

The News, 1 February 2005

**Constitution to be amended: Shujaat**

KARACHI. President of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League (PML) Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain has said that President Pervez Musharraf has approved in principle the recommendations of the Parliamentary Committee on Balochistan issue. Addressing a hurriedly called press conference here on Monday, Shujaat said certain amendments would be brought about in the Constitution for the implementation of these recommendations. Shujaat said a comprehensive package would be announced for Balochistan to do away with the sense of deprivation among its people. The package would cover all problems, including the issue of gas royalty.

Dawn, 1 February 2005

**Mehsuds draw up peace accord** (Ismail Khan)

PESHAWAR, Jan 31: Tribal negotiators have handed the government the draft of a six-point peace agreement that seeks to stamp out foreign militants from the restive South Waziristan tribal region, sources said. The draft agreement, to be signed by notables from Dre-Mehsud representing all the three main sub-clans of the Mehsud tribe and the government, is to be discussed and given a final shape at a meeting on Tuesday. The sources, who have seen the draft agreement said "It will give the government much leverage concerning the issue of foreign militants and their protectors and vest the Mehsud tribe with a responsibility," the sources said. However, some government circles appear to hold the view that the language of the draft is a bit loose and needs to be tightened up to provide for the possibility of a future military operation.

Daily Times, 1 February 2005

**Pakistan could offer India Kashmir-free project deals**

LAHORE: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz will this week propose that Islamabad and Delhi agree on a series of confidence-building projects that need not be held hostage to resolution of their central dispute over Kashmir. The message will be conveyed in his meeting with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on the sidelines of a SAARC summit in Dhaka next weekend, Aziz said in an interview with the Financial Times. First among the proposed projects is a gas pipeline to connect India with Iran via Pakistan. Aziz will also push a plan to open banking links between the two countries, a move he believes would be a catalyst for bilateral trade and development. Aziz said "there are many other possibilities which we want to explore".

Dawn, 2 February 2005

**Waziristan draft accord approved** (Ismail Khan)

PESHAWAR, Feb 1: The government on Tuesday approved the draft of a six-point peace agreement with a mujahideen commander aimed at restoring peace in South Waziristan, a government official confirmed to Dawn. "We have told Mehsud tribesmen negotiating the peace deal that we have no problems with it. As far as we are concerned the draft agreement stands approved," head of security in Fata, Brig Mehmood Shah said. The draft agreement stipulates that Baitullah Mehsud, commander of the mujahideen in South Waziristan, and his supporters would not give protection to nor support any foreign militant in their area. Clause II of the draft agreement says that Baitullah or his supporters will neither fire at any government functionary nor cause damage to government installations, nor will they obstruct development activities in the area.

The News, 2 February 2005

**Balochistan plunges into darkness** (Muhammad Ejaz Khan)

QUETTA: Almost whole of Balochistan, including Quetta, plunged into darkness on Tuesday night when the third main 220 KV electric supply line was blown up in Sibi. Unknown armed men planted heavy explosive material near the power supply circuit in Mithri Pirak area of Sibi. Meanwhile, two successive powerful bomb blasts here on Tuesday killed an alleged bomber and injured four officials of the Pakistan Railways (PR). In the first explosion, the Rawalpindi-bound 39-Down Jaffar Khan Express escaped a major disaster, while in the second blast an alleged bomber became the victim. The Balochistan Liberation Army immediately claimed responsibility in a message telephoned to local newspapers.

Dawn, 2 February 2005

**Defence cooperation discussed with US**

RAWALPINDI, Feb 1: The Pakistan-United States Security Assistance Working Group (SAWG) discussed defence cooperation in a meeting here on Tuesday. The group discussed "a wide range of issues concerning the defence equipment requirements of the armed forces of Pakistan as well as financial management issues related to foreign military funding," an official statement said. The US delegation noted the defence requirements of Pakistan and promised to work for early release of the equipment. The visiting delegation informed the Pakistani side that some of the equipment was in the pipeline.

Dawn, 2 February 2005

**'Pakistan helped US hit terror targets'** (Anwar Iqbal)

WASHINGTON, Feb 1: Pakistani troops have recently helped direct US artillery fire at suspected terrorist hideouts inside Pakistan, a senior US military officer told reporters in Washington on Tuesday. Army Col Cardon B. Crawford, the director of operations for the US military command in Afghanistan, told a breakfast briefing in Washington that this new development was "a huge step forward" in the fight against Taliban and Al Qaeda suspects hiding along the Afghan-Pakistan border. Giving details of the Pakistani cooperation in the war against terror, the US military officer said Pakistani troops guided US artillery fire into their territory at targets Americans believed were terrorist hideouts.

