

Daily Times, 1 December 2006

Musharraf calls for comprehensive strategy to combat terrorism

Islamabad: President General Pervez Musharraf on Wednesday briefed a visiting British parliamentary delegation on the need to pursue a comprehensive strategy to stamp out terrorism, stressing that Pakistan would continue cooperating with the international community towards this end. He told the seven-member Foreign Affairs Committee of the British House of Commons: There exists a need to adopt an elaborate strategy to curb the menace of terrorism. Pakistan is engaged in the war against terror not only in the national interest but also for the sake of peace and stability in the world. It will continue its cooperation with international community in this respect. The president also briefed the delegation, led by Labour MP Mike Gapes, which was winding up its two-day visit, on matters related to Pakistans national security, the Indo-Pak peace process and the situation in Afghanistan..

Daily Times, 1 December 2006

Women bill doesnt violate Quran and Sunnah: CII

Islamabad: The Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) has ruled that the Protection of Women Bill 2006 does not violate injunctions of the Quran and Sunnah. The councils chairman and members called on President General Pervez Musharraf on Thursday and expressed their support for the bill. They said the bill was a step in the right direction and would remove many of the anomalies in laws relating to women. However, Dr Javed Ahmed Ghamadi, a CII member and critic of the bill, later told Daily Times he did not voice his objections to the bill at the meeting.. He said the only good things about the bill were that it established the supremacy of parliament, and that it stopped the police from arresting women on charges of adultery. Otherwise, the bill was no different to the Hudood Ordinances, he said..

The Nation, 1 December 2006

NATO gets in touch with Pak religious parties

Lahore - NATO forces in Afghanistan have started contacts with the religious factions of Pakistan seeking their proposals for the maintenance of peace in Afghanistan, as well as, for negotiation with Taliban: In this concern, a Canadian diplomat arrived in Islamabad and got in touch with Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam in Pakistan, to seek their opinion. JUI sources have confirmed the contacts, disclosing that first the Afghan President wrote to the party, then NATO authorities contacted it. Meanwhile, a Canadian diplomat had a meeting with JUI Secy Abdul Ghafoor Haidri, and sought his party's opinion about maintenance of peace in Afghanistan..

Paktribune, 1 December 2006

Baloch, Hafiz among 25 MMA activists arrested over violation of section 144 in anti-WPB rally

Lahore: Lahore Police on Thursday used baton charge to stop the participants of an anti-women protection bill rally and arrested twenty five activists including several stalwarts of Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal over violation of section 144 imposed in the province. As soon as the MMA rally led by Liaqat Baloch, Hafiz Hussain Ahmed, Farid Ahmed Paracha and Ahsan ullah Waqas reached Chauburji, the participants started raising anti-

government slogans. But when Liaqat Baloch started his speech, police not only started baton charge but also arrested twenty activists of MMA including Hafiz Hussain Ahmed, Liaqat Baloch, Farid Ahmed Paracha, Ahsan ullah Waqas put them into a truck and took them to an undisclosed location..

Daily Times, 1 December 2006

Opinion: Afghanistan as NATO's touchstone (Tanvir Ahmad Khan)

President Musharraf cannot afford more Bajaur during the run-up to the 2007 election and at least this non-NATO ally of the United States is beginning to articulate its unease over the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan. The most powerful military alliance of human history has just held its summit in Riga, a Baltic capital that the Soviet Union once regarded as a sensitive nodal point of its outer reach. Despite a rearguard diplomatic fight by Moscow, NATO has never stopped creeping up to the new Russian frontier. The Riga summit showed that NATO's sights are set on horizons far beyond that frontier and that the new empire-makers, despite some internal opposition from France, are determined to transform it into a global strong-arm of their security policies. Challenged to discover a fresh raison d'être after the collapse of its adversary, the Warsaw Pact, NATO has been exploring new terrain..

Dawn, 1 December 2006

Unesco says 6.5 million children out of school: Illiteracy on rise in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, Nov 30: Experiencing a rise in its illiterate population, Pakistan ranks second among the countries of the world with highest number of out-of-school children. These shocking revelations about Pakistan, which spends a little over 2 per cent of its GDP on education, were made in Unesco's Education For All Global Monitoring Report 2007 launched here on Thursday. However, Minister of State for Education Anisa Zeb Tahirkhaili, who was the chief guest at the launch ceremony, said she was hopeful about the situation despite Unesco's scepticism. Talking to Dawn, the minister said the government had taken the issue of out-of-school kids as a challenge. According to the report, Nigeria with some 8 million out-of-school kids stands first in the hall of shame, whereas India follows Pakistan at the third spot with 4.5 million such kids..

Dawn, 2 December 2006

Consensus on IPI gas tariff likely, says official

ISLAMABAD, Dec 1: Pakistan believes that a consensus will emerge in the forthcoming tripartite meeting in Teheran to finalise the \$7 billion Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project, said a senior official. There is a room for consensus on the report of the UK-based consultant Gaffiney Caline & Associates over its proposed gas tariff for the IPI project,' petroleum and natural resources secretary Ahmad Waqar told Dawn on Friday. He said Pakistan was expecting a tripartite meeting in early December in Teheran to further negotiate the issue of gas price to be offered by Iran to India and Pakistan. We are still hopeful as Pakistan has not rejected the gas tariff finalised by the consultant, he added..

Daily Times, 2 December 2006

EDITORIAL: Consequences of Pavlovian reflex of enabling mullahs to interpret Islam

After a meeting with members of the Council for Islamic Ideology (CII), President Pervez Musharraf said that the Women's Protection Bill (WPB) sponsored by the government and passed by parliament was not repugnant to the Quran and Sunnah. The meeting came in the wake of the feared possibility of the government going back on it, re-tabling it after getting it amended once again to please the clergy in the Mutahidda Majlis-e-Amal (MMA). In the event, thank God, President Musharraf did not wait a day longer and signed the bill into law yesterday, thus ending all speculation surrounding its fate. The CII had declared the bill non-repugnant to Islam and met the president to reassure him that it still stood by its opinion. The CII chairman, Dr Khalid Masud, and its members also supported the WPB, calling it a step in the right direction..

Daily Times, 3 December 2006

EDITORIAL: Dismal state of the habeas corpus in Pakistan

No one should stint praise due to the Supreme Court of Pakistan under Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry for getting the government to cough up citizens that have simply disappeared from the face of this country. There is no novelty in the growing complaint that secret government agencies (which are actually not secret at all!) routinely pick up people without acknowledging that they have done so, and the victims are not traceable for months and years, depending on the whim of these investigation agencies. This has been happening in Pakistan for many decades and accounts for the label of soft state put on the country. It violates the first principle of governance: the habeas corpus or the duty of the state to publicise that it has brought a citizen under its custody. Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry had taken note of the list of 41 people who had simply disappeared and asked the government to produce them: the government has obliged by releasing 20 of them..

Dawn, 3 December 2006

Musharraf seeks end to gas pricing row: Contact with Ahmadinejad

ISLAMABAD, Dec 2: President Gen Pervez Musharraf stepped in on Saturday to resolve the gas pricing issue that has emerged as a threat to the Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) pipeline project earlier this week. Serious differences over the gas pricing were reported among the three parties this week. President Musharraf telephoned his Iranian counterpart Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to seek early conclusion of the project by resolving the pricing issue on fast track basis. When contacted, Foreign Office spokesperson Tasnim Aslam and military spokesman Maj-Gen Shaukat Sultan said that the conversation centred on the IPI project. Ms Aslam said that the two leaders agreed to stay in touch on the matter..

Daily Times, 3 December 2006

Opinion: Pakistan and her friends (Ahmad Faruqui)

Pakistan is likely to continue to depend on the largesse of its patron states, even though its special status with these states has been eroded by India. The remarkable thing is that New Delhi has done so without coming under anyones tutelage Conventional wisdom has

it that three As sum up Pakistans policy matrix: Allah, Army and America. But this is a half-truth. To complete the picture, one has to add a fourth A (Saudi Arabia) and a C (China) to the list. While Pakistan has long standing ties with both patron states, these have become more nuanced since America emerged as a global hyper-power and India emerged as a regional power. Chinas influence on Pakistan stems from its geographical proximity to Kashmir and Pakistans northern areas. For decades, it supported Pakistan on its forward Kashmir policy and Pakistan supported it on the One China policy..

Dawn, 3 December 2006

Opinion: Too much of loose talk (Anwar Syed)

I may have said this before, but if I have, it will bear repeating that we as a people, and particularly our politicians and government spokesmen, talk too much. Excess necessarily makes for extravagance, and leads to loss of precision, coherence, and relevance. General Musharraf told a group of officers in Lahore (November 26, 2006) that temporary upheavals in the countrys security environment should not arouse public concern, because the turmoil had been caused by the governments own steps taken to rein in anti-state elements. He went on to say that whichever way the government settled major issues, some disturbance was bound to occur. In any case, his government intended to take the bull by the horns. The general would have made good sense if he had said only that certain anti-state groups were making trouble, and that his government meant to deal firmly with them. But he wouldnt be content with brevity and discretion..

Dawn, 3 December 2006

Mixed response to BNP-M strike call

QUETTA, Dec 2: The shutdown strike call given by the Balochistan National Party-Mengal (BNP-M) against the arrest of its leaders and workers received a mixed response in Quetta and other parts of the province on Saturday. Police arrested 10 people in Kalat including BNP-M district president Mir Mohammad Umrani, Shahzada Zaki Ahmedzai and Mohammad Sadiq Dehwar. In Quetta, most of the shops, markets and business centres in Liaquat market, Prince road, Abdul Sattar road, Qandahari market, Mission road, Zarghoon road and Satellite Town remained opened throughout the day. However, a majority of the shops at Jinnah road remained closed, while a complete shutdown was observed till afternoon at Sariab road, Brewery road, Jail road and on the outskirts of the provincial capital..

Dawn, 4 December 2006

Suicide blast near Bannu; policeman killed

Peshawar, Dec 3: A suicide bomber allegedly blew himself up by detonating explosives strapped to his body, while a policeman died of shrapnel injuries near Speen Tangi, 24km east of Bannu, on Sunday. The bomber, suspected to be of Uzbek origin, had earlier shot and injured the policeman, Khalil, near Speen Tangi when his car was stopped at a checkpoint. After injuring the policeman, he fled towards the Frontier Region, and police chased him, officials said. During the chase, the man opened fire on the police party, which resulted in an hour-long exchange of fire. Police said that when the suspect received a bullet injury and fell down, Platoon Commander Ahmad Khan went up to him, but he detonated the explosives strapped to his body, blowing himself up and seriously

wounding the policeman, who died latter in a hospital..

Daily Times, 4 December 2006

Jamaat threatens to disrupt by-poll in Bajaur Agency

KHAR: A jirga organised by the Jamaat-e-Islami on Sunday threatened to besiege the homes of candidates taking part in a by-election for the National Assembly seat from Bajaur Agency vacated by Sahibzada Haroonur Rashid in protest against an airstrike on a madrassa in which more than 80 people were killed a few weeks ago. The jirga demanded the government cancel the by-election and warned that the tribesmen would destroy ballot boxes at the polling stations if the election were conducted. The jirga warned people against filing nomination papers for the constituency, saying that those participating in the election would be considered enemies of the madrassa air raid victims..

The Nation, 4 December 2006

Editorial: Preparing for elections

WITH the PPP entering what looks like the coming electoral fray, there is a stir now in Punjab which has so far remained complacent despite calls for action by the ARD leadership. Within days of his return from London, the newly appointed provincial PPP president Shah Mehmood Qureshi has held a fairly large public meeting in Multan addressed by party leaders of the region. Groups of enthusiastic party workers joined the main procession led by the Makhdoom as it passed through various towns on its way to Multan. It goes to the governments credit that it did not put any hindrance in its way and allowed the party to hold the meeting. The ruling party has already held public meetings in a number of cities where Ch Pervaiz Elahi had announced development and relief packages and called on the people to vote for the PML. The PPPs meeting in Multan will help reduce the perception that the opposition is being discriminated against..

Daily Times, 5 December 2006

Peace in tribal areas

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Khurshid Mahmood Kasuri will visit Afghanistan from December 7 to 9 for talks with Afghan leaders on Pakistans strategy to bring peace in the tribal areas, the Foreign Office said on Monday. The foreign minister will also discuss the proposed jirga across the Pak-Afghan border with his Afghan counterpart, Foreign Office spokeswoman Tasneem Aslam told a weekly press briefing on Monday. It is not that the foreign minister will tell them what to do, but will apprise them how we went about it and why it (jirga) was successful, she said. They will discuss how to reactivate the traditional institution of jirga, to promote peace and to bring down violence in the bordering areas. She said Pakistan believed peace in Afghanistan could only be achieved through a comprehensive strategy that included political reconciliation and economic reconstruction apart from military action. The spokeswoman also referred to President Pervez Musharraf's suggestion of a Marshall Plan for Afghanistan, particularly in the south and southeast..

