military action in Pakistans tribal region. Since Mr Obama could perhaps be in the White House one day, what he is saying today could well become Americas official policy tomorrow. In a speech made at the Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars Mr Obama spoke of those mountains in Pakistan basically because one doubts if the Senator from Illinois knows whether Waziristan is in Azad Kashmir or in eastern Sindh close to Tibet. Pakistan, he warned, would lose millions of dollars in aid when he would be the president, and order his troops into the area where, according to him, 3,000 terrorists are holed up. Mercifully, sanity seems to prevail in official quarters, and the very day that Mr Obama gave vent to his wisdom, the American ambassador in Islamabad denied that Washington had any such plans.

The Nation, 3 August 2007

Editorial: Judicial activism

THANKS to Supreme Courts intervention, millions of people debarred from voting for not possessing computerised national identity cards would now be able to exercise their constitutional right, though measures would have to be devised to debar bogus voters and aliens like Afghan refugees from getting themselves included in the new lists. On orders from the SC, the EC has taken steps to initiate necessary amendments in the Electoral Rolls Act and decided to launch a fresh door to door voter enrolment drive. As was the case with the earlier exercise, it is likely to cost billions of rupees, putting a burden on the exchequer, which could have been avoided if better sense had prevailed while formulating the elections rules. It was unjust to punish such a large number of voters for NADRAs inefficiency. Within days of CJs rehabilitation the SC has taken suo moto notice of a number of cases and made important decisions in public interest.

Daily Times, 4 August 2007

Bush phones Musharraf: Ignore Obamas, aid bill

ISLAMABAD: US President George Bush telephoned President General Pervez Musharraf on Friday to reassure him after US threats of unilateral action against Al Qaeda on Pakistani soil, a Foreign Office statement said on Friday. The call from Bush to his embattled ally in the war on terror comes after recent statements from US officials, and Democratic presidential hopeful Barack Obama, warning of possible US strikes in Pakistani tribal areas. President Bush stated that the United States fully respected Pakistans sovereignty and appreciated Pakistans resolve in fighting Al Qaeda and other terrorist elements, the statement said. He said that such statements were unsavoury and often prompted by political considerations in an environment of electioneering. He agreed that such statements did not serve the interests of either country, it added.

Dawn, 4 August 2007

US slams threat to attack holy sites

WASHINGTON, Aug 3: The US State Department denounced on Friday a lawmakers suggestion to threaten an attack on Islamic holy sites in order to deter a nuclear attack on American soil, saying the idea is absolutely crazy. Let me just say that it is absolutely outrageous and reprehensible for anyone to suggest attacks on holy sites whether they are Muslim, Christian, Jewish or those of any other religion, Tom Casey, a spokesman for the department, told reporters. Tom Tancredo, a Republican presidential hopeful, was reported to have said that the best way he could think of to deter a nuclear terrorist attack on the United States was to threaten to retaliate by bombing Islamic holy sites. If it is up to me, we are going to explain that an attack on this homeland of that nature would be followed by an attack on the holy sites in Makkah and Medina, Tancredo was quoted as saying on Tuesday in Iowa by a website.

Dawn, 4 August 2007

Editorial: These irresponsible threats

GIVEN the mess in which one finds the Bush administrations foreign policy, it is highly unlikely that a Republican will be in the White House next year. But even if a Republican were to make it, it is improbable that it will be Mr Tom Tancredo. Speaking at a town

hall meeting of 20 people in the Iowa state, Mr Tancredo, a Republican hopeful for the party ticket, said that the best way he could think of to deter a terrorist nuclear attack on the US was to bomb Makkah and Madina. He said a terrorist attack on America was imminent. One does not know where the Colorado Congressman got his information from, but no American intelligence agency has given an indication of a threat of this sort being imminent. And even in Britain, where the intelligence agencies periodically discover a terror plot involving, mostly, Britons of Pakistani origin, no one has come up with such a preposterous claim.

The Nation, 4 August 2007

Editorial: Highly provocative

RIDING the wave of a reckless campaign advocating attacks on Pakistani soil by the US army to take out the Taliban and Al Qaeda that have supposedly found sanctuary in the country some presidential hopefuls have joined the game of issuing threats that is being played by their media and political circles these days. Republican Congressman Tom Tancredo from Colorado has taken the score quite a few notches higher by maintaining that to deter a terrorist nuclear attack on the US territory that he sees is imminent, the administration ought to hurry up and threaten retaliatory action with Makkah and Madina, Islams holiest places, as its targets. Only a day earlier, Democratic Senator Barrack Obama had uttered strong words saying that if there was actionable intelligence about the presence of high value targets in Pakistans tribal area and President Musharraf wont act, we will.

Daily Times, 4 August 2007

Editorial: Afghan refugee mess

The people General Ziaul Haq welcomed from Afghanistan as our own people in 1978 are no longer wanted in 2007. Pakistan has reluctantly renewed its pledge with Afghanistan and the UN High Commission for Refugees UNHCR on Thursday that it would repatriate voluntary registered Afghan refugees in the next three years. It actually wants all of them back in Afghanistan, voluntary or not, but cant do it in the face of global humanitarian concerns. Since 2002, more than 3 million Afghans have returned under the voluntary repatriation programme of the UNHCR. If you have so far believed the figure of 3 million plus, prepare to make some revisions. The registered ones who remain in Pakistan are 2.5 million, which makes the total figure go up to nearly 6 million. Dont even talk about the unregistered ones. And even less about Pakistans ability to hunt down the stragglers who have been born and grown up here and are now in their mid and late 20s and able to bear arms.

Daily Times, 4 August 2007

Bhutto to risk arrest on return to Pakistan

LONDON: Former prime minister Benazir Bhutto will fly home later this year to contest parliamentary elections despite the risk of arrest, her spokesman in London said on Friday, Reuters reported. Next month or the following month Ms Bhutto will be travelling to Pakistan, spokesman Bashir Riaz said in a telephone interview. Asked if Bhutto was returning permanently, he said: Yes, thats what I mean. Thats a big event ... Her plan is very simple and straightforward: just to participate in the elections and lead

her party. Riaz said Bhutto, who has for years fought allegations of corruption in Pakistan, was prepared to run the risk of being arrested on her return..

Dawn, 5 August 2007

PML wants Musharraf re elected in uniform

ISLAMABAD, Aug 4: The ruling Pakistan Muslim League on Saturday decided to get President Gen Pervez Musharraf re elected in uniform from the present assemblies. The decision was taken at a meeting of the partys central executive committee held here under party chief Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain. Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz also attended the meeting. Sources in the PML told Dawn the meting also stressed that the same prime minister and party head were essential to ensure continuity of policies. Political observers see it as a clear message for Gen Musharraf against any change in the government in the backdrop of his recent visit to Abu Dhabi which gave rise to reports about a possible deal between him and PPP chairperson Benazir Bhutto.

Daily Times, 5 August 2007

23 die in suicide attacks, fighting

PARACHINAR: Nine people were killed and 43 injured when a suicide car bomber triggered an explosion at a busy bus station in Kurram Agency here on Saturday as security forces killed 10 militants when they attacked a checkpoint in North Waziristan, officials said. Four troops two each from the army and the Frontier Corps were killed in the clash with the militants in North Waziristan, security officials in Miranshah, regional headquarters of North Waziristan, told Daily Times on the condition of anonymity. Dr Muhammad Hanif Jan of the Parachinar hospital told Daily Times that four people died instantly in the suicide car bombing while five others succumbed to their wounds in the hospital. He added that 43 injured people were being treated and the condition of some of them was critical.

Dawn, 5 August 2007

Opinion: Beyond Lal Masjid episode (Anwar Syed)

BETWEEN July 3 and 10, 2007, came an event that many people in the country have been calling a great tragedy and mourning. What happened? Two brothers, Abdul Aziz and Abdul Rashid, administrators of a mosque called Lal Masjid, and the teachers and students of an affiliated seminary Jamia Hafsa decided that they were entitled to enforce the Sharia on the folks outside. They abducted and detained persons of whose morals they did not approve, kidnapped policemen and seized their vehicles, and threatened to burn down music shops. They took in scores of militants and stored modern heavy weapons and ammunition in their premises. Some five months after all this lawlessness had begun, the government moved to stop it..

Daily Times, 5 August 2007

Opinion: Cautious cooperation, conflicting goals (Dr HA Rizvi)

If Bhutto realises that Musharraf cannot be trusted in the post presidential election period, she may review her decision and join with other parties to challenge him at the time of the election The absence of a concise statement on the understanding between Benazir Bhutto and General Pervez Musharraf gives both parties the opportunity to engage in

cautious cooperation while pursuing their individual and conflicting agendas. In such an ambiguous scenario, Bhutto can uphold the claim that she will not support the president in army uniform. On the other hand, Musharraf can maintain that he will resist the return of corrupt political leaders who undermined national interest. Both stands are harmless and do not prevent either side from accommodating the other in matters that serve their mutual interests.

Dawn, 5 August 2007

Editorial: Foreign policy debate

TOMORROW the National Assembly is set to begin what could be a major review of Pakistans foreign policy against some disturbing developments. The opposition has a lot of ammunition at its disposal, and it should take patience and skill for the treasury benches to defend the governments position. The disquieting developments include President George Bushs assent to the bill linking aid to Pakistans performance in fighting terror and extremism, the finalisation of the Indo-American nuclear deal in which India seems to have come out the winner, and official and non-official threats from America to take military action against Al Qaeda bases in Pakistans tribal region. The most perverse of the threats included a presidential candidates idea of attacking Makkah and Madina. The conditional aid to Pakistan and the threat to take military action against terrorists in Waziristan go to highlight the bind in which the government finds itself today.

