

Dawn, 1 December 2005

US, Pakistan to step up talks on investment, free trade

WASHINGTON, Nov 30: The United States and Pakistan agreed on Tuesday to strive harder to forge a bilateral investment pact that could set the stage for negotiations to establish a free trade agreement. United States Trade Representative (USTR) Rob Portman and Pakistan Commerce Minister Humayun Akhtar Khan "committed to redoubling efforts to conclude" the bilateral investment treaty, USTR spokeswoman Neena Moorjani told AFP after the talks. She said the treaty "can play an important role in strengthening Pakistan's economy which creates new opportunities for exporters and investors in both economies as well as bolster our joint efforts on terrorism."

The Nation, 1 December 2005

Pakistan backs presence of int'l forces in Afghanistan for security

UNITED NATIONS: - Stating that insecurity remains a major challenge to Afghanistan's stability, Pakistan told the UN General Assembly Tuesday that it supports the presence of international forces in the war-torn country until peace is fully restored. "The Afghan government must continue to receive the support of the International Security Assistance Force (IAEA) and the Operation Enduring Freedom coalition in building security," Pakistan's U.N. Ambassador Munir Akram said in the course of a debate on the situation in Afghanistan. "We urge the international community to stay the course until durable peace and enlarged prosperity is achieved in Afghanistan," he added. Ambassador Akram said that with the successful holding of parliamentary and provincial council elections in September, Afghanistan had passed the last major milestone in the Bonn political process.

The News, 1 December 2005

PM directs completion of process before moving ICJ (Khalid Mustafa)

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz has asked the relevant authorities to complete the required process laid down under the Indus Waters Treaty prior to moving the neutral expert, or the International Court of Justice (ICJ) against India on the issue of Kishanganga hydropower project. Following the failure of all endeavours at the level of Permanent Commission of Indus in seeking resolution of the 300 MW Kishanganga hydropower project, the prime minister held a meeting on the issue here on Wednesday. "The prime minister has directed the Ministry of Water and Power at a meeting on controversial Kishanganga hydropower project and the Neelum-Jhelum hydropower project held at the Prime Minister Secretariat on Wednesday," a senior government official told The News.

The Nation, 1 December 2005

WB wants Pak reply on Baglihar (DILSHAD AZEEM)

ISLAMABAD ? The World Bank appointed neutral expert has given December 31, 2005 deadline to Pakistan for submission of its para-wise reply to Indian contentions on Baglihar dam to wind up hearings by June coming year, The Nation has learnt. To meet the deadline, Pakistani authorities from water sector and the foreign office on Wednesday started consultations, official sources maintained. Secretary Water and Power Ashfaq Mehmood chaired the meeting here and took up the issue of Baglihar dam as Commissioner Permanent Commission on Indus Waters Syed Jamaat Ali Shah, senior officials from foreign office and other concerned authorities attended it. When contacted, Syed Jamaat Ali Shah confirmed about the meeting saying that the consultative process would also continue for another few days.

The Nation, 1 December 2005

Negotiations on NATO's stay held

ISLAMABAD - Negotiation started in the Foreign Office on Wednesday between Pakistan and NATO over extension in stay of NATO forces. Pakistan delegation is headed by Additional Secretary Foreign Office, Tariq Usman Haider. FO spokesman Tasneem Aslam told The Nation that it was a wrong impression that Pakistan had been allowed only 24 hours time to respond to NATO regarding their stay in Pakistan. NATO had made formal queries from Pakistan in this regard on Wednesday, asking Pakistan to reply till December 15, but a suitable reply would be given much earlier than this. The NATO team and Pakistani delegation remained engaged in negotiations throughout Wednesday, during which NATO troops were satisfied over the objections raised by certain political factions and the public.

The News, 1 December 2005

IDB okays \$ 37m for hydropower project

ISLAMABAD: After the Asian Development Bank, the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) has also entered into its first-ever private sector infrastructure financing in Pakistan and on November 28, 2005 the IDB Board cleared the New Bong Escape Hydropower Project for Shariah-compliant financing of US \$ 37.3 million. Pakistan's economy has been growing at a rapid pace and the country is expected to face power shortages from 2008 onwards. Hydropower development is encouraged by the government and considered vital to provide energy security and generate cheaper power especially in the backdrop of rapidly escalating international hydrocarbon prices. The

lease financing of US \$ 37.3 million will match the funding provided by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Manila, whose board cleared the project on November 23, 2005, and gave a much needed boost to the development of Pakistan's indigenous hydropower resources. A consortium of local Pakistani banks will provide the balance of financing.

The Nation, 2 December 2005

President seeks US Kashmir support

ISLAMABAD - President General Pervez Musharraf received Thursday a seven-member US Congressional delegation led by Congressional Co-Chairs of the Pakistan Caucus Congressman Dan Burton (Republican) and Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee (Democrat). The President conveyed the thanks and gratitude of the government and people of Pakistan for the prompt assistance provided by the US government, US Congress and the American people for the earthquake relief efforts. The President informed the delegation of the immediate and long-term relief and reconstruction programme for the victims of the earthquake disaster. Other members of the delegation were Congressman Al Green (Democrat), Congressman Steven Pearce (Republican), Congressman Joe Wilson (Republican), Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy (Democrat) and Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez (Democrat).

Daily Times, 2 December 2005

Pakistan will continue cooperating with US in war on terror: Musharraf

ISLAMABAD: President Pervez Musharraf has reiterated Pakistan's willingness to crack down on all forms and manifestations of extremism and terrorism, saying Islamabad will continue cooperating with the United States and allied countries in this regard. Talking to US Senators Dan Burton, Sheila Jackson Lee, Joe Wilson, Steven Pearce, Al Green, Carolyn McCarthy and Loretta Sanchez, who called on him at Army House in Rawalpindi on Thursday, Musharraf said Pakistan had sacrificed a lot in the war on terrorism, but would continue cooperating against the global menace. He said the war on terrorism had brought the world together in the form of a coalition, which had struck a blow to the most visible manifestations of terrorism. He said the sustained campaign would continue to root out terrorism in its various forms worldwide.

Dawn, 2 December 2005

Pakistan's cooperation lauded (Masood Haider)

UNITED NATIONS, Dec 1: Mohammed ElBaradei, Director-General of the International Atomic Agency (IAEA) has applauded Pakistan for extending extraordinary cooperation with the agency on resolving many of the Iranian nuclear programme's "pieces of the puzzle." In an interview with New Delhi Television to be broadcast on Friday, partial script of which was made available to Dawn on Thursday, the head of the UN nuclear watchdog agency said: "We are getting good cooperation from Pakistan so I really want to make that clear." "Pakistan for the last year has been cooperating with us [IAEA] in resolving many of the Iranian pieces of the puzzle. In terms of contamination for example, or sources of supply, the Pakistani government has been cooperating," he declared.

Daily Times, 2 December 2005

No extension in NATO's quake mission: Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) troops involved in earthquake relief efforts can go home after their mission ends in February, Pakistan said on Thursday. The western alliance sent around 1,000 medics, engineers and helicopter support crews following the October 8 disaster. The mission was given an initial 90-day mandate. Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Tasnim Aslam said no exact date had been fixed for the withdrawal of NATO troops, but Pakistan was not seeking any extension of their stay. "Yes, we are sticking to our plans (for withdrawal)," she said. NATO Ambassador to Pakistan Carsten Fauboll met Pakistani Foreign Secretary Riaz Mohammad Khan and discussed plans for the withdrawal of NATO's troops.

The Nation, 2 December 2005

Trans-Kashmir bus service resumes

SRINAGAR (Agencies) - India and Pakistan resumed Thursday a trans-Kashmir bus service suspended after a massive earthquake in October damaged a road running across the LoC. "In all 16 (Indian) Kashmiris and four returning (Pakistani Kashmir) passengers crossed over to Azad Kashmir," Indian army spokesman Vijay Batra said. The crossing took place at Kaman Post, 117 kilometres northwest Srinagar. The earthquake damaged the road along which the bus service ran as well as a bridge at Kaman named the 'Peace Bridge'. With the Peace Bridge damaged, the passengers walked across a small footbridge over a stream that serves as the LoC. "The crossing marked the resumption of the stalled bus service," Batra said. The last bus crossing took place October 6, two days before the earthquake that killed over 73,000 people in Pakistan and Azad Kashmir. Some 1,300 people died in Held Kashmir and more than 150,000 were left homeless.

The Nation, 2 December 2005

IRSA calls meet to end Punjab-Sindh water row (DILSHAD AZEEM)

ISLAMABAD - The Indus River System Authority (IRSA) has convened a high-level meeting here on December 5 to take up the Punjab-Sindh dispute over water availability for low riparian and water losses in the ten-week period of Taunsa Barrage closure. However, both the provinces have already agreed on the closure of Taunsa Barrage by December 15 for 10 weeks but they entered into dispute when Sindh demanded Punjab bear all water losses as it would be released to it from Mangla Dam via Panjnad. Whereas Punjab rejected the demand and asked the IRSA Secretariat to call a meeting of the provincial authorities to resolve the controversy as water provision from Mangla Dam may cause up to 60 per cent losses due to long travelling up to Guddu Barrage.

The Nation, 2 December 2005

Pneumonia, scabies on rise (JAVAID-UR-RAHMAN and (DILSHAD AZEEM)

ISLAMABAD - Cases of pneumonia, scabies and diarrhoea are increasing at an alarming rate in the quake-stricken areas of AJK and NWFP, mainly due to unhygienic living conditions and increasingly severe cold weather. "Only in Muzaffarabad and its surroundings over 200 pneumonia cases were reported," said UN official Darren Boisvert while talking to The Nation. "Mainly children are the victims of pneumonia because of chilly weather, improper shelter and improper heating system," he said. "International Organisation for Migrants (IOM) is trying to approach every affected area to provide proper shelter and other necessary items," the official claimed.

Dawn, 2 December 2005

Madressahs registration ordinance promulgated

ISLAMABAD, Dec 1: President Gen Pervez Musharraf on Thursday promulgated Societies Registration (second amendment) Ordinance-2005 making it mandatory for every madressah (religious seminary) in the federal capital to carry out audit of its accounts, prepare annual educational activity report. It also prohibits seminaries from promoting militancy, sectarianism and religious hatred, a document issued by the law ministry said. The president amended the Societies Registration Act-1860 exercising his powers under clause (1) of Article 89 of the Constitution. The document said the ordinance, called "Societies Registration (second amendment) Ordinance-2005", will come into force with immediate effect in the Islamabad Capital Territory.

Dawn, 2 December 2005

Political parties to be consulted on dam issue (Ahmed Hassan)

ISLAMABAD Dec 1: The federal cabinet, which met here on Thursday, discussed options on the country's water reservoir needs and decided to take political parties into confidence on early construction of Kalabagh or Basha dam. The decision came as a surprise as it followed President Musharraf's recent meeting with Sindh Governor Dr Ishratul Ibad and Chief Minister Arbab Ghulam Rahim which is said to have ended on a dissenting note. The meeting was a part of the president's initiative of holding meetings with representatives of the four provinces. He was scheduled to meet the four provincial chief ministers on Friday (Dec 2) to continue the process of 'taking the political leadership into confidence' but the meeting was cancelled.

Daily Times, 2 December 2005

Fear, cold, intensify in quake camps

MUZAFFARABAD: Earthquake survivors said on Thursday that they fear for their future as a bitter winter intensifies and their life in makeshift tent camps becomes more miserable with each passing day. Almost eight weeks after the devastating October 8 disaster, which killed more than 73,000 people, the fate of the 3.5 million others left homeless is far from secure. Aid officials have warned for weeks that people in remote Himalayan villages are at risk of dying, but the situation in the refugee camps is causing increased concern as victims descend from the mountains. "We survived the earthquake, but we don't know if we will survive the winter," said Haji Abdul Rehman, living with his two sons and eight daughters in a single tent in Muzaffarabad.

Daily Times, 3 December 2005

90% tents in quake areas inadequate (Irfan Ghauri)

ISLAMABAD: Aid agencies on Friday said that 90 percent of the tents provided to survivors in the earthquake-hit areas were not equipped to cope with winter. Darren Boisvert of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), which is overseeing efforts to provide shelter, said that 90 percent of the 420,000 tents distributed were not winterised. UN Coordinator Jan Vandemoortele said that after heavy snowfall in the last week of November, there are reports of increasing cases of pneumonia and intestinal and respiratory tract infections in the affected areas. He said that about \$158.2 million had been contributed and another \$64.5 million had been pledged, making up 40 percent of the requirements specified in the UN's \$550-million flash appeal. "Needs can be met, but subject to additional funding. Without continued financial support, the operations will have to be phased down by mid-winter," he warned.

Daily Times, 3 December 2005

Relations between Pakistan and US are long-lasting: Karamat

WASHINGTON: The United States and Pakistan have no problems with each other and their relationship is not transient, said Pakistan's Ambassador to the US Jehangir Karamat on Friday. Karamat told APP that Pakistan and the US were broadening their relations by focusing on trade, economy and social sector issues. "We have to make sure that it stays that way — the US shows concern for our interest, and we must respect this. It is a two-way relationship and there is no pressure on us nor does the US interfere in our domestic matters." The ambassador said that a visit by Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz to the US was overdue because of his preoccupation with domestic events. He hoped to schedule a visit early next year.

Daily Times, 3 December 2005

Aziz releases Rs 2.5b for Balochistan

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz has ordered the release of Rs 2.5 billion for the development of Balochistan. This decision was taken on Friday at a high-level meeting chaired by the prime minister. Of this amount, Rs 1.5 billion will be used for the deferment of debt services while Rs 1 billion for interim increase in subventions to meet the province's financial requirements. Balochistan CM Jam Yousaf, PM's Finance Advisor Dr Salman, Minister of State for Finance Omar Ayub Khan, secretary finance and special secretary finance also attended the meeting. The prime minister has also constituted a team consisting of Economic Ministry officials to travel to Quetta on Monday to review the overall financial situation of Balochistan. staff report

Daily Times, 3 December 2005

Pakistan and India signing MoU on counter-narcotics

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and India agreed on Friday to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on cooperation between their counter-narcotics agencies in fighting drug trafficking in the region. The agreement came after a two-day meeting between anti-narcotics officials of the two countries in Rawalpindi. Major General Syed Khalid Amir Jaffery, the Anti Narcotics Force director general, headed the Pakistani delegation while the Indian side was led by Narcotics Control Bureau Director General KC Verma. A joint statement issued after the seventh round of director general-level talks said that realising the region's sensitivity to transit-trafficking of drugs, both sides emphasised closer co-operation between their drug law-enforcement agencies.

The Nation, 3 December 2005

Dams after consensus, says Shaukat

KARACHI (Online) – Terming the construction of new water reservoirs as very important matter of national interest, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said, government would consult and take into confidence all the stakeholders and provinces and the final decision regarding construction of dams including Kalabagh dam will be taken with consensus of all provinces. He reiterated this at a separate meetings at Chief Minister House with legislators of Sindh Assembly belonging to Pakistan Muslim League, Independents, Pakistan Muslim League (F) and MQM. The government will hold a series of meetings to consult the parliamentarians including the parties in government, opposition as well as NGOs and members of civil society on the issue of dams, Shaukat said.

The Nation, 3 December 2005

Afghan border crossing closed after spat

ISLAMABAD (Agencies) - Pakistani security forces closed the country's main border crossing on the western frontier with Afghanistan after both sides accused each other of beating up their soldiers, officials said on Friday. The crossing between the Pakistani town of Chaman and Afghanistan's Spin Boldak was closed late on Thursday after Pakistani forces accused their Afghan counterparts of 'kidnapping' a paramilitary trooper and beating him. "The soldier was released late last night but he was badly thrashed," a senior FC official said. He said forces closed the crossing and were awaiting orders before reopening the crossing point. Haji Abdul Khaliq, Commissioner of Spin Boldak, said the Afghan forces detained the soldier after Pakistani troops trespassed into Afghan territory and beat up Afghan soldiers.

The News, 3 December 2005

Ruling PML, allies oppose KBD (Azfar-ul-Ashfaque)

KARACHI: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz on Friday started from Sindh the first round of his countrywide campaign to take all political forces into confidence on the construction of big water reservoirs, including Kalabagh dam. However, he received strong opposition from the Sindh chapter of his own party as majority of the PML MPAs were of the view that the Kalabagh dam was not in the interest of the province. The prime minister, who met the MPAs, belonging to the ruling Pakistan Muslim League, PML-Functional, PPPP-Patriots and the Muttahida Qaumi Movement at the Chief Minister House here on Friday, did not speak particularly on the Kalabagh dam but the focal point of his meetings was to evolve a consensus on the need for building more water reservoirs to cope with the future demand.

The News, 3 December 2005

'Ulema satisfied over Madaris registration ordinance'

ISLAMABAD: The newly promulgated amended ordinance regarding registration of religious seminaries is in accordance with an agreement reached between the government and Ittehad-e-Tanzimat-e-Madaris-e-Deeniah Pakistan. Talking to APP by telephone here on Friday, spokesman for the Ittehad Mufti Munib-ur-Rehman said that the government had consulted Ulema and various sectarian groups and discussed the draft of the ordinance with them before its promulgation. A large number of Ulema and religious groups are unanimous over the societies registration (second amendment) ordinance promulgated by the president on Thursday because there was not any objectionable material in it, he added. He, however, asked the government to get the ordinance passed from Parliament and provincial assemblies as act before its implementation.

The Nation , 4 December 2005

Musharraf calls for OIC charter changes

KUWAIT (APP) :President General Pervez Musharraf on Saturday called for considering changes in the charter of the OIC as part of reforms to make it an effective and dynamic organisation for betterment of the Muslim world. He was talking to Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Dr Muhammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, who called on him at the Bayan Palace. The Kuwaiti Foreign Minister agreeing with the President, observed that the Organisation of Islamic Conference came into being under particular circumstances and added that its charter could be reviewed. Leaders from 57 Muslim countries are to meet in Makkah tul Makarma next week to reform and revamp OIC as part of efforts to steer their 1.5 billion populations to sustained socio-economic development.

Dawn, 4 December 2005

Support for Palestine to continue: Musharraf : Israel contact not to jeopardize cause

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 3: President General Pervez Musharraf has vowed to continue supporting the Palestinians in their quest for an independent homeland. President Musharraf, after his arrival here on a two-day visit, said in a statement that Islamabad's contact with Israel at the ministerial level would not be at the expense of its support for the Palestinians. The president said his visit was aimed at boosting bilateral relations between Kuwait and Pakistan, particularly at the political level. "We will seek to cement these ties further at the economic and commercial levels," the president added. The president said his talks with Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah would focus on regional and international affairs as well as coordination in the fight against terrorism. The president is scheduled to address the Kuwaiti business community on Sunday.

Dawn, 4 December 2005

Quake survivors not to be relocated

ISLAMABAD, Dec 3: The government has decided in principle that its rehabilitation plan for quake-hit people of Azad Kashmir would not involve any relocation and those who had lost their homes would receive shelters in their respective areas, a federal minister said on Saturday. Speaking at a news briefing following a marathon meeting on relief, reconstruction and rehabilitation in Azad Kashmir, Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Makhdoom Faisal Saleh Hayat said the road-map for reconstruction would be designed in light of the seismic survey reports prepared by experts from China, Turkey, Japan and Italy. One of the survey reports is expected to be submitted by the end of the month, according to the minister, who is also coordinator for relief and reconstruction in Azad Kashmir. Other reports suggesting safe places for reconstruction would be given sometime next month, he said.