The Nation, 5 December 2006

Grand jirga after truce in all agencies, says Sherpao (Assad Hameed)

Islamabad: The law enforcement agencies have recently held some 350 illegal Afghan nationals from various parts of the country in a crackdown on terrorists, Interior Minister Aftab Ahmed said on Monday. Talking to media persons at the inauguration of Computerised Centre for Arms Licence at the Ministry of Interior, he said some 200 detained Afghan suspects have been handed over to Kabul, asking the latter to do more for checking cross-border terror activities. Asked about the latest report in probe regarding Dargai suicide blast, Sherpao said the investigators were moving in right direction after getting some vital clues regarding the elements responsible for the deadly plot. However, he refused to share further details, apprehending that a disclosure at this stage may hamper the investigation progress..

Paktribune, 5 December 2006

Pak for comprehensive strategy for restoration of peace in Afghanistan: FO

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has stressed the need for devising a comprehensive strategy for restoration of peace in Afghanistan. In her weekly press briefing on Monday, the Foreign Office spokesperson, Tasnim Aslam said that a comprehensive strategy was needed for maintaining tranquility in Afghanistan adding that durable peace could not be restored through military operations. She underlined the need for exploring other ways to bring durable peace, harmony and political consensus in Afghanistan. The foreign office spokesperson ruled out change in Pakistan policy on Afghanistan or Taliban saying her statement was published out of context..

Daily Times, 5 December 2006

Opinion: Regional integration and us (Syed Mohammad Ali)

While many other factors will need to be taken into consideration, regional integration, provided it is accompanied by domestic reforms, could present an effective response to the unintended inequities resulting from globalisation..Pakistan and India do keep engaging in dialogues to secure a peaceful resolution to their problems. For purely economic reasons, India is perhaps more eager to develop greater regional cohesion since that would allow the Indian capital greater room to expand. Precisely for this reason, but also because of the manner in which Pakistan and Bangladesh were created, any advocacy of regional integration from New Delhi is viewed with much suspicion. Unless the impetus comes from Pakistan, attempts at integrating the Subcontinent seem doomed to failure. It seems unlikely that Pakistan will undertake such initiative, as long as New Delhis approach to the Kashmir issue remains unchanged..

The Nation, 5 December 2006

Opinion: Have Sino-Pak ties reached the end' (Abid Mustafa)

On his visit to Pakistan, the Chinese President Hu Jintao emphasised the importance of Sino-Pak relations and expressed his desire to expand bilateral ties between the two countries. Let us build on past achievement and strengthen traditional friendship, advanced with the time, expand and enrich China-Pakistan strategic partnership so that our friendship will pass on from generation to generation, he said. The Pakistani

government reciprocated by praising Chinas relationship with Pakistan. Supporters of the government pointed to the 18 agreements signed between the two countries as proof of Chinas longstanding commitment to Pakistan..But the eventual outcome of US-China-India-Pakistan relations hinges on three issues: Americas ability to extricate itself from Afghanistan and Iraq; Pakistans ability to wrest control of its domestic and foreign policy from America; Chinas ability to assert itself as a global power..

Daily Times, 6 December 2006

IB official caught with bomb near CM Secretariat: Durrani

ISLAMABAD: An Intelligence Bureau official was arrested with explosives near the Chief Ministers Secretariat on Tuesday, with Chief Minister Akram Durrani appearing to suggest that he was the target of a bomb plot cooked up by the IB. Durrani told a press conference that Muhammad Tufail, the IB employee, was arrested by policemen at around 11am outside his Peshawar office while trying to plant a bomb in a dustbin. We are considering whether the IB is directly responsible for it or if it is the outcome of the grudges the federal government has against the NWFP, he said, and recalled that his house in Bannu had been attacked in the past..

The Nation, 6 December 2006

MQM protests PML-Ulema talks

KARACHI - Muttahida Qaumi Movement held countrywide protest demonstrations Tuesday against ruling PML over Ch Shujat Hussain's meeting with ulema on Women Protection Act. MQM chief Altaf Hussain has said that time has come for the PML-Q leadership to decide whether it considers the MQM its coalition partner or a rival. Addressing the huge protest rally organised by MQM against the PML-Q, opposite Quaid-e-Azam mausoleum at MA Jinnah Road on Tuesday, Hussain said MQM did not want confrontation with its major ally at the Centre and Sindh Province but wanted that all problems should be resolved with dialogue and state affairs run with consultations with all coalition partners..

Dawn, 6 December 2006

Opinion: Ties with Iran (Muhammad Ali Siddiqi)

Notwithstanding the fund of goodwill that exists among the people, the relationship between Pakistan and Iran is far from ideal and is in fact characterised by an inexplicable coldness. A talk with a cross-section of Irans top leadership leaves no one in doubt that Iran is very keen to strike an understanding with Pakistan on regional issues, especially Afghanistan, but all of them complain or perhaps confess that something stands between the two countries and things do not move. Diplomats like Foreign Minister Manoucheher Muttaki and nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani soft-pedalled the issue and merely emphasised the need for closer ties, implying the absence of the degree to which they wished to see the relations between the two countries..

Daily Times, 6 December 2006

EDITORIAL: What can we boast of to Kabul'

The Foreign Office has announced that the foreign minister, Khurshid Mahmood Kasuri, will visit Afghanistan next week for talks with Afghan leaders on Pakistans strategy to

bring peace in the tribal areas. Mr Kasuri will presumably also discuss the proposed jirga across the Pak-Afghan border with his Afghan counterpart and tell him how to reactivate the traditional institution to promote peace and bring down violence in the border areas. The Foreign Office spokesperson believed that peace in Afghanistan could only be achieved through a comprehensive strategy that included political reconciliation and economic reconstruction apart from military action and a Marshall Plan for the country, particularly in the south and southeast where the Pashtun live and where the Taliban are making their depredations. In all realism, however, we wonder what Mr Kasuri can tell Kabul in the way of any successes achieved on our side of the border..

Dawn, 6 December 2006

BNP-M strike call for 7th

QUETTA, Dec 5: The Balochistan National Party (M) has given a call for a strike in the province on Dec 7 to protest against President Musharraf's Quetta visit. The president is due in the provincial capital on the day. The Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians, the Awami National Party and the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) have supported the strike call. However, the Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party called for observing a black day on the day, instead of a strike. In a statement issued here on Tuesday, the central spokesman for the BNP (Mengal) said that the call for the strike had been given to condemn Gen Musharraf's policies, including military operation, killing of Nawab Bugti, extra-judicial arrests and raids on houses of political workers. The BNP-M appealed to the people and business community to observe the black day and strike to show their solidarity with the Baloch people..

Dawn, 7 December 2006

Joint team to probe Peshawar incident

ISLAMABAD, Dec 6: Interior Minister Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao on Wednesday said a joint investigation team was being set up by the federal and provincial governments to probe into the incident of alleged recovery of some explosive from an intelligence official in Peshawar. The incident is result of misunderstanding, Mr Sherpao said at a press conference here. He said the NWFP chief minister should not have reacted in this fashion and that the stance of the Intelligence Bureau be considered in this respect. Our intelligence agencies have done remarkably well in the fight against terror and have set precedents, the minister said..

The Nation, 7 December 2006

Editorial: Durrani's accusations

NWFP Chief Minister Muhammad Akram Durrani has levelled the serious accusation of planting a bomb outside his office against an Intelligence Bureau operative, calling into question the role of intelligence agencies once again. The Bureau, however, has claimed that the peon concerned was found innocent both by the police station and its own officials. But since our agencies, and by no means just the Bureau, have been facing criticism both at home and abroad for their alleged involvement in controversial political issues that are outside the purview of their official domain, even criminal acts like the harassment of political opponents of the regime. Based on their past role in defeating the Soviet aggression against Afghanistan, they remain suspect for conniving at the

infiltration of pro-Taliban elements across the border..

The Nation, 7 December 2006

Opinion: He came, spoke and conquered (ISRARUL HAQ)

President Hu Jintaos visit to Pakistan has brought new hopes and promises for Pakistan. It can be very rightly said that he came, spoke and conquered. As many as eighteen agreements and memoranda of understanding including a land mark free trade pact were signed and President Hu strongly advocated to view strategic relation with Pakistan from a strategic long term perspective. A day earlier he vowed to build on Pak-China robust friendship and expand and enrich strategic partnership. When a Press reporter asked him with reference to his speech in India that China wanted to see peace prevailing in South Asia that whether he would like to play any role in the resolution of the Kashmir dispute, his reply merely expressed the hope that the ongoing talks between India and Pakistan would produce the desired results. This was expected of him since President Musharraf said that talks with India were proceeding very well..

Dawn, 7 December 2006

Editorial: New ideas on Kashmir

EVEN though India has not reacted positively to the suggestion, President Pervez Musharraf's four-point proposal for a solution of the Kashmir dispute should be seen as part of Pakistans continuing quest for new ideas for breaking the ice on this issue. It should be noted that it is Pakistan alone which has been coming up with fresh ideas on Kashmir to set the ball rolling. The Indian side has never had the vision or the inclination to come up with any new proposals; to most Pakistani proposals it has either reacted negatively or chosen to keep mum. The suggestions previously made by President Musharraf were unorthodox and included a zone-wise approach and a phased withdrawal of troops. These proposals marked a clear departure from Pakistan's known position on Kashmir, namely, that a solution of the dispute be sought on the basis of the UN resolutions that called for a plebiscite in Kashmir..

Daily Times, 7 December 2006

EDITORIAL: Hudood Ordinance is neither Islamic nor Pakistani

President Pervez Musharraf on Tuesday rejected criticism that the Womens Protection Bill was un-Islamic. He also rejected the notion that the Hudood Ordinances was, in any way, a divine law. He told the Womens Convention 2006 that the laws handed down by Allah could not be changed because they were eternal, but any ordinance framed and promulgated by man could be amended or even set aside. In the current case, he said that the amended law was in consonance with the laws of Allah and therefore there was nothing wrong with it. President Musharraf also made reference to the clergy that is up in arms against him for various reasons but is using the issue of the WPB to denounce and undermine him. He explained that the same clergy had once denounced the printing press as the devil and condemned the founder of the nation, Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah as a kafir or infidel..

Dawn, 8 December 2006

Terror affecting ties: Karzai

KABUL, Dec 7: Afghan President Hamid Karzai said on Thursday that attacks perpetrated by terrorists infiltrating Afghanistan from Pakistan were severely undermining relations between the two countries. The president emphasised that the Afghan people desired to have strong and friendly relations with Pakistan. However, the continuation of violence perpetrated by terrorists from across the border was a major obstacle, Karzai's office said in a statement. The Afghan leader made the remark on Thursday evening during a meeting in Kabul with Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri. Pakistan insists it is doing its utmost to quash extremism and terrorism in the semi-autonomous tribal agencies, which are governed by tribal, rather than national, law. Mr Karzai issued a veiled warning that escalating violence in Afghanistan, which is already shattered by more than two decades of war, would harm Pakistan's interests too..

The Nation, 8 December 2006

Pak plans to mine Afghan border

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan is considering to mine its border alongside Afghanistan amid reports that miscreants are benefiting from the inflow of weapons from the neighbouring country, Interior Minister Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao said on Thursday. In an exclusive interview with The Nation and Nawa-i-Waqt, Interior Minister Aftab Sherpao discussed a number of issues, including law and order situation in zones of conflict, Dargai suicide attack probe, MMA resignations, Shujat-MQM row, the upset NWFP Chief Minister and increase in heinous crimes such as robberies and kidnapping for ransom. Traces of attack on military training camp in Dargai go deep into the Kunar province of Afghanistan, Sherpao said, optimising that the culprits will be brought to justice very soon as the investigation was progressing positively..

Daily Times, 8 December 2006

Where is Lashkar-e-Balochistan?

QUETTA: President Gen Pervez Musharraf on Thursday ridiculed the Balochistan National Party's province-wide march that was scheduled to kick off on November 30, and said, 'Where is the Lashkar-e-Balochistan? There is only one Lashkar in Pakistan ... the Pakistan Army. Gone are the days when the people of Balochistan were cheated by rulers with empty promises. It is time for Balochistan to be brought into the national mainstream,' said Musharraf at a public gathering on the first day of his visit to Balochistan. He said he was determined to change the fate of Balochistan with a multi-pronged development strategy, and nobody will be allowed to derail the developmental process here. The president regretted that previous governments had not brought Balochistan at par with other provinces. He said he could not understand why some elements in Balochistan opposed him for mistakes made by rulers of the past..