Daily Times, 6 August 2007

Benazir willing to join Musharraf in govt conditionally

WASHINGTON: PPP Chairwoman Benazir Bhutto indicated on Saturday her willingness to be in the same government as President Gen Pervez Musharraf, as long as their respective powers were balanced. In an interview with CNN recorded in New York, asked if in the right circumstances she could work with President Musharraf in the same government, Ms Bhutto replied, Well, if the people of Pakistan give me a mandate, yes, but there would need to be a balance between the powers of the presidency and the powers of the parliament. She refused to confirm her meeting with Gen Musharraf but said there have been contacts between her and the government at various levels, including her own. She confirmed that she has met people in the government..

Dawn, 6 August 2007

Intelligence report on Pakistan was altered: Post

WASHINGTON, Aug 5: The Bush administration deliberately altered an intelligence document to show that Pakistan has allowed Al Qaeda to establish a safe haven in Pakistan, The Washington Post reported on Sunday. The claim was made in the US national intelligence estimate, submitted to President George W. Bush last month. Drafts of that document were deliberately altered to reveal this conclusion, a move that changed the complexion of the nearly finished report, a senior intelligence official familiar with the revisions told the Post. The July 17 US claim sparked outrage in Islamabad but helped yield the result that US officials sought, the Post observed.

The Nation, 6 August 2007

Editorial: Probing Lal Masjid

THE Senate Standing Committee for Religious Affairs demand for holding an inquiry into the Lal Masjid tragedy is perfectly justified. When an incident as gruesome and as perplexing as Lal Masjid takes place and despite demands from different quarters the authorities make no attempt to go into the root of the matter through a high powered inquiry commission, there is something seriously wrong with the countrys governance. And an obvious conclusion would be that there are skeletons in the cupboard that they would like to hide from the public. How, for instance, an institution of religious learning attached to a place of worship developed into a stronghold of militants, how all the sophisticated weapons that, the official circles claim, were discovered there were smuggled into the building, were there really any foreign terrorists and, if so, how they managed to sneak into the seminary..

Dawn, 6 August 2007

Opinion: The unfinished business of independence (SM Shah)

THE state is a powerful instrument for carrying forward the political objectives of society. While a colonial state imposes its own agenda upon the society its controls, national independence is meant to reverse this relationship between state and society. However, 60 years after the state became independent, society in Pakistan is still not empowered to determine the content and direction of state policy and action. Refusal of the state to submit to the will of society under various pretexts lies at the root of the prevailing social and economic tensions in the country. A clear example of this persistent refusal is that it took 25 years after independence for the countrys first popularly elected parliament and government to take charge of the affairs of state and to determine the content and direction of state policies. Non democratic traditions of governance set in the first quarter century of independence continued afterwards too as the state apparatus became creative and capable of coming up with one excuse or the other not to submit to the will of society.

The News, 6 August 2007

Editorial: Deal or no deal, is that the question?

In his October 1999 speech, shortly after seizing power in a bloodless coup, President then Chief Executive General Musharraf shared a prayer with the nation which he had written for himself. It read: O Allah, I promise my nation sincerity, honesty, integrity and unflinching loyalty. Give me the vision to see and perceive the truth from the false. The wisdom to comprehend the problem and find its solution. The courage to do justice and the strength to do right. Today, President Musharraf stands at the crossroads. He needs the courage to do justice and the strength to do right more than ever before. He is about to enter a deal with the same people he earlier dismissed as corrupt and unworthy. These are the politicians he once blamed for economically ruining Pakistan. And yet, for his political survival, and in the greater national interest he is ready to strike a deal. Or is this all hearsay?

The Nation, 6 August 2007

Tribal elders refusal not to affect Peace Jirga schedule

PESHAWAR Federal Interior Minister Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao has said that refusal of tribal elders from Waziristan to attending the Pak-Afghan Joint Peace Jirga would not

affect the schedule of the Jirga. We would go ahead with the jirga schedule and are determined to make it successive, remarked Sherpao in a brief chat with TheNation here on Sunday. Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao is leading Pakistan chapter of the Joint Pak Afghan Peace Jirga Commission. It is worth mentioning that a number of tribal elders from both North and South Waziristan Agencies have refused to attend the peace jirga during the introductory meeting with NWFP Governor Lt Gen Retd Ali Muhammad Jan Aurakzai.

Daily Times, 7 August 2007

Ill contest election in uniform: Musharraf

KARACHI: President General Pervez Musharraf said on Monday that he would remain in uniform for the presidential election, which would be held before general elections. The president, addressing PML MPAs, MNAs, senators and district nazims as well as PPP Patriots legislators, said a decision on his uniform would be made after the presidential election. Gen Musharraf said that it was a constitutional requirement that the presidential election be held one month before the end of his five year term ending in November, so the election would be held between September 15 and October 15, sources said. State Minister Muhammad Ali Malkani told journalists that the president had said that the Constitution did not bar him from contesting the presidential election for a second term. The president said that the Supreme Court could also not restrain him from re-election as president as the present chief justice had also signed the apex court's previous judgment in his favour, said Thatta Nazim Shafqat Shirazi.

Dawn, 7 August 2007

Bush quiet on direct strikes in Pakistan

WASHINGTON, Aug 6: President George W Bush said on Monday that the United States and Pakistan would take out Al Qaeda leaders if they had actionable intelligence about them, but did not say if he would consult Pakistan before ordering a military strike. Im confident that with actionable intelligence we will be able to bring top Al Qaeda to justice, said Mr Bush at a joint news conference he and the visiting Afghan President Hamid Karzai addressed at the Camp David presidential retreat. Were in constant communications with the Pakistan government. Its in their interest that foreign fighters be brought to justice, after all these are the same ones who are plotting to kill President Musharraf. We share a concern. And Im confident with real actionable intelligence we will get the job done.

The Nation, 7 August 2007

Task force for security of Chinese

ISLAMABAD Pakistan and China Monday signed an accord for the establishment of a special task force for improving security of Chinese living or working in Pakistan. Secretary Interior Syed Kamal Shah and Chinese Ambassador Luo Zhaohui have signed the agreement here. According to the agreement signed between the two countries the task force would hold a monthly meeting and review the security of Chinese personnel. Under the agreement security agencies of both countries would remain in contact.

Daily Times, 7 August 2007

Taliban-jirga talks fail in Bajaur Agency

KHAR: Talks between the Taliban and a tribal jirga about the law and order situation in the Bajaur tribal region failed on Monday, as the government refused to release arrested militants. The four day talks did not yield desired results as both sides stood by their stated positions, a local official and tribal elders from the jirga, who wished not to be named, told Daily Times. Taliban leaders did not accept responsibility for attacks on government interests, and demanded release of arrested people, jirga member Malik Abdul Aziz told reporters in Khar after the talks with militants failed.

Kashmir Times, 7 August 2007

Editorial: Fast moving drama of Pakistan

Events relating to Pakistan are taking place at such a fast pace that the country is left in a highly uncertain but expectant mood. Few can forecast what the next act in their national drama is going to present and when. But, one thing is evident, President Musharraf is no longer the sole hero on the stage dictating monologues. Now powerful claimants for that role Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif are visibly waiting at the wings, while the script being loudly prompted by the US from behind is indistinctly audible. After the mishandling of the Lal Masjid crisis on July 10, and the highly demoralising judicial slap he received ten days later the realist in Musharraf realised of course aided by his mentors in the US that to survive as a power he would have to change his position and policies. Old alliances and approach, evidently, will no longer work..

Daily Times, 7 August 2007

Editorial: The deal is still on

As predicted, with the passage of time, the attempted deal between the PPP chairperson Ms Benazir Bhutto and President General Pervez Musharraf has deliberately been enveloped in mists of ambiguity. Just as many pundits in Pakistan thought Ms Bhutto would be suicidal to join hands with a fading General Musharraf, she has talked of it again in Washington, saying she would work with President Musharraf under certain conditions. Clearly, having settled the pre election dimension, the deal has definitely moved to the post election phase. The earlier conditions voiced by Ms Bhutto no presidential election by the current assemblies and no president in uniform have now become policy. One can say that the facts on the ground and the inclination of the PPP rank and file after 9 March 2007 may have produced the new approach.

Daily Times, 8 August 2007

American threats counter productive

ISLAMABAD: President Gen Pervez Musharraf said on Tuesday recent suggestions from the United States that it might launch unilateral strikes against Al Qaeda in Pakistan were counterproductive to the fight against terrorism, the government said. Gen Musharraf's comments were the highest level rejection by Pakistan of comments by senior US officials and presidential candidates about the possibility of US strikes within the country, a possibility that Pakistan views as challenging its sovereignty. Gen Musharraf told visiting US Senator Richard J Durbin in a meeting in Karachi on Tuesday that Pakistan remained resolved to fighting terrorism, as it was in the national interest, the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

Dawn, 8 August 2007

Army helicopters pound militant hideouts

MIRAMSHAH: A tribesman and two children were injured and several houses damaged when security forces, backed up by Cobra helicopters, attacked suspected hideouts of militants in the Degan area of the North Waziristan Agency on Tuesday, official and hospital sources said. The attack came after a soldier was killed when an improvised explosive device went off near a spring close to the Banda checkpoint. The soldiers had gone to fetch water from the spring. According to Reuters news agency, 10 militants were killed in attacks on two hideouts of militants. The pre dawn offensive in Degan area destroyed the fortress like compounds used by pro Taliban militants, the agency quoted Maj Gen Waheed Arshad as saying. Local sources have told us that at least 10 local militants have been killed and seven wounded, Gen Arshad said.

Paktribune, 8 August 2007

Tenure of assemblies may be extended for a year

ISLAMABAD: The tenure of existing assemblies may be extended for one year. It was decided that the President would be elected from the existing assemblies as there was no constitutional hurdle in this regard. This was decided in a high level meeting headed by president General Musharraf on Tuesday night at Army House Rawalpindi. Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, president of ruling PML Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain and Mushahid Hussain Syed were also present in the meeting. It was decided that the President would be elected from the existing assemblies as there was no constitutional hurdle in this regard. If opposition take the matter in the court, they will face it emphatically.