Dawn, 4 December 2005

No fresh request for access to Dr Khan (Qudssia Akhlaque)

ISLAMABAD, Dec 3: Pakistan said on Saturday that it had not received any fresh request from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for direct access to nuclear scientist Dr A. Q Khan and reiterated the position of it being a "no-go area". Foreign Office spokesperson Tasnim Aslam made a categorical statement on the issue on Saturday in response to a query by Dawn regarding the IAEA Director Mohammad ElBaradei's recent comment that direct dialogue with the father of Pakistan's nuclear programme Dr A.Q. Khan would help in solving the complete puzzle about the network of proliferation of nuclear technology. The IAEA chief said this in an interview to the Indian television network NDTV. Reaffirming Pakistan's stance on the sensitive issue of direct access, Ms Aslam observed: "As far as access to any of Pakistani scientists is concerned, the president on many occasions has made it clear that whatever information is required it will be provided through the Government of Pakistan."

Daily Times, 5 December 2005

Dam announcement soon: Musharraf

KUWAIT CITY: President General Pervez Musharraf has said he will soon announce the government's decision on building major water reservoirs in an address to the nation. "I will take the nation into confidence on the matter of construction of new water reservoirs so that the growing energy needs of the country for its sustained economic development are met. I will soon address the nation and announce the decision on building water reservoirs," Gen

Musharraf said in an address to a gathering of Pakistani nationals here on Sunday. He said Pakistan had a shortage of water and power facilities but the government was committed to providing both amenities to all areas in Pakistan by 2007. He said safe drinking water was not available to all in Pakistan and this was also due to a lack of water reservoirs. He reiterated that a major dam is urgently needed to overcome this shortage. "I will not let Pakistan commit suicide because of paucity of water," he said.

Dawn, 5 December 2005

Foreigners still in Waziristan, says minister

ISLAMABAD, Dec 4: Interior Minister Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao said on Sunday that the death in north-eastern Pakistan of an Egyptian described as a leading Al Qaeda operative was a big setback for the terror network. "It is a big blow to Al Qaeda," Mr Sherpao told AFP, adding that operations were continuing to track down Al Qaeda members in North Waziristan where Hamza Rabia is said to have met his end. Asked if other key Al Qaeda members were still hiding in the area, the minister replied: "We just don't know, but certainly there are some foreigners hiding there." Officials have said that Hamza was killed with four other militants while handling explosives late Wednesday. But Al Arabiya television late Saturday said it had been contacted by a person claiming to be from Al Qaeda denying that Hamza was dead.

Dawn, 5 December 2005

Muslim League MPs cautious on Kalabagh (Habib Khan Ghori)

KARACHI, Dec 4: The ruling Pakistan Muslim League in Sindh is not prepared to extend support to the federal government on the Kalabagh dam issue and almost all of its MPAs who met Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz in Karachi expressed reservations about the controversial project, with some saying that if an announcement was made about the dam's construction, it would seal the fate of the party. However, even those who were vocal in the meeting with Mr Aziz were not prepared to come on record when contacted by Dawn. They said that in view of their commitment and sensitivity of the issue, they would not like to be quoted for or against the dam. However, they said there was serious resentment against Kalabagh in Sindh and unless a consensus was developed any announcement to build the dam would be extremely harmful.

The Nation, 5 December 2005

Pak to use two options against Kishanganga (DILSHAD AZEEM)

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan is likely to avail two options simultaneously-move for appointment of neutral expert and setting up of arbitration court-to stop India from constructing its Kishanganga project, The Nation has learnt reliably here. "Kishanganga is not purely a technical issue therefore we are to move for both options, seeking appointment of neutral expert and the court of arbitration simultaneously," sources in the Ministry of Water and Power said when contacted. Work on availing these two options is being carried out since Permanent Commission on Indus Waters (PCIW) proposed to Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz that Pakistan should not confine the Kishanganga project only to the technical level, but other legal aspects under the Waters Treaty 1960 should also be followed. According to Pakistan, India is constructing its Kishanganga project by diverting Neelum waters in sheer violation of the 1960 treaty and both the countries have held several meetings exclusively to settle the differences.

The News, 5 December 2005

Rehabilitation and reconstruction committee (Tariq Butt)

ISLAMABAD: Discussion on official relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts in the earthquake ravaged areas and the future of the 19-member parliamentary committee will dominate the National Assembly session beginning on Monday. The opposition leaders had attended the maiden meeting of the committee before Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz left for Malta to participate in the Commonwealth summit. In his absence from Pakistan, they had submitted their own terms of reference (ToR) for the parliamentary body that they want to make its mandate. They had refused to accept its charter delineated by the prime minister. The government has already expressed its willingness to pass a resolution, to be jointly sponsored by it and the opposition in the National Assembly and Senate, providing for setting up of the committee. It is widely believed that such a resolution would be tabled in the Lower House during its current session after the government's response to the ToR turns out to be acceptable to the opposition.

The News, 6 December 2005

Nato's withdrawal schedule subdues opposition (Tariq Butt)

ISLAMABAD: The opposition's onslaught against the government for inviting North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) troops for relief assistance in the earthquake-stricken areas seems to have considerably subsided after a firm official commitment about their withdrawal by a specific time. Some 1,000 engineers, medics and helicopter support crews of the western alliance are in Pakistan following the October 8 disaster. The mission, initially given 90 days mandate, is set to depart from Pakistan in February next year. As the opposition particularly top

Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) leaders kept slamming the government for permitting arrival of the NATO personnel, predominantly technicians. These foreigners and their superiors continued to be deeply embarrassed because they were here on Pakistan government's invitation for a humanitarian cause and hadn't entered Pakistan as an 'occupying force.'

Daily Times, 6 December 2005

Govt discussing KBD with Opp, says Aziz

MULTAN: The government is talking to all political parties including the opposition to try and build consensus on Kalabagh Dam, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said on Monday. "Water reservoirs are a necessity. We are in consultation with leaders and stakeholders. A decision on construction of water reservoirs will soon be taken in consultation with others. Talks are underway on Kalabagh dam with all political parties including the opposition," he told MNAs, MPAs, PML workers and journalists in Multan. The prime minister defended the government against criticism for high oil prices, saying it was still incurring a loss of Rs 60 billion in oil price subsidies. He said the opposition has a right to talk about the issue. "We want to resolve every issue with the spirit of reconciliation and accommodation," he added.

Dawn, 6 December 2005

Gas pipeline with Qatar under study

ISLAMABAD, Dec 5: Minister for Petroleum and Natural Resources Amanullah Khan Jadoon told the National Assembly on Monday that the government was considering a proposal to import gas from Qatar through an offshore pipeline. In a written reply to a question by MNA Sabir Ahmed Khan, the minister said the length and cost of the pipeline would be worked out on the basis of exact route and delivery point in Pakistan, which were still to be determined. Mr Jadoon said negotiations were under way with the Qatari authorities regarding the quantity of gas to be imported. He, however, said the annual import of gas from Qatar was expected to be 1,600 to 2,000 million cubic feet per day. He said options to import gas from Iran and Turkmenistan were also under consideration.

Daily Times, 6 December 2005

Pakistan stands by report of Hamza Rabia's death

PESHAWAR: Pakistan insisted on Monday that top Al Qaeda operative Hamza Rabia had died while making bombs in North Waziristan, as an Islamic activist in London claimed that he is still alive. Pakistani officials brushed off Washington's reluctance to confirm Rabia's death, saying they had no doubt that he died in a massive explosion which killed four other people last Thursday in a house in North Waziristan. Shrapnel that appeared to be from an American-made missile was found at the house, and a neighbour described seeing the white streak of a missile just before the blast. Despite the physical evidence of an apparent missile attack, Brig Javed Iqbal Cheema, head of the Interior Ministry's Crisis Management Cell, insisted that Rabia "blew himself up while making bombs". A US missile attack could create a backlash against the government.

Daily Times, 6 December 2005

Tribal journalist kidnapped

PESHAWAR: Five gunmen kidnapped a tribal journalist in North Waziristan early on Monday morning, his family told Daily Times. "Five armed men kidnapped him at gunpoint at 8:30am on Monday on the main Mir Ali-Bannu highway," said the kidnapped journalist's brother, who did not wish to be named. Hayatullah Khan, who is in his 40s, was to cover a demonstration by students against the killing of their colleague in a December 1 missile strike in which five people, including top Al Qaeda commander Hamza Rabia, were reportedly killed. The owner of the house where the blast happened, Haji Mohammad Siddiq, is an uncle of the kidnapped journalist, Reuters reported.

Daily Times, 6 December 2005

Suicide squads being formed to kill Shias in NAs (Shahzad Malik)

ISLAMABAD: Intelligence agencies have uncovered a plot by two banned militant groups to kill Shia members of the legislative council of the Northern Areas, sources said on Monday. Sources said that leaders of banned outfits Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LJ) had directed their operatives to form suicide squads to kill Shia members of the legislative council. Intelligence agencies outlined details of the plan in a report submitted to the Interior Ministry, that contained information gleaned from three members of the banned groups. The report said that the SSP and LJ had asked their members in the Northern Areas to recruit women and children to the suicide squads. Clerics belonging to these organisations had also contacted people in the earthquake-hit areas to convince them to send their children to seminaries in Punjab.

Daily Times, 6 December 2005

Sunni cleric shot dead in Karachi

KARACHI: Two gunmen opened fire inside a bakery in Karachi early on Monday, killing a Sunni Muslim cleric before fleeing on a motorcycle, police said. Qari Habibur Rehman Saeedi of Masjid Faizan-e-Aulia in Lyari, Naya Abad, was gunned down leading to widespread panic in the area. Shops were closed down and police patrols were ordered. Qari Habibur Rehman was buying food at the Fine Bakers after leading morning prayers at a nearby mosque when he was shot, police inspector Bahauddin Babar said. He was shot four times in the neck, shoulder and back. The gunmen escaped on a motorcycle driven by an accomplice, Babar said. Shopkeepers rushed the cleric to Civil Hospital where he died after receiving initial treatment. No one claimed responsibility for the killing, but Babar suspected it was the latest in a string of sectarian attacks.

Daily Times, 6 December 2005

Musharraf calls for bolstering trade among OIC countries

SANA'A: President Pervez Musharraf said on Monday that a coordinated approach should be adopted to bolster trade among Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) states for their overall economic development. Speaking to Yemeni businessmen ahead of this week's OIC summit in Mecca, Musharraf hoped that a revamped OIC would set up a dedicated department for promoting intra-OIC trade. "The current level of commerce within the Muslim countries hovers around 10-12 percent. We need to increase it and complement each other's economies for the sustainable development of our people," he added.

Daily Times, 7 December 2005

UNHCR braces for exodus of mountain dwellers

GENEVA: The United Nations refugee agency on Tuesday said it was standing by for an exodus of mountain-dwellers who survived the earthquake but are facing increasingly bitter winter weather. Jennifer Pagonis, spokeswoman for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), said that with more heavy snowfalls forecast by the end of this week, the Pakistani government estimates that between 100,000 and 200,000 people could head down to lower-lying areas in the North West Frontier Province and 30,000 in Azad Kashmir. Pakistan bore the brunt of the October 8 earthquake, which killed 73,000 people there. Another 1,300 died in India. Aid efforts are now focusing on the 3.5 million people left homeless, many living in tents not designed for freezing conditions or stuck in isolated areas that are hard for aid agencies to reach. Last week, the UN warned that efforts to shelter survivors from the Himalayan winter were on a knife's edge.

The News, 7 December 2005

Pakistan, Yemen ink accords to boost bilateral cooperation

SANA'A, Yemen: Pakistan and Yemen on Tuesday signed agreements to boost cooperation in the fields of security, economy and education as President General Pervez Musharraf wrapped-up his three-day visit to the Gulf countries. The president and his Yemeni counterpart Ali Abdullah Saleh witnessed the signing of a memorandum of understanding and three agreements after a brief one-on-one meeting here. The MoU on cooperation in the fields of oil, gas and mineral exploration was signed by Minister of State for Petroleum Muhammad Naseer Mengal and his Yemeni counterpart. The three agreements pertain to cooperation in the fields of security, air transport and technical education and vocational training. During their meeting, the two presidents renewed commitment to diversify and enhance their ties, particularly in trade and economic sectors. They noted that signing of agreements would boost their relations to the mutual benefit of their countries.

Daily Times, 7 December 2005

Army to hand over NWFP relief camps to civil administration

PESHAWAR: The Pakistan Army will begin withdrawing from relief camps in the five earthquake-hit districts of NWFP next week and let the provincial government take charge, an official source said on Tuesday. "The army will withdraw from most of the camps and the civil administration will take charge," the government official said. NWFP Information Minister Asif Iqbal Daudzai confirmed the handover of relief camps to the provincial government in a news briefing on Tuesday. He said that there were around 70,000 quake-affected people in the tent villages. He said that the provincial administration had the expertise to run the relief camps. The federal government had agreed to provide the necessary aid to the Frontier government, he said. "Initially, we had difficulty in getting to remote areas because of blocked roads, but all affected areas have now been reached," Daudzai said.

The Nation, 7 December 2005

Hudood Bill defeated (HAQ NAWAZ)

ISLAMABAD - The National Assembly on Tuesday defeated with a majority vote an amendment bill seeking to repeal Section 8 of the Offence of Zina (Enforcement of Hudood) Ordinance 1979 that gives the right of evidence to four men in case of adultery. National Assembly Speaker Chaudhry Amir Hussain after hearing arguments of both the mover and the ruling party asked the House to vote either in favour or against "The Offence of Zina (Enforcement of Hudood) (Amendment) Bill, 2005". The House rejected the proposed bill with a majority vote. The

mover of the amendment bill, Kunwar Khalid Yunus of MQM, the coalition partner of the ruling party, had suggested that Section 8 of the ordinance was against the women and it should be repealed. "The issue should be admitted for debate in the House," he said and stated that this section had not been in practice in the Muslim world except Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

The News, 8 December 2005

Musharraf urges conciliatory path to progress (Hummaa Ahmad)

MAKKAH: President Pervez Musharraf on Wednesday reiterated the path of Enlightened Moderation as the way forward and adopting a conciliatory course in the interest of progress and prosperity of the Muslim Ummah. Addressing the two-day third OIC extraordinary summit at the Al-Safa Palace here, Musharraf stressed the 'need to learn, acquire and assimilate knowledge.' He said the Putrajaya Summit in 2003 had deliberated upon the challenges confronting the Islamic world. 'It was a summit of reflection, Makkah must be a summit of decision and action. 'In reference to the Makkah Declaration, Musharraf said that the Commission of Eminent Persons and Makkah Conference of Scholars and Intellectuals had submitted recommendations that were all-encompassing and futuristic and hoped that the strategy launched for Islamic revival and renaissance would encompass actions at both national and Ummah levels.

The Nation, 8 December 2005

'Pak missions invited Israeli diplomats'

ISLAMABAD - With Israeli media claiming that Pakistani missions across the world have started inviting diplomats of Jewish state to functions organised by them, officials here said these assertions are partially true as embassies only in Washington, London and few other western states have been indulged in this practice. "Pakistani missions have started to formally invite diplomats from the Jewish country to their receptions and cultural events, signaling Islamabad's desire to forge relations with the Jewish state", Israel's daily newspaper Yedoit Ahronoth said. Pakistani embassies are sending official letters to Israeli missions, something unseen in the past, the report added. It said the Israeli Foreign Ministry has directed all its missions to see if there is a tangible change taking place in Pakistan's attitude towards Israel everywhere.

Dawn, 8 December 2005

'Terrorist camps' in Balochistan detected (Habib Khan Ghori)

KARACHI, Dec 7: The government has detected existence of five to six camps in Balochistan where people are being trained to carry out terrorists activities. The presence of the camps, known as Ferari camps, was discussed on Wednesday at an inter-provincial conference on law and order during a discussion on the situations of Balochistan. According to sources, the conference was informed that the camps were operating under the supervision of some tribal sardars and that terrorists were also being paid money to carry out 'assignments'. The camps, the conference was informed, were located in Sibi, Bolan, Shoran and Tilli areas. The sources said that the conference discussed different steps to rein in outlaws and stop them from escaping from one province to another after committing crimes. During the past year, 261 bomb blasts occurred in Balochistan and 167 rockets were fired.

The News, 8 December 2005

17 killed as militants clash with bandits

MIRAMSHAH/PESHAWAR: At least 17 men were killed on Tuesday night and Wednesday in clashes involving local Taliban and bandits in the volatile North Waziristan tribal region bordering Afghanistan. Confirming the losses to life and property in the fighting between the Pakistani Taliban and bandits near Miramshah, North Waziristan's political agent Syed Zaheerul Islam told The News that 17 people were killed and four were injured in fighting that began Tuesday evening and continued the whole night and then Wednesday morning. He said four of the dead were local Taliban and 13 were bandits. The injured included two Taliban and two by-passers, both children. He said eight houses including those used by bandits for gambling and other vices were destroyed and put on fire by Taliban and their supporters.

The News, 8 December 2005

Govt to intensify anti-terror drive (Azfar-ul-Ashfaq)

KARACHI: The 11th inter-provincial conference (IPC) on law and order on Wednesday reviewed the state of internal security in the country and decided to launch a coordinated and reinvigorated campaign at national and provincial levels to arrest most-wanted terrorists, belonging to banned extremists and Jihadi organisations. The one-day conference, held after every six month, also decided to establish special cells in all the provinces to monitor the pace of the drive against the wanted militants. It was also decided that the federal and provincial governments would continue their drive against militancy, sectarianism, extremism and use of loudspeakers and mosques for fanning sectarianism and resolved that action would be taken against those, fanning hatred by publishing, distributing and selling hate material.

The News, 8 December 2005

'Beware the remnants of Zia's political Islam' (Rauf Klasra)

ISLAMABAD: The Muttahida Qaumi Movement said on Wednesday that the Shaukat Aziz government should not allow remnants of Gen Ziaul Haq within the administration to influence important legislation. An important bill of the Muttahida, seeking sweeping changes in the Hudood Ordinance 1979, was rejected by the ruling party a day earlier. Kunwar Khalid Younis, a top Muttahida leader, who has returned to the National Assembly for the fourth time, caused a stir in the House on Tuesday by introducing a bill against existing Hudood laws, followed by a forceful attack on Zia and Saudi rulers, holding them responsible for introduction of discriminatory laws against women in the name of Islam in Pakistan.

The News, 8 December 2005

Four FC men kidnapped in Wana (Sailab Mahsud)

TANK: Four Frontier Corps personnel went missing on Tuesday evening in Wana amid reports that they had been kidnapped. Eyewitnesses said they had seen at least two of the men being taken away in a vehicle by gunmen. They included Havaladar Umar Khattak and Sepoy Akhtar Zaman Bhattani. The other two, Sepoy Shahzad Mahsud and Mahtab Mahsud, did not return to their family quarters in the Frontier Corps Camp in Wana, during the night and were presumed kidnapped. There were reports that the four FC personnel had gone out of their heavily fortified camp in Wana in South Waziristan, late on Tuesday for a stroll in the government orchards. By doing so, they violated the standing instructions under which troops and government employees were discouraged from unnecessarily moving out of the FC Camp and other official premises.

Daily Times, 9 December 2005

NATO denies it is acquiring land in Kashmir

ISLAMABAD: The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) has denied reports that it is acquiring land in Kashmir. The NATO Disaster Relief Team Commander Air Commodore Walton said on Thursday that NATO has not bought and does not plan to buy land in Kashmir. He said that NATO is in Pakistan by the government's invitation to provide aid and support after the October 8 earthquake. Meanwhile, NATO chief Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said in Brussels that the alliance will end its operations to transport aid and provide expert help in the quake-hit areas at the end of January. NATO has transported some 2,700 tonnes of relief supplies to the country, making it the largest aid air lifter, and engineers and doctors were also sent to help, he said.