Daily Times, 8 December 2006

EDITORIAL: Good news about curriculum

According to a report, Islamabad has made important changes in the new Pakistan Studies curriculum to make sure that the textbooks don't indirectly prejudice students against the non-Muslim minorities of Pakistan. It will also set the record right regarding

the economic, social and cultural basis of partition apart from the religious faith of the Muslim community. The curriculum directions for class 9 and 10 will restate the application of the Two-Nation theory to pre-partition India and also explain that in the post-1947 period the Pakistani state does not exclude non-Muslims and potential non-Muslims from the ambit of one Pakistani nation in which all citizens, regardless of caste, colour or creed, have equal rights. Excellent. This is a reflection of the true facts of history. A curriculum is not a syllabus. It is a centrally issued guideline for the making of syllabi in the provinces that print the textbooks. Until now Pakistans curriculum embodied a form of Pakistani nationalism that was obsessively anti-India falsifying the past and present to keep the nation hating India..

Dawn, 8 December 2006

Opinion: The demands of freedom (Tahir Mirza)

THE case of disappeared persons has caught the limelight. The Supreme Court has before it a petition concerning 41 missing people, and was told on December 1 by the government that 20 of them had been traced. Three men who have returned home in the Frontier after two years have confirmed that they were detained by state agencies. Others who have been released may be under threat not to disclose who had whisked them away and kept them in detention and perhaps even tortured them. The Supreme Courts interest and initiative have sent a wave of hope among all those who cherish human rights and the freedom of citizens. The court, which has taken suo motu notice of many matters concerning individual rights, has issued stern instructions to the government to inform it of the remaining cases of enforced disappearances. The authorities have always found ways to frustrate the judiciarys efforts in such matters, and the position does not appear to have changed significantly in this particular case..

Dawn, 9 December 2006

Military prepared for challenges: president: Defensive deterrence policy in place

QUETTA, Dec 8: President General Pervez Musharraf has said that the armed forces of Pakistan are fully prepared to face any challenges to the national security. He was addressing the students of Command and Staff College here on Friday. Garrison officers as well as students from 22 friendly countries going through a training course at the college were also present on the occasion. Pakistans strategy of defensive deterrence is in place. It is more credible than ever before and we shall continue to improve upon it, he said. President Musharraf said that the world, particularly the ummah, were passing through a critical phase. Due to the impact of globalisation, trouble in any part of the world would affect the rest of the world, he said, adding that if Muslim ummah was troubled, the whole world would suffer. So the need of the hour is to resolve all political disputes involving Muslims with justice and equality, he said..

Daily Times, 9 December 2006

No breakthrough in Pak-Afghan talks

KABUL: Security talks between Afghanistan and Pakistan ended on Friday without a breakthrough on planned tribal councils to stem the growing Taliban insurgency. A key point of dispute is Kabuls desire for all Afghan tribes to be involved in the councils, or jirgas, and Islamabad's preference for only those from the affected frontier lands mainly

the Pashtun from which the Taliban draw its base. Pakistani Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri arrived in Kabul on Thursday for the talks on the jirgas and border security, but by the time main discussions ended on Friday there was still no concrete plan. Kasuri told a joint news conference Afghanistan would hand him its outline of ideas in the few hours before he left for Islamabad and that Pakistan would respond soon..

The Nation, 9 December 2006

JI, JUI-F hold separate rallies in Peshawar

PESHAWAR - Differences between the two main components of MMA, JUI-F and JI, over the resignations issue came to the fore on Friday when leaders and workers of both the parties held separate protest gatherings against the Women Protection Act here. The MMA had announced on Thursday to hold countrywide protest demonstrations on Friday against the Women Protection Act (WPA). In this connection, a protest gathering was held at Masjid Mohabat Khan before the Juma prayer. Jamaat-e-Islami Amir Qazi Hussain Ahmad addressed the gathering. While the JUI-F leaders and workers, including provincial ministers, arranged their separate protest rally after the Juma prayer from Madni Masjid in Namakmandi here. The JUI-F activists and leaders avoided attending Qazi Hussains rally and the JI activists did not turn up at the JUI-F rally at Namakmandi..

The Nation, 9 December 2006

Editorial: Balochistan imbroglio

GENERAL Musharraf has rightly asserted that the future of Balochistan is closely linked with Pakistan and nobody should have any doubt about this. Addressing a public gathering in Quetta on Thursday, he announced a Rs 6.3 billion grant for the development of Balochistan and reiterated his resolve to bring the province at par with the rest of the country. The huge package includes Rs one billion for the development of Quetta, Rs one million each for the 28 districts of the province and Rs 2.5 billion to parliamentarians for the electrification and provision of other facilities in their respective constituencies. It was good to hear from him that the students who had completed 16 years of education would get a stipend of Rs 10,000 for one year so that they could study in the best professional colleges throughout the country. The presidential grant is very much in line with the federal governments policy of diverting substantial resources to develop this long-neglected province but somehow it failed to contain the brewing backlash against its repressive measures that show no sign of abating..

The Nation, 10 December 2006

Hatf-III test-fired

RAWALPINDI - A Strategic Missile Group (SMG) of the Pakistan Armys Strategic Force Command (ASFC) on Saturday conducted a successful launch of the Short-range Ballistic Missile Hatf-III (Ghaznavi). This was the third launch of a ballistic missile in the last three weeks as part of the training exercises of the ASFC. Two other SMGs had earlier conducted successful launches of the Ghauri and Shaheen-1 ballistic missiles last month. The launch came at the culmination phase of the training exercise, which validated the operational readiness of the Strategic Missile Group (SMG) equipped with Ghaznavi Missiles. The Ghaznavi Ballistic Missile System was handed over to the ASFC a few years ago. The Ghaznavi Missile has a range of 290 kilometers..

Dawn, 10 December 2006

President offers amnesty to Baloch fighters: Dialogue option kept open

QUETTA, Dec 9: President General Pervez Musharraf on Saturday announced amnesty in Balochistan for all those willing to surrender arms and said the government was ready for talks on peace and development. He was speaking to newsmen at the Governor's House on the conclusion of a three-day visit to Quetta. Our doors are open to everybody willing to negotiate for peace and development in Balochistan, he said, but added that as president, he would not beg anybody to come to the dialogue table. If somebody wants to meet me, he should come forward' I am ready to meet him, he said. Former primer minister Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali, Deputy Chairman Senate Mir Jan Mohammed Jamali, Governor Owais Ahmed Ghani, Chief Minister Jam Yousuf, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Mohammed Ali Durrani were present on the occasion..

Daily Times, 10 December 2006

WP Act will never be changed, undone: We are ready for bluffers: Musharraf

LAHORE: President General Pervez Musharraf has said that the Womens Protection Act will not be changed or undone. Whatever has been passed is passed and can't be undone, Gen Musharraf said on Saturday in an address at the concluding session of an international conference, titled The Other self: Conflict, Confusion or Compromise, and arranged by the National Commission on the Status of Women and the United Nations Development Programme. Gen Musharraf said the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal's threat to resign from parliament if the legislation were passed was a bluff. Let us see who resigns from the parliament, we are ready to deal with the situation, he added. He said passing the Womens Protection Bill was a serious challenge. The Hudood Ordinance is not only a religious issue but also political and administrative, he said. People would have come on the roads if this bill had not been dealt with properly, he added..

The Nation, 10 December 2006

Opinion: Treason or terrorism' (Dr. Farooq Hassan)

The recent news about the criminal activities of an agent of the Intelligence Bureau (IB) about planting a bomb next to the residential compound of the Chief Minister of the Frontier Province sends ominous signals to the country and indeed the world about the mindset and scope of operations of such super-national level spy agencies that work with the tax payers money in Pakistan under the directions of the Federal government. According to the latest press reports the said would-be saboteur has been eventually handed over to the local police. This occurrence came about after the alleged culprit had been forcibly whisked away by his own superiors from the grasp of the local police after he had been apprehended on the spot in broad daylight. It does not need much emphasis that police comes under the constitutional domain of the provincial government where as the Intelligence Bureau is a Central department under the scheme contained in the 1973 Constitution..

Daily Times, 10 December 2006

Opinion: Political scene and its problems (Dr. H.A. Rizvi)

The political parties need to work towards evolving administrative and legal

arrangements for ensuring fair and free elections. They should hold negotiations with each other to prepare a set of principles, rather than engaging in mutual recriminations or polemical exchanges with the government. Pakistans major political parties and alliances have been very active for the last six months. This applies equally to parties in the opposition and in the government. Whereas the major opposition parties and alliances want to dislodge the Musharraf government, the latter dismisses their challenge as lacking substance. Official circles claim that the opposition is so divided that its major components cannot agree on anything except their criticisms of General Pervez Musharraf. Government circles are happy to see that the Mutahidda Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) was unable to agree on resigning from the National Assembly. They plan to take up this issue when their supreme council meets sometime in January..

Dawn, 11 December 2006

Editorial: Musharraf beyond 2007

IT is a very disturbing statement. Speaking to Dawn, Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain said on Friday that the PML would support Gen Pervez Musharraf as president and army chief even after 2007 when his term as head of state expires. Add to this earlier statements, among others, by Punjab Chief Minister Pervaiz Elahi, that the existing assemblies will elect Gen Musharraf as president, and you have a scary picture of the kind of system this country may end up having. If the existing assemblies are to re-elect Gen Musharraf as head of state, then the electoral exercise next year loses all value. What difference will it make who becomes prime minister after the 2007 general election? As things stand, executive power is heavily tilted in favour of the president. If the aim of the constitutional amendments effected through the Legal Framework Order was to create a balance between the powers of the prime minister and the president, then the amendments have proved to be counterproductive..

Daily Times, 11 December 2006

4 killed in Khyber Agency tribal clash

BARA: At least four and as many as 25 people were killed and four houses demolished in an armed clash between two rival groups of Khyber Agency on Sunday. One of the groups, Lashkar-e-Islami, claimed to have killed several people from the rival Ansarul Islam group. The Lashkar said it had also destroyed the house of Ansarul Islam leader Maulana Mastameen. Mastameen said that his house had been destroyed, but denied that his group had suffered any casualties. We retaliated successfully and killed four of the attackers, he said, adding that his group also held a rival hostage. He said that his group had demolished the houses of three people from the Lashkar-e-Islami. The fighting reportedly took place in Kamarkhel, housing an army camp, close to the Pakistan-Afghan border..

Dawn, 11 December 2006

Balochistan wants 20pc share in PPL

ISLAMABAD, Dec 10: Balochistan has started negotiations with the federal government to acquire 20 per cent shareholding in the Pakistan Petroleum Limited and 25 per cent shares in all other concession licences for natural resources to ensure a constant revenue stream to the resource-rich starving province. The PPL is the countrys oldest and largest

exploration and production company with annual sales revenue touching Rs20 billion. It produces more than 300,000 million cubic feet of gas and more than 240,000 barrels of oil per year, besides substantial annual production of condensate, liquefied petroleum gas and other minerals. Governor Owais Ahmad Ghani told Dawn that he expected the mineral sector to be a major revenue-generating source for the province on the longer run because of 25 per cent shares in each mineral concession agreement the provincial government would be signing with private investors from home and abroad..

The Nation, 11 December 2006

MMA's nationwide strike against WPA on 15th

KARACHI- The Majlis Tahfuz Hudoodullah, Pakistan, on Sunday announced observing a country-wide strike against the Women's Protection Act with the Muttaheda Majlis Amal supporting it. The announcement was made during a huge rally against the WPA near the mausoleum of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah amid tight security. Addressing hundreds of participants, Maulana Fazlur Rehman, the opposition leader in Parliament and the MMA secretary general, said the religious alliance would extend support to whatever decision Ulema take against the governments alleged move to nullify Hudood Ordinance presumably based on Quran and Sunnah. He said this convention of religious scholars called the act as an attempt of the government to nullify the law based on Quran. He said that Pervez Musharraf had failed to deliver and alleged that he (president) did not respect the parliament and other democratic institutions. The way he treats Parliament suggests that democratic institutions hold no significance to him, he said..

Daily Times, 11 December 2006

Opinion: The end of dialogue' (Dr Ayesha Siddiq)

Greater provincial autonomy accompanied with the introduction of a bottom-up approach to development and politics would improve conditions in Balochistan where the nationalists fret over the top-down development agenda which could change socio-economic reality of their province Recently, I was at a seminar on Balochistan in London. The meeting, organised by the Foreign Policy Centre, was held in a committee room at the House of Commons and was attended by a large number of Baloch nationalists, hidden and not-so-hidden representatives from the Pakistani High Commission, other Pakistani nationals and members of the international media. Participants spoke at cross-purposes and evinced a near-total inability to engage in a dialogue. Despite the predominant presence of the Baloch nationalists, it was Pakistans Minister of State for Information, Tariq Azeem who stole the show..