Daily Times, 8 August 2007

Dwindling hopes: Afghans say Pak Afghan jirga likely to fail

PESHAWAR: Afghans said on Tuesday the Pak-Afghan jirga would not achieve the desired results, as some elements with vested interests on both sides did not want a peaceful solution to the problem. Some Afghans were of the view that the loya jirga was the US game that sidelined Taliban true representatives of Afghan people and without their participation, there was no possibility of any success. The Pak Afghan loya jirga is starting from August 9 in Kabul to discuss strengthening of bilateral relations between the two countries and to find ways and means to curb terrorism and extremism on both sides of the Durand Line.

Daily Times, 8 August 2007

Editorial: General Musharraf can salvage himself as Mr Musharraf

President General Pervez Musharraf reiterated on Monday that he would seek re election from the current assemblies while still in uniform, but that he would decide whether or not to take it off after he has been re-elected. He said two more things: that there would be no imposition of emergency on the country and that Ms Benazir Bhutto and Mr Nawaz Sharif will not return to Pakistan before the elections. Most legal experts like the PML senator Mr SM Zafar who wants him to take off his uniform think that he has a case for seeking re-election from the same assemblies. The new attorney general, Malik Abdul

Qayyum, says that President Musharraf could be re elected as president in uniform from the present assemblies for another five year term and there was no constitutional or legal hindrance in this..

Indian Express, 8 August 2007

Opinion: A match made in Washington (Ayesha Siddiq)

In Pakistan, like other Muslim countries, there is a lot of activity during the couple of months before the beginning of Ramadan. People are usually in a hurry to tie the knot before the start of the month for fasting. This year is no different except that the country is bracing for a grand political marriage of convenience between the countrys general president and the largest national party, the Pakistan People's Party. Musharraf and Benazir Bhutto recently met in the UAE. Initially, the government and Benazir Bhutto were shy in admitting they had a political date in the UAE. For Musharraf, meeting Bhutto is a major climbdown from his earlier position of not allowing the PPP and PML N leadership to return to the country. A secret deal makes him look weak. In fact, news about the meeting possibly leaked by the PPP was meant as a blow to his reputation which the general countered by encouraging stories that Benazir was ready to accept him in uniform.

Dawn, 9 August 2007

Emergency option under study

ISLAMABAD, Aug 8: A beleaguered President Pervez Musharraf met his senior aides on Wednesday apparently to consider new moves to tackle an uncertain political situation, including the possibility of imposing emergency that would mean suspension of most fundamental rights, political sources said. The sources said the situation also figured in informal discussions during a dinner hosted by Pakistan Muslim League president Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, who was quoted by a federal minister as saying the emergency could be imposed. Population Welfare Minister Chaudhry Shahbaz Hussain told Dawn the PML president informed his guests that emergency had become a necessity because of the prevailing situation.

Daily Times, 9 August 2007

Time is running out for deal, says Benazir

WASHINGTON: Benazir Bhutto, former prime minister and chairwoman of the Pakistan Peoples Party PPP, showing signs of frustration at the confusing statements coming out of the presidency, told the Voice of America in an interview that her negotiations with the regime have remained inconclusive to date and time was running out for the government to reach an understanding with the opposition. She also indicated for the first time that if General Pervez Musharraf seeks re election before general elections are held, her party might resign from parliament or boycott the elections altogether.

Daily Times, 9 August 2007

Opinion: US threats and Pakistan (Naeem Saliik)

It is time for Pakistan to take a correct position on the issue and inform the Americans that we are doing what is possible in very difficult circumstances but will not accept any bullying on this score. The recently released declassified parts of the National Intelligence

Estimate NIE have again thrown Pakistan US relations in a tailspin. The report has generated a spate of negative commentaries and analyses in the US media and even the normally balanced newspapers like the Washington Post have editorially recommended US military action in Pakistan tribal areas. Not to be left behind are presidential aspirants from both sides of the political divide.

The Nation, 9 August 2007

Editorial: Foreign policy debate

THE opposition has demanded for nearly five years that the foreign policy be formulated in the National Assembly instead of being devised by the President in consultation with his non political advisers. The call has been ignored. What has prompted the government to take recourse to the NA now are apparently the US threats of strikes inside Pakistans tribal region to destroy the alleged terrorist hideouts. Any adventure of the sort would violate Pakistans sovereignty and give birth to a strong reaction that could destabilize the government. General Musharraf is right to claim that Pakistan has done more than any other country in the war on terror..

Indian Express, 9 August 2007

He Musharraf takes decisions in a hurry, without applying his mind

It is yet uncertain when and in which shape things will settle down in Pakistan. We reproduce below edited and translated excerpts from the book, Ghaddar Kaun Nawaz Sharif ki Kahani, Un ki Zabani Who is the traitor? Nawaz Sharifs story in his own words by Suhail Waraich which offers clues to the calculus of one of the main players in the unfolding political turbulence in the country. On judiciary in Pakistan: The role of the judiciary in history has been suspicious. In my view Pakistan has been wavering from its path due to the collusion of the judiciary with the armys top brass. The basic reason why democracy could not take root was the existence of such an alliance..

Dawn, 10 August 2007

Karzai, Aziz stress unity to defeat Al Qaeda, Taliban

KABUL, Aug 9: Afghan President Hamid Karzai and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz told a three-day joint Pakistan Afghan Peace Jirga on Thursday that both nations could defeat a resurgent Al Qaeda and Taliban if they worked together. The jirga has been billed as an opportunity for the tribal leaders and elders of Afghanistan and Pakistan to thrash out a strategy to deal with the escalating terrorism threat. The two nations shared a common destiny. I believe... if Afghanistan and Pakistan worked together, we will eliminate in one day oppression against both nations, Mr Karzai said while opening the jirga. Mr Karzai was joined in his call for unity by Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz who said the future of Pakistan and Afghanistan were intertwined, and instability in one country affected the other.

Daily Times, 10 August 2007

Bush wants free and fair elections

LAHORE: US President George W Bush on Thursday urged President General Pervez Musharraf to hold free and fair elections in Pakistan. My focus in terms of the domestic scene there is that he have a free and fair election, and that's what weve been talking to

him about and hopeful they will, Bush said at a White House news conference, according to a transcript received here from the US Federal News Service. Bush said he and Musharraf had discussed and agreed on the need to go after Al Qaeda and Taliban militants in the Pak Afghan border region. I have made it clear to him that I would expect there to be full cooperation in sharing intelligence and I believe we've got good intelligence sharing, he said.

Dawn, 10 August 2007

Govt backs away from emergency

ISLAMABAD, Aug 9: President Pervez Musharraf on Thursday decided against imposing a state of emergency, bringing to an end almost 24 hours of speculations and uncertainty in the country. Statements and leaks to the media by senior members of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League PML and top government functionaries since Wednesday evening had kept the nation on tenterhooks. Senior ministers and PML leaders, who were either reluctant to speak on the issue till Wednesday night or were hinting at the imposition of emergency, were categorical on Thursday afternoon in denying that such a move was on the cards at least for the time being.

The Hindu, 10 August 2007

Opinion: Crisis blows over for now (Nirupama Subramanian)

President Pervez Musharraf's decision to withdraw from declaring an Emergency after giving it more than serious consideration for several hours over Wednesday and Thursday shows that American influence aside, Pakistan has changed so much in the last four months that a military ruler can no longer blithely resort to coercive options. The Pakistan President has the powers to proclaim an emergency under Article 232 of the Constitution, if he is satisfied that the country's security is threatened by war or external aggression, or by an internal disturbance. Through Wednesday night and part of Thursday, prominent figures in the Musharraf regime, including the Minister of State for Information Tariq Azeem, pointed to statements by U.S. officials of carrying out unilateral military strikes against alleged Al Qaeda safe havens in the border regions of Pakistan, as posing the threat of external aggression.

Daily Times, 10 August 2007

Editorial: Emergency will endanger Pakistan

Reports emanating from Islamabad say that a proclamation of national Emergency is on the table for the approval of President Pervez Musharraf. In fact, the PML chief, Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, is worried that it might come within days. But the attorney general, Mr Abdul Qayyum, is in denial, saying that no Emergency is being planned; so too is the law minister, Mr Wasi Zafar. But the minister of state for information, Mr Tariq Azeem, says the option is still on the table. Off and on since one year, the PML chief, Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, has been hinting at the imposition of Emergency, always adding that, in case it is done the 2007 elections could be postponed for a year under the Constitution.

The Nation, 10 August 2007

Editorial: Better sense prevailed

PML President Ch Shujaat Hussains assurance that emergency is not being imposed in the country, coming on the heels of a similar denial by the presidency, does not indicate that the option was not considered in depth. This was implicitly confirmed by Senator Mushahid Hussain who told a private television channel on Thursday that these rumours were being spread by those who had earlier advised General Musharraf to file a reference against Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry. There was also an indication that the governments legal aides had suggested to the President to invoke Article 232 of the constitution in anticipation of a Supreme Court decision to allow Mian Nawaz Sharif to return to Pakistan..

Daily Times, 11 August 2007

Musharraf committed to timely polls: CJP

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan CJP Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry said on Friday the Supreme Court SC will not allow any delay in the compilation of the new electoral rolls because President General Pervez Musharraf had expressed commitment to hold the general elections in time. Presiding over a two member division bench including Justice Javed Buttar, the CJP rejected the Election Commissions EC request for more time and directed it to ensure that all eligible missing voters were enlisted in the computerised electoral rolls within 30 days.

Dawn, 11 August 2007

Pakistan proposes joint tribal council with Afghanistan

PESHAWAR, Aug 10: At the ongoing grand peace jirga in Kabul, Pakistan has proposed formation of a joint tribal council to open negotiations with Afghan resistance groups and work for a ceasefire to create necessary conditions for peaceful resolution of the conflict, an official document made available to Dawn reveals. The six-page document titled Pak Afghan Jirga: Draft Declaration says that Pakistan would call for durable institutions to guarantee the unity and stability of Afghanistan and underline the need for peace as a critical prerequisite for the prosperity of the Afghan people.