Dawn, 9 December 2005

12 killed in Tank Bazaar explosion (Dilawar Khan Wazir)

WANA, Dec 8: At least 12 people were killed and 50 others wounded when a powerful explosion ripped through the Jandola Bazaar in the Tank tribal area of the Frontier Region on Thursday, witnesses said. In a separate development, suspected militants killed two of the four militiamen kidnapped from the Wana Bazaar in South Waziristan. Their decapitated bodies were found by residents in the Karikot village in Wana, who turned them over to political authorities. Witnesses said that a powerful bomb placed in a roadside hotel close to the Frontier Corps' Jandola Fort went off with a big bang at around 9.30am on Thursday morning. Tank borders the restive South Waziristan tribal region. The explosion triggered a chain of small explosions in the adjoining arms shops.

The News, 9 December 2005

Meeting on WTO conference takes up Pakistan's concerns

ISLAMABAD: A joint meeting of the WTO Council and Parliamentary Task Force on WTO was held here Thursday with commerce minister in the chair to discuss WTO issues vis-a-vis Pakistan for the upcoming 6th ministerial meeting of the WTO in Hong Kong on 13-18 December. Mr. Qasim Niaz, Joint Secretary WTO briefed the participants on WTO agreements including Agriculture, NAMA, Services, Goods, TRIPs, TRIMs, Anti-dumping, Rules of Origin and Dispute Settlement Understanding. On agriculture the meeting was informed that Pakistan did not have major defensive concerns since the country did not provide much in the way of subsidies to its agriculture sector in any case. Moreover Pakistan could provide a certain level of subsidies depending upon the availability of fiscal resources. Pakistan's agriculture tariffs are quite low already.

Daily Times, 9 December 2005

Samjhota Express running without guard since October 1 (Iftikhar Gilani)

NEW DELHI: The Samjhota Express train linking India and Pakistan has been running without a train guard since October 1 because of a visa wrangle. No train can move unless the guard waves the green signal, but it is Pakistani driver Daar V Allah Ditta who has been doubling up as guard to move the train from Wagah to Attari to hand it over to Indian Railways staff. The agreement between India and Pakistan puts responsibility on Pakistan Railways staff to ply the train between Wagah and Attari, taking the charge from the Indian staff at Attari for its Lahore journey and giving them the charge to take it to New Delhi. However, Pakistan Railway's guard Hamid Rana has been absent from duty since October 1 and the train is crossing the border without any guard.

The News, 9 December 2005

Balochistan disappears from top bureaucracy (Ansar Abbasi)

ISLAMABAD: The top echelons of the federal bureaucracy, at present, do not have even a single officer from Balochistan. Government officials though argue there is no provisional or regional quota applied in senior appointments as traditionally the smaller provinces have been given their due representation at senior most level. Even while making BS-22 promotions, according to sources, it has been particularly ensured that Sindh and Balochistan must have their officers at the top level. A former establishment secretary, not willing to be named, said that it is the government's responsibility to keep a balance between federating units and bureaucracy is one such area where such a balance is must.

Dawn, 9 December 2005

'Taliban' action in Miramshah: toll 21

MIRAMSHAH, Dec 8: The death toll from Wednesday's bloody clash rose to 21 as militants continued their hunt for members of a group that locals said was involved in extortion. Armed with rockets and other heavy weapons, groups of militants, known as Taliban, riding pick-up trucks searched houses in Miramshah looking for associates of the ringleader, Muhammad Hakim. Witnesses said that two members of the Hakim group were captured and executed summarily by the Taliban on Wednesday evening. Bullet-riddled bodies of four others, who had been captured on Wednesday night, were thrown into the open in Miramshah on Thursday morning. With the latest killings, the figure of those killed in the bloody clash since Wednesday shot up to 21. Hakim, the alleged ringleader, has been under government's custody for quite some time.

The News, 9 December 2005

PM invites opposition to discuss KBD issue

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz extended an invitation to the opposition on Thursday for having a discussion on the issue of the Kalabagh dam (KBD) and sought their comments on the working mechanism of the parliamentary committee on earthquake relief and reconstruction. The prime minister extended the invitation in a meeting with opposition leaders, including Makhdoom Amin Fahim, Raja Pervez Ashraf and Liaquat Baloch, during the National Assembly session. During the meeting, which lasted for 20 minutes, the prime minister sought a response from the opposition to the government reply to the terms of references proposed by the combined opposition for the parliamentary committee.

Daily Times, 9 December 2005

Third round of dialogue in January

NEW DELHI: India and Pakistan have agreed to start the third round of composite dialogue when the foreign secretaries of the two countries meet in January 2006. Minister of State for External Affairs E Ahamed told the Rajya Sabha (Upper House) on Thursday that India and Pakistan have successfully completed two rounds of dialogue, and the third will commence next year. Ahamed said that India had proposed increasing the number of pilgrims and pilgrimage centres in both countries. The visit of pilgrims between India and Pakistan is covered under the Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines, 1974. online

Daily Times, 9 December 2005

Rebuilding quake-hit areas: 40,000 houses still to be inspected in Muzaffarabad

MUZAFFARABAD: Weaving his way through piles of slippery stone rubble on a steep hillside, Asif Ghulab makes house-by-house assessments. If the damage is bad enough, he passes out a "reconstruction" voucher to the owners - in many neighborhoods, virtually all houses qualify. Two months after the earthquake flattened much of this rugged city, Ghulab's work has only just begun. "There are about 40,000 houses to check," he said. "We have inspected about 375." Like most other cities and villages in this remote region life is in some ways beginning to return to normal. Water was restored after about a month in Muzaffarabad. The lights came back on after eight or nine days. The main market is crowded, and most of the shops that weren't crushed by the quake are back in business. The rebuilding will take much longer.

Daily Times, 10 December 2005

Decision on dams will be in national interest: PM

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said on Friday that a final decision on the construction of dams will be taken in the national interest and by considering the opinion of all stakeholders. Speaking to journalists on Friday, he said that he was in contact with all stakeholders. "We have decided to release the executive summaries of the experts' reports on the construction of big dams translated into regional languages," he said. The prime minister said that the government wanted to consult the opposition on all issues, including the construction of dams and the ongoing rehabilitation process in the earthquake-hit areas. He said that he had held several meetings with opposition leaders over the last two days on the formation of a parliamentary committee to oversee the transparency of the rehabilitation process. He said that the opposition's input would help make the process better,

and hoped that it will make a positive decision on the proposed Terms of Reference of the parliamentary committee in its meeting on Saturday (today).

The Nation, 10 December 2005

No Taliban regrouping on border: Sherpao

ISLAMABAD - The recent wave of lawlessness in South Waziristan is a reaction of local population against robberies in the area. Interior Minister Aftab Sherpao said this while talking to journalists at Fatima Jinnah Park on Friday after inspecting 50 prefabricated houses for survivors of the Oct 8 earthquake. He negated fresh reports about regrouping of Taliban on both sides of the border against the foreign forces based in Afghanistan. The minister expressed his ignorance about any 'backdoor' contacts between the US and Taliban to craft a bailout for both the parties from armed conflict in Afghanistan. About the chaos in South Waziristan, he brushed aside the impression that there was a political vacuum, which was ultimately failing the government in enforcing its writ in tribal tract.

Daily Times, 10 December 2005

20 PPL employees missing in Karachi (Aziz Sanghur, Abbas Naqvi and Azizullah Khan)

KARACHI/QUETTA: As many as 20 employees of the Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL) have been missing from a hotel in Karachi since early hours of Friday amid unconfirmed reports that they have been picked up by law-enforcement agencies. The PPL staff, who are from Balochistan, had been in Karachi for the past few days in connection with their meetings with the organization's management. They were staying at Hotel Regent Plaza. The news about their sudden disappearance was broken by a spokesman for the Jamhoori Watan Party at a press conference in Quetta on Friday evening at which he claimed that the gas company's employees had been missing since early hours of Friday. However, when the hotel was contacted by the Daily Times, it was learnt that all of them had left the hotel on Thursday.

Daily Times, 10 December 2005

Neglect could kill thousands: Oxfam

ISLAMABAD: A dramatic improvement in the international relief operation is essential to avert a second humanitarian disaster in Pakistan, Oxfam has warned again. "The international community must work together to fulfil their promise to prevent further deaths. Within weeks, the window of opportunity to bring relief to hard-to-reach areas will be shut, the time to act is now," Farhana Faruqi Stocker, Oxfam's Pakistan country director explained. Thousands of people are suffering from upper respiratory tract infection. Many survivors have still not been reached. Some people have told Oxfam that they have already started digging graves before the earth is hardened by the winter. It was a race against the onset of appalling weather, said the charity. Donor governments must respond to the looming second disaster of winter by increasing their funding to the UN relief appeal and releasing what is already pledged. The World Food Programme is still short by US \$115 million.

The Nation, 10 December 2005

Two more 'bandits' beheaded

MIRANSHAH (Agencies) - 'Militants' beheaded two suspected bandits and strung up their bodies on electricity poles in the latest violence to hit lawless tribal region near the Afghan border, witnesses said on Friday. The 'militants' have been searching for members of a gang of bandits in the North Waziristan region after a clash on Tuesday in which 15 people were killed, including 10 bandits. Five of the bandits killed on Tuesday were strung up in public. One was beheaded and his head stuck on a pole. Residents of Miranshah awoke on Friday to find two more bodies strung up from electricity poles. "Both were beheaded. One beheaded body was hanging upside down," said a resident of the town who declined to be identified out of fear for his safety.

Daily Times, 11 December 2005

Pakistan, India revise shipping protocol

KARACHI: Pakistan and India have agreed to allow each others' ships to carry third country cargo from ports in the two countries. The two sides agreed to a revised Protocol on Shipping after three days of technical talks in Karachi that ended on December 10, said Susheel Kumar, India's joint secretary for shipping, and SM Hasan Zaidi, Pakistan's joint secretary for ports and shipping, at a joint press conference here on Saturday. The agreement will increase the tonnage carried by ships from both countries and also result in competitive shipping rates, they said. Anwar Shah, the director general of ports and shipping, said the agreement will create jobs for seamen and result in a fresh wave of investment into the Pakistani shipping industry. According to a joint communiqué issued at the end of the meeting, the two sides agreed to delete paras 3 and 5 of the Shipping Protocol of 1975 which restricted the transport of cargo between the two countries by third country vessels as well as transport of third country cargo by Indian and Pakistani vessels from each others' ports.

Dawn, 11 December 2005

President, PM review OIC summit

RAWALPINDI, Dec 10: President General Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz on Saturday expressed satisfaction over the outcome of the extraordinary summit of the OIC observing that the final document issued in Makkah incorporated some of the key points proposed by Pakistan for the overall development of the Ummah. The two leaders, meeting at the conclusion of President Musharraf's successful visit to Kuwait, Yemen and Saudi Arabia, reaffirmed Pakistan's support for implementation of the 10-Year Plan of Action for socio-economic, scientific and technological uplift of the OIC countries. Prime Minister Aziz congratulated President Musharraf for Pakistan's vital contribution to collective efforts aimed at revamping and reforming the OIC. APP

The Nation, 11 December 2005

Civilians must for quake body (ABDUL AHAD)

ISLAMABAD - Expressing dissatisfaction over the government's reply to their terms of reference, the combined opposition Saturday demanded civilian setup to head the earthquake reconstruction and rehabilitation bodies. Addressing a press conference at the parliamentary committee room, the opposition leaders said it is important that the parliamentary committee on earthquake should be made powerful so that the process of rehabilitation and reconstruction could be made transparent. Maulana Fazlur Rehman, Liaquat Baloch, Makhdoom Amin Fahim, Mian Raza Rabbani and Chaudhry Nisar Ali said they had received the letter and after serious deliberations decided to send another letter to the government hoping that this time it would take some practical steps. They said the government should ensure supremacy of the Parliament.

Daily Times, 11 December 2005

Balochistan allocated a huge chunk despite quake: PM

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz has said that despite millions of rupees spent on relief and rehabilitation work in earthquake-affected areas, the government has given a huge amount of money to Balochistan. He was talking to a delegation of Mutahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) senators and FATA, led by Ismail Buledi, which called on him on Saturday. The lawmakers appreciated the efforts of President Musharraf and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz in ensuring the speedy delivery of relief goods to the earthquake affected areas. "The government has not imposed any new tax and the development schemes under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) have been allowed to continue and we have still provided Rs2.5 bn in financial assistance to the province", the prime minister said.

Daily Times, 12 December 2005

Possible options on Kashmir: Pakistan more flexible than India (Ali Waqar)

LAHORE: Kuldeep Nayar, a leading journalist, peace activist and former member of the Rajya Sabha proposed maximum autonomy for the Indian and Pakistani sides of Kashmir except for foreign, defence and communication affairs. He said that free movement across the Line of Control (LoC) was the most feasible solution to the Kashmir issue. Noted Pakistani intellectuals have urged that India should show flexibility in its stance to resolve issues between India and Pakistan, including Kashmir, because Pakistan has come a long way in this regard. Demilitarisation in Kashmir was deeply linked to democracy in Pakistan, they said at "Possible Options on Kashmir", a special lecture at Avari Hotel on Sunday. The Punjab chapter of the South Asian Free Media Association (SAFMA) organised the lecture in collaboration with the Eqbal Ahmad Foundation. Sialkot-born Nayar was the keynote speaker and Daily Times Editor Najam Sethi and former foreign minister Sardar Aseff Ahmad Ali discussed solutions to Indo-Pak issues.

Daily Times, 12 December 2005

'Interfaith dialogue key to peace'

LAHORE: Inter-faith dialogue is the key to improvement of relationships between people and implies that religion should be an instrument of peace rather than conflict, said Adviser to Prime Minister Senator Muhammad Ali Durrani. He was addressing the South Asian Regional Seminar on Christian-Muslim Dialogue in the Indian subcontinent, organised by the National Commission for Inter-Religious Dialogue and Ecumenism on Sunday. He said despite theological differences between Christianity and Islam, they had several common beliefs and similarities. He said both believed in supremacy of God and in messengers sent to guide humanity.

Daily Times, 12 December 2005

Consensus or no consensus, KBD will go ahead (Sarfraz Ahmed)

KARACHI: President Pervez Musharraf has strongly indicated that the Kala Bagh Dam will be built even in the absence of a consensus among the four provinces. "Consensus is very important. But sometime you don't get a complete consensus because of a variety of reasons," Gen Musharraf told newspaper editors, mainly representing the Sindhi press, at Governor's House here on Sunday. He stressed the importance of taking "timely decisions", saying Pakistan had not built a major dam in 30 years, which had resulted in the current shortage of

nine million acre feet of water. "This shortage would enormously compound in the coming years and it would be the construction of big dams like Kala Bagh which could help us cope," he said. He said previous governments had failed to make difficult decisions for reasons of political expediency and lack of courage.

The Nation, 12 December 2005

Bhasha Dam may take 12 years (JAVED MAHMOOD)

LAHORE - Bhasha Dam, being debated as a second choice or an alternative to Kalabagh Dam, would take more than 12 years to get ready from the day the work on this mega water reservoir is initiated. Before starting work on this project, at least six to eight years are required to complete extensive studies, intensive research, all the pre-requisite tests, and a comprehensive investigation on its high seismic risk and resettlement of the inhabitants of the area, to be dislodged from the site area. Details gathered by 'The Nation' from experts and official documents revealed that after the completion of all the studies, investigations, research and various tests, another six years would be required to complete the entire project, that too if the things moved smoothly and in line with the originally conceived plan.

Daily Times, 12 December 2005

Fatwa calls for death to Karzai

SPIN BOLDACK: Taliban have issued a fatwa (religious decree) calling for President Hamid Karzai to be killed for serving American and British "infidels". The decree came in a 12-page Pashto-language booklet distributed in the Afghan south. It reiterated a call for jihad against infidels and their slaves. "It should be remembered that there is no difference between infidels and their agents and jihad against them has become incumbent," the fatwa said. The document was written by three Taliban Muslim scholars and approved by a council of about 100, a Taliban spokesman said. "Jihad against all the slaves of Americans and the British, including Hamid Karzai, has become incumbent and they deserve to be killed," it said. US and Afghan opposition troops forced the Taliban from power in late 2001 after they refused to give up Osama bin Laden, architect of the September 11 attacks on the United States.

Dawn, 12 December 2005

'Caution' against immigrants from S. Arabia, Pakistan

NEW YORK, Dec 11: A Nobel prize laureate who called for liberalizing immigration laws for skilled workers from around the world, cautioned that the US should be careful about admitting students and skilled workers from countries "that have produced many terrorists, such as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan". In an Op-ed article in the Wall Street Journal, Gary S. Becker a professor of economics and sociology at the University of Chicago and a 1992 Nobel prize winner said: "My attitude may be dismissed as religious profiling, but intelligent and fact-based profiling is essential in the war against terror." He said: "Terrorists come from a relatively small number of countries and backgrounds, unfortunately mainly of the Islamic faith. But the legitimate concern about admitting terrorists should not be allowed, as it is now doing, to deny or discourage the admission of skilled immigrants who pose little terrorist threat."

Daily Times, 12 December 2005

'Pakistan should shift funds from military to rehabilitation' (Khalid Hasan)

WASHINGTON: The Pakistan government has been advised to continue to redirect resources originally intended for military use toward reconstruction. An editorial in the conservative Washington Times on Sunday predicts that the people of Pakistan will become emboldened to demand more constructive use of public funds in the wake of the earthquake. The change in Pakistani temperament and the necessary refocusing of the military could have a lasting effect, even after the aftershocks wear off. The aid effort remains vulnerable as aid workers race with the approaching winter. The leading article notes that there have been more than 900 aftershocks to the devastating October earthquake, while the "effects on the political landscape have also been seismic," both from a positive and a negative viewpoint.

Daily Times, 13 December 2005

Militants rule the roost in Waziristan: report (Khalid Hasan)

WASHINGTON: Militants have begun to open recruiting offices in North and South Waziristan to recruit fighters against the Pakistan Army and US forces in Afghanistan, asserts a report appearing in an American newspaper on Monday. The Christian Science Monitor reports from Islamabad that videos released by the militants, and sold in local shops as part of their recruitment drive, show militants training openly. The militants have even held public gatherings, the most recent in October to mark the year anniversary since the Pakistan military bombed a militant camp in Dela Khula, killing 40 of their comrades. "Music and TV have been banned. Women are confined to their homes. Shops must close five times a day for prayers, an edict enforced by armed religious police who patrol the streets.

The Nation, 13 December 2005

Democracy must for durable Pak-US ties (JAVED SIDDIQUE)

ISLAMABAD - US Ambassador in Pakistan Ryan C Crocker has stated that the bilateral and strategic relations between Pakistan and US will remain under pressure until a credible democracy backed by stable institutions do not take full roots. The US envoy strongly believed that the future progress, prosperity and stability of Pakistan depended on a truly democratic dispensation in the country. Crocker, who was chatting to senior journalists at the Islamabad residence of a senior US diplomat, said he was in no position to guarantee free, just and impartial national polls in 2007. But, he did commit that other countries and US would keep a close and hawk like vigil on the next Pak elections. He told journalists that "we are all for a democratic set up and fervently wish to have a stable and democracy in Pakistan." But he was quick to add "running of democracy was the task of Pakistani nation." Responding to a question about the past role of US of supporting military rulers, he said.