Dawn, 3 February 2005

**Pakistan rejects US military claim**

ISLAMABAD, Feb 2: Pakistan on Wednesday rejected a US military claim that its forces were helping American troops in Afghanistan to aim artillery fire at rebels on the Pakistani side of the border. "Not at all, it is baseless, it has got no truth," military spokesman Major General Shaukat Sultan told AFP in response to remarks by Colonel Cardon Crawford, director of operations for the US military command in Afghanistan. Maj-Gen Sultan said Pakistani forces were cooperating with US-led coalition troops who are on the other side of the porous frontier but "it is a cooperation in terms of intelligence sharing." "It is not in terms of inviting their (coalition) fire onto our territory," Maj-Gen Sultan said.

Dawn, 3 February 2005

**OIC calls for peaceful solution: Iran's N-issue** (Sher Baz Khan)

ISLAMABAD, Feb 2: Pakistan and the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) has called for a peaceful solution to Iran's nuclear issue, saying any US attack on another Muslim country, after Afghanistan and Iraq, may further fuel tension between the Muslim world and the West. The call was made by Minister for Foreign Affairs Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri and OIC's Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu. Mr Ihsanoglu said the OIC wanted a peaceful solution and Iran's abiding with international laws and Tehran's efforts for dialogue should be respected. "It is Iran's right to keep peaceful technology and Pakistan wanted Iran's rights to be protected and respected," Foreign Affairs Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri said. The secretary-general and the minister also said that they supported the G-3 proposed solution to Iran's nuclear issue.

The News, 3 February 2005

**Baitullah Mahsud signs draft peace agreement** (Sailab Mahsud)

TANK: Baitullah Mahsud, one of the most wanted militants in South Waziristan, signed the draft of a peace agreement in presence of a tribal Jirga in his remote mountain hideout Wednesday to clear the way for peacefully resolving disputes that had resulted in death and destruction in areas inhabited by Mahsud tribe. He termed his willingness to reach agreement with the government as reconciliation and not surrender. Under the terms of the agreement, Baitullah Mahsud and his men have been offered amnesty in return for a pledge by him not to attack the military and refrain from damaging government installations. He has also committed not to harbour or support foreign militants and to allow development work to continue unhindered in South Waziristan.

Daily Times, 3 February 2005

**FC in Northern Areas soon** (Mohammad Imran)

ISLAMABAD: The government has decided to deploy the Frontier Constabulary (FC) in the Northern Areas on a permanent basis to maintain law and order, Interior Minister Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao told a delegation of clerics from the Northern Areas on Thursday. The minister told the clerics that the ministry had asked the Kashmir Affairs and Northern Areas Ministry to make necessary arrangements for the deployment of the FC in the region. "The Northern Areas Ministry has not responded to the Interior Ministry's suggestion yet," Sherpao said.

The News, 3 February 2005

**US anti-terror programme team meets NWFP police chief**

PESHAWAR: A three-member team of US anti-terrorism programme met the Inspector-General of Police NWFP Muhammad Raffat Pasha at his office and shared their experiences in enhancing training skills of the police force to curb terrorism acts. The IGP Muhammad Raffat Pasha apprised the US experts of his department's efforts that led to assert and elimination of anti-state elements, said a press release issued here on Wednesday. Pasha said the police were establishing advance intelligence collections units and preparing complete records of the terrorists.

Dawn, 4 February 2005

**PM discusses situation with Nepal king** (Qudssia Akhlaque)

ISLAMABAD, Feb 3: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz on Thursday telephoned King of Nepal Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev in an apparent expression of solidarity, a day after India pulled out of the 13th Saarc summit on the pretext of political situation in the neighbourhood and security concerns. Mr Aziz conveyed to King Gyanendra that recent developments in Nepal were its internal matter. A foreign ministry statement issued on Thursday quoted "The prime minister also assured King Gyanendra of Pakistan's support for the unity, sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the kingdom of Nepal."

The News, 4 February 2005

**Phone, power towers, railway track blown up in Balochistan**

QUETTA: A telephone tower, an electric supply tower and a railway track were blown up on Thursday in a fresh upsurge in attacks on vital government installations in Balochistan. The telephone tower was hit in Maiwand Tehsil of Kohlu district, where another landmine blast injured a Frontier Corps (FC) sepoy, who was inspecting the site. And the electric tower was blown up in Nushki, while the railway track was damaged in Mastung district.

Dawn, 4 February 2005

**US agrees to continue talks for F-16s** (Arshad Sharif and Khawar Ghumman)

ISLAMABAD, Feb 3: Defence needs of Pakistan were discussed at a meeting of the Pak-US Defence Consultative Group here on Thursday and the US side made a commitment to speed up delivery of the promised multi-million dollar military equipment, starting from next month. However, officials said the meeting held at the defence ministry did not succeed in breaking the

deadlock on the issue of F-16s and the two sides agreed to hold further discussions on Pakistan's request for the aircraft.