Daily Times, 12 December 2006

Taliban wont join talks in foreigners presence

KABUL: The Taliban on Monday backed away from comments they might join tribal jirgas aimed at ending growing violence in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Senior spokesman Sayed Tayeb Agha said the rebels would never join such talks as long as foreign soldiers remained in Afghanistan. Such jirgas are aimed at protecting American interests only. Such jirgas are neither independent nor do they make independent decisions, he told Reuters from a secret location. The Taliban will not take part in any jirga in the presence

of foreign troops in Afghanistan because such jirgas have no significance. While Afghanistan and Pakistan agree jirgas should be held, they have so far failed to agree on when, how or who should be included..

Dawn, 12 December 2006

Unanimous call for dialogue on Balochistan

ISLAMABAD, Dec 11: In a rare demonstration of unity, prominent government and opposition leaders called on Monday for resolving the crisis in Balochistan through dialogue, involving all genuine stakeholders. They also said that autonomy should be granted to the province. They were speaking at a seminar on National dialogue on Balochistan conflict, organised by four leading non-governmental organisations here. There was also near-consensus that the objective of a political solution to the Balochistan crisis could be achieved only by ending the military operations there. Opposition leaders also urged the government to release political prisoners and those detained by security agencies and not to try to replace the existing law-enforcement personnel with police..

The Nation, 12 December 2006

Pak, Yemen to cement ties

ADEN (Yemen) (APP) - Unanimity of views marked wide-ranging discussions between Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and President Ali Abdullah Saleh of Yemen here Monday. Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz flew into Aden and met President Saleh at the Presidential Palace. The two leaders agreed to strengthen cooperation between Yemen and Pakistan in political, diplomatic, economic, defence, security, education and social sectors. They also identified new areas of cooperation including agriculture, pharmaceutical, textiles, banking and capital markets, where both the sides can share their experiences for their mutual benefit. They also agreed on increased two-way investments. The two sides were of the view that greater interaction at the highest level will strengthen the bilateral ties..

Daily Times, 12 December 2006

Opinion: Problems of democratic transition (Rasul Bakhsh Rais)

The big vacuum of credibility, trust, genuineness, true representation, and clean image, helps the military run the country with the political horses it can choose at will, discard and replace when they are found too weak to pull the political cart Since the October 1999 coup, every party in the opposition, regional, ethnic, Islamic or mainstream has been threatening to dislodge General Musharraf and his political associates through street agitation..On the ground, however, there are no visible signs of any agitation yet. The examples of some of the states that have made the transition to democracy from military regimes show that pressure from below through mobilising the masses at the popular level, civil society and professional groups works in making the hard military regimes amenable to the idea of democratic change..

Dawn, 12 December 2006

Fata taken over by Taliban

PESHAWAR, Dec 11: Describing Pakistans volatile tribal region as a virtual mini-state used by Taliban and foreign militants to regroup, reorganise and rearm, an international think-tank on Monday accused Islamabad of following an ambivalent approach. It also

spoke of the government's failure to take effective action to stop destabilisation of Afghanistan. The 34-page report by the Brussels-based International Crisis Group gives a detailed analysis of the situation in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata), cross-border militancy, Talibanisation and its external implication and makes a set of recommendations for Pakistan, Afghanistan, the United States and the European Union. It said the Taliban and other foreign militants, including Al-Qaeda sympathisers, have sheltered since 2001 in Pakistan's tribal regions bordering on south-eastern Afghanistan..

Daily Times, 13 December 2006

US concerned over extremist safe havens in Pakistan

WASHINGTON: The US said on Monday that it was concerned over safe havens being established by Islamic militants in Pakistans tribal areas bordering Afghanistan, and acknowledged the situation on the Pak-Afghan border was a mess. Clearly, you still do have cross-border infiltration, and I know that that is a concern for the Pakistanis and the Afghans, but having safe havens and areas where these extremists can operate from is a real concern for us, said State Department spokesman Sean McCormack. Asked to acknowledge the characterisation that this situation was a mess, McCormack said, It is ... and the key is cooperative working relationships among the Afghans, the Pakistanis and coalition forces, reported SANA news agency..

Dawn, 13 December 2006

Opinion: Worsening ties with Kabul (Najamuddin A. Shaikh)

THE hope that Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuris visit to Afghanistan would lead to some better understanding between the leadership in the two countries has not been borne out. Conciliation went out of the window as President Hamid Karzai, in a statement immediately after his meeting with Mr Kasuri, talked of the continuation of violence perpetrated by terrorists from across the border as a major obstacle to the realisation of Afghanistans desire for better relations with Pakistan. He went on to add that the patience of the Afghan people was running out. A couple of days later, in an emotion-laden speech at a function to observe Human Rights Day, Mr Karzai portrayed himself and his countrymen as helpless pawns who were unable to prevent the terrorists from coming from Pakistan. Neither could they prevent the coalition from bombing the terrorists, because of which our children are dying..

Paktribune, 13 December 2006

Interpol issues warrant against 22 Pakistanis involved in human smuggling

ISLAMABAD: On the request of Government of Pakistan, Interpol Tuesday has issued warrant of 22 Pakistanis that are involved in Human Smuggling. According to Interior Ministry sources, Government of Pakistan has handed over list of 142 human smugglers to Interpol who are involved in the heinous crime of human smuggling. 2 smugglers has been issued red warrant while 20 blue warrant notices in this regard. The wanted persons are Major retired Ajmal and Javed who are currently residing in UK and Greece respectively who have been issued red notices. Interpol has also sent special notices to 182 member countries to arrest the alleged human traffickers. On the other hand, FIA has been on a high alert and are taking pragmatic steps against human smugglers..

The Nation, 13 December 2006

Editorial: Yes, we claim Kashmir

THERE was no justification whatsoever for the Foreign Office spokespersons gratuitous remark that Pakistan does not claim Kashmir. The entire dispute revolves round the issue of a claim that is based on historical decisions supportive of Pakistan. The Subcontinent's partition took place on the principle that Muslim-majority areas contiguous to each other would constitute Pakistan and the rest India. The princely states were under the obligation to take that factor and the composition and wishes of their subjects into account, while deciding upon accession to either state. Under that principle, the Jammu and Kashmir State should have acceded to Pakistan without any fuss. Our claim on the state is strengthened for a host of other reasons. All rivers flowing into Pakistan originate from Kashmir, making the state its lifeline, prompting the Quaid-i-Azam to call it the jugular vein of Pakistan. The Indus Waters dispute and now Baglihar and Kishanganga would not have arisen. Then, the people on either side have family ties and have become divided families as a result of the dispute..

Dawn, 13 December 2006

Editorial: Dialogue with the Baloch

THE unanimous call given at a seminar in Islamabad on Monday by politicians belonging to the government as well as the opposition to settle the differences between the centre and the Baloch nationalists through a dialogue should be heeded immediately. This was augmented by further calls made on Islamabad by participants, arguing that the Baloch people be shown respect and given provincial autonomy by shortening the Federal and the Concurrent lists and taking other political measures enshrined in the 1973 Constitution. It was demanded that political prisoners being held after recent military actions taken against the dissidents should be set free, and further military action stopped. The setting up of nine more cantonments in the province already having 43 of them was also opposed. Participants argued that the Rs30 billion annual development package given to Balochistan would not address the political issues; only a dialogue based on sincerity would achieve that goal. The Islamabad moot followed President Musharraf's three-day visit to Balochistan last week..

Daily Times, 13 December 2006

Opinion: The times, are they a-changin' (William B Milam)

Jinnah, who President Musharraf invokes often, would be pleased with this effort to move this curriculum back towards the tolerance he so clearly stood for when he led Pakistan to independence as the South Asian homeland for Muslims..The questions about President Musharraf's political direction are more subtle, and his reputation in history is not yet written in stone. Are we witnessing a course correction on his part also, one not so overt and certainly not paraded yet in front of the Pakistan electorate? Or is it just a blip on the chart of unfulfilled promises of enlightened moderation. Until a few weeks ago, I would have thought that his presidency was likely to be judged a wasted opportunity that people in future generations would say, he could have achieved so much, yet backed down on every occasion when confronted by the Islamist forces of obscurantism. Suddenly, however, things seem to have changed. After the government's pitiable attempt to amend the Hudood Ordinance had gone seriously awry...

Daily Times, 14 December 2006

EDITORIAL: Pakistan must retain sovereignty over its frontiers

President Pervez Musharraf should take time off from his other engagements to look into the matter of safe-havens that the Taliban are supposed to enjoy in parts of Pakistan. He has to do this because his denials about Taliban attacks on NATO forces in Afghanistan from across the Durand Line are not cutting any ice. The latest statement from the State Department in Washington is that the US is concerned over safe havens increasingly being established by Islamic militants in Pakistan's tribal areas bordering Afghanistan. Afghanistans President Hamid Karzai has now become quite shrill about Pakistans involvement in the attacks. He is actually more unbuttoned than the US government about the nature of safe havens and the peace deal Pakistan has made with militants in North Waziristan. He says state elements are involved in Taliban activity and that it is not the Taliban who are up to mischief but the Pakistan government itself which is destabilising his government..

Dawn, 14 December 2006

Frustrated Karzai again lashes out at Pakistan

KANDAHAR, Dec 13: Afghan President Hamid Karzai on Wednesday lashed out at Pakistan for the third time this week, accusing the neighbouring country of trying to enslave the Afghan people. Mr Karzais rhetorical barrage started in a tearful speech on Sunday when he said terrorists from Pakistan were killing Afghan children. He ratcheted up his criticism on Tuesday, directly charging Islamabad with supporting the Taliban. In Islamabad, Pakistans foreign ministry spokesperson Tasneem Aslam said the Taliban were operating well inside Afghanistan and reiterated that Islamabad was standing up to the problem. On Wednesday Mr Karzai took direct aim at the eastern neighbour. Pakistan hopes to make slaves out of us, but we will not surrender, he said in a school courtyard, in a 90-minute speech punctuated by frequent applause from several hundred schoolboys in attendance..

The Nation, 14 December 2006

Pak, S. Arabia to cement defence, strategic ties

RIYADH (APP) - Pakistan and Saudi Arabia on Wednesday vowed to deepen their multifaceted and strategic relations to new heights by enhancing cooperation in the war against terrorism, increased collaboration in defence, security, trade and investment. The wide ranging talks between King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz, the Custodian of the two Holy Mosques, and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz at the Janadariya Farm House stretched well beyond the scheduled time of one hour to over three hours. The two leaders also had one-on-one meeting. The King, in a rare gesture, invited the PM to his farm house, where they took into account matters covering the whole gamut of relations besides regional and international issues of mutual interest. The two leaders also reiterated their countries' stance of standing by each other..

Daily Times, 14 December 2006

Rashid Rauf acquitted of terror charges

RAWALPINDI: A British man of Pakistani origin implicated in this summer's foiled

trans-Atlantic terror plot was on Wednesday acquitted of terrorism charges. Judge Safder Hussan Malik of the Rawalpindi Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) referred the case of Rashid Rauf, 25, to the District and Sessions Court, where he would face charges of false impersonation, document forging and explosives possession. Rauf's lawyer Hashmat Habib said that the case before the civil court would begin from December 20, adding that he hoped all charges against the defendant would be dropped. The prosecution had argued that Rauf's possession of 29 bottles of hydrogen peroxide underlined his intent to make bombs. However, Rauf's lawyer had argued in court that the chemical compound was also a recognised antiseptic used to clean wounds..

Dawn, 14 December 2006

Editorial: Dealing with the Taliban

THE assessment of the situation in North and South Waziristan by an international NGO which says that Pakistani authorities have buckled before the local militants sympathetic to the Taliban is too simplistic. This echoes, word for word, Kabul's reading of the peace pacts signed between Islamabad and the militants residing along the Durand Line. After months of military action in which many lives were lost on both sides, the government agreed in September to a truce backed by guarantees that the militants would not indulge in subversive activities either in Afghanistan or in Pakistan. Thus, the fighting came to an end, and peace was restored. The truce was cited by independent observers as a model for Afghanistan where the government of President Hamid Karzai has its writ confined to the capital or at best to pockets under the control of his Northern Alliance partners..

Daily Times, 14 December 2006

JUI-F refuses to back anti-govt rallies in NWFP, Balochistan

LAHORE: The Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Fazl) has not agreed to back anti-government rallies in NWFP and Balochistan, so the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) has decided to postpone the rallies, MMA sources told Daily Times on Wednesday. According to the sources, MMA Balochistan President Maulana Muhammad Khan Shirani believes rallies in Balochistan and NWFP would harm the provincial governments. The MMA is a coalition partner in the Balochistan government and runs the NWFP government. The MMA has announced a schedule of protest rallies in Punjab and Sindh. The rallies will be held in Punjab on January 22 and 23 and in Sindh on January 29, 30 and 31. No schedule for rallies in the other two provinces has been announced. In both provinces, the JUI-F has more street power and seats than any other party of the MMA, so the alliance cannot go ahead with protests there without the JUI-F, said the sources, adding that this was the second time the MMA faced such a situation..