Daily Times, 11 August 2007

Editorial: Radicalisation of Wafaq seminaries

The nation was shocked to see members of the biggest federation of madrassa chains in Pakistan, the Wafaqul Madaris al Arabiya, come to blows and heap curses on one another when they met at Multan on 7 August 2007. The session was to review the role of the Wafaq during the Lal Masjid crisis; and the clerical leadership, roused by the politicisation of the affair, got divided over the way the Wafaq had handled the situation. Maulana Salimullah, head of the Wafaq federation, was abused in such a manner that he at once offered to resign. The chief administrator of the Wafaq, Maulana Hanif Jalundhari, also promised to resign after the Wafaq had finished conducting examinations for the madrassa chains.

Indian Express, 11 August 2007

Opinion: Courting emergency (M Razvi)

ARE they going to impose emergency rule or not? This was the question that rattled everyone in Pakistan for much of Wednesday night and Thursday morning. Then the

people learnt that Condoleezza Rice had her 17 minute phone chat with President Musharraf at two in the morning, Islamabad time, and the clouds of ambiguity began to subside. While the world knows what the Americans had to say to Musharraf, only the Americans know what the general's response was.

Dawn, 12 August 2007

Musharraf wants exiled leaders to stay away

ISLAMABAD, Aug 11: President Gen Pervez Musharraf on Saturday said the return of Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif to the country before the general election would disturb the political atmosphere, adding that they would be well-advised not to insist on coming home. The president was talking to a delegation of the All-Pakistan Newspapers Societys APNS executive committee here. The president said: The case of Nawaz Sharif is in court and whenever asked, documents of the agreement will be produced before the court.

Dawn, 12 August 2007

Jirga forms body to implement decisions

KABUL, Aug 11: The Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Peace Jirga decided to set up a 40 member committee on Saturday, the day when Afghan President Hamid Karzai described the event as one which would cement the relations between Islamabad and Kabul. The proposal to set up a body for ensuring implementation of the jirga decisions was floated by a working committee earlier in the day. The meeting was jointly chaired by Pakistans Humayun Saifullah Khan District Nazim of Lakki Marwat and Pir Syed Hamid Gilani, representing Afghanistan.

Daily Times, 12 August 2007

Re-election by current assemblies: Musharraf to get nod from next assemblies

ISLAMABAD: President General Pervez Musharraf has said he will stand for re election from the present assemblies, but will seek endorsement of his election from the new assemblies formed after general elections. I will be reelected from the sitting assemblies as the Constitution allows me to do so. But I will seek approval from the next assemblies too as I want to keep on good terms with them,?? the president told a delegation of the All Pakistan Newspapers Society that called on him at the presidential camp office on Saturday.

Daily Times, 12 August 2007

EDITORIAL: Whither Pakistans security if NATO leaves Afghanistan

A Pakistani tribal elder and former member of parliament MP, Malik Fazl Mannan Mohmand, addressed the Pak-Afghan Peace Jirga in Kabul and demanded that Western forces be thrown out of Afghanistan in favour of troops from Muslim countries. There is no need for NATO forces. Bring Islamic countries' troops, said the wise man from Mohmand Agency in Pakistans Tribal Areas. Interestingly, however, his Afghan counterpart, MP Sardar Mohammad Rehman Ogholi, demanded the ouster from Pakistan of foreign terrorists entrenched in the Pakistani tribal belt along the Afghan border.

Daily Times, 12 August 2007

Opinion: Emergency is no solution (Dr HA Rizvi)

The future of Pakistani politics is uncertain. The same can be said about the political future of Musharraf. Even if he manages to complete the ritual of presidential elections, the loss of ethical and political legitimacy will make it extremely difficult for him to cope effectively with internal challenges. On August 8, Pakistan came very close to the imposition of emergency by President Pervez Musharraf. The Musharraf government has been toying with the idea of imposing a state of emergency since the beginning of the lawyers protest movement in March 2007. However, the president pulled back after a tense 16 hours. This reflects that the government faces conflicting pressures from within and outside.

Dawn, 13 August 2007

Accord to deny sanctuaries to terrorists: Joint jirga in Kabul agrees to push for reconciliation with Taliban

Kabul, Aug 12: Afghanistan and Pakistan pledged on Sunday to eliminate terrorist sanctuaries in their respective tribal regions and fight the opium trade financing militants. President Pervez Musharraf, addressing 700 tribal delegates at the end of a landmark peace jirga aimed at defeating the common threat of Al Qaeda and the Taliban, called for an urgent rescue from extremism. A statement at the close of the four day jirga also agreed to push for reconciliation with the opposition a reference to the Taliban who agree to accept the rule of law. Participants pledged they would not allow sanctuaries/ training centres for terrorists in their respective countries, according to the declaration text.

Daily Times, 13 August 2007

Pakistan at 60: caught between military rule and radical Islam

ISLAMABAD: As Pakistan marks its 60th anniversary, the country finds itself chafing under military rule with its identity and very existence threatened by a rising tide of Islamic extremism. Osama Bin Ladens Al Qaeda network and its Taliban allies plot insurrection and global terror from bases in Pakistans northern tribal zones, and military ruler Pervez Musharraf is under intense to strike hard against them. But security experts say the threat of radical Islamic terrorism is the product of military rule and only a return to democracy can help bring it to an end. The country is fighting two last battles which will decide the soul of Pakistan first is the fight against extremism and second is the rise of a peoples movement for genuine democratic rule, political writer Najam Sethi told AFP.

The Nation, 13 August 2007

Editorial: Presidents briefing

SOMEHOW, the Presidents belief that the return of exiled leaders, Ms Benazir Bhutto, Mian Nawaz Sharif and his younger brother Shahbaz, before the elections would lead to political and economic instability in the country is in sharp contrast with the opinion of most Pakistan watchers abroad and at home. In their view, their presence here and participation in the polls would be in line with the wishes of a vast majority of politically conscious people, make for an atmosphere of reconciliation among different parties and prove conducive to the conduct of free, fair and transparent elections that the President told members of the Executive Committee of the All Pakistan Newspaper Society on

Saturday was his aim. Keeping them out of the process would instead generate ill feeling, with the almost certain possibility of agitational politics marring the prospects of peaceful holding of the ballot.

Daily Times, 13 August 2007

Opinion: Limits of absolute power (Dr A Siddiq)

The US appears to be less concerned with Musharraf's uniform as long as he can deliver on the war on terror. But Washington also knows that Musharraf needs to broaden his political support-base and to that end Pakistan needs to have the next round of elections as planned. General President Pervez Musharraf is getting himself into a morass everyday. The best course of action for him would be to seriously try and get out. But since that is unlikely to happen, he may at least take the second-best course of action: get himself a good PR man. Such a one may also have a good knowledge of history. He could then update the president on the limitations of absolute power and the principle of diminishing returns. This means that after a point any additional use of force or power is bound to be counterproductive. The chief justice episode is a case in point..

The Hindu, 13 August 2007

Editorial: Making the General blink

While the intensifying movement against military rule took President Pervez Musharraf to emergency-brink, the apprehension that it might be explosively unpopular has made him defer the decision. As talk of an imminent clampdown swelled by the afternoon of August 9, commentators were of the view that General Musharraf would cite the dire internal security situation and a putative external threat to justify the extreme step. Hardly any of them bought the rationale. It is true that Islamabad and some other places have been hit by a spate of suicide bomb attacks. There have been violent agitations in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas against the central government after it launched a drive against militants living in these territories. Islamists across Pakistan are seething at the Musharraf regimes Operation Lal Masjid in the capital.

Dawn, 13 August 2007

Opinion: Responding to history (TA Khan)

INDEPENDENCE Day 2007 marks an important milestone in the nations journey through time. The 60th anniversary of freedom is a moment for remembering the covenant it made to create a great Muslim democracy in South Asia where a proud heritage of power and glory was lost largely because of a failure to evolve a state that drew strength from the assent and participation of the people and from an unquestioned adherence to the rule of law..In trying to maintain their stranglehold on power, which is more shadow than substance after the eventful developments of the last five months, these elements are once again asking the army to sweep aside these pro democracy forces through another fiat of arms even if it leads to the fragmentation of the nation-state the historic birth of which 60 years ago we celebrate now. If President Musharraf remains exclusively dependent on these men of straw for support and legitimacy, the ship of state cannot hope to weather the storm raging around him.

Dawn, 14 August 2007

Editorial: Pakistan at 60

PAKISTAN today is 60 years old. To say that we have achieved nothing over these six decades is to deny the truth. True, we have made blunder after blunder, committed terrible crimes against our own people, and in the process lost half the country in 1971. Yet it is not a record all that bleak. All said and done, there has been progress, though, admittedly, the rate could have been faster. The literacy rate has crossed the 50 per cent mark. Some other countries, like China, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Kenya, have done better and achieved much higher results. But we had to contend with enormous problems, foremost being the compulsion to spend on defence more than what we could really afford. Also, despite the gross neglect of science over the decades, Pakistan has been able to develop a pool of scientific talent, and when India left us with no choice by testing a nuclear device, we responded in kind and thus could raise our head in pride.

Dawn, 14 August 2007

60 years on, Kashmir core issue Srinagar, Jammu poles apart

SIXTY years after the independence of the Sub-continent from British rule, the status of Kashmir remains the most contentious issue between Pakistan and India, with a survey showing that a majority of Kashmiris living in Srinagar want to see the disputed territory as an independent country. This is in marked contrast to the aspirations of not only the people living in India and Pakistan, but also those in Hindu dominated Jammu, who overwhelmingly favoured the region's accession to India. The survey, sponsored by Dawn News, CNN IBN, Dawn and Indian Express in the last week of July and the first week of this month, was carried out by AC Neilsen in the top 10 cities of Pakistan and by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies CSDS in India's top 20 cities.