The News, 13 December 2005

Pakistan asks EU to lift anti-dumping duty (Sajid Aziz)

HONG KONG: Pakistan has formally asked the European Union (EU) to withdraw punitive duty on its bedwear sector, which was imposed some 18 months ago. Speaking at a press briefing here, Commerce Minister Humayun Akhtar Khan informed Pakistani media team that during his meeting with EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson on Monday the imposition of anti-dumping duty was on top of the agenda. The minister said his EU counterpart assured him that the matter would be resolved at the earliest as the case would be placed before the anti-dumping committee of the European Commission (EC) as soon as he got back to Brussels. Humayun said there would be three fundamental issues in the sixth ministerial conference of the World Trade Organisation starting today (Tuesday) but the issue of agriculture subsidies would be the most important for developing countries.

Daily Times, 13 December 2005

Russia welcome to IPI pipeline project: Iran

TEHRAN: Iran is open to Russian involvement in an ambitious multi-billion-dollar plan to supply India and Pakistan with piped natural gas; the foreign ministry was quoted as saying Monday. "The issue has been brought up. Russia is a powerful country with advanced technology. If the Indians and Pakistanis agree, and I don't think they would have serious opposition, these countries can cooperate and go ahead with the project," foreign ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said. In June, India signed a deal worth 22 billion dollars for Tehran to supply five million tonnes of liquefied natural gas annually over a 25-year period from 2009 and also a memorandum of cooperation on the construction of a multi-billion-dollar gas pipeline from Iran through Pakistan. The 2,600-kilometre link is expected to cost more than seven billion dollars. Russia has voiced its interest in the project.

The News, 13 December 2005

WB to fund electricity import by Pakistan (Khalid Mustafa)

ISLAMABAD: The World Bank has agreed to fund the laying of power transmission lines and setting up of grid stations for import of electricity from Tajikistan to Pakistan. However, the Bank linked its funding for the project with the transfer of electricity through Kabul arguing it will benefit the war ravaged Afghanistan a lot. In this regard a meeting of representatives from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan is most likely to be held in Islamabad next month. The donors such as WB, ADB will also participate the meeting. According to an official in Prime Minister Secretariat, Ministry of Water and Power has been asked to forward a summary to this effect to prime minister seeking approval for the donors meeting on the issue. The official said that the World Bank had agreed to fund the project proposing Pakistan to import electricity from Tajikistan through Afghanistan.

Daily Times, 13 December 2005

Banned groups' relief work bothers Crocker

ISLAMABAD: US Ambassador to Pakistan Ryan C Crocker said on Monday that the involvement of "banned groups" in the earthquake relief operation was a matter of concern and his country's position on such outfits, which have been put on the watch-list, was very clear. Talking to a group of editors and senior journalists at a lunch, the US ambassador, however, said it should be a matter of concern for the Pakistani government that such groups involved in violence were associated with the relief operation. He said these groups were already on the watch-list and their involvement in the relief activities would facilitate them to freely operate and increase their movement. "It is a challenge for the government.

The Nation, 13 December 2005

Croat to head India-Pakistan Observer Group

UNITED NATIONS - The UN Secretary General has appointed Maj Gen Dragutin Repinc of Croatia as the head of the UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), it was announced Monday. Gen Repinc, 46,

will replace Maj Gen Guido Dante Palmieri of Italy who left the mission in September. The Gen has been an instructor at the Croatian Command Staff School, the war school for military operations other than war including peace support operations and served as commander of the Officers School. From 1999 to 2003, he served as Chief of the Operational Planning Division, General Staff. Since 2003, Gen Repinc has been deputy head of the operational department, general staff, and Chief of Staff, Army Headquarters in Karlovac.

The Nation, 13 December 2005

Musharraf's guarantees over KBD hollow: Opp (ABDUL AHAD)

ISLAMABAD - The main component parties of Alliance for Restoration of Democracy-PPP-P and PML-N-and Awami National Party have rebutted the statement of President General Pervez Musharraf about the building of Kalabagh dam. Talking to editors in Karachi on Sunday President Musharraf had reportedly said that he was ready to give watertight constitutional guarantees and timely decisions had to be taken to build the dam even if there was no consensus on it. Senator Asfandyar Wali of the ANP told The Nation that "The General is repeating the same mistakes that were committed by the military regime in 1971, when it pitted West Pakistan against East Pakistan." He said the only difference now was that the present regime had been pitting Punjab against the other three provinces.

The Nation, 13 December 2005

President challenges dam opposers to debate

KARACHI (Online) – President Gen Pervez Musharraf has asked the parliamentarians belonging to ruling coalition in Sindh to "turn the tide" and convince the people of Sindh on Kalabagh Dam issue. "You are the leaders. You have to turn the tide and convince those people who cannot understand the benefits of new dams", Musharraf said while addressing the federal and provincial ministers, senators, and members of national and Sindh assemblies at the governor house on Monday. Governor Sindh Dr Ishrat-ul-Ebad, Chief Minister Dr Arbab Ghulam Rahim, Federal Minister for Water and Power, Liaquat Jatoi, Federal Minister for Communication, Shamim Siddiqui, Federal Minister for Ports and Shipping Babar Ghouri, Federal Minister for Local Bodies, Justice (Retd) Abdul Razzak Thaeem, and Speaker Sindh Assembly, Syed Muzzafer Hussein Shah were also present on the occasion.

Daily Times, 13 December 2005

Shujaat in Jeddah to meet Nawaz

LAHORE: Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain flew to Jeddah on Monday with a view to meeting with Nawaz Sharif to try and foster a reconciliation with the former prime minister, sources close to the Pakistan Muslim League (PML) president told Daily Times. President Gen Pervez Musharraf sent Shujaat as his emissary to Saroor Palace on a special plane, the sources said. Shujaat would ask Nawaz to support the construction of Kalabagh Dam and Gen Musharraf in the next general elections, offering in return to allow Shahbaz Sharif to come back to Pakistan and take part in politics, and a share in the federal and provincial governments for the PML-Nawaz after the next general elections, the sources said. Shujaat and Nawaz would also discuss the possibility of a merger between the PML and PML-N.

The Nation, 13 December 2005

Gomal-Zam Dam project award by month-end (MONEM FAROOQI)

LAHORE - The Water and Power Development Authority is going to award contract for the completion of Gomal-Zam Dam project by the month-end. Sources told The Nation that WAPDA Monday received a letter from the lowest bidders and decision to finalise the successful bidder for completion of left-over work, would be made within a couple of days. China National Water Resources and Hydropower Engineering Corporation and the Hanbiw Power Engineering Company had stopped work on the Gomal-Zam project in October 2004 following the kidnapping and killing of Chinese engineers working on the project. Another Chinese engineer was injured in the incident.

Daily Times, 14 December 2005

Pakistan receives two F-16 aircraft (Mohammad Imran)

ISLAMABAD: Two upgraded F-16 Fighting Falcons landed in Pakistan on Tuesday. The US has provided the aircraft to the Pakistan Air Force (PAF). The F-16s are of the same category that the PAF is already operating. The purchase of the aircraft was finalised with the US several months ago, a press release stated. "The two F-16s were of the A and B category, which the PAF is already operating," sources told Daily Times. They said the aircraft were handed over to the PAF after a deal in September. They said only four F-16s of the A and B category were in extra stock of the US Air Force and two of them had been given to Pakistan. The jets had been made operational after being passed through the Mid Life Up Grade Programme.

Daily Times, 14 December 2005

Pakistan not hostage to a handful of extremists: Musharraf

QUETTA: President Pervez Musharraf said on Tuesday that Pakistan was not hostage to a bunch of terrorists and extremists who could dictate their "wills and ideas" by their petty sabotage activities. Addressing trainee officers and faculty members of the Command and Staff College Quetta, Musharraf said Pakistan was on its way to stability and democratic norms were steadfastly gaining ground. He condemned and shunned terrorists and extremists, who were bent upon spoiling Pakistan's image, and vowed to foil their nefarious designs. He called on Muslim states to shun such elements likewise for a better image of the Islamic world. He also talked about Pakistan's economic growth, saying it indicated an increase in the annual GDP of 8 percent whereas foreign loans had been reduced from \$50 billion to \$35 billion. He said exports had registered a 100 percent growth, at about 17 billion.

Daily Times, 14 December 2005

PPPP vows to oppose KBD (Irfan Ghauri)

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) said in the National Assembly (NA) on Tuesday that it will oppose the construction of Kalabagh Dam. "Kalabagh Dam will be built over our dead bodies. NWFP will submerge under its waters. We will stay the course," PPPP Chief Whip Syed Khurshid Shah said. He said that Musharraf was raising the issue to carry out a 'political vendetta'. He said that three provinces have passed unanimous resolutions against the construction of Kalabagh Dam, and the government cannot ignore them. Earlier, Sherry Rehman of the PPPP accused President Pervez Musharraf of trying to create a rift between Punjab and Sindh. "He said that he will construct it (Kalabagh Dam) even if no consensus develops," she said, adding that this stubborn attitude would not be tolerated.

Dawn, 14 December 2005

Musharraf seeks Balochistan's support on dams (Saleem Shahid)

QUETTA, Dec 13: President Gen Pervez Musharraf has urged the people of Balochistan to support the case of new dams and let others know that Balochistan is not against construction of new reservoirs. Addressing elected representatives, notables, lawyers and intellectuals at the Governor's House here on Tuesday, he said that three new dams were needed to overcome the anticipated shortage of water. He said that the dam issue had been politicized to the extent that people in Sindh were not ready to hear anything about new reservoirs. If new dams were not built, all the provinces, including Sindh would suffer, the president said, adding that he would talk to the people of Sindh and make them realize the necessity of new dams. He said that according to Irsa statistics, Balochistan and the NWFP were not getting their due share of water, and Balochistan would start getting its share only after completion of the Kachhi canal.

Dawn, 14 December 2005

Negotiations for \$1.4bn quake loans

ISLAMABAD, Dec 13: Pakistan has completed negotiations with multilateral agencies for \$1.47 billion loans out of the \$3.984 billion pledges and asked international institutions to lend their experts on secondment for reconstruction and rehabilitation of the areas devastated by the October earthquake. Advisor to the Prime Minister on Finance Dr Salman Shah told a news conference on Tuesday that negotiations had been finalized with the World Bank for \$870 million, Asian Development Bank for \$300 million and the Japan Bank for International Cooperation for \$300 million loan. The boards of directors of the World Bank and the ADB were expected to approve the loan packages by Dec 15, he said. The loans were based on soft terms, he said. The World Bank would charge 0.75 per cent service charges on its loans repayable over 35 years and the ADB would charge about one per cent interest on its \$220 million loans repayable in 40 years, he said. He said total international financial pledges had increased to \$6.3 billion and offers were still coming in. This comprised \$3.984 billion in loans and \$2.341 billion in grants, he said.

Dawn, 14 December 2005

Foreign secy may meet IAEA officials (Qudssia Akhlaque)

ISLAMABAD, Dec 13: Foreign Secretary Riaz Mohammad Khan, who is in Vienna for bilateral consultations, is likely to touch base with some key officials at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The foreign secretary left for Vienna on a three-day visit on Monday. "Foreign Secretary Riaz Mohammad Khan, besides holding talks with his Austrian counterpart, will meet some key IAEA officials," sources told Dawn on Tuesday. The visit acquires significance given that Austria will be assuming the European Union presidency next month. Also, it coincides with Iranian Foreign Minister Manoucher Mottaki's first visit to Pakistan during which the question of Tehran's nuclear programme and its negotiations with the IAEA and the EU would come up. Mr Mottaki would arrive on Wednesday on a two-day visit.

Dawn, 14 December 2005

Nato not chasing Al Qaeda in Pakistan: official (Iftikhar A. Khan)

ISLAMABAD, Dec 13: North Atlantic Treaty Organization forces are not in Pakistan to chase Al Qaeda, a Nato commander said on Tuesday. "Chasing Al Qaeda is neither our agenda nor our mandate," Commander of the Nato Forces in Pakistan Air Commodore Andrew George Walton told Dawn at the Chaklala Airbase. He said the Nato forces after accomplishing their short-term mission here would return to their headquarters and not travel to Afghanistan to take part in peace-keeping operations. He rejected allegations that Nato had acquired land to establish bases in Kashmir. "No acquisition of any land has taken place in Kashmir or any other part of Pakistan, nor will it happen in the days ahead," he said. He said he had no funds for the purpose, which was also something beyond the mandate of the Nato forces here. He said Nato forces were in the country by invitation of the government to provide aid and support after the October earthquake.

The Nation, 14 December 2005

Pak-Iran talks on N-standoff, gasoline today (Shaiq Hussain)

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan and Iran will hold crucial talks on Tehran's nuclear standoff with US and EU as Iran's Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki arrives here today on a two-day official visit. The visiting minister will deliver a special message to President Musharraf from his Iranian counterpart Ahmedinejad, said the diplomatic sources here Tuesday. "Pakistan had been silently mediating between US and Iran to defuse the crisis arising out of their row over Tehran's nuclear programme and this message could originally be meant for Americans seeking the settlement of issue amicably," a source said. Mottaki, who arrives here on his first visit as Iranian Foreign Minister since the assumption of this post in August this year, would discuss in detail Tehran's controversial nuclear programme with the Pakistani leadership. Importantly, this visit comes ahead of December 21 talks between Tehran and EU on the nuclear programme.

The Nation, 14 December 2005

Lahore bus reaches Amritsar on trial run

LAHORE (APP) - The trial run of the Lahore - Amritsar bus service started here with eight officials and technical experts of concerned departments on board here Tuesday morning. The delegates included MD Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) Hashim Khan, Punjab Tourism Secretary Hassan Nawaz Tarar, Federal Communication Ministry's Director Shahid Iqbal, Lahore DCO Khalid Sultan, PTDC Islamabad Managers Anwar Sajid and Tayyab Nisar Mir, Incharge Lahore-Delhi Bus Service PTDC Punjab, Arshad Ali and the bus driver Muhammad Khalil. Talking to journalists prior to leaving for Amritsar from the PTDC bus terminal, Hashim Khan appreciated the new initiative and said the bus service would facilitate people of both Punjabs to visit each other. He said initially the bus service would operate between Lahore-Amritsar-Lahore once a week, while the proposed dates for regular service between the two cities are December 23 for Lahore-Amritsar, and December 27 for Amritsar-Lahore.

The News, 14 December 2005

Third round of Indo-Pak dialogue likely next month (Mariana Baabar)

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and India hope to start third round of the composite dialogue at the foreign secretary level in the third week of next month in New Delhi. At a time when the Congress government has still not nominated a new minister for external affairs, Pakistan hopes that a moderate new face will emerge so that "the year 2006 could be one of great promises between the two countries." "The dates for this meeting are still being worked out but hopefully it should be sometime in the third week of January. After these talks the two foreign ministers will meet. Both these meetings are expected in New Delhi," diplomatic sources told The News. "Peace, security and Kashmir will form part of the agenda. "Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri and Natwar Singh had developed a good equation though their several meetings had seen slow progress in the areas of peace and security and opening up by New Delhi to explore possibilities on Kashmir

The News, 14 December 2005

Musharraf can't contest 2007 presidential poll: MMA (Asim Yasin)

ISLAMABAD: The Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal on Tuesday raised a constitutional question, saying President Pervez Musharraf could not contest the presidential election in 2007. "General Musharraf had availed two terms as president and the constitution bars a person from contesting elections for a third time," said MMA Deputy Secretary-General Liaquat Baloch at a press conference at the Parliament Cafeteria with Dr Farid Piracha and Asadullah Bhutto here on Tuesday. He said Musharraf first took oath of the president after removing former president Rafiq Tarar in June 2000 while his second term started after the referendum when the Supreme Court validated it. He also got validation from the electoral college of Parliament in December 2003, Baloch said.

Dawn, 15 December 2005

Nato relief work to end by Jan 20: spokesman

BAGH, Dec 14: Nato Forces Bagh Communication Officer on Wednesday said relief work in the affected areas would be completed by Jan 20. "We have no political objective behind it and Nato is taking measures for the rehabilitation of the affected areas since many months," he told a press briefing on Wednesday. He said the Nato forces were working day and night for the survivors of the Oct 8 quake on the request of the government of Pakistan through an agreement. He said Nato's relief teams had only two Americans. It included 20 countries that were working under a formal system. He said England teams were working in mountainous regions and providing optimum health facilities to the survivors living on mountains. Nato, he said, had established 20 temporary hospitals and education institutions. He said that the target would be completed by January that included construction of roads, temporary restoration of health organizations and education institutions.

The Nation, 15 December 2005

Pakistan pins hopes on WTO moot outcome (HAQ NAWAZ)

HONG KONG - Commerce Minister and Facilitator for Non-Agriculture Market Access (NAMA) Humayun Akhtar Khan Wednesday revealed that the negotiations on NAMA are under way and the conference is close to agree on the Swiss formula. Talking to journalists here, the minister said being facilitator for the NAMA talks, he had a wide range of deliberations with various groups under WTO and the process was still under way. All the stakeholders in NAMA have indicated their acceptance on the Swiss Formula regarding tariff cuts and once they formally agreed on this formula, the modalities for the general agreement would be discussed, he added. The basic issue is the concession and flexibility for developed, developing and least-developed countries, which hopefully would get set once the negotiators agreed.

The News, 15 December 2005

Pakistan admitted to Cairns Group (Sajid Aziz)

HONG KONG: Pakistan has formally been admitted to the 17-member Cairns Group, representing agriculture exporting countries from the developed and developing world. The Group welcomed Pakistan as its 18th member in a meeting on the second day of the WTO ministerial meeting. Other members of the Cairns Group are: Argentina, Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Paraguay, the Philippines, South Africa, Thailand, and Uruguay. Pakistan's entry into the group is seen as a little deviation in its earlier stance as Islamabad is also an active member of the G-20. Indian Commerce Minister Kamal Nath has, however, commented that his country has no objection to Pakistan's entry into the group.

Daily Times, 15 December 2005

Pakistan opposes force in settling Iran nuclear issue

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has opposed using force to resolve the issue of Iran's nuclear programme, saying it should be settled within the framework set by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Following a meeting with visiting Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki on Wednesday, Pakistani Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri said Pakistan supported the Iran-European Union dialogue process on the nuclear question. "We hope that the talks will resume soon and lead to an amicable solution," Kasuri said, reiterating Pakistan's support to Iran's legitimate right as a state party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Reportedly, Iran and the EU are expected to resume talks on the nuclear question on December 21. Despite the pressure, the IAEA put off plans to take Iran to the UN Security Council and gave it more time for diplomacy to work.

The News, 15 December 2005

IPI gas pipeline talks tomorrow

ISLAMABAD: The third meeting of the India-Pakistan joint working group on the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project is starting on Friday here, a government official told Online on Wednesday. He said Petroleum and Natural Resources Secretary Ahmad Waqar would leave for New Delhi on Thursday along with a three-member delegation, comprising managing-director of the Sui Northern Gas Pipeline Limited (SNGPL), the deputy secretary development and the technical director Inter-State Gas Pipeline Limited (ISGPL). The official said the meeting would discuss the gas reserve certification and allocation; gas quantity and build-up; gas quality, system configuration and the project structure. Other matters of pipeline routing, delivery points, transportation tariff, transit fee, capital and operation costs and pipeline security would also be discussed in the meeting, he said.

Dawn, 15 December 2005

Saboteurs will fail, says Musharraf: Rockets fired during president's Kohlu visit

KOHLU (Balochistan), Dec 14: Vowing continued focus on development of remote areas, President Gen Pervez Musharraf said here on Wednesday, "saboteurs and anti-development elements cannot deter the process of socio-economic progress as the masses want to move forward." Addressing a public gathering during his four-hour visit to Kohlu, the president announced Rs1.5 billion development projects for Kohlu district and sought

people's support for development projects in different parts of Balochistan, including Gwadar port. "We are not deterred by anti-development elements and will continue to steer the country on the path of socio-economic development," he said in reference to recent incidents of rocket attacks and bomb blasts in the area. During the president's visit, miscreants fired rockets at Kohlu, but the incident did not affect the visit which went on as scheduled.