Dawn, 4 February 2005

**'US won't be allowed to hit terror targets'**

ISLAMABAD, Feb 3: Interior Minister Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao on Wednesday said Pakistan would only share information with the US relating to terror targets in tribal areas of the country but the US forces deployed in Afghanistan would never be allowed to hunt terrorists inside Pakistan. Talking to reporters after the inauguration of Khayaban-i-Iqbal Road, the minister said as a leading partner of international alliance against terrorism, Pakistan had to share all information with the US-led peace force to destroy terrorist network in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border areas.

The News, 4 February 2005

**Parliamentary body finalises recommendations** (Tariq Butt)

ISLAMABAD: The parliamentary subcommittee on Balochistan, headed by ruling Pakistan Muslim League (PML) Secretary-General Mushahid Hussain Sayed, has prepared a total of 31 recommendations for the betterment of the province, assuaging grievances and complaints of some of its aggressive leaders. The recommendations will be given final touches after PML President Ch Shujaat and Mushahid meet Jamhoori Watan Party (JWP) chief Nawab Akbar Bugti and other defiant Baloch leaders, a senior official told The News. He said President Gen Pervez Musharraf has indicated acceptance of more than 26 recommendations of the subcommittee.

The News, 5 February 2005

**Four blasts rock Balochistan**

QUETTA: Four bomb explosions, two in Turbat and one each in Khuzdar and Nushki, were reported in Balochistan on Friday. Two home-made bombs exploded at the residence and office of PML Turbat district chief. However no casualties were reported. PML Turbat president Ghulam Nabi Baloch was present in his house when unknown attackers hurled the bomb, the police said. About 10 minutes after the blast, another bomb went off near the PML office in Turbat. Also, police said unknown attackers hurled a hand grenade at the poultry farm of the Frontier Corps (FC) in district Khuzdar.

Daily Times, 5 February 2005

**Debate on Balochistan concludes: No plans for military action, Senate told**

ISLAMABAD: The government told the Senate on Friday that the military was not operating in Balochistan nor did it plan to operate in the province, but it (the government) made it clear that the safety of national installations in the province would be ensured at all cost Aftab Khan Sherpao, interior minister, said while concluding the three-day debate on the issue of Balochistan. He also told the House that work on development projects in the province would continue and the government would not allow the projects to stall.

Daily Times, 5 February 2005

**Pakistan-India survey teams to meet on 8th**

ISLAMABAD: Survey teams of India and Pakistan will meet at the Wagah check post from February 8 to 11 to jointly process the data collected during a survey of pillars along the horizontal segment of the Sir Creek area. The computation work over four days will be first carried out on the Indian side for two days and then on the Pakistani side for the last two days. The results of joint processing will be submitted to both countries' governments, which will be discussed at the next round of talks on Sir Creek between India and Pakistan.

Daily Times, 6 February 2005

**Bugti rejects talks with govt**

JHANG: Nawab Muhammad Akbar Bugti, the chief of the Bugti tribe and chairman of the Jamhoori Watan Party (JWP), has again ruled out dialogue with the government on the Balochistan situation and said he would not talk to members of a committee lacking decision-making powers. Talking to Madni Baloch, the JWP Punjab vice president, on the phone on Saturday, Bugti said dialogue with a "toothless committee" on Balochistan was futile. He said he respected the army as an institution but the use of force would further deepen the Balochistan crisis, damaging Pakistan.

The News, 6 February 2005

**WB president arrives today** (Nadeem Malik)

ISLAMABAD: James D Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank, arrives here today on a three-day visit, the bank said here on Saturday, also indicating \$950 million financing for Pakistan during the current fiscal year. Wolfensohn would meet President Pervez Musharraf, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, his adviser Salman Shah, Dr Ishrat Husain and many others, including the representatives of the private sector. Another issue, which maybe discussed with Wolfensohn, is that of Baglihar controversy.

The News, 6 February 2005

**Straw arrives on 14th** (Muhammad Saleh Zaafer)

ISLAMABAD: British Foreign Affairs Secretary Jack Straw will be visiting Pakistan on a three-day official trip from Feb 14 to 16 on the invitation of his Pakistani counterpart Mian Khurshid Mahmood Kasuri. British Secretary is believed to have detailed discussions with the host leaders about the follow up actions of the summit meeting of the two countries. According to sources

British investors are taking keen interest in investing in Pakistan, and British government is interested in enhancing its political ties further with Pakistan. Straw will also visit Kabul.