Dawn, 15 December 2006

Nawaz accuses generals of ruining country

LONDON, Dec 14: A seemingly bitter and perhaps even desperate Nawaz Sharif on Thursday castigated Pakistan Army generals in the harshest ever terms, accusing them of destroying their institution by using it to promote their political ambitions. He even went to the extent of comparing the Pakistani Army with its arch rival the Indian Army and declared that the latter was much superior in professionalism to the former. He said the Indian Army did not harm Pakistan as much as the Pakistani generals, and that is why we

have to continuously face the ignominy of being called a failed state. He was speaking at the PML-N election strategy meeting at the party's international secretariat here today. According to a statement issued by the secretariat, the PML-N chief, comparing the armies of India and Pakistan, said while the Indian army and its intelligence arms remained focused on defending their country, the Pakistani army was undermining its professionalism by wasting its time and energy playing political games..

The Nation, 15 December 2006

President to be re-elected again and again: CM

LAHORE - Chief Minister Ch Pervaiz Elahi has said that President Musharraf will be elected president in uniform again and again as his presidentship has become a symbol of stability, prosperity and national dignity. He said that sincere efforts made by the government under the leadership and development strategy of President General Pervez Musharraf have started yielding highly encouraging results. He was addressing a big public meeting in the ground of Government College Talagang, on Thursday. Federal Minister for Railways Sh Rasheed Ahmad and District Nazim Chakwal Sardar Ghulam Abbas also spoke on the occasion. Managing Director Sui Gas Rasheed Lone, Members Provincial Assembly and Nazims were also present. .When Chief Minister Ch Pervaiz Elahi, during his visit to Talagang, sought the opinion of public for electing President General Pervez Musharraf in uniform, thousands of people expressed their support by raising their hands. People raised full-throated slogans and clapped in favour of President General Pervez Musharraf..

Daily Times, 15 December 2006

EDITORIAL: Realism brings the MMA down

The split in the MMA has finally burst like a carbuncle and it would be a fig-leaf job if the clerical alliance were still to go on brandishing the common flag. Realism has dawned twice on the JUI in quick succession. First, its leader and secretary general of the MMA, Maulana Fazlur Rehman, had problems with going along with the strategy of the MMA president, Qazi Hussain Ahmad, of resigning from the assemblies and then taking to the streets against President Pervez Musharraf. He stated instead that he favoured the policy of remaining in power in two provinces and in parliament and then going into agitation mode. But that, too, was not finally possible. Now the Maulana has made it public that his party is not ready to even come out and protest via any million march. The JUI was not supposed to be in the vanguard of the protests scheduled for Punjab and Sindh in the last week of January 2007; but it was supposed to come out in strength in Balochistan and the NWFP where it packed its punch..

Dawn, 15 December 2006

Editorial: Drug trade ban in Bara

THE political authorities of Khyber Agency have made a wise decision long overdue by banning the thriving opium trade in Bara bazaar. Its opium market is one of the largest in the tribal areas and on Monday authorities shut down about 100 shops dealing in the banned drug. This is a welcome development, especially since the drug trade has been flourishing in recent years. While the Taliban had curtailed poppy farming when they were in power in Afghanistan, after the war on terror began they encouraged its

cultivation for monetary reasons as a means to procure arms and ammunition. The Bara market served as a staging point to smuggle the drugs in and out. The ban will only be successful if it is properly enforced and those violating it are given strict punishments. The political agents will have to exert their power, especially as opium traders have said they will simply move their business elsewhere if the ban is strictly enforced..

The Nation, 15 December 2006

Editorial: Lesser help

PAKISTANs external financing has declined by \$90 million in the four months of the current financial year. This is despite the fact that the donor agencies have been promising an increase in loans for 2006-7. From the July-October 2006 period, we received only \$733 million as opposed to the \$823 million received last year. The 12-percent decline is very disturbing since, far from lesser aid, an increase was actually expected in the wake of the increasing reconstruction activities in the earthquake-affected areas. Multilateral agencies like the World Bank, ADB and IDB have promised more than \$ 2.5 billion while \$500 million were expected from major bilateral donors. This is a deadly delay on part of the donor agencies. The people in the earthquake-affected areas need help and they need it fast. If at all the donor agencies are serious about providing relief to the earthquake victims, relief that they themselves had promised, they had better get around to it as soon as possible..Another far more serious charge is that there might be a decrease in the enthusiasm of the donors in the wake of stories of misappropriations of earthquake relief funds..

Daily Times, 16 December 2006

Tribal accord has failed

WASHINGTON: John D Negraponte, director of national intelligence, has joined the growing number of those who are blaming Pakistan for the dangerous situation now prevailing in the Pakistan-Afghanistan tribal belt. In an interview published by the Washington Post on Friday, Negraponte said with new fighting expected to break out next spring in , the Pakistani government would soon have to decide what it could do about the tribal authorities who had not been living up to their agreement to prevent Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters from moving back and forth across the border. Sooner or later, the government will have to reckon with it, Negroponte said, but added that with elections in coming, the US understood that President Pervez Musharraf has a domestic political balancing act to perform. Referring to the accord signed by Pakistani government representatives with tribal elders in South Waziristan, Negroponte said tribal authorities are not living up to the deal and that back-and-forth travel by the Taliban and others causes serious problems..

Daily Times, 16 December 2006

EDITORIAL: Fatwas, legality and the state

A very curious case has been adjudicated by the Peshawar High Court involving a man who is alleged to have printed Quranic verses with some changes (tehreef) in them. The man was hauled up by the police and brought before a judge in Peshawar who gave him life imprisonment. Earlier, the same accused had been let off when the witness against him repudiated his statement. But after many years the same man turned around and

revived the case and got the accused in trouble. The honourable High Court has now acquitted the man of the charge. The life sentence at the Sessions Court was awarded on the basis of 12 witnesses and the fatwa of a local cleric. While handing down the acquittal, the High Court said that the government should constitute a body of religious scholars and authorise it to issue official fatwas on grave issues, and that the practice of unofficial fatwas should end..

Paktribune, 16 December 2006

Pak for long term sustainable defence ties with France

RAWALPINDI: Senior Federal Minister and Minister for Defence Rao Sikandar Iqbal has said that Pakistan attaches greater significance to its relations with France and wants to maintain a long term sustainable defence cooperation with France. He said this during a meeting with French defence delegation, led by Mr DE Lajugie, DGA Directorate International Development of France which called on the minister here Thursday. Both sides underlined the need for promoting closer defence cooperation between the two countries. The minister highlighted the contribution made by France in construction of Agosta submarine and hoped that France would continue to strengthening the defence Industry of Pakistan..

The Nation, 16 December 2006

Militancy is Afghan problem, says Musharraf (RAO KHALID)

RAWALPINDI - Emphasising upon the necessity to understand the prevailing environment in Afghanistan and on borders, President General Pervez Musharraf said on Friday that the militancy was essentially an Afghan problem. He was talking to Special Representative of the EU on Afghanistan, Francesc Venderell, who called on him at Camp Office. He had last visited Pakistan in August 2004. During the meeting in depth discussion was held on matters related to regional stability and security. Views were exchanged extensively on the situation in Afghanistan, Pakistan-Afghanistan relations and the government's strategy in the tribal areas. Musharraf informed Venderell about the absolute necessity for all parties to understand the prevailing environment, recognise that border security was a collective responsibility of Pakistan, Afghanistan and ISAF/NATO and that the militancy problem was essentially an Afghan problem..

Dawn, 16 December 2006

Opinion: What led to Pakistans dismemberment (Ghayoor Ahmed)

THE dismemberment of Pakistan in 1971 was indeed a tragic blow to the nation. It also unleashed separatist tendencies in the country that have sprouted in recent years posing a serious threat to the very fabric of national unity. The tragedy could have been avoided if Pakistan was allowed to become a truly federal state as envisioned by its founding fathers. Some ill-informed people, however, argue that the Bengalis had always been conscious of their distinct cultural features and considered themselves to be separate from the rest of the nation. There was, therefore, nothing common between the two wings of Pakistan to make them a cohesive nation and hence there was a fragile relationship between them from the very beginning after independence. Regrettably, this was a distortion of historical facts and even a cursory glance at historical record would disprove such a hypothesis..

The Nation, 16 December 2006

Opinion: The enemy within (Fakir S. Ayazuddin)

The scenario in Afghanistan and our Northern areas is developing into a quagmire for Karzai, and the UN forces. For once the Afghans are realising that the Pashtun is as good if not better than the legendary Afghan soldier. This knowledge is acceptance of the dominance of the Pashtun ethnicity, in the conflict, and the plurality of the Pashtun on both sides of the Durand line. We must closely examine the present day reality, and the Talibanisation of the Pashtun. The emergence of the Religious parties, in the NWFP assembly, and in neighbouring Balochistan should be viewed positively, and attempts should be made to harness the strengths of the Taliban. Especially in their successes in opium control. However, the export of their Islam can have a serious effect on the entire neighbourhood., and may serve to target us from attacks on our soil from the US and her allies..

Dawn, 17 December 2006

PML-N to initiate dialogue on provincial autonomy

ISLAMABAD, Dec 16: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Chairman Raja Zafarul Haq on Saturday said his party had decided to initiate national dialogue on the issue of provincial autonomy in an effort to develop consensus on this important national issue. Speaking at a news conference with the party's information secretary, Ahsan Iqbal, the PML-N chairman said the party chief, Nawaz Sharif, had started making contacts with other opposition parties to materialise the plan. Mr Haq said President Gen Pervez Musharraf had himself admitted in a recent TV interview that the federation was weaker than it was seven years ago..

The Nation, 17 December 2006

Stable Afghanistan in Pak interest: PM

ISLAMABAD - Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz on Saturday said Pakistan is the only country in the world, which wants peace, stability and development in Afghanistan. We firmly believe that a peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan is in the interest of Pakistan, the prime minister said while talking to media persons here after addressing a delegation of foreign tourists. When asked to comment on President Karzai's allegation that Pakistan is involved in destabilising his country, he said Pakistan shares a long border with Afghanistan and its stability is our stability. Pakistan has always been supporting Afghan people and will continue to help them in attaining development and prosperity, he maintained. To a question about internal political situation of the country, he said the MMA decision of not resigning from the assemblies would strengthen democracy as well as parliamentary system in the country. We welcome this decision, he added. He said that resignations were not in public interest and no elected member should resign as people chose them for their representation..

Dawn, 17 December 2006

Opinion: Issues in 2007 election (Anwar Syed)

LAST Sunday we discussed Islamisation, the present governments enlistment in the war against terrorism and the related drive against the Taliban, relations with India, domestic

terrorism, and provincial autonomy as issues that will figure prominently in the election next year. Let us now turn to a few other issues. All contenders will claim to cherish democracy not only as an ideal but as an imperative of political stability and national integrity. The opposition parties will demand its restoration. The ruling party, PML-Q, will claim that democracy is functioning well in this country: elections have been held, assemblies are in place, they debate and pass legislation, the press is free, organs of civil society are free to do their work, and governments remain open to scrutiny and criticism. The opposition parties will reject these claims..

Daily Times, 17 December 2006

EDITORIAL: Religion, state and democracy

The Pakistan Muslim League (PML) president, Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, has ruled out an electoral alliance or seat adjustment with the PPP of Benazir Bhutto during the next elections but said that it is possible to form a coalition government with the PPP after the general elections. It is likely that he made this statement in response to one by fellow-partyman Salim Saifullah, the inter-provincial coordination minister, who had earlier confirmed that President General Pervez Musharraf was in contact with Ms Bhutto. Mr Saifullah had said that the ruling PMLQ could sign an electoral alliance with Ms Bhutto and the MQM for the 2007 general elections. The wisdom of Mr Saifullah obviously doesn't sit well with Chaudhry Shujaat. If Mr Saifullah had foreseen an electoral adjustment between the PML, the PPP and the MQM, his party boss sees wisdom only in plucking the fruit-laden tree of the PPP after the election and then letting the PPP hang for dear life to the coat-tails of President Musharraf..

Daily Times, 18 December 2006

Jihadis preparing to avenge Bajaur

ISLAMABAD: Militants belonging to banned jihadi outfits are planning suicide attacks on army installations in Pakistan and foreign troops in Afghanistan in revenge for the air strike on a Bajaur madrassa in November, Daily Times has learnt. According to reports submitted by intelligence agencies to the Interior Ministry, Maulvi Inayatullah Rehman and Maulana Faqir Mohammad of the Tehreek Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM) have pledged before their supporters to target VIPs in Pakistan and US and NATO forces in Afghanistan. The bombed Bajaur madrassa was run by the TNSM and is thought to have been used as a training camp for militants. Sources said that British and US diplomats and nationals were also possible targets of the militants. Leaders of the Harkatul Mujahideen, Lashker-e-Jhangvi and Khudamul Islam have also pledged to cooperate with the TNSM and called for a joint strategy, the sources added..