Daily Times, 14 August 2007

Editorial: Tread carefully after 60 ideologically mismatched years

Since 2001, after the Pakistani public's honeymoon with General Pervez Musharraf began to fade following his participation in an American sponsored war on terror, the Pakistani mind has submitted to a pessimistic view of the state of Pakistan. Even the Urdu editorials began to praise India for holding on to democracy while Pakistan was subject to the supremacy of the army instead. Slowly, everybody began to emphasise the years Pakistan had spent under military rule and under emergency during democracy. One runs the risk of joining this orgy of pessimism unless one thinks within the third world paradigm and outside the box of pan Islamic alarmism about what the world is allegedly doing to the Muslims.

Dawn, 14 August 2007

Opinion: Whither provincial autonomy? (M Chandio)

SIXTY years on from the birth of a new country and a new nation, how do the people of smaller provinces view Independence Day? Do they really believe they are free? Are they proud to call themselves Pakistani? Do they think theirs is a respectable federation among the comity of nations? Since Partition in 1947, Pakistan has had a chequered history. The nascent state started its journey with mass communal riots, killing of innocent men, women and children, the destruction of property, an unprecedented influx of refugees and bitter disputes with India over Kashmir, Junagarh, canal waters, evacuee property and the

withholding of assets.

Daily Times, 15 August 2007

Armed forces guarantors of peace, says Musharraf

RAWALPINDI: President General Pervez Musharraf said on Tuesday that Pakistans armed forces were guarantors of peace, stability and integrity of the country. Addressing a reception he hosted for senior serving and retired officers and junior commissioned officers at the Artillery Officers Mess, President Musharraf said the government was aware of the basic needs of the people and was making efforts to transfer the benefits of Pakistans economic development to the masses. Musharraf said that Pakistan was facing the menace of extremism and terrorism and it was unfortunate that a handful of extremist groups were trying to force their will over the people.

Dawn, 15 August 2007

Terrorism a threat to progress: Musharraf: Independence Day reception for military officers

ISLAMABAD, Aug 14: President Pervez Musharraf has reiterated that Pakistan will never allow use of its soil by terrorists and expressed his governments determination to root out extremism and terrorism in the country. The country is facing the menace of extremism and terrorism and it is very unfortunate that a handful of extremist groups want to force their will over majority who are enlightened and moderate, he said while speaking at a reception he hosted for senior serving and retired armed forces officers and junior commissioned officers at the Artillery Officers Mess as part of the Independence Day celebrations here on Tuesday. He, however, expressed the confidence that these elements would not succeed in achieving their ulterior motives.

Daily Times, 15 August 2007

Opinion: Reinventing Pressler Amendment (Ijaz Hussain)

The problem with the US is that it wants Pakistans unstinting involvement in the war against terror more or less on its own terms. It does not seem to concede that Pakistan too could have interests in Afghanistan that might be divergent from those of the US. The Pressler Amendment that we thought we had interred forever, like the Valhalla character in the Norse mythology, refuses to die. This is evident from the anti terrorist law which links American assistance to Pakistan, among others, with performance against Al Qaeda and the Taliban. It does not stop the assistance in the pipeline but may affect military assistance for fiscal years 2008 and 2009, if the American president fails to certify that Pakistan is doing enough to prevent terrorists from operating in areas under its sovereign control.

Dawn, 15 August 2007

Opinion: Its a long, troubled journey (Mahir Ali)

A DECLARATION of emergency would have been an unwelcome 60th birthday gift for Pakistan, but perhaps not entirely an inappropriate one, given a post-independence trajectory littered with all manner of exigencies. And it would be unwise to complacently assume that this particular danger has passed. A belated present is by no means out of the question, particularly if the unusually independent Supreme Court seeks to interfere with

the chosen means of perpetuating the existing form of misrule. Apart from providing an excuse for pageantry, national anniversaries are commonly considered appropriate occasions for celebrating the past and looking forward to the future. Unfortunately, in Pakistan's case, gazing in either direction can prove to be a painful experience.

Dawn, 16 August 2007

Concerns conveyed to US official

ISLAMABAD, Aug 15: US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, Richard A. Boucher, said on Wednesday that the United States was committed to a long term strategic relationship with Pakistan and allayed Pakistans concerns about recent hostile US statements. In separate meetings with President General Pervez Musharraf and Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri, he said that there existed a solid foundation for such a relationship. An official told Dawn that the US assistant secretary of state said the US highly valued relationship with Pakistan and admired the role being played by the country in the fight against terrorism.

Daily Times, 16 August 2007

Editorial: PPPs worrisome communication gap over the deal

A report understandably says that some PPP leaders in Punjab are upset over Ms Benazir Bhuttos continuing engagement with President General Pervez Musharraf on a deal while the people wanted her to join the politics of confrontation within the all parties democratic movement APDM. Their plaint is that the coming elections will see the PPP isolated, ceding the top position to the PMLNs Mr Nawaz Sharif. The most damaging blow to the partys public image, say the partys critics, is the allegation that she may be holding out for a beleaguered President Musharraf to get a reprieve from the cases she and her husband face in the courts of Pakistan if she returns in September October this year.

Dawn, 16 August 2007

Benazir wants govt action in 3 weeks

NEW YORK, Aug 15: Saying that she has staked her political future in holding talks with President Pervez Musharraf, former prime minister Benazir Bhutto on Wednesday asked the general to put in place necessary reforms to hold free, fair and transparent elections. Speaking at the Council of Foreign Relations, the PPP chairperson said Gen Musharraf should put in place the elements of an understanding on the issues of democracy and election within three weeks. She reiterated that she would return to Pakistan before the end of the year and start a movement for the restoration of democracy and the rule of law.

Dawn, 16 August 2007

Opinion: Absence of national integration (Sultan Ahmed)

AS Pakistan celebrates its 60th birthday with some people having almost everything they want, and the rulers having a low public rating, some of the deficiencies have become too glaring. The basic deficiency is the lack of national integration or cohesion which had earlier resulted in the loss of half the country following a stunning military defeat. Then, we have not been able to integrate the vast tribal areas with the mainland. Tribal maliks

or sardars rule the roost in their areas and sit in the national parliament making laws for the whole of Pakistan which do not apply to the areas to which they come from. This is a blatant contradiction but only one of the main contradictions in our polity.

Daily Times, 17 August 2007

US urging Musharraf to explore political deal with Opposition

WASHINGTON: The United States has urged President Pervez Musharraf to explore some kind of political arrangement with opposition politicians, a US official said on Thursday. There are elections coming up in Pakistan and there is a moderate centre in Pakistani politics and that moderate centre has an interest in seeing the political and social reforms that Musharraf put in place continue, said the official, asking not to be named. The official was commenting on a New York Times report that the Bush administration is quietly encouraging Musharraf to share power with former premier Benazir Bhutto, citing US and Pakistani officials.

Dawn, 17 August 2007

Musharraf rules out accord with PPP

FAISALABAD, Aug 16: President Gen Pervez Musharraf has ruled out any deal or power sharing with the Pakistan People's Party PPP, saying it PPP will be the rival of the ruling PML in the general elections. President Musharraf met ruling party MNAs and MPAs from six districts Faisalabad, Jhang, Toba Tek Singh, Sargodha, Mianwali and Khushab at the Faisalabad airport on Thursday. The president said he would be re-elected president in uniform as the constitution allowed him.

Daily Times, 17 August 2007

Editorial: Debasement of the jirga in Pakistan

The terrorists of the Tribal Areas have sent threatening letters to the elders of the Bajaur Agency promising them unspecified punishment for attending the grand Pak Afghan joint jirga in Kabul. The grand jirga was, generally speaking, a failure because of the refusal of a large number of elders from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas FATA to attend it. Even the MMA secretary general, Maulana Fazlur Rehman, who has a significant party presence in FATA, refused to attend it. Hundreds of tribal elders have been killed by the terrorists merely because they form a part of the tribal system run by Pakistan.

Daily Times, 18 August 2007

Pakistan needs me: Musharraf

LAHORE: President General Pervez Musharraf said on Friday he had decided to contest the presidential election for another term because the country needs him. Talking to federal and provincial ministers, senators, members of the national and Punjab Assembly, and district nazims from Gujranwala, Kasur, Okara, Sialkot, Hafizabad, Sheikhpura, Gujrat, Mandi Bahauddin, Narowal and Lahore at Chief Minister's Secretariat here, President Musharraf said that he wanted to complete the mega projects and reforms introduced by him in the next presidential term.

Dawn, 18 August 2007

Destruction of evidence annoys apex court: Lal Masjid Jamia Hafsa case

ISLAMABAD, Aug 17: In view of the mess that followed the military operation against Lal Masjid and Jamia Hafsa, the Supreme Court on Friday asked Interior Secretary Kamal Shah to handle the case. A four-member bench, comprising Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry, Justice Sardar Mohammad Raza Khan, Justice Faqir Mohammad Khokhar and Justice M. Javed Buttar, was not happy over the destruction of evidence by pulling down Jamia Hafsa. The delay in disposal of cases against students arrested from the seminary during the operation also annoyed the court when it was told that their cases had been put off till September because Anti Terrorist Court ATC Judge Sakhi Mohammad Kahut had proceeded on summer vacations till August 26.

Daily Times, 18 August 2007

Opinion: Sixty years on...(Shaukat Qadir)

While there are still dark clouds on the horizon that show no signs of dispersing, there are rays of light shining through. I have not yet lost hope; but then, friends talk of me as an inveterate optimist. This being the running topic, let me also jump on the bandwagon. So what's the score? The population has tripled which means the number of people living below the poverty level has increased. Religious tolerance has decreased by leaps and bounds while social inequalities have grown to enormous proportions. While the wealthy have increased in number, the gap between the rich and the poor has increased. The vast majority of our population still has no access to potable water, health care or schooling, and at least one province has become so alienated that it commemorated the 60th birthday as a black day.

Dawn, 18 August 2007

Editorial: Advice or interference?