Dawn, 6 February 2005

**Gas pipeline, rail track blown up** (Tariq Birmani & Saleem Shahid)

DERA GHAZI KHAN/QUETTA, Feb 5: Unidentified saboteurs blew up a gas pipeline in Punjab and a railway track in Balochistan on Saturday. Gas supply to several cities in southern Punjab and a power generation plant was suspended following an explosion in the main pipeline originating from Dhodak gas and oil fields in Taunsa, 90km from D. G. Khan, on Saturday night. The Dhodak plant manager confirmed the blast but said it was not clear whether it was a terrorist activity or an accident. It is the third blast in DG Khan during the last week.

Dawn, 7 February 2005

**Strategic system preferred over balance in arsenal** (Anwar Iqbal)

WASHINGTON, Feb 6: Pakistan is no more seeking to match India's conventional weapons and instead is focusing on strengthening its strategic systems, diplomatic sources told Dawn. The sources explained that since the May 1998 nuclear tests, Pakistan has developed a new defence strategy of meeting the Indian threat with the help of "strategic systems, not conventional weapons". They said that the decision to acquire eight P-3 Orion reconnaissance planes from the United States was part of this strategy. "The bottomline is, Pakistan is seeking to build up an effective defensive mechanism, not an aggressive weapon systems," said a diplomatic source.

Daily Times, 7 February 2005

**Armed struggle only way out: Marri**

ISLAMABAD: Baloch nationalists have rejected the government's talks' offer and have resolved to achieve their rights at all costs, Nawab Khair Bux Marri, Baloch nationalist leader, told BBC on Sunday. He said the Baloch leaders had linked the dialogue process to the withdrawal of troops from the province. He described the armed struggle as the only means to achieve the rights of the people of Balochistan.

Daily Times, 7 February 2005

**Pakistan to initiate FTA talks with Malaysia** (Waqar Ahmad)

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan will try to convince Malaysia to enter a free trade agreement (FTA) when Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawai visits Islamabad next week. The Malaysian prime minister is to visit Pakistan from February 15 to 17 to discuss bilateral relations, the regional situation etc. Diplomatic sources told Daily Times that Badawai with Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz will witness the signing of agreements to enhance economic and commercial relations between the two countries. "There is already a lot of trade between the two countries. Shaukat Aziz will take up this matter with his Malaysian counterpart," the sources said. Pakistan imports large quantities of palm oil from Malaysia.

Daily Times, 8 February 2005

**'73 Constitution does not apply to Balochis, says Bugti**

QUETTA: The constitution does not apply to the Baloch because a majority of Baloch leaders refrained from endorsing the document when parliament approved it in 1973, said Nawab Akbar Bugti, chief of the Bugti tribe, on Monday. Talking to a private television channel, Nawab Bugti said only two of the five members from Balochistan signed the constitution, which was passed by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's government. He said, "We neither voted for it nor we signed it and therefore it does not apply to us." He also denied inks between the JWP (his party) and the Baloch Liberation Front (BLF).

Dawn, 8 February 2005

**Amnesty granted to militant leader** ( Dilawar Khan Wazir)

WANA, Feb 7: Militant leader Baitullah Mehsud and about 100 of his supporters were granted amnesty on Monday after they entered into a peace deal with the administration of the South Waziristan Agency in the Srarogha area, promising to remain peaceful. Baitullah Mehsud gave an assurance to the authorities that he would refrain from providing refuge to militants, attacking security forces operating in the area and targeting government installations.

The News, 8 February 2005

**PTCL installation, railway track blown up** ( Muhammad Ejaz Khan)

QUETTA: The microwave repeater of the Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL) was blown up on Monday in a powerful blast in Barkhan district, while two explosions rocked Quetta but caused no loss of life or property. PTCL officials told The News that the microwave repeater was blown up in the wee hours of Monday by heavy explosive material planted by unknown saboteurs on the Mazar mountain. The explosion blew the repeater into pieces, disconnecting the telephonic link of Barkhan district with the rest of the country.

Dawn, 8 February 2005

**Sri Lanka president arrives: four accords to be signed** ( Qudssia Akhlaque)

ISLAMABAD, Feb 7: Sri Lankan President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga arrived here late on Monday night on a three-day official visit during which four agreements and two MoUs will be signed to strengthen bilateral cooperation. Announcing the pacts to be signed between the two countries, Foreign Office spokesman Masood Khan said "The Sri Lankan

President, along with the Prime Minister of Pakistan, will witness the signing of protocol to the Free Trade Agreement, Agreement on granting Exemption from Visa Fees by Students. Agreement on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters and an Agreement on US\$10 million credit facility to Sri Lanka are expected to be finalised and signed during the visit."