Daily Times, 18 December 2006

EDITORIAL: Post-Musharraf perspective flaws

Some American commentators are receptive to the idea that President General Pervez Musharraf might be ousted from power 'sooner rather than later' and are therefore trying to tell the Bush Administration that it shouldn't worry about the post-Musharraf phase because Pakistan is not likely to descend into terminal chaos. In other words, they are telling the Bush administration that it shouldn't look at General Musharraf as the hero with his finger in the dyke but as a transitional figure whose departure will not damage

American interests in Pakistan and the region. This comes close to implying that perhaps his departure could actually benefit America by forestalling developments in Pakistan that could hurt America in the medium term. The sequel to this kind of ditch-Musharraf suggestion is that after him the deputy or vice chief of the army would inevitably step up and give continuity to General Musharraf's pro-America policies while helping to defuse the tensions and contradictions that have cropped up with his personality, style and strategy of politics..

The Nation, 18 December 2006

Editorial: Delayed autonomy

IT is heartening to hear from Federal Inter-Provincial Coordination Minister Salim Saifullah Khan that granting more autonomy to the provinces will be in Pakistan's interest. At an Inter-Provincial Coordination Committee meeting in Lahore on Saturday, also attended by the concerned Punjab and Sindh ministers, he said the federal government could transfer 20 to 25 items from the Concurrent List and a couple from the Federal List to the provinces. The participants agreed to the proposal that the centre would collect the capital value tax for another year and then transfer it to the provinces. Mr Saifullah told the meeting that the ruling coalition did not have a two-thirds majority in the National Assembly required to carry out a constitutional amendment for giving more powers to the federating units. But he was optimistic that the MMA and the PPP would support the proposed legislation. It was also decided that the provinces would help the Sajjad Sub-Committee to formulate a package of amendments needed for autonomy..

Dawn, 18 December 2006

Afghan DPs not to be offered citizenship

PESHAWAR, Dec 17: No proposal to integrate Afghan refugees with the local population is under consideration, said a senior official. The government of Pakistan will not forcibly repatriate Afghan refugees, nor will it offer them citizenship, said Sahibzada Mohammed Anees, head of the Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees (CAR), while briefing members of a European Parliamentary delegation at the Kacha Garhi refugee camp here on Sunday. Neena Gill, Chairperson for South Asia, is leading the delegation which earlier visited Darul Uloom Haqqania near Nowshera. At the Kacha Garhi camp, the delegation members witnessed the process of registration of the refugees at an office of the National Database Registration Authority (Nadra). The delegation members also spoke to the refugees at the camp. Haji Mohammed, an elderly Afghan national, told the delegation that the refugees could not go back to Afghanistan, primarily because of a worsening law and order situation there. Lack of basic amenities of life in the country was also hampering their repatriation, he added..

Dawn, 19 December 2006

No N-deal with Pakistan: US

WASHINGTON, Dec 18: The United States has no plans to offer a nuclear deal to Pakistan as the agreement President Bush signed on Monday was 'unique to India', says a senior US diplomat. Under-secretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns, who played a key role in negotiating the deal, said that President Pervez Musharraf was not unhappy with the India deal, although some Pakistanis beneath him were. We've made

clear all along that this is a unique deal to India only, said Mr Burns when a reporter asked what it would take to offer Pakistan a similar deal. This is an exemption ... were making an exception for India only, and an exemption to the law for India only, he said..

Daily Times, 19 December 2006

Musharraf needs JUI

LAHORE: Maulana Fazlur Rehman, secretary general of the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal Maulana, has warned President Gen Pervez Musharraf that he will need the help of religious parties for peace in the Pak-Afghan border region, and so should avoid alienating religious leaders. We have been helping create agreements throughout the tribal areas and what do we get in return' Musharraf calls us dangerous, Maulana Fazl said in an interview with The Daily Telegraph. Gen Musharraf has repeatedly urged Pakistanis not to vote for hypocrites and extremists in the next general elections. With his poisonous propaganda against the religious parties, General Musharraf is trying to widen the gap between the religious circles and the liberals in the country, Maulana Fazl said..

The Nation, 19 December 2006

2007 elections to decide Pakistans future: Musharraf

KHANEWAL - President General Pervez Musharraf Monday said that Kalabagh would be constructed and materialised into concrete form by 2015. Pervez Musharraf expressed these views here in a mammoth gathering held in the premises of Khanewal Public School and added that the general elections 2007 would decide the future of the Pakistan. Urging the people to part from those who bring a bad name to Islam, Pervez Musharraf said that the people should side with those who are with him. I ask the torch-bearers of Islam whether terrorism and suicide attacks are Islamic practices, the president said adding that some elements are telling lies regarding Bajaur Agency incident. We are being hampered by terrorism and extremism in Balochistan and some other tribal areas, the president said expressing his determination that Kalabagh dam would at all cost would be constructed by 2015, it is a pledge given to my people..

Daily Times, 19 December 2006

Pakistan-China joint anti-terror exercise concludes

ISLAMABAD: China is ready to conduct an anti-terrorism drive with Pakistan for lasting peace and mutual prosperity, said Lt General Lu Dengming, Chief of Staff of the Chendu military region, on Monday at the concluding session of the ten day Pakistan-China Joint Exercise Frindship-2006, a press release issued here said. For many years Pakistan and china have remained focused on economic development and regional stability; at the same time we are confronting three evil forces terrorism, extremism and separatism, he said. He said that all countries of the world must benefit each other and enhance cooperation to combat these evils. The Chinese government is against all forms of terrorism and insists on international cooperation and the conducting of anti-terrorism campaigns, said General Lu Dengming..

Daily Times, 19 December 2006

Opinion: Simmering nationalism in Balochistan (Rasul Bakhsh Rais)

Balochis and other ethnic groups have three issues with the Centre, which Islamabad can ignore only at the risk of national security. These are autonomy, empowerment, and adequate representation in the power structure of the country. Under the surface of artificial normalcy in Balochistan, there is a simmering nationalist sentiment that has the political capacity to boil over the brim. Frequent incidents of blowing up gas pipelines and bridges, and attacks against railways and governmental installations, confirm that certain sections of the Baloch community have taken up arms. It is the third time, some would argue the fourth time, in the history of Pakistan that a situation of confrontation between the Baloch nationalists and security forces is developing. The military regime has acted with its usual arrogance and condescension towards the Baloch nationalist leaders, making sarcastic and disparaging references to them even in nationally televised speeches..

Dawn, 20 December 2006

Kasuri in Tehran for pipeline talks

TEHRAN, Dec 19: Foreign Minister Khurshid Mahmood Kasuri arrived in Tehran on a two-day visit on Tuesday. During his stay in Tehran, Mr Kasuri will hold talks with his Iranian counterpart Manocher Mottaki on ways to further strengthen cooperation between Pakistan and Iran in various fields. The two sides will discuss the situation in Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon, the Middle East peace process and Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project. Qudssia Akhlaque adds from Islamabad: The foreign minister left for Tehran on Tuesday afternoon. During the visit, he would hold consultations with the top Iranian leadership on key matters, including the Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) gas pipeline project. Mr Kasuri is accompanied by senior foreign ministry officials, including additional secretary (Afghanistan and ECO) Khalid Khattak, director-general Foreign Minister's office Khalid Mahmud and director (Iran and Turkey) Diyar Khan..

Daily Times, 20 December 2006

EDITORIAL: Maulanas dubious recipe for peace

The MMA secretary general and JUI leader, Maulana Fazlur Rehman, has claimed that he has the key to the crisis of Afghanistan. He complained about the overt appeals made by President General Pervez Musharraf to the people not to vote for hypocrites, extremists and dangerous people, and retorted that General Musharraf will need the help of the religious parties for peace in the Pak-Afghan border region, and should avoid alienating them. His view is that by bad-mouthing the clergy General Musharraf is increasing the gap between the religious parties and the liberal elements of the country. One might be deceived into thinking that the good Maulana is finally realising that he should not posture inflexibly across the entire gamut of political issues and try to come into the middle ground by helping establish peace in the region. So far he has been competing with Qazi Husain Ahmad on extreme statements simply to protect his party from radical assaults from the Jamaat chief..

Paktribune, 20 December 2006

Restoration of peace in Afghanistan responsibility of NATO, Afghan forces: Kasuri
ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri has categorically stated that Pakistan is not responsible for the current deteriorating situation in Afghanistan. Talking to special envoy of European Union, Francesc Vengal who called on him here at the Foreign Office on Tuesday, the foreign minister said that maintaining law and order in Afghanistan was responsibility of Afghan Army and NATO forces. According to the Foreign Office, the overall security situation in the region, restoring peace in Afghanistan, Pak-Afghan borders issues and Pakistan's strategy to improve situation in the tribal areas were also discussed in the meeting. Foreign Minister during the meeting also apprised EU envoy about the steps taken by Pakistan to restore peace in the region and said that it is unfortunate that some elements are blaming Pakistan for the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan..

Daily Times, 20 December 2006

Opinion: A shift in Pakistans Kashmir policy' (Ijaz Hussain)

Musharraf appears to be a man in a great hurry. He seems to believe that now is the time for a deal on Kashmir favourable to Pakistan, as India is destined to become a global player before long. The other day President Musharraf threw a mini-bombshell when during an interview with Dr. Prannoy Roy of the NDTV he observed that Pakistan would be prepared to give up its claim on all of Kashmir if India agreed to make it a self-governing and autonomous territory. The Indian Prime Minister has welcomed the proposal. However, the opposition parties in Pakistan have denounced it. For example, rejecting it as being contrary to Pakistans long-standing principled position, Qazi Hussain Ahmed termed it a sell out. He insisted on seeking a solution based on the UN resolutions. Similarly, Ahsan Iqbal of the PML (N) censured Musharraf for acting without consulting Parliament, the National Security Council or the corps commanders of the Pakistan Army. Is the criticism against Musharraf justified and has Pakistan changed its policy on Kashmir?

The Nation, 20 December 2006

Editorial: Isolated in the region

PAKISTANs relations with various countries of the world are an interesting, though disturbing, phenomenon. We cultivate friendship with far off lands in South America, Africa and elsewhere and exchange visits at the highest level, but the region we live in bristles with those who could be called anything but friends (antagonists, if not enemies), who are prone to suspect any move we make to get closer to them with the best of intentions in the world. The fast friends we had in the past have been showing signs of weariness, despite their public declarations. We failed to build on the excellent legacy of Shah-era Pak-Iran ties and convince the revolutionary leadership that followed his ouster that Islamabads over-riding interest in relations with Tehran was the mutual good of the Iranian and Pakistani people. With India eternally hostile and Afghanistan never friendly, developing ties of trust and deep understanding with Iran would have been our priority. But the military dictator who ruled the country at the time of the Iranian revolution and who had taken it upon himself to guide foreign policy could not figure out how to persuade Imam Khomeini and his team to treat us as genuine friends. There was a basic

dissonance between the two countries policies..

The Nation, 20 December 2006

Opinion: The need to befriend Afghanistan (Husain Haqqani)

Amidst spiralling violence in Kabul and the Afghan countryside, Afghan President Hamid Karzai has stepped up his criticism of Pakistan's role in supporting the resurgent Taliban. Pakistan hopes to make slaves out of us, but we will not surrender, Karzai told schoolboys last week. Three days earlier, a tearful Karzai had grieved over Afghan children being killed by NATO and US bombs and by terrorists from Pakistan. The Bush administration has responded to Karzai's cries for attention and help with diplomatically worded expressions of concern about Pakistan's policies. But Washington remains unwilling to publicly put pressure on General Pervez Musharraf or to say that the roots of Afghanistan's security problems lie in Pakistan. In frequent media interviews, General Musharraf recounts the ways he has assisted the United States in the war against terrorism and insists that the Afghans should avoid the blame game and work with Pakistan in dealing with a shared problem..

The Nation, 21 December 2006

Pak, Iran to speed up IPI gasline project

TEHRAN (APP) - Pakistan and Iran on Wednesday agreed to speed up efforts to finalise the IPI gas pipeline project and coordinate activities for the reconstruction in Afghanistan. Foreign Minister Khurshid M Kasuri held formal talks with his Iranian counterpart Manouchehr Mottaki here Wednesday and exchanged views on bilateral, regional and international issues. The talks were preceded by a brief one to one meeting between the two Foreign Ministers. During the talks between the two Foreign Ministers, they reviewed various aspects of Pakistan-Iran bilateral relations and expressed their resolve to further consolidate political, economic and trade relations between the two countries. They also expressed their resolve to continue their efforts against terrorism and organized crime. Referring to the IPI gas pipeline project, Foreign Minister Kasuri stated that implementation of the gas pipeline project will bring Pakistan and Iran closer and will vest the friendly relationship between the two countries with economic content. He reiterated Pakistan's determination for the implementation of the project..