CALL it pressure or friendly advice, Washington's interest in having a moderate government in which the military will share power with the PPP is becoming clearer by the day. While Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher denied in Islamabad on Thursday that the US was facilitating a deal between President Pervez Musharraf and Ms Benazir Bhutto, a White House spokesman made it clear the same day that the US was interested in seeing a moderate political centre in Pakistan. One American official, who did not wish to be named, was a little more specific and said that his government wanted all moderate elements to take part in the political process leading to the election of a leader who represented the choice of the Pakistani people.

Daily Times, 19 August 2007

EDITORIAL: Success and failure of Musharraf

Talking to federal and provincial ministers, senators, members of the national and Punjab assemblies, and district nazims from the province, at Chief Ministers Secretariat in Lahore, President General Pervez Musharraf has declared his intention to contest the presidential election for another term because the country needs him. He added that he wanted to complete some mega projects, and continue his reform agenda in the next presidential term. President Musharraf's assessment of himself differs from that of the people of Pakistan: the last opinion survey conducted in Pakistan showed that 70 percent of the people do not want him around.

Paktribune, 19 August 2007

Presidential elections to be held according to constitution and law: Musharraf

BAHAWALPUR: President Gen Pervez Musharraf has reiterated that Presidential elections would be held according to the constitution and law. Addressing a gathering of senior MNAs, MPAs, and district nazims of Southern Punjab districts like Rajanpur, Vehari, Lodhran, Rahim Yar Kahn, Bahawalnagar and Bahawalpur, he said that the political system has become imperative for economic progress, and democratic norms of Country. He assured of the defense of the Country being in safe and sound hands, and said that the economic and developmental budget of the Country has peaked to Rs. 520 billion from a mere Rs 80 billion ten years ago.

Dawn, 19 August 2007

Vision 2030 envisages rule of law, democracy: Musharraf to unveil plan on 21st

ISLAMABAD, Aug 18: President Pervez Musharraf will launch on Tuesday a Vision 2030 document aimed at making Pakistan a developed, industrialised and prosperous nation enjoying democracy and freedom of expression within one generation. Official sources told Dawn on Saturday that the president had turned down a proposal to limit the launch to state controlled media, saying that the document prepared by the Planning Commission needed a national debate. An official said billions of rupees were required to realise the vision for which working groups were being finalised to prepare recommendations for each sector with the funding requirements.

Dawn, 19 August 2007

Opinion: Jirga: an exercise in futility? (M Shah)

TO say that the situation in Afghanistan is grave would be an understatement. Every passing day sees the US becoming mired ever deeper in Afghanistan à la Iraq, because of its faulty strategy. In its desperation, it is looking for supporting planks and is leaning more and more on Pakistan. Thus the mantra of do more. Meanwhile, Kabul, the proverbial capital of intrigues, is bustling with renewed activities. People are talking about a new great game related to the oil and gas reserves of the Central Asian Republics and trade opportunities that mask the ambitions of the US and the new emerging superpowers. It is in the backdrop of this environment that Pakistan is getting sucked into the situation in the name of the peace jirga.

Dawn, 20 August 2007

US efforts for Musharraf PPP deal hit snag

WASHINGTON, Aug 19: US envoy to the United Nations Zalmay Khalilzad has said he had a good meeting with Pakistan Peoples Party chairperson Benazir Bhutto, but refused to give details of his talks with the former prime minister. Mr Khalilzad, the guest star at the Afghan national day reception here, has suddenly acquired a key place in media reports about Pakistan as the person who is trying to negotiate a deal between Ms Bhutto and President Gen Pervez Musharraf. A seasoned diplomat, who represented the United States in Kabul and Baghdad before sent to the United Nations as envoy, Mr Khalilzad is known for obliging the media with one liners on issues that other diplomats hesitate to discuss.

Daily Times, 20 August 2007

Army attacks militant hideouts in Miranshah, 15 killed

MIRANSHAH: Pakistan army helicopter gunships killed at least 15 Al Qaeda militants, mostly Uzbeks, in a pre dawn raid near the Afghan border on Sunday, a military spokesman said. Four helicopters carried out the attack near Mir Ali town in the North Waziristan tribal region, which lasted for more than two hours, Major General Waheed Arshad said. The attack was launched after credible reports that foreign elements were using the compounds as hideouts, he said. We have credible information that the two compounds have been destroyed and 15 miscreants, including 10 Uzbeks, have been killed in the strike, Arshad said.

Dawn, 20 August 2007

Opinion: Emergency option not yet given up (Dr MN Chishti)

PRESIDENT General Pervez Musharraf does not seem to have learnt any lessons from his thrashing in the case of Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry. In less than a month of the judgment delivered on July 20, and within days of his announcing the decision not to proclaim emergency, he has once again issued a statement in which he has effectively suggested between the lines that emergency rule was still on the cards. While talking to a delegation of the All Pakistan Newspapers Society, he declared The Constitution clearly said that conducive economic and political conditions are necessary for holding elections.

Daily Times, 20 August 2007

Editorial: A post election deal with PPP?

Talking to the PML leaders in the southern Punjab constituency of his re election campaign, President General Pervez Musharraf said that he was in favour of national reconciliation, but that it would happen after the general elections, on the basis of the strength of the political parties in the new assemblies. He repeated his allegiance to the leadership of the PML and it was clear from the TV coverage that Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain and Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi were both satisfied with his renunciation of the policy of a deal with the Pakistan Peoples Party. Although General Musharraf spoke of national reconciliation after the elections, it was clear that he meant the PPP and not the PMLN.

Dawn, 21 August 2007

Produce the missing or go to jail: SC warns FIA chief

ISLAMABAD, Aug 20: The Supreme Court on Monday sent a clear signal to the countrys powerful intelligence agencies by telling a top investigating officer to produce a man he had arrested and handed over to the Military Intelligence, or else go to jail. You should bring the missing person as you had illegally handed over the custody of Hafiz Abdul Basit, the court told the former additional inspector general of police Tariq Pervez, who now heads the Federal Investigation Agency. A Supreme Court bench comprising Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry, Justice Faqir Mohammad Khokhar, Justice Nasirul Mulk and Justice Raja Fayyaz Ahmed was hearing petitions of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and 48 other complaints moved by Ms Amina Masood Janjua, Saqlain Mehdi, Aisha, Abdul Ghaffar, Amtul Hafiz, Fatima, Mohammad.

Daily Times, 21 August 2007

Pakistan to respond if India resumes N testing

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan will be forced to review its unilateral moratorium on nuclear tests if India resumes nuclear testing, Foreign Office FO spokeswoman Tasnim Aslam said on Monday, while expressing concern over statements from New Delhi about India's right to conduct nuclear tests after a deal with the US. India resuming nuclear testing would be a serious act and Pakistan would review its policy in the light of national security, Ms Aslam told a weekly press briefing. She said Pakistan took India's assertion to the right of atomic testing very seriously, and said the international community should do the same.

Dawn, 21 August 2007

Musharraf urged to quit army

DUBAI, Aug 20: Former prime minister Benazir Bhutto said she wants General Pervez Musharraf to retire from his position as the Chief of the Army Staff to pave the way for younger generals and indicated that she could get along with some generals. According to report in a Dubai newspaper, she said next two weeks would be crucial for any working arrangement with President Musharraf. There is no agreement yet, the next two weeks will be crucial, she was quoted as saying by Khaleej Times. The PPP chairperson who lives in Dubai in self-exile also declared that deal or no deal, she would return to Pakistan after September this year and said that right now she felt excited and tense.

Daily Times, 21 August 2007

Opinion: Emerging national consensus (RB Rais)

The military rulers and their subordinate class of civilian bureaucracy share an elitist view of politics and think that only they understand what is good for the country; also, that they are intellectually better equipped than the elected representatives to pursue that good. It is often asserted that we have constantly failed in achieving consensus on fundamental political values. This is wrong. But let's first define the fundamental political values that a nation must choose carefully and, having agreed on, consider sacrosanct. They entail the nature of the political system and distribution of power among various parts of the government and between the federal and the provincial governments.

Dawn, 22 August 2007

Jirga decisions will be implemented: president

ISLAMABAD, Aug 21: President Gen Pervez Musharraf on Tuesday said that Pakistan would take all possible follow up steps to implement the decisions taken at the Pak Afghan Joint Peace Jirga held recently in Kabul. He was chairing a high level meeting at the Aiwan i Sadr. Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz was also present. The president expressed satisfaction at the holding of the jirga and expressed the hope that involvement of tribal and religious leaders from both sides of the border would help promote peace and security and check illegal border crossings..

Dawn, 22 August 2007

Minister blasts pro US foreign policy

ISLAMABAD, Aug 21: Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr Sher Afgan Niazi on Tuesday stunned both the treasury and opposition senators when he roundly criticised the foreign policy, describing it as one of appeasement at the cost of national interests, sovereignty and honour. He also condemned recently passed US legislation and the derogatory statements about Pakistan made by some American presidential candidates. Muttahida Majlis i Amals Prof Khurshid Ahmed immediately stood up to endorse most of the views expressed by the minister, and welcomed the change of heart describing it as part of the change that had taken place in the wake of the July 20 landmark Supreme Court judgment.

Dawn, 22 August 2007

Editorial: IDPs in Afghanistan

WHILE it is difficult to cite an exact figure, it is estimated that the number of internally displaced persons inside Afghanistan runs into several thousands over 100,000 were uprooted last year alone. Refugees returning from Pakistan and Iran are aggravating the crisis, especially as their reintegration is proving to be a difficult task, given their limited resources and the usurpation of land and homes that formerly belonged to them. Neither the Afghan government nor the various aid agencies working for the rehabilitation of Afghan society have been able to contain the swelling number of the internally displaced. The latter have been forced out of their homes because of natural disasters, ethnic tensions, human rights violations and the continuing conflict between Nato and Afghan forces on one side and the Taliban on the other.