Daily Times, 8 February 2005

**Pakistan denies it sold N-tech to Arab states**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan denied on Monday that nuclear scientist Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan sold nuclear technology to Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries after Time magazine reported that the United States was investigating the matter. AQ Khan admitted last year to leaking nuclear secrets to Iran, Libya and North Korea. The latest edition of Time said US officials were investigating whether Khan also sold sensitive technology to Arab nations, including Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Information Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed dismissed the report though a Foreign Office spokesman said the case was not yet closed.

Daily Times, 9 February 2005

**Neutral expert on Baglihar within 2 weeks: Wolfensohn** (Khalid Mustafa)

ISLAMABAD: The World Bank will appoint a neutral expert for the Baglihar Hydropower Project dispute within two weeks, the findings of which will be binding for both parties involved in the dispute, bank President James D Wolfensohn said in a press briefing on Tuesday. The bank had no right to stop India from going ahead with the Baglihar project till the neutral expert decided on the issue, Mr Wolfensohn said. He was unable to give a timeframe for the neutral expert's decision, as it did not fall under the bank's jurisdiction, he added.

Daily Times, 9 February 2005

**Team to visit India for discussion on Neelum river dam** (Khalid Mustafa)

ISLAMABAD: A seven-member Pakistani delegation will leave for India on a four-day trip for crucial talks on India's controversial plans for the 330-megawatt (MW) Kishanganga hydropower project in Kashmir, a government official told Daily Times. "There were talks in November 2004 at the Permanent Commission of Indus Waters (PCIW) during which India promised to provide technical data on the project within three months. Three months have passed, but Pakistan has not received any data," said the official. Jamaat Ali Shah, Pakistan's commissioner for Indus Water, will lead the delegation.

The News, 9 February 2005

**Pakistan, S Arabia resolve to enhance trade cooperation** (Tariq Butt)

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have resolved to enhance their trade, investment and business relations as seventh session of the Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC) started its two-day meeting here Tuesday. The JMC unanimously approved its agenda and formed four committees on trade & investment; education and human resource development; visa and consular affairs; and information, culture, sports and youth. Some more areas to come under review of the JMC include investment environment, encouragement and protection of upcoming privatisation and investment opportunities for Saudis; hydropower projects and hydrocarbon explorations etc.

Dawn, 9 February 2005

**Militants were paid to repay Al Qaeda debt** (Ismail Khan)

PESHAWAR, Feb 8: The government paid huge amounts of money to four of the five most-wanted militants in South Waziristan, who surrendered and signed peace deals with the authorities in November last year, to enable them to repay the debt they claimed they owed to Al Qaeda, sources told Dawn. Payments were made as part of a package after the militants insisted that they needed to pay back a huge sum they had taken from Al Qaeda in their fight against Pakistani forces. The sources said the payments were made from the secret service fund (SS Fund) and the four militant commanders were summoned to Peshawar for the purpose.

The News, 9 February 2005

**PTCL, Wapda installations attacked** (Muhammad Ejaz Khan)

QUETTA: A microwave station of PTCL was hit by a rocket, which did not explode, in Galungor area of Nushki district, disrupting the telephonic links of three districts, officials said on Tuesday. Two powerful bomb blasts were also reported in other parts of the province, they added. Officials sources said that unidentified saboteurs planted a powerful bomb near the Och-Sibi circuit number-2, which exploded, damaging the power supply tower but did not disrupt the power supply to the area.

The News, 10 February 2005

**Pakistan, Sri Lanka sign Free Trade Agreement** (Mariana Baabar)

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Sri Lanka signed a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) here on Wednesday. Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, addressing newsmen along with Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga, described the signing of the FTA as 'historic' and said it would be a turning point in the economic ties between the two South Asian states. Sri Lanka is the first country that Pakistan has signed such an agreement with. Shaukat Aziz said besides the FTA, talks focussed on an early warning system against natural disasters like tsunami, holding of an early Saarc summit and increasing economic ties between the two countries.

The News, 10 February 2005

**US to provide \$1.2bn to eradicate drug menace** (Muhammad Saleh Zaafir)

ISLAMABAD: The United States is providing \$1.2 billion in three years for eradicating the menace of narcotics and for law-enforcement to meet running cost of the efforts. Washington has given Pakistan \$40 million for this year and assured an equal amount for the next year. It would be over and above the \$3 billion package announced by US President George Bush at Camp David in 2003 in presence of President Pervez Musharraf.

Dawn, 10 February 2005

**Work on pipeline to begin this year: minister**

ISLAMABAD, Feb 9: Pakistan would soon issue tenders to begin work on one of the three trans-national pipelines for natural gas import in 2005 to meet its growing energy requirements and to achieve a higher economic growth. "A decision (to select one of the three pipelines) would be taken shortly and tenders would be issued and work would be started within 2005," Federal Minister for Petroleum and Natural Resources Amanullah Khan Jadoon said here on Wednesday. Speaking at a news conference, the minister said a decision would soon be taken that which of the three pipelines - from Iran, Turkmenistan or Qatar - should be constructed first.