Dawn, 15 December 2005

Ecneec approves Rs183.6bn projects (Khaleeq Kiani)

ISLAMABAD, Dec 14: The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council on Wednesday approved 29 development projects with an estimated cost of Rs183.6 billion. The projects will be executed in the next fiscal year as part of the Public Sector Development Programme-2006-07. Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz presided over the meeting which approved 24 new projects at a total cost of Rs157.3 billion, including a foreign exchange component of Rs87.8 billion. It approved five old projects with an increased cost of Rs26.3 billion having foreign exchange component of Rs3.3 billion instead of their original cost of Rs23.9 billion. Ecneec also approved incorporation of a disclosure clause in the procurement contracts to be awarded by the federal and provincial governments to identify taxable money and the element of corruption.

Daily Times, 15 December 2005

Nothing can stop Balochistan uplift, says Musharraf

KOHLU: The government will not allow the development of Balochistan to be held up by "saboteurs and anti-development elements", President General Pervez Musharraf said on Wednesday. "We have the financial resources and will put them to use for the uplift of the masses," Gen Musharraf said at a public gathering in Kohlu district, APP reported. "The opposition to development is totally unjustified. You should rest assured that all resources of the province will be utilised for your well-being, so do not pay heed to elements who indulge in utterly baseless propaganda." He said an increase in oil and gas exploration would help step up the pace of development in the province. Gwadar deep sea port will become operational next summer and usher in "a new era of development", he said. "We will run Gwadar as a modern port.

Daily Times, 16 December 2005

Americans will upgrade Pakistani F-16s next year (Umer Farooq)

ISLAMABAD: The mid-life upgrade (MLU) programme for Pakistan Air Force's F-16 fleet will start in the first quarter of next year, defence sources told Daily Times. The US-assisted MLU programme will help enhance the operational capabilities and reliability of the F-16s, as the fleet will undergo structural and avionics up-gradation under this programme. In the Pakistan-US defence consultations during the last one-year, the US government has agreed to include PAF's F-16s in the MLU programme, which the US had started for the air forces of its allied countries back in early 1990s. Pakistan had started negotiating with the United States for up-gradation of its F-16s' fleet back in 2003. The sources said that an offer finally came last year during the defence consultative group's meetings.

The News, 16 December 2005

Tripartite panel holds 14th meeting in Kabul

ISLAMABAD: The Tripartite Commission, comprising senior military and diplomatic representatives from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Coalition Forces in Afghanistan, held its 14th meeting in Kabul on Thursday. Delegates included General Ahsan Saleem Hayat, Vice Chief of Army Staff of Pakistan, General Bismullah Khan, Chief of Staff of the Afghan National Army and Lieutenant General Karl W Eikenberry, Commander, Combined Forces Command Afghanistan. The session began with short summaries of the recent Border Security Subcommittee meeting hosted by Pakistan at the Khyber Rifles Mess and the Counter-IED and Military Intelligences - Sharing Working Group meetings hosted by Afghanistan in Kabul. The delegations then briefly summarised the role of their military forces placed in relief efforts after the October 8 earthquake in Pakistan, and discussed ways to continue relief efforts throughout the winter. The delegates also discussed the future of Tripartite Commission and ways to expand their cooperative security efforts in other areas. The Tripartite Commission will meet again in February 2006 in Kabul.

Daily Times, 16 December 2005

APC on Kalabagh Dam soon: Rashid (Rana Qaisar)

ISLAMABAD: The government on Thursday decided to convene an All Parties Conference (APC) to discuss the issue of Kalabagh Dam (KBD). "Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz will announce the date for the APC and brief all participating parties about the need for a major water reservoir," Information Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed told Daily Times. This decision was taken at a high-level meeting chaired by President General Pervez Musharraf in Rawalpindi after his return from visits to Sindh and Balochistan promoting KBD. The meeting also decided to launch a media campaign to support KBD and to increase contact with the people opposed to the project. Aziz,

Rashid, PML President Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi, Sindh Chief Minister Arbab Ghulam Rahim, former president Farooq Leghari, PML Secretary General Mushahid Hussain and NWFP Chief Minister Mohammad Ali Durrani attended the meeting.

Daily Times, 16 December 2005

New fund to set up madrassas in quake-hit areas (Hasan Mansoor)

KARACHI: The largest among the five seminary boards, Wafaq-ul-Madaris al-Arabia, has established a fund to set up hundreds of new seminaries in parts of Azad Kashmir and NWFP that were hit by the October 8 earthquake, officials said. The Wafaq, which runs 9,000 out of a total of 14,000 seminaries across the country, has established its own fund with seed money totaling one million rupees, a spokesman of the seminary board confirmed on Thursday. This fund has nothing to do with relief efforts but would be exclusively used for the provision of Islamic education to local children, the spokesman said. The Wafaq asked all of its affiliated members to donate funds and has set a target of Rs 30 million. Each of around 5,000 seminaries, which offer the equivalent of middle education, have been asked to donate Rs 2,000. Some 2,000 seminaries offering the Darja Sanvia (matriculation) will donate Rs 4,000 each and the rest, comprising Darja Aaliya and Dorah-e-Hadith (equal to bachelors and postgraduate), have been asked to donate Rs 6,000 and Rs 8,000, respectively.

Daily Times, 16 December 2005

ADB okays \$1.33b aid for Pakistan

MANILA: The Asian Development Bank on Thursday said it had approved \$1.33 billion in grants and loans for Pakistan to rebuild earthquake-hit areas and for other infrastructure and development projects. The package includes \$300 million in assistance to help Pakistan restore infrastructure and the economy in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and the North West Frontier Province. The cost of reconstruction and restoring services is estimated at \$3.5 billion, said the Philippines-based lender's statement. "The project aims to quickly reverse the devastating impact of the earthquake and revive economic activity to enable people to resume their livelihoods and return to normal life," said Fernando Garcia, an ADB transport specialist. By far the largest component of the total aid package is a Multi-Tranche Financing Facility (MFF) of up to \$770 million and a related \$3 million loan to upgrade the country's highway network.

Daily Times, 16 December 2005

UN appeals for \$22 million for housing in Pakistan, Zimbabwe

NAIROBI: The United Nations on Thursday launched an urgent appeal for more than \$20 million to build shelters for people left homeless in Pakistan by a the October 8 earthquake and by a controversial demolitions campaign in Zimbabwe. The Nairobi-based UN Human Settlement Programme (HABITAT) asked donors to contribute \$22 million for the appeal that aims to assist millions of Pakistanis and Zimbabweans. "There is an urgent need to stabilise the shelter conditions of poor people who were evicted and have been living in the cold and in the open for almost six months," said HABITAT chief Ann Tibaijuka. "There is also a desperate need to meet the shelter demands of those affected by the earthquake in Pakistan especially now that winter has set in," she said. Just over \$18 million of the money will be spent in Pakistan, she added.

Daily Times, 16 December 2005

Pakistan opposes attack on Iran: Musharraf

ISLAMABAD: President Pervez Musharraf said on Thursday that Islamabad opposes any attack on Iran. "Acquisition of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes is the legitimate right of every country, and Pakistan's nuclear programme is also based on peaceful purposes," Musharraf said in a meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki at Army House. He said that Pakistan had extended complete cooperation to the international community on nuclear non-proliferation. "Islamabad wants to cement ties with Tehran in multidimensional areas, as both countries are striving for sustained peace in the region," he said. He linked regional progress and development to the completion of the India-Pakistan-Iran (IPI) gas pipeline project and said that Pakistan wanted to widen the scope of defence, trade and other areas with Iran.

Daily Times, 16 December 2005

'Govt not planning military operation in Balochistan'

QUETTA: The government is not planning to start a military operation in Balochistan but police and paramilitary forces have been deployed to nab those responsible for rocket attacks in Kohlu, said Balochistan Chief Minister Jam Muhammad Yousaf on Thursday. Talking to reporters at the chief minister's secretariat, Yousaf said President Pervez Musharraf was aware that rockets were regularly fired at Kohlu. "Security officials knew that rockets would be fired during the president's visit, but he (Musharraf) still visited the area to encourage people working for development," he added. azizullah khan

The News, 16 December 2005

Arbab proposes Bhasha dam (Tahir Hasan Khan)

KARACHI: Chief Minister Dr Arbab Ghulam Rahim said on Thursday Sindh had proposed that Bhasha dam should be constructed on the Indus river on a priority basis because the feasibility of this dam had been completed. Talking to newsmen at the Jinnah Terminal on Thursday night after returning from Islamabad where he attended a high-level meeting chaired by President Gen Pervez Musharraf, Arbab said no decision was taken in the meeting about any dam, including the Kalabagh dam, as it was a political meeting and not an inter-provincial conference. Rejecting speculations of his opponents, Arbab said those who claimed he would not return as chief minister had been proved wrong. Replying to a question, he said in the meeting he expressed the view that a dam should be constructed on the Indus river, but designing link canals from any dam should be avoided. Arbab said President Gen Pervez Musharraf had listened to the point of view of Sindh.

The News, 16 December 2005

Kashmir bus service resumes

HELD SRINAGAR: A Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus halted by the devastating Oct 8 earthquake resumed on Thursday, Indian officials said. "The bus has resumed its service from Srinagar to Kaman post with seven passengers on board," SL Srinramlu, a passport officer in held Kashmir, told Reuters. The 170-km highway between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad was reopened in April, connecting the two sides for the first time in almost 60 years. But the quake blocked the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road and damaged the Aman Setu, or Peace Bridge. Indian officials said 15 passengers were cleared to travel but only seven, including five stranded passengers of Azad Kashmir, boarded the bus on Thursday. At least 10 passengers from held Kashmir stranded in Azad Kashmir since the quake were expected to return home. "It is not clear how the passengers from (the) other side would travel to the Peace Bridge, as the road on the other side is still in a bad condition," an Indian official said

The News, 16 December 2005

Punjab accepts Sindh's water re-routing plan

ISLAMABAD: In a positive development, the Punjab has surrendered to the re-routing and diversion plan of water as per Sindh's proposals during the repair period of Taunsa barrage that will start from January 1 and end on February 28. This development came in the Indus River System Authority (Irsa) meeting held here on Thursday presided over by its Chairman, Shafqat Masood. All the Irsa members, Irrigation secretaries of the Punjab and Sindh, representative of Balochistan, chief engineer (hydrology & water management) Wapda, chief engineer Mangla, chief engineer Chashma, superintending engineer Tarbela attended the meeting. Masood, who is also member from the Punjab, said at the press briefing that the Punjab, which will start the rehabilitation work on Taunsa barrage, earlier, wanted to release only 15,000 cusecs per day during the closure period from January 1 to February 28, but Sindh was opposed to it.

Daily Times, 17 December 2005

Dams necessary for Pakistan's energy needs, says Korean envoy

LAHORE: Large water reservoirs are vital to meet Pakistan's energy and agriculture needs, South Korean Ambassador Kim Jooseok told Chief Minister Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi at a meeting at Chief Minister's Secretariat on Friday. Jooseok said that Korea had deep-rooted relations with Pakistan, which would improve further in the future and new avenues of cooperation between the two countries would open. Elahi said the government was strengthening the private sector and promoting public-private partnership in the projects of national development. He said that private sector's development could help alleviate poverty and unemployment. He said that agriculture and industry were improving because of the reforms introduced by the government. staff report

Dawn, 17 December 2005

Pakistan envoy sees no major Taliban resurgence

WASHINGTON, Dec 16: Pakistan's ambassador acknowledged on Thursday that "remnants" of Taliban and Al Qaeda militants continue to operate in Afghanistan and his country's border, but insisted they are not resurging significantly. In an interview with Reuters, Jehangir Karamat said Osama bin Laden has lost effectiveness, that his Al Qaeda organization has no overarching leadership capable of directing attacks worldwide and that it would be unwise to become "obsessed" with capturing the Islamist militant who directed the Sept 11, 2001, attacks. Four years after US-led forces overthrew the Taliban, Afghanistan is still troubled by a Taliban-led Islamist militant insurgency and the country has seen a spate of suicide attacks in recent weeks. In addition, there are media reports that Pakistan's rugged Waziristan region along the Afghan border may be slipping back into the hands of Taliban and Al Qaeda militants, despite the presence of some 60,000 Pakistani troops.

Daily Times, 17 December 2005

Britain to improve trade ties with Pakistan

LAHORE: British Deputy High Commissioner to Pakistan Hamesh Denial has said Britain would continue to facilitate Pakistani businessmen for the promotion of trade between the two countries. He was speaking at the

Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) on Friday. LCCI President Mian Shafqat Ali, Vice President Aftab Ahmad Vohra, former presidents Shahzada Alam Monoo, Mian Misbah-ur-Rehman and former senior vice president Sohail Lashari also spoke on the occasion. The British envoy said Great Britain being the largest investor in Pakistan wants to multiply the flow of investment and is ready to take all necessary steps in this regard. He said the British government, together with other European Union member states, is striving to get resolved the issue of anti-dumping duty on bedlinen to make the export of Pakistani textiles to the European Union easier.

The Nation, 17 December 2005

Use of force in Balochistan opposed

LAHORE -The Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy (ARD) and representative parties of Balochistan at a Round Table Conference (RTC) on "National Solidarity and Developing Situation in Balochistan" expressed deep concern over the current situation in Balochistan and termed it highly dangerous for county's security and existence. A joint Communique issued at the end of the conference strongly urged the government to learn lesson from history, desist from using force against Baloch people and reveal the identity of arrested youth and political workers. Held under the chairmanship of PML (N) leader Raja Zafarul Haq, it was arranged by ARD here at Hamdard Centre, Lahore and was attended by nationalist parties of Balochistan including Balochistan National Party and Pakhtoonkhawa Milli Awami Party.

Daily Times, 17 December 2005

Conversion from Hinduism to Islam (Mohammad Kamran)

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Friday ordered that three sisters, who recently converted to Islam from Hinduism, be shifted from the seminary they were staying at to the Edhi Centre. The court further ordered the police to protect the girls while it ascertained if they were forced to convert to Islam. The court was hearing a case wherein it was alleged that three sisters were kidnapped and forced to become Muslims. An FIR was lodged regarding girls' abduction and rape. The three sisters were later found in a religious seminary learning Islamic education. The Supreme Court took up the application and summoned the girls to record their statement on free will. Appearing on notice, DSP Clifton Town-II Muhammad Hashim Memon produced the sisters in court and submitted that the girls had converted upon their own free will.

The Nation, 17 December 2005

WB approves \$400m for rehabilitation (JAVED MAHMOOD)

LAHORE - World Bank has approved 400 million dollars Emergency Recovery Credit (ERC) on Friday to further support the earthquake recovery and reconstruction effort in Pakistan over a three-year period. Details released by the bank showed the project will support Pakistan's efforts to reduce the immediate suffering and restore livelihoods; reconstruct housing; and help finance needed imports. This follows the Bank's initial commitment of 475 million dollars in October as part of the institution's overall pledge of US\$1 billion for earthquake recovery. The credit will support housing reconstruction (220 million dollars), livelihood support (85 million dollars), import financing (85 million dollars), and capacity building (10 million dollars), and also can make funds available for any financing gaps identified in other sectors such as social protection, health, education, agriculture, roads, water supply, and other infrastructure.

Daily Times, 17 December 2005

No US troops, jails in Pakistan: Musharraf

ISLAMABAD: There are no Americans troops or secret jails in Pakistan and Islamabad has not signed any agreement with Washington to this effect, said President Pervez Musharraf in an interview with Saudi newspaper Al-Watan on Friday. The president brushed aside speculations that the United States had set up secret jails in Pakistan, adding that no accord was executed to establish such jails. On the war against terrorism, Musharraf said, "Pakistan has won the war by the grace of Allah. Al Qaeda has been forced to flee the country and it is no longer an organised group because its network has been dismantled. "He said that Pakistan should not be considered a "soft country". The country's armed forces are strong and vigilant and equipped to deal with any situation, he said, adding, "There is only room for one army – the Pakistan Army - here and no other sipa (army) would be allowed to come into being.

Daily Times, 17 December 2005

Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, to combat human trafficking

ATHENS: Pakistan, Greece, Iran and Turkey have decided to form a joint working group to bolster their cooperation against human trafficking, the interior ministry officials said on Friday. The decision was taken at a two-day meeting of the interior ministers of the four countries held at Athens. Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao, the minister for Interior, made the joint working group proposal at the opening session of the meeting on Wednesday. The meeting accepted the proposals of Sherpao for regular meetings of the Ministers of Interior, the

establishment of a working group comprising of experts of the four countries to meet after six months and also for the inclusion of Afghanistan in the regional consultative process. Mr Sherpao, said that there was a need of imperative arrangements to stop the menace of human smuggling.

Daily Times, 17 December 2005

Third India-Pakistan meeting on IPI gasline begins: India gives Pakistan drafted agreement (Iftikhar Gilani)
NEW DELHI: The third round of the Indo-Pakistan Joint Working Group (JWG) meeting on the proposed multi-billion dollar Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) gas pipeline began on Friday, with both countries focusing on the project structure. Sources said that various dimensions of the project and the future framework of talks were discussed during the first day of talks. Before formal meeting of both delegations, the oil secretaries held one-on-one meeting for more than an hour. Sources said that India had handed over a draft agreement on the project structure, which was being deliberated. The nine-member Pakistani delegation, headed by Petroleum Secretary Ahmad Waqar, includes Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz's oil adviser Mukhtar Ahmed, Sui Northern Gas Pipeline Ltd Managing Director Rasheed Lone, the Planning and Development deputy secretary and technical director of the Inter State Gas Pipeline Ltd.

The Nation, 17 December 2005

Pak prepares response on neutral expert (DILSHAD AZEEM)

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani authorities are still in process of preparing a response to be presented to the World Bank appointed neutral expert on his latest observations regarding Baglihar Dam with indications that the decision may go against it (Pakistan), sources told The Nation Friday. "The sluggishness on part of the authorities concerned in preparing a reply on the latest observations of the neutral expert and earlier delay in moving the World Bank have considerably weakened Pakistan in contesting the case," the sources maintained. The neutral expert has given the deadline of December 30, 2005 to submit the reply on the observations that he gave after visiting the Baglihar Dam a few months back along with the authorities from both the countries.

Daily Times, 18 December 2005

MQM is with us on water, says PM

KARACHI: The Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) supports the government on the dams issue, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said on Saturday. All political parties have agreed that new dams must be built to overcome the water shortage in Pakistan and the government has started a campaign to solicit political parties' support for Kalabagh Dam, the prime minister told reporters after meeting with Pir Pagara at Kangri house. He said constructing new water reservoirs, be it the Kalabagh or Basha dams, was essential to making Pakistan a strong agriculture country. Pir Pagara is in favour of new water reservoirs and pledged his support to the government for building new dams, he said. Aziz said the government had launched a campaign to raise public awareness about the need for new dams and to remove the reservations of political parties. He urged parties to shun politicking on the water issue and decide their positions based on the national interest.

The News, 18 December 2005

Implementation of Hudood laws faulty: Pakistan (Rauf Klasra)

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has admitted to the concerned European countries that legal procedures dealing with the Hudood Ordinance promulgated by Gen Ziaul Haq in 1979 without producing them ever before parliament for discussion and formal enactment were faulty and needed to be reviewed. After promulgating and practicing these controversial laws against the women for six years, Gen Zia got them approved from 1985 assembly as part of a package deal agreed with the assembly elected on the basis of non-party election.