Daily Times, 22 August 2007

No martial law and no emergency: Musharraf

ISLAMABAD: President General Pervez Musharraf has ruled out the possibility of martial law or a state of emergency in Pakistan, Aaj television reports. The president told a meeting at Aiwan e Sadr in Islamabad that general elections would be held on time because he had promised the world that elections would be held on time and would be free and fair. The meeting discussed the governments strategy for the presidents re election as well as the opposition's likely challenge of Gen Musharrafs plan to stand for re election in uniform and from the current assemblies.

Daily Times, 22 August 2007

Opinion: The growing schism (Dr M Ejaz)

The US was also concerned that if, in reaction to the imposition of emergency the lawyers and other communities took to the streets, the Musharraf governments focus would have shifted from fighting the Taliban and Al Qaeda to controlling the unrest in the country. Finally, the foreign minister, Khurshid Mahmood Kasuri, has acknowledged that the imposition of emergency was averted because of a call from the US secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice. Almost instantly though, he recanted his statement and said that Pakistan as an atomic power and a sovereign state would not take any dictation from outside.

Daily Times, 23 August 2007

Musharraf BB deal may be near collapse

WASHINGTON: The Musharraf Benazir Bhutto deal may be near collapse if Gen Pervez Musharraf is contemplating imposing martial law, according to a noted South Asia expert. If Gen Musharraf declared martial law, even a short term one, it would be seen in the United States and Pakistan as a desperate attempt to retain both the presidency and the uniform, according to Marvin Weinbaum of the Middle East Institute. He told Daily Times in answer to a question that reports that Gen Musharraf may be contemplating a short term martial law reflect the apparent collapse of a deal with Benazir, made in some ways ever more difficult as she is being depicted in Pakistan as the American candidate.

The Hindu, 23 August 2007

Sharif deal papers submitted to court (N Subramanian)

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan government on Wednesday submitted in the Supreme Court a copy of a purported undertaking by the former Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, agreeing to go into exile to an unnamed country for 10 years in December 2000 and pledging to keep off political activity during that period. Saudi Arabia, at whose behest President Pervez Musharraf admittedly agreed to release Mr. Sharif from prison, and where he went into exile, remains unmentioned in the mysteriously worded document.

Paktribune, 23 August 2007

Talks underway with Pak Government for signing NPT, says Japanese Defence Minister

ISLAMABAD: Japan will keep on providing funds to Pakistan for strong and stable democratic system in Pakistan and talks will continue with Pakistan on signing Non Proliferation Treaty NPT. These views were expressed by visiting Japanese Defence Minister Mrs Yuriko Koike in a Press Briefing held at a local Hotel in Islamabad on Wednesday after her talks with President, Prime Minister and her counterpart Rao Sikandar Iqbal. Mrs Yuriko Koike said that she had fruitful talks with President and Prime Minister of Pakistan in which host of issues of bilateral interest were discussed in length.

Dawn, 23 August 2007

Editorial: Recovering the disappeared

THE Supreme Courts drive for the recovery of missing people believed to be in the custody of the intelligence agencies is yielding results. On Tuesday, the court ordered the release of two men, one of whom was produced in court. Aleem Nasir, a German national, said that he had been arrested by the ISI at Lahore airport more than a month ago and was subsequently harassed and interrogated. He has been luckier than most detainees who have been subjected to extreme torture as in the case of suspected Al Qaeda operative, Saud Memon, who was produced in court last May on a stretcher and in an unrecognisable state after having been in the ISIs custody for two years.

Daily Times, 24 August 2007

Musharraf can be president in civvies: Benazir Bhutto (Khalid Hasan)

WASHINGTON: Pakistan Peoples Party Chairwoman Benazir Bhutto has said in an interview telecast here this week that she wants a facilitated transfer of democracy and is willing to have a working relationship with President General Pervez Musharraf, who

could stay in charge of the army as president if he sheds his uniform. In an interview with former CBS news anchor Dan Rather, the PPP chairwoman indicated that two of the confidence building measures that she is waiting for from Musharraf are: lifting of the ban on a third term for prime ministers and indemnity for holders of public office prior to 2001. Asked if she and her party were open to sharing power with Musharraf and leave him in charge of the military, Bhutto replied, The president of our country under the Constitution is the commander in chief.

Dawn, 24 August 2007

THE TIDE TURNS: Apex court clears Sharifs return Govts adjournment plea rejected PML N supporters distribute sweets, sacrifice goats

ISLAMABAD, Aug 23: In a dramatic verdict which may have far reaching effects on the countrys political future, the Supreme Court on Thursday ruled that the exiled Sharif brothers could come back home and asked the government not to obstruct their return in any manner. It is declared that Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and Mian Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif under Article 15 of the Constitution have an inalienable right to enter and remain in country, as citizens of Pakistan. Their return/entry into country shall not be restrained, hampered or obstructed by the Federal or Provincial Government Agencies, in any manner, a seven member bench of the court said in a unanimous short order announced after a day long hearing.

Daily Times, 24 August 2007

Editorial: Significance of SC judgement in Nawaz Sharif case

The Supreme Court has decided that Nawaz Sharif and Shahbaz Sharif are free to return to Pakistan without let or hindrance. The judgement clearly did not give credibility to the agreement presented by the government in which the Sharifs undertook to stay away from Pakistan for ten years and not take part in politics. Mr Sharif says there was no agreement with the government of Pakistan but admits there was an understanding with the Saudi Arabian government. However, Mr Sharif refuses to disclose the details of the prosecution of this understanding between his family and Saudi Arabia because not everything is to be disclosed in the national interest. The text of the Harmless Agreement binds him to secrecy, a condition apparently also accepted by the Musharraf government. Since no other party is mentioned, President Musharraf can be said to be as much bound under presumption by its content as Saudi Arabia.

Daily Times, 25 August 2007

Opinion: A turning point, at 60 (Abbas Rashid)

Far better for Musharraf to facilitate the transition that at this turning point seems within the nation's grasp. It is not just his individual role that is at issue here but that of the institution. The military has a serious enough task to perform, which is not governing the country itself, but aiding a legitimate government to do so. Pakistan celebrated its 60 years of independence under a cloud. Among other things, Independence Day had been preceded by serious deliberations on the imposition of emergency. There were the inevitable comparisons with the stable system of governance that India has evolved over the duration and Pakistans frequent bouts of military rule..

Dawn, 25 August 2007

Illegal for man in uniform to seek election: Benazir

KARACHI, Aug 24: The former prime minister and self exiled chairperson of the Pakistan Peoples Party, Benazir Bhutto, reiterated on Friday that her party would not accept a president in uniform and would continue to work for transition towards a democratic dispensation in the country. She also spoke of her intention to return to Pakistan to campaign for her party and join other moderate political parties to try and bring about a transition. In an interview with DawnNews TV channel, Ms Bhutto said a president in uniform blurred the distinction between democracy and dictatorship, adding that the PPP would find it very hard to reconcile with that and we will not do so.

Dawn, 25 August 2007

Editorial: After the Kabul jirga

PRESIDENT Musharraf recently pledged that Pakistan would take all possible follow up steps to implement the decisions taken at the tribal jirga held in Kabul two weeks ago. Taken at face value, the generals commitment to the peace process is both laudable and pragmatic, for stability in Afghanistan is linked inextricably to rule of law in Pakistan not just in the tribal belt but the country at large. Delivering on pledges is easier said, however, given the volatility of the situation and the trust deficit that has undermined past attempts at dialogue. The Kabul jirga, which featured delegates from some 700 tribes on either side of the Durand Line, had vowed on August 12 to eliminate terrorist camps and sanctuaries in Pakistan and Afghanistan and to clamp down on the opium trade which finances militancy..

Daily Times, 26 August 2007

Tariq Aziz in London for last ditch deal with BB

ISLAMABAD: Backchannel diplomacy re started yesterday with the departure for London of Tariq Aziz, secretary of the National Security Council, for a final round of talks with Pakistan Peoples Party PPP Chairwoman Benazir Bhutto to win her support for the forthcoming presidential polls by making constitutional amendments to remove legal hurdles for President Gen Pervez Musharraf's re election. According to the proposals in Mr Aziz's pocket, the president is ready to shed his uniform after the presidential polls.

Dawn, 26 August 2007

Nawaz likely to return before Ramazan

LAHORE/ISLAMABAD, Aug 25: The political scene seems set for dramatic developments as all indications suggest former prime minister Nawaz Sharif is ready to return home before Ramazan. The holy month is to begin in mid September. Nadir Chaudhri, a spokesman for Nawaz Sharif, told Dawn from London that Shahbaz Sharif would, in all likelihood, accompany Mr Nawaz. In Islamabad, the central working committee of the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz suggested that the former prime minister and the former Punjab chief minister return by Sept 10. Nadir Chaudhri said the final date would be decided by the PML N in consultation with other members of the All Parties Democratic Movement.

Daily Times, 26 August 2007

Opinion: Hazards of confrontation (Dr HA Rizvi)

Pakistan's politics has entered a critical phase. While President Army Chief General Pervez Musharraf is determined to hold on to power for another five years, the opposition political parties and leaders are equally persistent in their bid to challenge this effort using means like resignations from the assemblies, protest marches and seeking a Supreme Court ruling against Musharraf's candidature. The opposition is more confident than ever to take on the Musharraf government against the backdrop of the protest movement for the restoration of the chief justice. This confidence has been reinforced by the Supreme Court judgment on August 23, recognizing the right of Nawaz Sharif and Shahbaz Sharif to return to Pakistan.

Dawn, 26 August 2007

Opinion: The deal that never was (Anwar Syed)

ON August 15, Ms Benazir Bhutto told an interviewer in New York that she had staked her political career on her negotiations with General Pervez Musharraf, and that he must act on the understandings reached with her within the next three weeks. Meeting with PML Q legislators from several Punjab districts the following day, the general reportedly ruled out any power sharing arrangement with the PPP, because it was going to be his own party's PML Qs main opponent in the forthcoming general elections. Despite this disclaimer, reports of a deal in the making continue to appear in the American, British and Pakistani media, and Ms Bhutto is doing her part in feeding them.