Daily Times, 11 February 2005

**Benazir and Nawaz meet in Jeddah** (Shahzad Raza and Mubasher Bukhari)

ISLAMABAD/LAHORE: Former prime ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, once political rivals but now allies in the Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy (ARD), met in Jeddah on Thursday. This was the first encounter between the exiled leaders since Benazir went into exile in early 1999. "The three leaders shared and tallied their notes, prepared during talks with emissaries of President Musharraf," said the sources of the meeting between Nawaz, Benazir and Zardari. They claimed that Nawaz proposed that the ARD be converted into an election alliance. He also brought up the idea of a joint anti-government movement with the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal.

Dawn, 11 February 2005

**Govt is in contact with PPP: Rashid- Seat adjustment hinted at**

ISLAMABAD Feb 10: Federal Information Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed on Thursday confirmed that the government was in constant touch with the PPP of Benazir Bhutto, saying there was every possibility that the PML "contests the coming elections in collaboration with the PPP". Answering a question he said there could be a seat-arrangement in the next polls between PPP and PML if both parties agreed to an agreement. He added it would be premature to say about the result of such contacts.

Dawn, 11 February 2005

**Islamabad wants increased trade with Kabul**

ISLAMABAD, Feb 10: Pakistan is focusing on the development of infrastructure, provision of road links and better communication facilities from Gwadar to border areas to facilitate trade with Afghanistan, says Dr Salman Shah, adviser to the prime minister on finance and revenue, while speaking at the inaugural session of the 4th session of Pak-Afghan Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC) here on Thursday. "We want to provide preferential, low cost and hassle-free access to Afghanistan through infrastructure development and lot of proposals will be discussed in the JMC in this regard". The adviser said that Pakistani investors were keen to invest in the proposed industrial estate in Afghanistan as well as in the border areas of Pakistan.

The News, 12 February 2005

**Body to discuss provincial autonomy** (Shakil Shaikh)

ISLAMABAD: A five-member high profile special committee will discuss the issue of providing more autonomy to the provinces and would debate over the possibility of reviewing and revising the concurrent list. his special committee would meet here on Monday with former Prime Minister and President Pakistan Muslim League Ch Shujaat Hussain. The crux of this provincial autonomy issue lies in the concurrent legislative list, which contained 47 items. "We have received proposals from all parliamentary parties and others on the issue of provincial autonomy and the concurrent list," said Wasim Sajjad. He said these proposals range from abolition of the concurrent lists to that of introducing substantive changes in these lists.

The News, 12 February 2005

**Parco pipeline blown up**

DERA GHAZI KHAN: Unidentified terrorists blew up the Parco pipeline near Kot Chutta on Friday, after which the diesel supply to the refinery was suspended and diesel worth Rs 3 million was wasted. The engineers on the bomb blast site refused to give out any information, therefore, the make and the size of the bomb could not be ascertained, as the bomb disposal squad did not reach the spot even after eight hours. According to reports, the diesel pipeline, coming from Karachi to Parco refinery, was blown up.

Daily Times, 12 February 2005

**C'wealth urges Musharraf to quit army by 2007**

LAHORE: Commonwealth ministers on Friday sharply criticised President Gen Pervez Musharraf for failing to keep his pledge to step down as army chief. The Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group, also known as CMAG, stopped short of suspending Pakistan from the 53-national club of Britain and its former territories. The official statement noted that President Musharraf had been authorised by the Senate and the National Assembly to retain both offices and had pledged not to remain head of the army beyond 2007. "The group nevertheless urged President Musharraf to relinquish one of the two offices."

Dawn, 12 February 2005

**Preferential trade pact with Kabul proposed**

ISLAMABAD, Feb 11: Commerce Minister Humayun Akhtar Khan has proposed signing of a preferential trade agreement (PTA) leading to a free trade agreement (FTA) with Afghanistan in near future to increase the volume of bilateral trade. The minister made this proposal in a meeting with Afghan Finance Minister Dr Anwar-ul-Haq Ahadi here on Friday. Mr Khan stressed that both the countries should form a group to study each other's tariff regimes as well as complementarities of the two economies so that businessmen of the two countries might be able to make informed business decisions.