Daily Times, 18 December 2005

IPI pipeline to be built from 2007 (Iftikhar Gilani)

NEW DELHI: Pakistan and India hope to start building a \$7 billion gas pipeline from Iran by 2007 despite objections from the United States, top officials from both countries said on Saturday. "We have made significant progress. We hope to complete the project by 2010," Pakistan's Petroleum Secretary Ahmad Waqar told reporters at the conclusion of a two-day meeting of the Joint Working Group (JWG) on the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline in New Delhi. Waqar's Indian counterpart, Petroleum Secretary SC Tripathi, said talks had gained momentum. "We have made significant progress. We are now talking about details of the project," he said.

Daily Times, 18 December 2005

US plans to sell howitzers to Pakistan

WASHINGTON: The Bush administration said on Friday that it tentatively planned to let Pakistan buy 115 155mm self-propelled howitzer artillery pieces as well as related gear and services valued at up to \$56 million. The sale of M109A5 howitzers would not affect the basic military balance in the region, the Pentagon's Defence Security

Cooperation Agency said in a notice to Congress. The big guns at issue are in the US Army's current inventory, said Jose Ibarra, an agency spokesman. The total value of the deal, if all options are exercised, could be as high as \$56 million, the notice to Congress said. Such a notice is required by law. Congress has the power to block such a government-to-government arms sale but has never done so. No contractor would be involved in the deal.

Daily Times, 18 December 2005

\$2-3b FDI expected this year, says Aziz

KARACHI: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz has said that Pakistan is expecting \$2-3 billion in foreign direct investment (FDI) in the 2005-06 fiscal year. He said this while addressing a delegation of Foreign investment chambers of commerce and industry, including members of the American Business Council, who called on him at Governor's House on Saturday. Sindh Governor Dr Ishratul Ibad Khan and Chief Minister Dr Arbab Ghulam Rahim were also present on the occasion. Aziz urged foreign investors, businessmen, industrialists and entrepreneurs to avail themselves of the "tremendous" investment opportunities in Pakistan created by a rapidly-growing middle class and business-friendly environment provided by the government. He said that a stable exchange rate, low inflation, strategic location and availability of inexpensive but hardworking labour make Pakistan ideal for investment.

Daily Times, 18 December 2005

Religious parties' alliance a great achievement, says Qazi

LAHORE: Formation of the religious parties' alliance was a 'great achievement' and people who wanted to interfere with it would fail, said Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) chief Qazi Hussain Ahmad at a meeting of JI leaders on Saturday. He said that leaders of the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) should try to strengthen their party. He said that Americans were targeting Islamic organisations and their war was not against terrorism, but against Islam. He said that heads of various Islamic states were supporting America. MMA Deputy Secretary Liaqat Baloch said that the country was going through a tough phase because of military rule.

Daily Times, 18 December 2005

NATO relief operation reaches full strength

MUZAFFARABAD: NATO said on Saturday that its massive relief operation in northwestern Pakistan and Kashmir to help survivors of the October 8 quake has reached its peak, with doctors and engineers repairing roads, schools and bridges before the harsh winter sets in. NATO has said it will wrap up its operation in Pakistan on February 1 at the end of a 90-day mandate. On Saturday, the military alliance said the full contingent of Italian engineers assigned to NATO Disaster Relief Team had arrived in Pakistan. They are among more than 1,000 NATO personnel in the region. The engineers brought with them 136 trucks, including dump trucks, trailers, lift trailers, excavators and bulldozers. "This heavy machinery is essential to expedite the relief efforts," NATO said in a statement. It said the NATO airlift has moved about 3,000 tonnes of tents, blankets, stoves and food into Pakistan on more than 153 flights from Europe.

The News, 18 December 2005

Pakistan receives two bids for Neelum-Jhelum power project (Khalid Mustafa)

ISLAMABAD: In an unexpected development, Pakistan received only two bids in the international competitive bidding (ICB) from the whole world for 969 MW Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower project of strategic national importance. On completion, the project would protect Pakistan's priority rights over Neelum waters, besides providing cheap electricity. The immediate completion of this project is essential, otherwise India, in case of earlier completion of Kishanganga hydropower project, will have water priority rights on Neelum River under the Water Treaty of 1960. Pakistan's proposed project will be built on the Neelum river in Azad Jammu Kashmir, which is called in held Kashmir as Ganga River on which India is building Kishanganga hydropower project.

Daily Times, 18 December 2005

HRCP demands equal rights for FATA

PESHAWAR: The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) on Saturday demanded equal social, economic and political rights for people of the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA). "Tribal people are treated as second rate citizens. The government should ensure full rights to them as enshrined in the constitution," said I A Rehman, director of HRCP, during a consultation on 'The Reforms Process in FATA'. The consultation organised by HRCP, discussed issues such as the enforcement of recommendations by HRCP regarding FATA, free and fair elections in FATA in 2007, local government and economic and social rights in FATA. Mr Rehman said the economic and social problems of the tribal people were being ignored. "No attention is paid to the rule of law in FATA and whether people are being granted their fundamental rights," he said.

Daily Times, 19 December 2005

KBD media campaign from today

ISLAMABAD: The government will launch a countrywide public awareness campaign for the construction of Kalabagh Dam today (Monday), said Federal Information Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmad. Talking to BBC on Sunday, Ahmad said that the public will be informed of the benefits of constructing large water reservoirs through the media. The campaign will also address the "propaganda" that Kalabagh Dam is harmful to Sindh's interests, he said. "I have been assigned to organise the campaign through the media, while the state machinery will contact the public to gain support on the issue," Ahmad said.

Daily Times, 19 December 2005

Govt mulling more than one dam

ISLAMABAD: The government is considering building more than one dam, said Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said on Sunday. "We are not deliberating on just one dam but we are taking on a whole water strategy to meet future water needs," Aziz told reporters at Prime Minister's House. He said the water demand for agriculture was growing everyday, while the silting of dams and global warming were reducing Pakistan's supply of irrigation water. The country already has a very limited water storage capacity, he added. He said he had "fruitful" meetings with Pir Paraga and other Sindh leaders during his visit to the province and everyone agreed that "there should be progress on water issues". Aziz said the government would hold a detailed debate on water issues in the parliament and the reports of a parliamentary committee and technical committee will be made public and translated into regional languages

The News, 19 December 2005

Crackdown on militants launched in Kohlu (Muhammad Ejaz Khan)

QUETTA: The security agencies launched action against those involved in rocket-firing incidents in Kohlu district, some 410 kms from here, on Sunday. Confirming the action, official sources said that the security forces raided targeted points from where miscreants used to fire rockets on civilians in Kohlu. A top official of the Inter-Service Public Relations (ISPR) also confirmed the action, terming it a targeted action. The sources said there was information about the presence of some miscreants in the area, so the targeted action has been taken against them. Though the officials did not give details of the arrests of miscreants during raids, they maintained that the action would continue until all miscreants were taken to task.

Daily Times, 19 December 2005

Moot rejects 'United States of Kashmir' (Mohammad Imran)

ISLAMABAD: Participants of a conference held to discuss the "United States of Kashmir" proposal on Sunday called the formula ambiguous and a bid to divide the people of Kashmir. They also asked Kashmiris not to compromise on their right to self-determination. Most speakers said formulas on Kashmir that appeared time and again were meant to confuse Kashmiris and the "United States of Kashmir" formula was also ambiguous. They said it would confuse the Kashmiri nation. The Jammu and Kashmir National Liberation Front convened the conference titled "Future of the United States of Jammu and Kashmir".

Daily Times, 19 December 2005

Rift in PML-N hampers its reorganization (Qamar Jabbar)

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) reorganisation at provincial, district, tehsil and city level could not be completed even after a whole year because of a tussle between the party's central and provincial leadership. PML-N President Shahbaz Sharif had dissolved party's provincial organisations on December 18, 2004, and district, tehsil and city organisations on December 21 to restructure the party at all levels. It was said at that time that the organisational work would be completed in 45 days, but no progress has been made in this regard so far. Only provincial presidents and general secretaries are running the party affairs for the last one year and issuing policy statements to keep the party in news. Currently, the PML-N is working only on the Alliance for Restoration of Democracy's (ARD) agenda and the party's central and provincial leaders are doing nothing to reactivate it at grassroots, party sources said.

Dawn, 19 December 2005

Tochi Scouts accused of occupying tribal land

PESHAWAR, Dec 18: Some Darpa Khel tribesmen have accused the Tochi Scouts of occupying more than 4,000 acres of their land and said that the force has already started construction over it. Haji Pasham Din Khan urged the authorities to stop construction work at the disputed site, saying that an arbitration committee set up by the political authorities in 2002 had acknowledged their right over the piece of land. He said that former political agent of North Waziristan Mushtaq Jadoon had struck an agreement with the tribesmen in the light of the committee's decision. "The decision of the committee was not fair but we accepted it to ease the tense situation at that time," he said, adding the authorities did not keep their promise.

Daily Times, 20 December 2005

FC clashes with tribesmen in Marri and Bugti areas

QUETTA: Paramilitary forces backed by helicopter gunships launched a counter-offensive on Baloch tribesmen in Marri areas and also clashed with tribesmen in Bugti areas on Monday. At least four tribesmen were confirmed dead in the fighting. "The operation is on," Lieutenant-Colonel Jamil Hassan, a spokesman for the paramilitary Frontier Corps, told Reuters in Quetta. Helicopter gunships pounded hideouts in the Jindran, Tilli and Pir Mahmood areas of Kohlu district after FC personnel came under rocket attack in Kahan, some 250 kilometres east of Quetta, a security official told AFP. "Security forces and helicopters returned fire towards the mountains and later found the body of a tribesman lying near unfired rockets," the official said.

Daily Times, 20 December 2005

Govt denies military action in Kohlu

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Aftab Sherpao and military spokesman Major General Shaukat Sultan have denied a military operation is being conducted in Kohlu, Balochistan. "No operation is being carried out in Kohlu. People wrongly think that an operation is being conducted there," Sherpao told the BBC. "You can not call it an operation," Gen Sultan told a local television channel. "There were some bases of miscreants from where they used to fire rockets. Recently they targeted the helicopter of the IG, FC. Therefore hideouts have been raided." nni/sana

The News, 20 December 2005

Cheney due today (Mariana Baabar)

ISLAMABAD: US Vice-President Dick Cheney arrives at the Chaklala airbase in the morning today (Tuesday) from Afghanistan on a day-long visit and leaves later in the evening for Oman. Cheney will call on President Pervez Musharraf at the Aiwan-e-Sadr and will be the chief guest at a luncheon to be hosted by the president. Later, Cheney will visit some earthquake-hit areas where American and Nato troops are taking part in relief activities. Officials say that as yet a call on Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz has not been scheduled but the two might meet at the Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Daily Times, 20 December 2005

Five buses torched in Karachi (Abbas Naqvi)

KARACHI: Five buses were set on fire and one residential building was also affected on Monday evening after a nationalist party gave the call for a province-wide strike for Tuesday against Kalabagh Dam. In the first incident, at Tower in Saddar, unidentified men stopped a route No 4K bus and forced the passengers to disembark before setting it alight. Deputy Inspector General of Police (Operations) Mushtaq Shah said the men used a chemical powder that did not allow the fire to be put out till it burnt off itself. "It appears that this was done to give people the impression that the strike will be successful," he told Daily Times. "In a short period of time, such incidents were reported from different parts of the city. All fires were started in the same fashion," he added.

Daily Times, 20 December 2005

US killed Zia, says Hameed Gul

ISLAMABAD: Former Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) chief Lt Gen (r) Hameed Gul has held the US responsible for president Gen Ziaul Haq's death. He told GEO channel on Sunday that clues pointed to the US for being behind the Bahawalpur incident. He also said the discovery of Stinger missiles in Iran had nothing to do with the intended investigation by the US. He also rejected the idea that Stinger missiles were given to Iran. He said there were 248 Stingers that were all destroyed in the Ojri Camp incident. He said the ISI had told Gen Zia to restrict his movements three weeks before the Bahawalpur incident. "The situation was grim. Parliament had been dissolved by the president at the time, which annoyed the Americans," he added.

The News, 20 December 2005

APHC leaders' visit put off (Muhammad Saleh Zaafir)

ISLAMABAD: The much-awaited visit of leaders belonging to the moderate faction of All Parties Hurriyat Conference to Pakistan and Azad Kashmir has been postponed. The visit is expected to take place early next year. The APHC visit was significant in the backdrop of Pakistan's proposal of self-governance in Kashmir and demilitarisation of the area that has been supported by almost all Kashmiri groups. Diplomatic sources confided to The News that APHC Chairman Mirwaiz Omar Farooq was coming to Islamabad along with some other leaders. They had to be here in the second week of current month. Primarily, the leaders were coming to express solidarity with the people affected by the October 8 earthquake.

Daily Times, 20 December 2005

Headless body found in North Waziristan

PESHAWAR: A headless body of a gang member was found early Monday morning in North Waziristan. The killing is said to be part of the seminary students' campaign against criminals. The dead body was hanging from

an electricity pole in front of an Islamic school, two kilometres west of Miranshah, the regional headquarters of North Waziristan, a government official told Daily Times. A message was also left with the body warning that "anyone who helps these types of people will meet the same fate", the official requesting anonymity said. Thousands of armed seminary students took to the streets near Miranshah on December 6 after the bandits killed three of their fellow students. staff report

The News, 20 December 2005

Tent sellers exploited quake relief urgency (Rauf Klasra)

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Textile probing the purchase of 0.3 million defective tents for earthquake victims worth Rs 2billion was told on Monday that the tent sellers exploited urgency of the situation and dictated their own terms and conditions to the Textile Ministry to get a deal of their own choice. A Federal Relief Commission official informed the meeting that over 40,000 rejected tents were accepted by the authorities and sent to the affected areas. The representatives of tents association admitted that the Textile Ministry had finalised the multi-billion deal on the terms and conditions offered by the tent sellers.

Daily Times, 20 December 2005

Pakistan, India to sign shipping protocol in 2006

KARACHI: Senator Babar Khan Ghauri, the federal minister for ports and shipping, said on Monday that the shipping protocol between Pakistan and India would be signed in February 2006. "The agreement will be formally inked by high officials of Governments of Pakistan and India at New Delhi in 1st week of February next," he said at the signing ceremony of a contract between Karachi Port Trust and Holland Company at his camp office in the PNSC building. He said the planned Karachi-Mumbai ferry service was the part of the shipping protocol. He also said that the land dispute between KPT and Sindh government would be resolved very soon

Daily Times, 20 December 2005

Japan promoting education in Balochistan

ISLAMABAD: The Japanese Embassy on Monday extended \$84,397 to Qandeel Model Public School in Quetta for its expansion. According to a press statement, Nobuaki Tanaka, the Japanese ambassador, signed the grant contract with Noshaba Shafique, the school principal. Japan considers Balochistan a priority region for assistance. Qandeel Model Public School has been providing quality education to the under privileged communities at minimum cost. Japan granted \$65,878 to the school in 2003. The assistance was meant for development of the primary section of the school to accommodate more children and to provide formal education to the local residents.

Daily Times, 21 December 2005

Fighting continues as tribesmen blow up Sibi rail track (Azizullah Khan)

QUETTA: Paramilitary forces clashed with Baloch tribesmen in Bhambhor and Fazil Chail villages of Kohlu on Tuesday as rebel tribesmen attacked rail track and government buildings. Paramilitary forces backed by gunship helicopters launched an offensive on Monday against what the government calls "miscreants" after a series of rocket attacks in Balochistan, including one in Kohlu as President General Pervez Musharraf visited the district. A railway line between Sibi and Harnai at Kachaki was blown up early on Tuesday, said FC spokesman Lieutenant-Colonel Jamil Hassan. A train was due to pass over the track shortly after the blast, but it was halted in time. Four rockets hit an FC base in Dera Bugti and two fell near a government office in Kohlu district but there were no casualties, he said. Hassan said the operation against "miscreants" was still going on.

Daily Times, 21 December 2005

Agreement on Lahore-Amritsar bus today

LAHORE: The first day of the India-Pakistan technical level talks on the Lahore-Amritsar and Nankana-Amritsar bus services ended on Tuesday with both sides indicating progress on the issue. The talks are scheduled to end today (Wednesday) with the signing of an agreement to start the Lahore-Amritsar bus service in two weeks. The Indian and Pakistani teams also hoped that an initial agreement on the Nankana-Amritsar bus service would also be signed at the end of the talks. "The talks have been good and hopefully we'll be signing a final agreement on the Lahore-Amritsar bus service tomorrow," said Muhammad Abbas, Communications Ministry additional secretary, who is leading the Pakistani team at the talks.

Daily Times, 21 December 2005

Munabao-Mirpurkhas link: Aziz asks Railways to complete track before 31st

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz on Tuesday reviewed the construction of the Mirpurkhas-Khokhropar railway track and asked Pakistan Railways (PR) to complete the Munabao-Mirpurkhas track before December 31. He asked PR to conduct necessary testing for a month and start operating the link by January 31, 2006. He also asked the Railways Ministry to make a feasibility report for the construction of a railway link between Bostan-

Zhob-Dera Ismail Khan-Kalat-Kohat-Peshawar. He said the project would open up the area and create new economic opportunities for Balochistan and the NWFP and would contribute to the provinces' economic development.

The News, 21 December 2005

US promises continued support

ISLAMABAD: The US Chinook helicopters were critical to step up rescue and relief operations, said President Pervez Musharraf here on Tuesday. He was talking to US Vice President Dick Cheney who met him at the Aiwan-e-Sadr for more than an hour. President Musharraf expressed Pakistan's gratitude to the US for extending timely help in the aftermath of the October 8 catastrophic earthquake. Vice President Cheney expressed United States' solidarity and support over the earthquake calamity and said Washington would continue to assist Pakistan in its rebuilding efforts in the quake zone. He conveyed sorrow and grief over colossal losses on behalf of President George W Bush and the American nation.

The News, 21 December 2005

Violence proliferates in Balochistan (Muhammad Ejaz Khan)

QUETTA: Violence continued unabated in various restive areas of Balochistan on Tuesday as miscreants sabotaged a railway line in the Harnai area and fired two rockets in Kohlu, while a passenger coach blew up after it hit a landmine in Dukki. On the other hand, security forces continued with their crackdown in various parts of Kohlu and seized a large cache of arms and ammunition in Sui Tehsil, vowing they would continue the hunt for miscreants. Reports from Kohlu district said miscreants fired two rockets, which landed near a Frontier Corps (FC) camp but caused no loss of life or damage to property. Sources said the security personnel were combing the area to apprehend the assailants.

The News, 21 December 2005

Informal talk on jehadis relief work (Mariana Baabar)

ISLAMABAD: The United States remains perturbed about the presence of jehadi relief workers who are working around the clock in Azad Kashmir and in the NWFP. According to diplomatic sources, a member of the visiting US delegation led by US Vice President Dick Cheney raised this issue during the lunch at the Awan-e-Sadar hosted by President Pervez Musharraf. Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmud Kasuri were also present. "The issue was raised by a US official informally during the lunch hosted by President Pervez Musharraf, as Washington still questions the presence of these jehadi relief workers and wants to know why they cannot be replaced by the Pakistan army or national or international NGO's", sources claimed. Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmud Kasuri, when contacted by The News, refused to comment on whether this issue had come up during the lunch, except to say that the environment at lunch was informal and quite relaxed.

Daily Times, 22 December 2005

Three-tier implementation framework finalised

ISLAMABAD: The Earthquake Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Authority (ERRA) will coordinate and monitor the rebuilding of the quake-ravaged areas of NWFP and Azad Kashmir and the governments of the two regions will carry out the reconstruction work. This was decided at a high-level meeting chaired by President Pervez Musharraf on Wednesday. Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz also attended the meeting. The meeting was informed that a three-tier implementation framework has been adopted for reconstruction. "ERRA will be responsible for coordinating and monitoring the process at the federal level. The reconstruction agencies of the NWFP and Kashmir governments will pursue the objectives at the provincial level while reconstruction units will implement the strategy at the district level," sources said.