The Hindu, 26 August 2007

Pakistan test fires new missile Hatf 8

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Saturday test fired Hatf 8, a new air launched cruise missile that the military said was designed to provide Pakistan's air platforms with a strategic stand off capacity on land and at sea. According to a military statement, the test of the indigenously developed low flying stealth design missile, also named Raad, meaning thunder in Arabic, was successful. The missile has a range of 350 km, can carry all types of warheads and its accuracy is comparable to the recently tested Babur cruise missile, the military said.

Daily Times, 27 August 2007

Afghan forces strike inside Pakistan

KABUL: US led and Afghan troops struck Taliban posts inside Pakistan, which denied giving permission, as new clashes left more than 30 rebels dead and there were claims on Sunday of civilian casualties. The US led coalition said it received the go ahead from Pakistan to strike across the border on Saturday, but this was rejected by the chief military spokesman in Islamabad. Afghan and coalition forces used mortars and artillery fire to destroy insurgent attacking positions on both sides of the border after a military post in Afghanistan came under attack, the coalition said in a statement.

Dawn, 27 August 2007

Team in UK to salvage deal with Benazir

LONDON, Aug 26: Three heavyweight official negotiators are understood to have arrived here from Pakistan ostensibly to dissuade former prime minister Benazir Bhutto

from walking out of the deal which she had warned she would if President Pervez Musharraf did not fulfil by the end of this month the promises he had made. The official team of negotiators is understood to comprise Secretary General of the National Security Council, Tariq Aziz, Chief of Staff Lt Gen ret'd Hamid Javed and businessman Iqbal Z Ahmed who is said to be close to the President, the PPP chairperson and Nawaz Sharif. Insiders said the three had met Ms Bhutto on Sunday afternoon, but no details could be obtained. Others said the meeting would probably continue on Monday.

The Hindu, 27 August 2007

Musharraf changes tack on Sharif (N Subramanian)

ISLAMABAD: All eyes are on the former Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif's planned return to Pakistan, but the Government is playing every card it has to stop him. On Sunday, Railways Minister Sheikh Rashid said on several television channels that Saad Hariri, son of the assassinated Lebanese leader and billionaire businessman Rafiq Hariri, had told Mr Sharif that he should not return home. The Hariri family has close associations with the Saudi royal family and the Sharifs, and the late Hariri, one time Prime Minister of Lebanon, was the bridge between Riyadh and Islamabad for the release of Mr Sharif from prison and his exile to Saudi Arabia in 2000, the Minister said.

Daily Times, 27 August 2007

Opinion: To the barracks they must go (Dr Ayesha Siddiqa)

We continue to lack clarity on, a should the military be pushed back and b how to make it vacate significant political space. It is true that the military has an important role in fighting terrorism. But this is a role which it can perform without dominating political life. Given how the situation is unfolding politically, there is a sense that General Pervez Musharraf will either have to leave the scene or at least be forced to give up his uniform. A third player has entered Pakistans politics the Supreme Court. The Court does not appear to be in control of the GHQ or the politicians, and is taking decisions that will have a long lasting impact on the countrys politics. While it is too early to say when and how Musharraf will remove his uniform, people hope that the honourable judges will not allow him to contest elections in uniform.

The Hindu, 27 August 2007

Opinion: Little time, few options for Musharraf (N Subramanian)

It was seen as President Pervez Musharraf's best bet for another term in office, and Pakistan Peoples Party chairperson Benazir Bhutto's best chance to return to power. A deal between the two, combining General Musharraf's military leadership and Ms. Bhutto's democratic credentials in measured doses, is what Washington thinks is the best antidote against Islamist extremism and the Talibanisation of the region. Those who fear a popular agitation for democracy could tip the country into an emergency, martial law or into the hands Islamist extremists, also see it as the best route to a painless transition to democratic, moderate, civilian rule in Pakistan.

Daily Times, 28 August 2007

I wont let 8 years work go waste, says Musharraf

ISLAMABAD: President General Pervez Musharraf said on Monday he was in contact

with all political parties, including the Pakistan Peoples Party, to achieve political stability and that he would not let his eight years of hard work of turning Pakistan into a prosperous country go to waste. The president was discussing the prevailing political situation with Railways Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed at Awan e Sadr. During the meeting that lasted for at least an hour, the two leaders discussed the possible return of the Sharif brothers to Pakistan, general elections, ongoing negotiations with former prime minister Benazir Bhutto and opinions of various Pakistan Muslim League members about the presidential elections.

Dawn, 28 August 2007

India cautioned over finger pointing

ISLAMABAD, Aug 27: Pakistan on Monday condemned bomb blasts in Hyderabad Deccan, but cautioned the Indian authorities against finger pointing without investigating the attacks. Speaking at a weekly news briefing, Foreign Office spokesperson Tasnim Aslam termed the attacks as terrorist acts. When asked to comment on attempts by some Indian authorities to pin the blame of the blasts on Pakistan, she said: I do not want to comment on conjectures. It is always better to investigate incidents of terrorism than to start speculating..

Daily Times, 28 August 2007

Editorial: General Musharraf should announce general amnesty for NS and BB

It is now more or less confirmed that the Confidentiality Hold Harmless Agreement that Mr Nawaz Sharif and his brother signed in 2000 is void because the unnamed guarantor of the agreement is no longer willing to interfere in Pakistan's affairs. However, the other unnamed party to the Agreement, Saad Hariri of Lebanon, by devolution of liability after his father ex premier Rafiq Hariris death, has spoken to Mr Sharif in Scotland and asked him not to go to Pakistan as per his undertaking in the Agreement. Apparently, this has not had much effect. But Saad Hariri was neither here nor there.

The Hindu, 28 August 2007

Editorial: Sharif can return

The Supreme Court of Pakistan has come to the defence of democratic principles once again by ruling that Nawaz Sharif has every right, as a citizen, to return to his country. In doing so, the court rejected the Musharraf regimes bizarre argument that relations with a friendly country would be damaged if the former Prime Minister and his brother were allowed to return. The argument was that Mr Sharif had voluntarily gone into exile in 1999 under the terms of a tripartite agreement he had worked out with the government of Pakistan and an unnamed third country widely assumed to be Saudi Arabia. It was further contended that the Sharif brothers were saved from long prison terms only because they had exercised this option.

Dawn, 28 August 2007

Editorial: Hyderabad blasts

ONE fails to find the words to express ones anger and sorrow at the series of bomb blasts that killed at least 43 innocent people in the southern Indian city of Hyderabad on Saturday. This is the second and a more serious case of terrorism in that city in three

months. The last incident was a blast in a mosque in May that killed 11 people, sending shock waves throughout the region. For those carrying out these heinous acts, human life is not sacred, though one does not know what they hope to achieve by killing at random. If the idea is to destabilise society and spread panic, the killers do succeed in doing that in the immediate aftermath. But in the long term the terrorists only strengthen the resolve of governments to fight violence with all the resources they have. The problem with incidents of violence of this kind apart from their human dimension is the implication it has for India Pakistan relations.

Dawn, 29 August 2007

PPP spells out terms for backing Musharraf: Doff uniform, seek election from new assemblies

LONDON, Aug 28: Pakistan Peoples Party chairperson Benazir Bhutto is understood to have made it clear to the high powered government emissaries who met her here on Monday that her party would not enter into any deal in which there was a place for a president in military uniform. Sources said Ms Bhutto told the government side that her partys parliamentarians would resign if Gen Musharraf attempted to get himself elected president in uniform from the present assemblies.

Daily Times, 29 August 2007

Editorial: Rescuing eight years of good work

President General Pervez Musharraf says he will not let his eight years of hard work of turning Pakistan into a prosperous country go to waste, and for that reason he was busy parleying with the mainstream parties for a national reconciliation. According to him, what moved him the most was his concern with political stability in the country, and that he was pursuing national interest through his emissaries, offering incentives to the opposition to let him stay on in power. All good work in the national sense is done with political support. Anyone who is cavalier about this support in deference to his high ideals will see his efforts come to naught..

Dawn, 29 August 2007

Editorial: Recipe for disaster

THINGS seem to be moving at last on the political scene, and realisation seems to be dawning on all politicians, including those in uniform, that without giving up their rigid positions it would be well nigh impossible to break the current stalemate. The deal talks between President Pervez Musharraf and Ms Benazir Bhutto are not the only indications of the military led governments eagerness to strike a workable understanding with the politicians. Talks are now underway even with the Sharifs. The military regime would never have talked to the politicians if it were not in trouble. Immediately after seizing power and getting the Supreme Courts validation, the generals treated the politicians with contempt. If at all they had any soft corner, it was for the religious right.

The Nation, 29 August 2007

Editorial: Crumbling coalition

GENERAL Musharraf has directed Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain to meet the disgruntled party members and address their concerns when the

ruling Muslim League is encountering a revolt like situation. Following Minister of State for Information Technology Ishaq Khakwanis resignation from his cabinet slot on Monday, PMLs Senior Vice President Lt Gen retd Abdul Majid Malik also expressed his reservation over the President's plan to contest for the next term in uniform. Mr Kabir Wasti, PML Vice President, outspoken critic of party high command and against the Presidents election in uniform, has been expelled from the party. Mr Khakwani plainly pointed out that the uniform issue would deepen the crises facing the country.

The Hindu, 29 August 2007

Musharraf resigned to the writing on wall? (N Subramanian)

ISLAMABAD: President Pervez Musharraf appears to be reconciling to the writing on the wall about his uniform, but Pakistan Peoples Party leader Benazir Bhutto wants him to make a public announcement on proposals discussed between them over this and other issues by Thursday. Gen Musharraf is now reportedly willing to give up both his uniform and his plan for re election from the sitting electoral college in its dying days. In return, the only assurance he apparently wants is that after the general elections, the political parties will back him for a fresh five year term in the new parliament.