Dawn, 12 February 2005

**World Bank to provide financial support: Turkmen gas pipeline** (Ihtasham ul Haque)

ISLAMABAD, Feb 11: The World Bank has agreed to provide financial and technical support to Pakistan in importing gas through trans-national pipelines. Informed sources told Dawn here on Friday that the World Bank has been requested to assist Pakistan in providing the benefits of its international experience in gas import through trans-national pipelines. "The World Bank would send a special mission to Pakistan in the third week of this month for discussing various aspects relating to import of gas", a source said.

The News, 13 February 2005

**'No evidence Dr Qadeer sold N-tech to al-Qaeda'**

WASHINGTON: Contrary to global fears, there is no evidence Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan sold nuclear technology to al-Qaeda or any other militant group, Pakistan's ambassador to Washington said on Friday. The network of Dr Qadeer was no longer operating and its Pakistani elements had been wiped out, Ambassador Jehangir Karamat said in an interview with Reuters. However, some of Khan's international associates might still be doing illicit business abroad.

Daily Times, 13 February 2005

**Musharraf should end dual role: US**

WASHINGTON: The US State Department said on Friday that General Pervez Musharraf should end his "dual role" as president and chief of army staff of Pakistan. This is the first time that the Bush administration has taken a clear and straight position on the "uniform issue" and signals an important departure from past policy. State Department spokesman Richard Boucher also expressed the hope that the 2007 elections in Pakistan would be open and meet international standards with the "full participation of all political parties".

Dawn, 14 February 2005

**Heavy agenda for talks with Natwar**

ISLAMABAD, Feb 13: Indian External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh will hold wide-ranging talks with his Pakistani counterpart Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri here on Wednesday afternoon and call on President Gen Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz earlier in the day, diplomatic sources told Dawn on Sunday. In Islamabad, Mr Natwar Singh's forthcoming visit is seen as an opportunity for Pakistan to re-assess the political will of India to re-engage and sustain the dialogue process that so far has failed to produce any positive movement towards the resolution of all outstanding issues, including Jammu and Kashmir.

Dawn, 14 February 2005

**Pakistan to get US arms later this year** (Anwar Iqbal)

WASHINGTON, Feb 13: Pakistan will start receiving weapons from the United States under a \$1.2 billion arms package by the end of this year, official sources told Dawn. The production of these weapons has already started, they added. The package, announced in mid November, includes eight P-3C Orion surveillance aircraft, six Phalanx close-in weapon systems and an ammunition complement of 2,000 TOW-2A missiles and 14 TOW-2A Fly-to-Buy missiles.

The News, 14 February 2005

**'No troops withdrawal from South Waziristan'** (Sailab Mahsud)

TANK: Peshawar Corps Commander Lt-Gen Safdar Hussain has said Pakistan Army troops would not be completely withdrawn from South Waziristan and other tribal agencies but relocation and readjustment would take place in keeping with the demands of the situation. He said around 70,000 troops were fighting terrorists, bringing peace and defending the country's borders in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata).

The News, 14 February 2005

**Pak-Turkmen gas deal soon** (Muhammad Saleh Zaafer)

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is close to striking a deal with Turkmenistan for natural gas to suffice its future needs and Islamabad has sought from Ashgabat gas reservoirs certification. Official told The News here on Sunday that Pakistan was still prepared for sharing the pipeline with India but it would not accept any condition on this count. Islamabad has welcomed the Indian Union cabinet go-ahead signal to its minister concerned for the purpose who is expected to visit Pakistan next month. Abdullah Attiya, the deputy prime minister of Qatar, is reaching Islamabad tomorrow (Tuesday) to discuss the gas pipeline project, while the matter would be further discussed with Iran when the Pakistan-Iran JMC will meet in last week of this month.

The News, 15 February 2005

**US, Afghan troops raid Dewgar village** (Mushtaq Yusufzai)

PESHAWAR: US and Afghan troops on Sunday raided a border town of Dewgar near Saidgai in North Waziristan tribal agency, and detained two Pakistani tribesmen for their alleged links with al-Qaeda and Taliban. The two suspects were later taken to neighbouring Khost province of Afghanistan for interrogation. Relatives of the two detainees as well as tribal sources from that remote border village informed The News that about 70 US and Afghan soldiers, backed by five helicopters gun ships and jet aircraft, cordoned off the border Dewgar village in Saidgai town and started search operation for al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters.

Dawn, 15 February 2005

**Rockets fired on Kohlu, Nushki**

QUETTA, Feb 14: Nushki and Kohlu were rocked on Monday when unknown men fired rockets targeting Frontier Corps checkpoints. In Kohlu, five rockets exploded at different places near residential area. Frontier Corps personnel fired back in the direction from which the attack had been launched. In Nushki, unknown men fired four rockets towards an FC checkpoint. One of the rockets exploded near the checkpoint and slightly damaged an official vehicle.