The News, 22 December 2005

I won't allow Sindh to commit suicide: Musharraf

ISLAMABAD: Calling for realisation of the growing water shortage, President Pervez Musharraf on Wednesday regretted that Sindh is resisting the construction of new water reservoirs in the country the most, saying if we didn't address the issue at the earliest, this shortage would intensify to as much as 20 to 25 million acres feet by the year 2020. "If dams are not constructed it will be a massive loss for Sindh and its economy and even for the country. Sindh wants to commit suicide, however I will not let the people of the province suffer due to this indecision," the president said while addressing the participants of Public Affairs Committee ceremony, here at a local hotel.

Daily Times, 22 December 2005

FC takes two'rebel' camps, arrests 8 (Azizullah Khan)

QUETTA: Paramilitary forces backed by army helicopters continued their advance in Kohlu on Wednesday and arrested eight tribesmen suspected of firing rockets at security forces. Army helicopters attacked two suspected

training camps for tribal insurgents and ground troops later moved into the suspected bases near Kohlu and seized heavy weapons and ammunition, Lt Col Hassan Jamil, a spokesman for the Frontier Corps, told AP. The FC also arrested eight men in Kohlu suspected of firing rockets and involvement in bomb blasts and was interrogating them, a spokesman told Daily Times. Rebels fired rockets at paramilitary forces in Mand and Nushki on Wednesday. FC spokesman Col Jamil told AP that eight rockets had been fired.

The News, 22 December 2005

Miscreants' camp targeted in Kohlu

QUETTA: Army helicopters attacked two suspected training camps for miscreants on Wednesday, an official said. Ground troops later moved into the suspected bases near Kohlu and seized heavy weapons and ammunition, said Lt-Col Hassan Jamil, a spokesman for the Frontier Corps. Paramilitary troops destroyed the two camps near Kohlu and Tali with helicopter gunships. The forces during a search found a huge cache of arms and ammunition, besides important documents from the sites. The latest fighting came after troops on Tuesday captured two other miscreant bases and arrested four tribesmen suspected of the attacks. Tribal leaders have claimed scores of people have been killed in military operations to quell the unrest. But Jamil said he couldn't confirm any deaths. — Agencies

Daily Times, 22 December 2005

Govt to take action against 390 extremists: Musharraf (Rana Qaisar)

ISLAMABAD: The government has identified 390 individuals belonging to banned jihadi groups it will move against for fanning extremism, President General Pervez Musharraf has said. "Action is also being taken against those using mosques for spreading extremism and those publishing hate material," Gen Musharraf said in a speech at the Pak-PAC's 16th annual banquet on Wednesday. He said the government had made short and long-term policies to eliminate extremism and terrorism and bring about a societal change. The government is revising curricula and reforming madrassas as part of its long-term strategy to effect an "Islamic renaissance".

Daily Times, 22 December 2005

PAC unhappy with FATA management

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly's Public Accounts Committee (PAC) expressed concern over the financial and administrative management of the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) during a meeting on Wednesday. The PAC called the States and Frontier Regions Ministry (SAFRON) secretary "powerless", saying that funds exceeding "billions of rupees" had been allocated for FATA but no one had monitored their usage. It directed the SAFRON secretary to take action against officials not providing records of funds spent on development projects. It also directed SAFRON to amend the Frontier Crimes Regulation, questioning why political agents had not deposited money, collected from taxes and fines, in the government account.

Daily Times, 22 December 2005

Relief camps facing environmental disaster, says report (Ghafar Ali)

PESHAWAR: People left homeless by the devastating October 8 earthquake are facing environmental and health hazards because of poor sanitation and inadequate solid waste management practices in the relief camps, leaving them vulnerable to epidemics. "The danger of flash floods and more landslides; the pressure on dwindling natural resources, especially forests for fuel and shelter needs; the risks of heavy silting in rivers feeding into the Mangla Dam and those of haphazard reconstruction still continues", said the World Conservation Union (IUCN), the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) and CARE International in a joint report issued on Wednesday.

Daily Times, 22 December 2005

AJK CEC seeks Rs 46m for general elections (Mohammad Imran)

ISLAMABAD: The Kashmir government has failed to provide its Election Commission (EC) Rs 46 million required to hold general elections scheduled for June 2006. Kashmir Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Justice Akhtar Riaz Chaudhry made this statement at a news conference on Wednesday. He said that the general elections could be delayed because the EC was facing a shortage of funds and staff. Chaudhry said that it would be impossible for the EC to prepare the new electoral rolls on time if Rs 11.5 million were not provided within the next 10 days. "Another problem is that people from Neelum Valley, Muzaffarabad and Bagh have migrated to safer places. So we now have to prepare electoral rolls from the relief camps," he said.

The News, 22 December 2005

Gunmen kill three in Wana

TANK: Three men sitting in a barber's shop in Wana were killed when masked men indiscriminately fired at them Wednesday evening, witnesses said. Those deceased included an unidentified Afghan refugee and two local tribesmen. One of them was Ishaq Wazir, nephew of the slain tribal elder Malik Mirzalam Khan. The other was identified as Allah Noor Wazir. Witnesses said three men with their faces covered disembarked from a white car

at 5pm in a bazaar in Wana and barged into a barber's shop. Their fourth colleague remained seated in the car. The masked men fired inside the shop killing the three men and injuring one more before running to the car and driving away. Nobody was able to challenge or chase them.

Daily Times, 22 December 2005

2,400 madrassas registered (Ali Waqar)

LAHORE: Around 2,400 madrassas had been registered under the new ordinance till December 20 while seminaries affiliated with the Ittehad-e-Tanzeemat-e-Madaris-e-Deenia (ITMD) are still reluctant to register even though the ITMD has recognised the new Societies Registration (Amended) Act of 1860. Around 2,400 madrassas registered from August to December 20, 2005, of which 1,884 are in Punjab. The total number of registered seminaries, including madrassas already registered under the old Societies Registration Act, has reached 8,400. Around 2,200 madrassas were registered from August to November 2005. Only 200 seminaries have registered since then.

Daily Times, 23 December 2005

View new dams with open mind, says Musharraf

SUKKUR: President Pervez Musharraf on Thursday urged the people of Sindh to view the construction of large water reservoirs with an open mind, saying the government would make constitutional and administrative guarantees to safeguard Sindh's interests. Addressing farmers, local government officials and the public from Shikarpur, Naushero Feroze, Jacobabad, Khairpur and other areas, Musharraf vowed to take Pakistanis along and address their concerns over water issues. He said the government would also provide judicial guarantees and would like the issue to be debated in parliament. The president also assured the enforcement of the guarantees provided by the government, saying nobody would be able to flout them. He said Pakistan needed two to three dams to overcome the water shortfall of about 15 to 20 million acre feet (MAF) by 2020. "Now is the time to decide about the issue, as Pakistan's economy is on the upswing and international financial institutions are willing to finance large projects," he added.

Daily Times, 23 December 2005

Pakistan to command coalition maritime force from April (Umer Farooq)

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan will assume command of the Coalition Maritime Security Force, which has been operating in the Arabian Sea since the US-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, from April 2006. The coalition force includes naval forces of Germany, United States, Britain and other western countries, as well as Pakistan. Defence Ministry officials confirmed that Pakistan would assume command from April 2006. The main objective of the force is to provide stability to the region and to check the activities of international terrorist organisations operating there. The visiting German defence minister, Dr Franz-Josef Jung, speaking at a press conference on Thursday, hinted that Pakistan would assume important responsibilities for the stability of Afghanistan in April 2006. Jung, who is on a three-day visit to Pakistan and Afghanistan, made this announcement after meeting with his Pakistani counterpart Rao Sikandar Iqbal. "The minister highlighted the ongoing efforts and contribution made by Pakistan's security forces in curbing the menace of terrorism including the efforts at sea by participating in the Coalition Maritime Campaign Plan," Jung said.

Dawn, 23 December 2005

No change in UK visa policy, says official (Iftikhar A. Khan)

ISLAMABAD, Dec 21: Dispelling the impression that the United Kingdom was giving tough time to Pakistani visa seekers, the director of UK's visa and consular services has said there was no change in the visa policy after the 7/7 incident. Talking to Dawn, Alex Pond said the British government did not regard every person sporting a beard as an extremist or terrorist. Likewise, she maintained, a pure Islamic (Arabic) name did not at all mean disqualification to get a British visa. "We make absolutely no judgment on a person's name," she stressed. She said the British High Commission was accepting visa applications from all categories except working holiday makers. "We process all straightforward non-settlement visa applications within five working days while the processing of settlement visa applications takes twelve weeks," she added. She said 15 working days were required to process the applications of those who required an interview.

Dawn, 23 December 2005

Musharraf warns of Sindh's desertification: 'Construction of dams essential' (Shamim Shamsi)

SUKKUR, Dec 22: President General Pervez Musharraf said here on Thursday that if work on new dams was not taken up now, a process of desertification would start in Sindh after 2010. The president said he had launched a mass contact campaign to make the people of Sindh realize the gravity of the situation and the need to build new reservoirs. He stressed the need for consensus on the issue and said that reservations of Sindh would be removed. He said that due to sedimentation in Tarbela and Mangla reservoirs, water resources of the country were depleting fast and, therefore, construction of new dams had become essential.

Daily Times, 24 December 2005

End Balochistan operation: ARD

ISLAMABAD: The Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy (ARD) called on the government to immediately halt the military operation in Balochistan. This demand came in a consensus resolution by the alliance after a meeting of leaders of its component parties. The alliance also said that it will hold a demonstration on December 29 in front of Parliament House to protest the military operation. It also considered a proposal for an All Parties Conference (APC) on the same issue. The ARD appealed to all democratic forces to join them in the protest. The alliance called the military operation in Kohlu "extremely detrimental" to national security and integrity, and urged the government to resolve all issues peacefully. The ARD leaders said that the government will create a '1971-like' situation if it used force against its own people.

The Nation, 24 December 2005

Kohlu operation continues (SHAHZADA ZULFIQAR)

QUETTA - Military operation continued with a slow pace on Friday as few helicopters reportedly targeted two Marri Ferrari camps in Kohlu area. However, sources in security forces said that no operation took place in Kohlu area. Addressing the protestors gathered in front of Quetta Press Club, former Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Humayun Marri said that no bombardment was carried out in Kohlu. But, he said, "gunship helicopters and jets came into action in afternoon and made a number of sorties, bombing mercilessly on the unarmed Marri Baloch population". When contacted the security forces officials they said that no military operation was being conducted there adding that it was an action against the terrorists and saboteurs who remained involved in attack on President General Pervaiz Musharraf, IG FC, DIG FC and national installation in Kohlu and rest of Balochistan.

Dawn, 24 December 2005

Over 9,000 missing in quake areas: Farooq: Rs16bn compensation paid

ISLAMABAD, Dec 23: Federal Relief Commissioner Maj-Gen Farooq Ahmad on Friday said that over 9,000 people were still missing since the Oct 8 earthquake and were believed to be dead. Addressing a press briefing, he said most of those people belonged to the NWFP and added that Rs16 billion had been distributed in compensation. Referring to the damming of water caused by the quake in two streams of Hattian Bala, he said a report on the action plan to deal with the threat would be submitted to Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz on Monday. A huge landslide had blocked the Karli and Salmia streams increasing water levels in the areas of Azad Kashmir. The relief commissioner said that construction of one-room shelter was continuing and so far over 200,000 winterized shelters had been provided to survivors. About 35,000 more shelters were under construction, he added.

Daily Times, 24 December 2005

Expel foreign troops, NGOs from quake-hit areas: AHYF

LAHORE: The Ahle Haidth Youth Force (AHYF), the youth wing of the Markazi Jamiat-e-Ahle Hadith demanded that the federal government expel foreign troops and non-government organisations from earthquake hit areas in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and NWFP. Addressing a press conference, AHF leaders said that they would also arrange a national conference on the present political condition of the country to discuss major issues, including the Kalabagh Dam. Youth Force President Imtiaz Ahmed Mujahid, Senior Vice President Abdul Haleem Janbaz, Central Information Secretary Shakeelur Rehman Nasir and other leaders said that leaders from all four provinces and AJK would be attending the conference scheduled on December 25 at Lahore. They alleged that the government was trying to secularise the country under pressure from the United States and Western powers and giving it the name of modernisation. staff report

The Nation, 24 December 2005

CM hails UAE role in Pak socio-economic uplift

LAHORE - Punjab Chief Minister Ch Pervaiz Elahi has said that UAE is extending commendable cooperation in infrastructure development, health, education and environment sectors as well as investment in Pakistan. This was stated by him during a meeting with President of United Arab Emirates (UAE), Sh. Khalifa Bin Zaid Bin Sultan Al-Nahyan at the lounge of Rahimyar Khan airport on Friday. Honorary Advisor of UAE, Ch. Muhammad Munir was also present on the occasion. The chief minister said that the people of UAE and Pakistan were bound together in the strong relations of love and mutual respect. He also thanked UAE for helping the earthquake affectees of AJK and the NWFP. Ch Pervaiz Elahi said that UAE cooperation had resulted in progress in health and infrastructure development in Rahimyar Khan. A number of medical education and research facilities have been provided due to medical college set up with the cooperation of UAE in Rahimyar Khan, he added.

Daily Times, 24 December 2005

NFC, dams will be announced together, says Musharraf

HYDERABAD: President Pervez Musharraf has said that the construction of new dams in the country and the

National Finance Commission (NFC) Award will be announced together. Addressing a press conference at Hyderabad Circuit House on Friday, Musharraf said that problems had arisen in forming a consensus on the NFC Award, but the chief ministers of the four provinces had now given him the authority to announce it. In an extensive interaction with students and young professionals, the president presented his vision on meeting the country's water requirements. Musharraf asked the youth of Sindh to help shape mass opinion in favour of the construction of large dams. He said that the youth, being the nation's "driving force", have a critical role in determining the future of the province.

Daily Times, 25 December 2005

India says proposal under discussion: Self-governance in Kashmir (Jawed Naqvi)

NEW DELHI, Dec 24: Indian and Pakistani diplomats are discussing the idea of self-governance for divided Kashmir as proposed by President Gen Pervez Musharraf, a top Indian official disclosed on Saturday. Indian National Security Advisor M.K. Narayanan told a private TV channel that the discussions were being held in the back channels by senior Indian diplomats and their Pakistani counterparts. Once the ideas on the delicate issue were refined thoroughly these could become part of the composite dialogue process for a more formal discussion and a possible decision, he indicated. "We have a back channel. We have experienced diplomats as part of it and if they (Pakistan) come forward and give specifics about self-governance, then we can probably look at it," Mr Narayanan said. In the interview to NDTV, Mr Narayanan ruled out any imminent move to demilitarise the Kashmir region, claiming that violence and infiltration remained a major concern there.

Dawn, 25 December 2005

Efforts stressed to evolve consensus: Govt not focused on Kalabagh dam: Aziz (Ismail Khan)

PESHAWAR, Dec 24: Calling for a national debate on the need of water reservoirs in the country, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz on Saturday warned that time was running out and doing nothing was not an option. "Time is running out. Doing nothing is not an option. We need to galvanize our efforts to evolve consensus. We all are Pakistanis and any decision to be taken would be in the best national interest," he told a press conference at the end of his day-long visit to Peshawar. Mr Aziz had had a meeting with NWFP Chief Minister Akram Durrani and Governor Khalilur Rehman and also attended a meeting of the provincial cabinet. The prime minister dispelled the impression that the government had made up its mind on the construction of Kalabagh dam, when a reporter drew his attention to statements by President Gen Pervez Musharraf advocating for Kalabagh dam.

Daily Times, 25 December 2005

PA resolution to end military operation in Balochistan: 'Talk to the Baloch if you can talk to India and Israel' (Zakir Hassnain)

PESHAWAR: The NWFP Assembly passed a joint resolution on Saturday demanding the federal government halt military operation in Balochistan and begin a dialogue with Baloch leaders. The House adopted the resolution, moved by the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) and the Awami National Party (ANP), by a majority with opposition from the Pakistan Muslim League (PML). "If the federal government can start a dialogue with India and Israel then why it can't talk to Baloch leaders to solve problems in Balochistan," said Bashir Ahmed Bilour, the parliamentary leader of the ANP. Tabling the resolution, Bilour said that the government should avoid a '1971-like situation'. "Pakistan is the name of four provinces where 160 million people live", he said.

Dawn, 25 December 2005

New gas discovery in Balochistan

ISLAMABAD, Dec 24: The Mari Gas Company has claimed a gas discovery in Balochistan with successful drilling and testing of Ziarat exploratory well No.1 located at Khost which is 118km east of Quetta. The Ziarat Well has been tested, which has shown gas discovery in its Dungan Limestone with a minimum of 6.867 MMSCF/day gas at wellhead flowing pressure (WHFP) of 664 psi at 32/64 choke, says a press release issued here on Saturday. The flow rates from the well are expected to increase significantly with acid treatment at the time of its completion. The discovered gas has heating value of +946 btu 85.49 per cent Methane, 1.9 per cent Ethane, 6.68 per cent Carbon Dioxide, 4.45 per cent Nitrogen and over 6000 ppm Hydrogen Sulphide contents. The gas having high Hydrogen Sulphide is very poisonous and toxic and needs to be processed/ sweetened prior to use/utilization. The MGCL intends to undertake drilling operations in the block to further appraise and delineate the structure, to establish realistic estimates of reserves and to increase the production to commercial level

Dawn, 27 December 2005

Federal disaster management agency set up: PM

ISLAMABAD, Dec 26: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz on Monday said the government had decided to set up the Federal Disaster Relief Management Agency (FEDREMA) for improving coordination and organised rescue and relief operation in wake of any natural calamity. Talking to volunteers who worked in the quake-hit areas, particularly the damaged Margalla Towers, here at Prime Minister House, the prime minister said, the agency

would have the capability and resources to provide immediate help in case of a natural disaster besides motivating volunteers. The prime minister said the agency would coordinate with all agencies, departments, hospitals and NGOs so that prompt and timely assistance and help could be sent to the affected areas any where in the country and abroad.

Daily Times, 27 December 2005

Govt to brief Opp, provinces on water (Rana Qaisar)

ISLAMABAD: The government on Monday decided to brief the provincial cabinets, coalition partners and opposition parties on its water management strategy before initiating construction of Kalabagh Dam. The government will set up a team of technical experts to give the briefings, it was decided at a high-level meeting chaired by President General Pervez Musharraf. Sources told Daily Times that the meeting discussed possible constitutional guarantees for the smaller provinces to remove their apprehensions about Kalabagh Dam. Asked what constitutional guarantees the government was expected to offer the smaller provinces, Information Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed said: "I can't say anything." However, the sources said the attorney general briefed the participants on constitutional matters related to the water issue.

Daily Times, 27 December 2005

Iran not behind Balochistan crisis, says Foreign Office

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has dismissed speculations of Iran being behind the deteriorating situation in Balochistan, saying Iran was a good neighbour and it was unimaginable that Tehran would be behind the situation in the province. Addressing her weekly press briefing at the Foreign Office, FO spokeswoman Tasnim Aslam said only a handful of miscreants were behind the deteriorating law and order in Balochistan. She said the miscreants had only one agenda, which was to damage the province's development. She said Pakistan thought of Iran as a friendly neighbour having close bilateral relations. "We can't imagine Iran being behind the situation in Balochistan," she added. She also said the third round of the India-Pakistan composite dialogue process would begin in New Delhi from January 16, 2006.