Daily Times, 21 December 2006

Tribal areas should be brought under system of laws: Benazir

ISLAMABAD: Former prime minister Benazir Bhutto has said that Pakistan's tribal areas need to be brought under a system of laws and representation to empower people of these areas, and allow them to be independent of Afghan-Arab fighters who dominate their society. In an interview with the German daily Junge Welt, Ms Bhutto talked about issues related to the Taliban, tribal areas and the Charter of Democracy and her plans to return to Pakistan. She said that it should be recognised that the Taliban went to war with the world under a military dictatorship in Pakistan in 2001. She said that until military dictatorship in Pakistan ended, the environment that nourishes the Taliban and their sympathisers will continue to grow in strength. She asked Islamabad to work closely with Kabul to stop infiltrations into Afghanistan..

Paktribune, 21 December 2006

Gen Musharraf to contest presidential election for next term: Information minister

LAHORE: Information Minister Muhammad Ali Durrani has said general Pervez Musharraf will contest presidential election for the next term in keeping with the procedure laid down in the constitution adding ruling PML-Q and its allied parties will launch his election campaign vigorously. He said this while addressing a function held here Wednesday under Caravan Ilm foundation and later talking to the journalists. Noted journalists and columnists Altaf Hussain Qureshi and Dr Ejaz Hussain Qureshi also spoke on the occasion. The information minister also distributed prizes among 290 position holders from 23 secondary education boards on the occasion. Information minister said there is no concept of monarchy in Pakistan and general Musharraf will contest presidential election for the next term as per constitution. Ruling PML-Q and its coalition partners will extend full support to the president..

Dawn, 21 December 2006

Editorial: Pakistan-Iran trade ties

AS the visiting Iranian deputy commerce minister on Tuesday offered Pakistan land transit facilities for trade with Central Asia and Russia, Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri dashed to Tehran to sort out the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline problems. The moves come after President Musharraf called his Iranian counterpart earlier, stressing the need to expand bilateral relations. Iran is equally keen on availing itself of transit facilities through Pakistan for increasing its trade with China. Tehran also wants to raise the existing bilateral trade stuck at just over \$600 million a year to a billion-dollar mark for a start. Increase in rice imports from Pakistan tops its agenda, but this cannot materialise until Iran cuts the heavy tariffs on direct import of Pakistani rice and even oranges. The absence in Pakistan of a big exporter to Iran is cited as hampering advance in bilateral trade. Meanwhile, Islamabad has granted permission for Iranian banks to open their branches in Pakistan to further the prospects of bilateral trade..

Daily Times, 21 December 2006

EDITORIAL: Economy is hostage to politics

Prime minister Shaukat Aziz said in Islamabad the other day that Pakistan will build all the dams it has announced Kalabagh, Basha-Diamer, Munda, Akori and Kuramtangi but only after taking all the provinces on board and removing their reservations. As if this was something that the people had not heard before countless times, he went on to add statistics, as is his wont, to spread peace, tranquillity and joy over a country in despair about solving its fundamental problems, more fundamental incidentally than democracy. Seventy percent of the population lives in the rural areas. When agriculture stagnates, foodstuffs become expensive, the real wages of the urban classes go down and discontent is in the air. The cities lack the infrastructure to cater to mass migration and import of foodstuffs is rarely timely or inexpensive. The PM said that if the agricultural sector flourishes in Pakistan the economy throws up good indicators, but if agriculture takes a dip the economy goes belly up, because the incidence of poverty in Pakistan, which has increased instead of decreasing, is in the countryside..

Dawn, 22 December 2006

Unfair elections to harm ties: EU

LAHORE, Dec 21: The visiting European Union (EU) delegation has made it clear to the Pakistan government that if the forthcoming general elections are not held in a fair and transparent manner, the country stands a chance of impairing its relations with the EU. Addressing a press conference here on Thursday, the seven-member delegation of the European Parliament, led by British Parliament member Ms Nina Gill, said the general elections 2007 should be held in a transparent manner, with complete schedule being announced well in advance of six months, enabling the EU monitoring team to survey the pre-election and post-election procedures carefully. She said that at a meeting with the chief election commissioner, the delegates had stressed on the approval of all the conditions and recommendations applied during the previous elections. In reply to a question, the leader of the delegation said President General Pervez Musharraf had assured them of keeping his promises. No delegation member replied when asked why the EU had so far supported a president in uniform..

The Tribune, 22 December 2006

Opinion: Where the Taliban roam free (Laura King)

QUETTA, Pakistan ‘ At a time when the Taliban is making its strongest push in years to regain influence and territory across the border in Afghanistan, this mountain-ringed provincial capital has become an increasingly brazen hub of activity by the Islamist militia. Quetta serves as a place of rest and refuge for Taliban fighters between battles, a funneling point for cash and armaments, a fertile recruiting ground and a sometime meeting point for the group’s fugitive leaders, say aid workers, local officials, diplomats, doctors and Pakistani journalists. Everybody is here, said Mahmood Khan Achakzai, a Quetta-based member of Pakistans National Assembly, describing the routine comings and goings of senior Taliban commanders in Quetta, the capital of the Pakistani province of Baluchistan. The apparent ease of Taliban movement in and out of Quetta comes against a backdrop of increasingly bitter squabbling by authorities in Afghanistan and Pakistan over who bears the responsibility for the militias use of tribal areas on the Pakistan side as a staging ground for attacks that have killed at least 180 NATO and allied troops this year..

The Nation, 22 December 2006

Kasuri holds second round of talks with Iranian FM

TEHRAN (APP) - Foreign Minister Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, who is on a two-day official visit to Iran, held the second round of formal talks with his Iranian counterpart, Manouchehr Mottaki on Thursday. During the talks, the two sides discussed the situation in Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine. They underlined their support for the territorial integrity of Iraq, highlighting that greater accommodation among different political groups and factions could prepare the ground for the withdrawal of foreign forces. Besides formal talks with his Iranian counterpart, Kasuri held parleys with a number of senior Iranian officials including the Chief Nuclear Negotiator and Secretary Supreme National Security Council, Dr Ali Larijani, Ali Akbar Aghaee, Chairman Iran-Pakistan Parliamentary Friendship Group, Alaeddin Boroujerdi, Chairman Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee and Dr Kamal Kharrazi, Chairman Foreign Policy Advisory Council..

Dawn, 22 December 2006

Editorial: Integrating Fata

THE International Crisis Group, which created quite a stir recently by reporting the takeover of Fata by the Taliban and foreign militants, has also made some very sensible recommendations that were drowned in the cacophony of allegations and counter-allegations that ensued. The ICG, among others, has called on the Pakistan government to integrate Fata into the NWFP under the provinces executive control and under the jurisdiction of the provincial and national court system. Another recommendation calls for the removal of restrictions on political parties in Fata and the extension of the Political Parties Act to the tribal areas. One positive impact of the ICG report is that a debate has started on this issue among the local stakeholders, and the pros and cons of allowing free political activity in the area are now being discussed. Perhaps the biggest breakthrough has come in the form of a statement from the NWFP governors office saying that he has underscored the need for changing the approach to political activity in Fata..

The Nation, 22 December 2006

Editorial: No resignations

ANOTHER one bit the dust the other day when the Jamaat Islami Amir Qazi Hussein Ahmed while speaking at a convention in Abbottabad, said that he will not resign from Parliament. Qazi Hussein Ahmed, who is also MMA President, said that it would be of no use for only some leaders within the coalition to resign. The MMA, in its parliamentary agitation against the Women Protection Act, had threatened to resign were the Bill to be passed. When the piece of legislation finally got through and it was time to make good on their threat, rifts started appearing within the MMA. Maulana Fazlur Rehman, who heads the alliances largest component, wasnt too keen on resigning from Parliament. Qazi Hussein Ahmed, the other main leader of the MMA and the more mercurial of the two, seemed hell-bent on resignation. The rifts within the MMA seemed to be getting bigger; and there were even rumours of the alliance breaking up, with both factions being wooed by other parties. The statement in Abbottabad seems to have put all such rumours to rest. There are going to be no resignations..

Daily Times, 22 December 2006

EDITORIAL: SAFTA: a conditionality withering on the bough

Pakistan is going to announce its latest tranche of low tariffs for goods imported from its SAARC partners, but it will leave India out because India has not resolved its bilateral disputes with Pakistan. This will be a second tariff reduction of 5 percent on the import of 4,872 items starting next year under the South Asia Free Trade Area (SAFTA) agreement. The tariff reduction will apply to imports from Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Maldives, but India will not be in the new regime. India, from where nearly a billion dollars worth of goods are smuggled into Pakistan every year, is ostensibly punished by this measure. Does the prime minister, Shaukat Aziz, who is a banker-economist apply the term loosely, please think that the conditionality placed by him on trade from India is so hurtful that New Delhi will soon give up its 50 year old recalcitrance studded by three wars and come hat in hand to Islamabad begging for the needful' He has, however, expanded the positive lists to 1,077 items from India contained

in the Importable Items List of his Import Policy Order 2006-07..

Daily Times, 23 December 2006

Musharraf orders improved security ahead of 2007 polls

ISLAMABAD: President General Pervez Musharraf has ordered a marked improvement in the law and order situation in the country, particularly in Balochistan, well before the 2007 general elections, official sources told Daily Times on Friday. The sources said that Musharraf had directed the Interior Ministry to submit a regular fortnightly report on the country's security situation so that a foolproof strategy could be devised for holding the general elections. 'The Crisis Management Cell (CMC) of the Interior Ministry has been directed to closely monitor the law and order situation after every two weeks and submit a report to the president,' the sources said, adding that CMC Director General Brig Javed Iqbal Cheema had started chairing security-related meetings with senior officials of the federal and provincial police departments, representatives of the intelligence agencies and other departments concerned.

Dawn, 23 December 2006

Rs4bn eaten up by law & order: Balochistan seeks funds from centre

ISLAMABAD, Dec 22: Balochistan has sought a capital injection from the federal government - 'either through special grants or advanced proceeds of natural resources' - as an increase of Rs 4 billion in its federal divisible pool share has been offset by the law and order in the province. 'This year's higher share under the interim NFC (National Finance Commission) has been eaten up by additional expenditure on law and order, reduction in oil and gas production and higher pay and pension bill imposed by the federal government,' a senior member of the Balochistan government told Dawn. There has been a loss of Rs 1.7 billion in the royalty and gas development surcharge proceeds owing mainly to much lower gas production as a result of law and order problems and supply disruptions. Besides Sui field, Loti and Pirkoh gas fields have faced severe interruptions during the year. A number of additional security posts were built and related infrastructure provided to protect Loti and Pirkoh gas installations. In addition, so far about Rs 700-800 million have been spent on direct enforcement of law and order, while another Rs 1.6 billion burden came as a result of an increase in salaries and pensions announced by the federal government, the member said.

Dawn, 23 December 2006

Working group on governance set up: MoU signed with Delhi

ISLAMABAD, Dec 22: Pakistan and India on Friday formed a joint working group (JWG) on governance to share each other's experiences for strengthening their local government systems. The two sides signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) at a meeting held here. National Reconstruction Bureau (NRB) secretary Humayun Ishaque Chohan and Indian Panchayati Raj Ministry secretary Meenakshi Datta Ghosh signed the document on behalf of their respective governments. The working group will consist of nominees from the two sides to be intimated through correspondence. The first meeting of the JWG will be held in New Delhi on mutually agreed dates and its agenda will be finalised later. The group will recommend schedules of activities for bilateral exchanges between India and Pakistan to the forum with the minister of Panchayati Raj and the

NRB chairman as its co-chairs. Panchayati Raj Minister Mani Shankar Aiyar and NRB Chairman Daniyal Aziz at a meeting in Islamabad in June 2005 had agreed to set up a Pakistan-India joint forum on local governance (The Forum). The meeting was followed by discussions between the NRB chief and the Indian ministry secretary on the sidelines of the forum of ministers of social development from Asia held in Bhurban on May 27 this year to devise a methodology for the establishment and working of the forum.

Daily Times, 24 December 2006

Joint survey of Sir Creek from January 15

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and India on Saturday agreed to start a joint survey of Sir Creek from January 15, 2007. Defence officials of the two countries agreed 'in principle' on the survey at the final session of two-day talks held in the Defence Ministry, according to a joint statement. The two sides worked out technical details of the joint survey, it said. 'It was agreed that the joint survey would be commenced from January 15,' it said. The discussions between the two sides were 'useful, covering various options to delimit the maritime boundary. The two countries will verify the outermost points of their coastlines during the joint survey according to the equidistance method.' The two-day talks were held to decide how to coordinate a joint survey of Sir Creek and its adjoining areas impartially and settle the issue of maritime boundaries.