Daily Times, 27 December 2005

Arms sales to Pakistan, India in 2006: Rivalry could put US 'on the hook'

WASHINGTON: The Bush administration is manoeuvring to balance possible big new US arms sales to archrivals India and Pakistan in the New Year. In the past week, US Vice President Dick Cheney and Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld have made separate visits, not announced in advance, to Pakistan, a key ally in the US-led war on terrorism. If their rivalry flared anew, the United States could be on the hook to deliver sophisticated weaponry to a region on the brink of war, said Matt Schroeder of the Federation of American Scientists' arms sales monitoring project. Islamabad will make up its mind in the coming year on a US offer to resume F-16 fighter aircraft sales after a 16-year break, Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri was quoted by the Associated Press of Pakistan as saying after Cheney left. Earlier this month, Air Force Lt Gen Jeffrey Kohler, head of the Pentagon's Defence Security Cooperation Agency, said he expected Pakistan to modify buying plans because of the October 8 earthquake.

Dawn, 27 December 2005

3rd round of composite talks on Jan 17: FO (Qudssia Akhlaque)

ISLAMABAD, Dec 26: The Foreign Office announced on Monday that foreign secretary-level talks between Pakistan and India, marking the beginning of the third round of the composite dialogue process, would be held in New Delhi on January 17-18. Foreign Office spokesperson Tasnim Aslam at a weekly briefing here said: "These talks will be on Jammu and Kashmir and peace and security CBMs." She said that talks between the railways authorities of the two countries would be held in New Delhi on January 5-6. The authorities would discuss the launch of the Khokrapar-Monabao train service, she said. Ms Aslam expressed the hope that there would be more progress in the next round of the composite dialogue and that further progress would be made on the Siachen issue. Noting that while expectations may be that Pakistan and India would be able to "move very quickly", Ms Aslam said that the two countries were dealing with some complex issues.

Daily Times, 28 December 2005

Final phase of local govt elections today (Mohammad Kamran)

ISLAMABAD: The election of district, tehsil and town naib nazims will be held today (Wednesday) in the fourth and final phase of the local government elections. At least 198 naib nazims have been elected unopposed and elections in five councils of Ghotki district have been postponed on court orders. Election Commission sources told Daily Times on Tuesday that there would be no contest in 33 districts and 165 tehsils and towns councils because the candidates there were standing unopposed. That leaves 267 seats and the Election Commission will name the winners the same day as the election takes place. Kanwar Muhammad Dilshad, the Election Commission secretary, said that all arrangements had been finalised for the conduct of the election in a peaceful

and transparent manner. He said the Local Government Ordinance had been amended in all provinces, so that naib nazoms would be elected through a show of hands in district, tehsil and union councils rather than through a secret ballot.

Dawn, 28 December 2005

Pakistan, UAE vow to revitalize OIC: Musharraf, Khalifa to strengthen ties

ISLAMABAD, Dec 27: Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates on Tuesday agreed to bolster trade and investment relations as President Pervez Musharraf and his counterpart Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan discussed follow-up efforts to revitalize the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) for the benefit of the Muslim world. The two leaders took up a wide range of regional and international issues of common concern at their one-to-one meeting at the Aiwan-i-Sadr here. They also agreed to continue cooperation in the war against terrorism and extremism. Within the next three months the two countries will hold a meeting of the joint ministerial commission in an effort to spur bilateral economic cooperation. The joint ministerial commission will look for ways to bolster bilateral trade and promote joint ventures.

The Nation, 28 December 2005

Punjab to be biggest loser if dam built: WB (MEHTAB HAIDER)

ISLAMABAD - The World Bank has asked Pakistan to construct new dams as further delay in this regard will not be in the interest of the country. "Further delay is not in the interest of the country," the World Bank's latest report said about construction of new dams. It added that with each of the many delays in the past, the economic and social costs for any of the major options had risen substantially because of increase in property values and population growth in the areas of the proposed dams. Punjab will be the biggest loser in terms of getting water share in case of building new Indus storage, the report states. The WB report says Balochistan and NWFP will get much larger share of the "new water" than they have of existing allocations if new water reservoirs are built on Indus in future.

Daily Times, 28 December 2005

Pakistan, Malaysia begin free trade from Jan 1 (Sajid Chaudhry)

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Malaysia are all set to start free trade under the Early Harvest Programme (EHP) from Jan 1. Pakistan will offer duty concession ranging between 0%, 50% and 90% on import of 126 items to Malaysia and in return the Malaysian side will also provide same tariff concession on 114 items to Pakistan. Both the sides had also agreed to finalize Free Trade Agreement (FTA) by June 2006 and also to finalize approval and ratification process of the FTA during the year for operationalizing the FTA from January 1, 2007, a senior official told the Daily Times on Tuesday. The EHP was agreed between the two trading partners at a meeting held in the Malaysian capital, where Senior Joint Secretary Ministry of Commerce Shahid Bashir represented Pakistan.

The News, 28 December 2005

No military action in Balochistan: Sherpao (Asim Yasin)

ISLAMABAD: Denying any military operation in Balochistan, the government on Tuesday clearly told the Senate that the paramilitary forces were taking action in Kohlu only against the miscreants who wanted to destroy the peace in the province, and held a firm assurance to people of Balochistan that the government will take all necessary steps to protect their lives and properties. "The government is not taking any military action in Kohlu but paramilitary forces are taking action against Ferari camps and hideouts of miscreants in Kohlu from where rockets were fired on the government installations," said Interior Minister Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao while winding up debate on Balochistan issue.

Daily Times, 29 December 2005

Abbasi disagrees with majority: Basha has edge over KBD (Fida Hussain)

ISLAMABAD: ANG Abbasi, the chairman of the Technical Committee on Water Reservoirs (TCWR), supports the construction of Bhasha Dam ahead of Kalabagh Dam, according to the committee's report which was launched on Wednesday. However, the chairman is in a minority in the committee in holding this view, Federal Water and Power Secretary Ashfaq Mehmood told reporters at the launch of the report on an official website. He said the government would welcome feedback on the report from the public and media. Abbasi also objected to the water distribution mechanism of the Indus River System Authority (IRSA), Mehmood said. According to the report, the chairman believes that the construction of only one of the two dams for which feasibility studies are available could begin at once and Basha has the edge over Kalabagh. Eight of the nine-member committee agree that both Kalabagh and Basha could be constructed.

Daily Times, 29 December 2005

Iran-Pakistan-India gas project: Iran to host tripartite meeting in February (Iftikhar Gilani)

NEW DELHI: Iran has agreed to host tripartite official-level talks with India and Pakistan in February to kick start

the construction of the \$7 billion Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) gas pipeline. At the end of the first day of discussions held under the Joint Working Group (JWG) meeting that started on Wednesday, India and Iran also reiterated their commitment to start construction from mid-2007 and complete all formalities including the project structure, framework agreement and financial arrangements by April 2006. Officials said Wednesday's discussions revolved around four core issues including technical specifications, financial structure, measures to boost investor confidence and the price of the gas sold by Iran to India and Pakistan. Discussions also centred on the blocks offered by Iran for the proposed project and whether India would participate in its development plan. A seven-member Iranian delegation led by Deputy Oil Minister Mohammad-Hadi Nejad Hosseinian including officials from the Natural Iranian Gas Exporting Company (NIGEC) participated in the talks. SC Tripathi, Petroleum and Natural Gas Ministry secretary, headed the Indian delegation.

Daily Times, 29 December 2005

Waziristan militants disturb govt (Iqbal Khattak)

PESHAWAR: NWFP Governor Khalilur Rehman is facing a real test of his political skills to bring South Waziristan under control after the turbulent tribal region was declared "secured" following successful operations last year, analysts and tribal parliamentarians said on Wednesday. "We discussed the Wana situation with the governor for two days and we are likely to hold a similar meeting with Peshawar Corps Commander Lt-Gen Hamid Khan today (Wednesday) or Thursday," Wana MNA Maulana Abdul Malick told Daily Times. He declined to give details of his meeting with the governor. "Let the discussion finish first, then we will talk with the press," he said. "South Waziristan is virtually under the control of people who were once on the government's wanted list and foreign militants are roaming around freely in the area," he said. South Waziristan MNA Maulana Mirajuddin was also present in meetings with the governor.

Daily Times, 29 December 2005

Explosion damages pipeline in Sui (Azizullah Khan)

QUETTA: A gas pipeline was damaged in Sui late on Tuesday night after an explosion near a gas well, but no one was hurt. The explosion in a tank near gas well number 60 blew up a 1.8-metre section of a pipe taking gas from a well to a purification plant at the gas field in Sui, but it was not clear if the explosion was accidental or sabotage, Dera Bugti District Coordination Officer Abdul Samad Lasi said. Witnesses said the fire was extinguished after about 45 minutes when the valve of the well switched off automatically. Lasi said gas supplies would not be affected and technical experts from Pakistan Petroleum Limited were repairing the pipeline. Militant tribesmen have attacked gas infrastructure in Balochistan in the past. The gas field is in Dera Bugti, which has been tense for the last 10 days since paramilitary forces backed by helicopter gunships launched an offensive which government officials say is aimed at tribesmen who carry out frequent rocket attacks.

The Nation, 29 December 2005

Over a dozen suspects held in Balochistan (ASSAD HAMEED)

ISLAMABAD - Interior Minister Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao Wednesday said that over a dozen suspects involved in recent wave of violence have been arrested from the troubled areas of Balochistan. The paramilitary forces have also recovered arms and ammunition from the apprehended persons and they are being interrogated for judging their level of involvement in the subversive activities, Aftab Sherpao told reporters during a visit to a tent village, housing quake victims in H-11 sector of Islamabad. "The charges against the arrested would be lodged after thorough investigation which is underway," the interior minister further told. The arrests have been made during the crackdown at Ferrari camps as the law enforcement agencies are flushing out such elements after the recent attacks in Kohlu including the one which injured FC bosses a few days back, Sherpao said. "The government is committed to carry forward the already launched mega development projects costing billion of rupees in the province without any hindrance," he said.

The Nation, 29 December 2005

Madaris not to expel foreigners

ISLAMABAD (AFP) - Pakistan's controversial madrassas Wednesday said that they would not meet a government deadline to expel foreign students from the Islamic religious schools by the end of the year. The Ittehad Tanzeemat Madaris (madrassas' union), which represents about 12,000 of the religious schools, said the order was a violation of human rights. "We would not expel any (foreign) student," Hanif Jallundhari, a central leader of the Ittehad Tanzeemat Madaris, told a press conference in Islamabad. "It is unconstitutional, against sharia and a human rights violation to expel any student seeking knowledge," he said. President Pervez Musharraf had ordered that some 1,400 foreign students studying in Pakistani madrassas leave the country by December 31, following the July 7 suicide bombings in London.

The News, 29 December 2005

Uproar in Senate over French deal (Rauf Klasra)

ISLAMABAD: The Senate witnessed uproar and exchange of hot words on Wednesday after former finance minister Ishaq Dar criticised the Finance Ministry and Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) bosses for signing a supplementary agreement with the Paris Club on December 24, 1999 to dole out Rs 5.5 billion to a French insurance agent. Dar claimed that the deal was reached with the French agent after the Nawaz government was toppled on October 12, 1999 and as such the then financial team had nothing to do with the payment made to a private agent. The discussion on the scam in CAA regarding dubious payment to a French insurance agent, COFACE, reportedly under the French government's pressure took such a turn that Senate Chairman Muhammad Mian Soomro had to expunge many words from official proceedings when Dar and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Dr Sher Afgan exchanged harsh words. Dar effectively pleaded his case and to the surprise of the treasury benches also produced many classified official documents to establish that the deal was struck when Shaukat Aziz was the finance minister.

Daily Times, 30 December 2005

Free trade regime between Pakistan and China from Jan 1

BEIJING: Pakistan and China are set to launch the much awaited free trade regime under the Early Harvest Programme (EHP) from January 1. The trade under the EHP includes arrangement on the basis of mutually agreed lists of items. The first list includes fruits and vegetables and marble. Both nations will reduce tariff on these items to zero gradually, but not later than end of 2007. The second list includes home textiles, towels, chewing gum, cotton fabric, cutlery, surgical goods and sports goods for Pakistan and machinery and chemicals for China. These items would also be zero-rated gradually.

The News, 30 December 2005

Saudi Arabia readies fleet of helicopters for Haj season

ISLAMABAD: The Saudi Civil Defence Department has readied a fleet of advanced helicopters to take part in fire fighting, rescue, search and reconnaissance operations during the Haj season, Saudi press has reported. It quoted Col Jameel Muhammad Arbaeen, director of the department in Makkah, as saying that his officers had inspected 5,176 buildings and more than 750 restaurants and hotels in Makkah to make sure they follow safety regulations. They also checked the safety condition of 51 tunnels across the city. "We have taken measures to improve the efficiency of our fire fighting and rescue units," Arbaeen said, adding that his department had deployed an adequate number of staff in various parts of the city. Col Arbaeen said the department had also taken precautionary measures to deal with flash floods during the Haj.

Daily Times, 30 December 2005

Explosions rock Balochistan

QUETTA: Two explosions jolted Nushki late on Thursday while explosions were also reported in Sibi and Hub. Deputy Superintendent of Police Ghafoor Kurd said unidentified people threw a grenade at a barbershop run by three people from Dera Ghazi Khan. All three owners Nasibullah, Ilahi Bakhsh and Rashid Ahmed were injured. Police also said a bomb exploded near a grid station, damaging its wall. No casualties were reported. Unidentified men fired a rocket that hit the Agriculture Model Farm in Sibi. Local journalists said they heard a big bang, but nobody was killed or injured. Police said another bomb exploded on the roof of a sweet shop. However, nobody was killed. Two bombs exploded in Machh on Wednesday night.

The News, 30 December 2005

Northern Pakistan jolted

ISLAMABAD: A moderate earthquake measuring 5.3 on Richter scale jolted northern Pakistan early on Thursday, but there were no immediate reports of any casualties or damage, officials said. The quake was felt at 3.04am in several cities including Islamabad, Abbotabad, and Muzaffarabad, devastated by the massive Oct 8 quake, seismologists said. Since the 7.6-magnitude quake that killed more than 73,000 people in Pakistan, a total of 1,518 aftershocks have rocked the region. The last one, on Dec 25, measured 5.2 on the Richter scale. The epicentre of Thursday's aftershock was in Hazara division, some 100 kilometres north of Islamabad, a seismological department official told AFP. Residents panicked but there were no reports of any casualties or damage, the official said. Despite extreme cold in various areas people remained outside their homes.

Daily Times, 30 December 2005

Parliamentary committee report on water: 3 provinces oppose KBD, agree on Basha (Irfan Ghauri)

ISLAMABAD: Three provinces including Sindh, the NWFP and Balochistan have opposed the construction of Kalabagh Dam (KBD) while the Punjab has proposed constructing KBD and Basha Dam simultaneously. The report of the parliamentary committee on water resources (PCWR) tabled in Senate on Thursday said the three smaller provinces unanimously agreed on Basha Dam. The committee was headed by Senator Nisar A Memon with Anisa Zeb Tahirkheli, Mir Naseer Mengal, Syed Dilawar Abbas, Abdul Qadir Jamaluddin Al Gillani, Muhammad Ali Malkani, Jehangir Khan Tareen and Sher Akbar Khan as its members. The committee was formed

by the National Assembly speaker in October 2003. It finalised its report in August 2004. "All four provinces have agreed on building large dams and have agreed on Basha Dam. However, the Punjab chief minister proposed building Basha and Kalabagh Dams simultaneously.

Daily Times, 31 December 2005

Deciding on water reservoirs: Pakistan comes first: Musharraf

MANDI BAHAUDDIN: President Pervez Musharraf said on Friday that the government would decide on the construction of water reservoirs in Pakistan's best interest. He also asked the people of Mandi Bahauddin district to ignore calls of striking over the issue. "We will always put Pakistan first and steer it to new levels of development. So don't pay any attention to strike calls, as we are sincere in serving the country and taking it forward keeping its potential in mind," he told MPs, local government leaders, notables and agriculturalists. This is the first of Musharraf's planned visits to the country's districts in order to increase the pace of development at the grassroot level and translate his vision of transferring the benefit of economic gain to the common man. He said Pakistan needed to build at least three dams by 2026 to sustain itself on the path of high economic growth. "We have no choice but to build dams. It is not a matter of one dam.

Daily Times, 31 December 2005

Deadline for registration of seminaries may be extended (Mohammad Imran)

ISLAMABAD: The government is likely to extend the deadline for the registration of seminaries. President Pervez Musharraf has set December 31 as the deadline for the registration of the seminaries, which ends today (Saturday). "The government will extend the deadline following a formal request from the Ittehad Tanzimat Madaris Deeniya (ITMD)," Wakil Ahmed Khan, the Religious Affairs Ministry secretary, told Daily Times on Friday. Sources said the ITMD had agreed on the registration of seminaries under the Societies Registration Act 1860 (Second Amendment) Ordinance of 2005 during its recent meeting with the government. They said the registration process was discontinued because the seminaries had refused to register under the Societies Registration Act 1860 (Amendment Ordinance) of 2005. Sources said that the ITMD had earlier refused to register because the government was seeking complete information about income, donors and expenditure of the seminaries.

Dawn, 31 December 2005

17 hurt in 'attack'on Dera Bugti (Amanullah Kasi)

QUETTA, Dec 30: Security forces on Friday allegedly attacked the residence of Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti and Dera Bugti town, leaving 17 people injured. However, officials said that an exchange of fire took place when tribesmen occupied government buildings in which one wanted person was killed. Meanwhile, two personnel of the Kalat Scouts were shot dead in Khuzdar district. Speaking at a press conference here on Friday night, the four-party Baloch Alliance announced that opposition parties would take out a procession in Quetta on Saturday to protest against what they called an attack by security forces on Dera Bugti. Agha Shahid Hasan Bugti of the Jamhoori Watan Party, Leader of Opposition in the provincial assembly Kachkol Ali and Habib Jalib Baloch of the Balochistan National Party-Mengal addressed the press conference.

Dawn, 31 December 2005

3 provinces agree on Bhasha dam: Arbab (Shafiq Ahmad)

PESHAWAR, Dec 30: Sindh Chief Minister Arbab Ghulam Rahim has said that President Gen Pervez Musharraf has been empowered to take a decision about the National Finance Commission (NFC) award and not on the construction of Kalabagh Dam. They had not given power to the president to take a unilateral decision on the Kalabagh Dam construction, he told journalists at the end of a one-day workshop organized by the Citizen-Police Liaison Committee (CPLC) here at a local hotel on Friday. He said three provincial governments, excluding Punjab, were agreed on the construction of Bhasha Dam and Sindh wanted its construction first. "We have authorized Gen Pervez Musharraf to decide on the NFC award issue and not on the construction of Kalabagh Dam," said Mr Rahim. The people of Sindh had reservations on the planned emanation of canals from Kalabagh Dam. However, they were optimistic that the president would take all the people in confidence before the dams' construction, he said

The Nation, 31 December 2005

United Muslim League to contest '07 polls: Rashid

LAHORE - All factions of Muslim League would unitedly participate in the 2007 general elections of 2007 and no body should be in doubt about this eventuality, as well as about consensus on the issue of Kalabagh Dam the construction schedule of which would be announced shortly by the President Musharraf. This assertion was made by federal Minister for Information, Sheikh Rashid Ahmad, while addressing a press conference here at a local hotel on Friday. He said those talking about the partition of the country would be crushed. According to him, Muslim League would not stand divided over the issue of dam, funds for which have been allocated by the

government. Responding to a question, he said the political future of Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman was bright.