Dawn, 24 December 2006

Strict enforcement of pact planned: Waziristan issue

ISLAMABAD, Dec 23: President General Pervez Musharraf on Saturday chaired a high-level inter-agency meeting to discuss the state of relations with Afghanistan and ways of removing irritants between the two countries. The meeting, held at the President's camp office in Rawalpindi in the afternoon, was kept under wraps and there was no word about it from the presidency, the Foreign Office or the Press Information Department. Sources told Dawn that Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri, NWFP Governor Lt-Gen (ret'd) Ali Mohammad Jan Aurakzai, Interior Minister Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao and representatives of key security agencies attended the meeting. Apparently the meeting was convened on the request of the foreign minister after his return from Kabul earlier this month where he had a two-hour-long meeting with Afghan President Hamid Karzai. Mr Kasuri gave a detailed account of his visit to Afghanistan and his candid but tense interaction with President Karzai who held Pakistan responsible for the Taliban-led insurgency in his country. Mr Kasuri also proposed specific measures to address the Afghan concerns.

Daily Times, 25 December 2006

North Waziristan peace deal: Jirga to discuss 'serious issues' in Miranshah

PESHAWAR: The 45-member tribal jirga that negotiated the September 5 North Waziristan peace accord will visit Miranshah to discuss 'some serious issues' with pro-Taliban militant leaders, sources told Daily Times. The decision was made as Governor Ali Jan Orakzai chaired a meeting to review the three-month-old peace deal in North Waziristan. 'The governor directed the jirga members to visit North Waziristan and carry out a detailed review of the state of affairs and remove bottlenecks, if any, for ensuring complete success in this regard,' a handout quoted Orakzai as saying to the jirga

members at Governor's House. The meeting took place a day after an attack on an official vehicle near Miranshah in which a tribal cop was killed. It also comes amidst growing criticism of the accord in the western media.

Dawn, 25 December 2006

President, PM vow to protect rights of minorities

ISLAMABAD, Dec 24: President Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz have reiterated Pakistan's commitment to protect legitimate rights and interests of minorities. In separate messages on the eve of Christmas and the birth anniversary of the founder of Pakistan Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, they said the Quaid-i-Azam, even before the creation of Pakistan, had unequivocally declared a policy of equality, freedom and security for all communities irrespective of their religion, profession or ethnic origins. President Musharraf said that no doubt Quaid-i-Azam was one of the greatest leaders in world history and the creation of Pakistan was a living testimony to his foresight and political genius. Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, quoting Quaid-i-Azam, said one of the most unforgettable of his sayings was: 'The Almighty has blessed this country with rich resources, both human and material, and that is now up to its citizens to build a meaningful structure on this solid foundation.' He said these were simple but purposeful words. 'We must pay heed to them if we want to emulate the Quaid's life and character. He said Islam enjoins upon Muslims to regard the life, property and culture and honour of all religious communities as sacred as their own.

Daily Times, 26 December 2006

Half of Pakistanis not keen on democracy

ISLAMABAD: People in South Asia overwhelmingly support democracy, except in Pakistan, where about half the respondents in a survey said that democratic or non-democratic forms of government made no difference to them. Sri Lanka emerged as the country where democracy was most popular, while India was third after Bangladesh in terms of the percentage of people expressing support for the democratic system in the study, 'State of Democracy in South Asia'. 'The people not only approve of democratic arrangements, they find it suitable for their own contexts. Seven out of eight responses in the region, higher than in East Asia, held that democracy was 'suitable' or 'very suitable' for their own country,' the report said. The study found that the citizens of South Asia do not simply like democracy; they prefer it over authoritarian rule. 'With the exception of Pakistan, about two-thirds of those who responded preferred democracy over any other form of government,' the report said.

Daily Times, 27 December 2006

Afghan border to be fenced and mined

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan will build a fence and lay mines at 'selected places' on its side of the border with Afghanistan to restrict cross-border movement, Foreign Secretary Riaz Muhammad Khan said on Tuesday. 'This is a part of our established policy. We are taking measures to prevent any militant activity from Pakistan inside Afghanistan,' Khan said in a press briefing at the Foreign Office. The Pakistan Army has been tasked to work out the modalities of the project. The 2,400-kilometre Pak-Afghan border has 700 crossing points. Khan did not give any time frame for the completion of the project, nor

mentioned the specific areas to be fenced or mined. However, he said that no foreign country was funding the project. 'Mining (the border) is easier and can be done expeditiously while fencing, of course, requires a huge budget and time. However, the decision will be taken after we get suggestions from the armed forces,' the foreign secretary said.

Dawn, 27 December 2006

Split in MMA over Bajaur by-election

KHAAR, Dec 26: The Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal suffered a major setback on Tuesday after Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (F), a key component of the religious alliance, announced that it would take part in the by-election to the NA-44 constituency in Bajaur Agency.

Speaking at a press conference here on Tuesday, the JUI (F) deputy general secretary, Senator Maulana Abdul Rashid, said the MMA had nothing to do with the election boycott and his party would participate in the process. Sahibzada Haroon-ur-Rasheed, naib amir of the Jamaat, won the seat in the last election, but resigned to protest against the Oct 30 bombing of a madressah in the area that left at least 80 people dead. The Election Commission of Pakistan has announced holding of the by-election to the seat on Jan 10. The JUI leader accused the Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) of trying to achieve political mileage by launching a movement against the by-election. "Regrettably, the JI is using the MMA platform for negative activities and trying to disturb peaceful environment of the Agency by threatening the people and boycotting the poll," he said. Maulana Rashid said that no individual or party could deprive the people of their democratic and constitutional right. Criticising policies of the Jamaat-i-Islami, he said that through such tactics, the Jamaat was betraying the people, and trying to create the law and order situation in the area.

Daily Times, 28 December 2006

General elections on Jan 15, 2008: Azim

ISLAMABAD: The state minister for information and broadcasting said on Wednesday that the general elections would be held on January 15, 2008, and Shaukat Aziz would be the ruling party's candidate for the prime minister's seat, while Gen Pervez Musharraf would be re-elected the next president between September 15 and October 15, 2007.

Tariq Azim told reporters that between September 15 and October 15, 2007, Musharraf would be elected the next president and the current assemblies would play the role of the electoral college in this process. He said that the general elections would be held three months after this. It had already been settled that Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz would be the Pakistan Muslim League's candidate for the prime minister's seat, he added. The PML and its allies would contest the elections jointly, he added.

Dawn, 28 December 2006

PPP issues conditional threat of poll boycott

ISLAMABAD, Dec 27: The People's Party Parliamentarians (PPP) has indicated that it may change its strategy and boycott the forthcoming general elections, if it gets information about government's moves to rig the poll. Speaking at a press conference, PPP Secretary-General Raja Pervez Ashraf said his party intended to take part in the elections even in the presence of a president in military uniform and did not want to leave

the arena for its political opponents. He, however, said the strategy might be changed if measures were taken by the government to 'steal the elections'. He warned that 'chaos would rule' the country if the upcoming elections were hijacked and said those who resorted to rigging would vanish in such a case.

Daily Times, 29 December 2006

PML yet to decide next PM

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Muslim League's candidate for prime minister has not been finalised and will only be decided after the next general elections, senior government officials said on Thursday. Tariq Azeem, the minister of state for information, is reported to have said on Wednesday that Shaukat Aziz would remain the ruling PML party's candidate for prime minister after the next general elections. However, asked to comment on Azeem's statement, PML President Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain said that this was only the minister's 'personal view'. He said that Aziz had repeatedly said himself that it was up to the party to decide who its candidate for prime minister would be.

Dawn, 29 December 2006

Autonomy bill by February

ISLAMABAD, Dec 28: Federal Minister for Inter-provincial Coordination Salim Saifullah Khan has expressed optimism about the formulation of a consensus draft dealing with provincial autonomy, which would be sent to the National Assembly in February after vetting by the law ministry. He said he had formally asked the provincial governments to submit their recommendations on the subject. The National Reconstruction Bureau had been asked to work fast but it should not suggest sweeping changes in its report, instead confining itself to the changes acceptable to all stake holders, said the minister. He said an informal meeting, chaired by parliamentary committee chairman Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, on Sunday had reviewed the progress in consultations and decided to involve provinces in the talks. Mr Khan said the committee was considering reducing the number of items from the concurrent list from a total of 47 to 25 items, instead of abolishing the list in one go. Besides, he said, most committee members thought that a number of federal powers should also be transferred to the provinces.

Daily Times, 30 December 2006

Pakistan, US pledge better military ties

ISLAMABAD: President General Pervez Musharraf on Friday held talks with the United States Army Chief of Staff General Peter J Schoomaker to discuss boosting bilateral military cooperation in the region, while reiterating that Pakistan would never compromise its national interest while engaging in the global war against terror. According to sources, the two discussed the war on terror, Pak-US cooperation and the current situation in Afghanistan. Gen Musharraf said that enhancing military, strategic and defence ties between the two countries would help to eliminate terrorism and extremism. He said that Pakistan was committed to combating terrorism because it was in its national interest to do so, stressing that the country would 'under no circumstances' compromise its national interest in the realms of defence and sovereignty. The president said that while certain elements still blamed Pakistan for harbouring terrorists, the US and

the international community knew that Islamabad had the best anti-terrorism record and had sacrificed a lot for the war on terror.

Dawn, 30 December 2006

Gen Musharraf's election opposed

ISLAMABAD, Dec 29: The Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) has decided to mobilise public opinion against what it called the government plans to get General Pervez Musharraf re-elected as president by the present assemblies. The decision was taken at the first meeting of the newly-elected SCBA after a re-polling was held under the supervision of the Pakistan Bar Council (PBC) to end a bitter row between two groups of lawyers. Muneer A. Malik was elected president of the association and his group swept the polls for office-bearers and executive committee members. Presided over by Mr Malik, the meeting adopted two resolutions. One of them authorised the president and the secretary, Zulfikar Ali Bokhari, to chalk out a strategy for holding protest meetings to block what it called a fraud against the Constitution and the nation. The protest strategy would be devised in consultation with other bar associations and councils in the country. 'The committee is deeply disturbed by recent reports that Gen Pervez Musharraf intends to get himself re-elected as president by the present assemblies,' the resolution said.

The Hindu, 31 December 2006

Sri Lanka to purchase defence equipment from Pakistan

New Delhi, Dec. 31 (PTI): In order to equip itself to fight the LTTE, Sri Lanka has placed orders worth up to USD 100 million from Pakistan for tanks, their ammunition, different kinds of bombs and explosives, fuses, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and armoured vehicles, reports said. Premier journal Jane's Defence Weekly and media reports have confirmed that the arms deal size could go up to USD 200 million in the next 18 months. Major Colombo newspaper 'Island' earlier reported that the Sri Lankan forces needed two UAVs, cluster and fuel air bombs, laser-precision and guided bomb kits, deep penetration bombs, 80MM rockets with fuel explosive warheads, Bakhtar-Shiken anti-tank guided missile launcher, Tandem warhead missiles, radios, mortars and night vision goggles. The island nation was looking at Pakistan "to significantly strengthen its military capabilities amid the increasing prospect of renewed civil war", Jane's said.

Dawn, 31 December 2006

Musharraf urges Leaguers to rise up against extremists

ISLAMABAD, Dec 30: President Gen Pervez Musharraf has asked the leadership of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League to shun their differences and prepare the party for the general elections in order to 'effectively defeat the obscurant, extremist and radical elements'. Speaking as chief guest at a function held in the Prime Minister's House on Saturday to celebrate the completion of 100 years of the founding of the Muslim League, the president said: 'We have to take on the obscurant and extremist elements as we can not allow radicalisation of the society'. Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, PML president Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, party secretary-general Mushahid Hussain Sayed and a good number of league's old guards, including Sharifuddin Pirzada, Sahibzada Yaqoob Ali Khan, Minister of Information Muhammad Ali Durrani, and others were present at a well

attended function. The president expressed optimism that the issues of Kashmir, Siachen and Sir Creek will be resolved as a result of an ongoing composite dialogue with India provided the other side also shows a spirit of accommodation. He hoped that the improved relations between India and Pakistan will improve further in times to come warning that this whole process could become artificial if not consolidated through the conflict resolution.

Daily Times, 31 December 2006

Truce between Tirrah valley's warring factions

LANDIKOTAL: The FATA grand jirga has succeeded in announcing a ceasefire between two warring religious groups in Tirrah valley here. The 60 member tribal jirga was convened by the Khyber political administration to overcome differences between the Lashker-e-Islam and Ansarul Islam. The jirga held its first meeting with the Ansarul Islam in Khyber House, during which its leaders assured their full cooperation in bringing peace to the area. They said they were ready to deposit 1,000 kalashnikovs and Rs 10 million with the jirga as security to assure them that they would not retract from the jirga's conditions. The jirga meeting was held at Haji Habib Jan Zakha Khel's hujra near Gagrina where Mengal Bagh and colleagues negotiated with jirga members. The jirga managed to convince Mengal Bagh to accept a ceasefire till the last day of Eidul Azha and decided to continue the struggle for a permanent solution to the tension between the two factions. The political administration and Zakha Khel tribe members have also expressed satisfaction over the jirga's peace efforts.