Dawn, 15 February 2005

**Qatari minister due today: Pipeline talks**

ISLAMABAD, Feb 14: Qatari Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Abdullah bin Hamad al-Attiya arrives here on Tuesday to speed up negotiations over the \$3-billion Gulf-South Asia pipeline project and discuss possible oil sales to Pakistan. The sources say the visit is part of Pakistan's last round of discussions with all key stakeholders of three possible gas import pipelines emanating from Qatar, Iran and Turkmenistan before it takes a decision as to which of three projects it should take first and then second.

Daily Times, 15 February 2005

**MMA to boycott NSC meeting** (Mohammad Imran)

ISLAMABAD: The Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal has decided to boycott the next National Security Council meeting because its reservations about the body have not been addressed, said Qazi Hussain Ahmed, the MMA president, on Monday. At a press conference after a meeting of the MMA's Supreme Council, the alliance also announced its plans for further protests against General Pervez Musharraf and his dual role as president and army chief after Muharram.

The News, 16 February 2005

**Kashmir bus service accord likely today** (Mariana Baabar)

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and India are likely to strike a deal on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service here today, as the two countries agreed that Kashmiris on both sides of the LoC would travel on "local papers," senior officials said. "The details are still being worked out and we have to finalise few more points." It is not clear at this point if during talks, President Musharraf will raise the issue of a change in the Saarc charter which would stop the cancellation of these much needed summits by a single state veto.

Daily Times, 16 February 2005

**Rockets fired at FC post**

QUETTA: Suspected tribal militants attacked a Frontier Corps camp in Kohlu, some 400 kilometres southeast of Quetta late on Monday in which five rockets were fired, but all missed the target, said an official on Tuesday, asking not to be named. The militants also fired four rockets at a checkpoint in Albad, some 180 kilometres west of Quetta but no casualties were reported. Three rockets missed the target and slammed into a field while the fourth exploded nearby and splinters damaged a paramilitary vehicle, said Lt Col Rizwan Malik, a Frontier Corps spokesman.

Dawn, 16 February 2005

**Body formed to discuss gas pipeline from Qatar**

ISLAMABAD, Feb 15: Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Resources on Tuesday constituted a special technical committee to come up with the best possible economic options for the proposed gas pipeline from Qatar to Pakistan. The technical committee due to meet in Doha in about a week's time would be headed by petroleum secretary from the Pakistani side. The committee, comprising highly qualified personnel, would delve deep over the best options of the proposed project and present its recommendations.

The News, 17 February 2005

**Kashmir bus service to start from April 7** (Mariana Baabar)

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and India have agreed to allow travel between Muzaffarabad and Srinagar by bus. Travel across the Line of Control (LoC) will be by entry permit system, once the identities of travellers are verified. The bus service, likely to commence from April 7, will entail application forms for travel, which will be available with the designated authorities on both sides of the LoC. Both sides have also agreed, according to officials, that those travelling by this route will be Pakistanis, Indians and Kashmiris and no third country citizen can use this bus service.

The News, 17 February 2005

**Two power towers blown up in Balochistan**

QUETTA: Two power supply towers of 132 KV transmission line were blown up on Wednesday in Eshani area of Rakhani Tehsil in district Barkhan, some 325 kms off here. Levies officials told The News that unknown saboteurs planted heavy explosive material near the power supply towers in Eshani area, which ripped through the towers in the wee hours of Wednesday, disrupting power supply to Barkhan and Kohlu districts. Residents claimed that they heard five successive explosions and subsequently power supply disrupted in the district.

The News, 17 February 2005

**Pakistan receives 24 US 'copters: Karamat**

WASHINGTON: Out of 27, Pakistan has received delivery of 24 two-engine Bell helicopters in support of war on terrorism, Ambassador Jehangir Karamat said on Tuesday. Pakistan would get eight P-3C Orion aircraft and TOW missiles. About Pakistan-US Defence Consultative Group (DCG) meetings, he said the DCG met in Islamabad recently, taking stock of the bilateral defence relations. It also reviewed the international military education and training requirements.

Dawn, 17 February 2005

**Democracy-linked curbs waived (Anwar Iqbal)**

WASHINGTON, Feb 16: President George W. Bush has once again waived democracy-related restrictions on Pakistan, enabling the country to continue to receive US assistance. In a waiver issued on Tuesday evening, Mr Bush certified that Pakistan qualified for a waiver of any provision of the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2005. The waiver notification observed that lifting the restriction would facilitate the transition to democratic rule in Pakistan.

Daily Times, 17 February 2005

**Qatar rejects Pakistan's demand for more gas (Khalid Mustafa)**

ISLAMABAD: Qatar has refused to commit to increasing the volume of gas it will export to Pakistan through the proposed \$1.88 billion Gulf-South Asia Pipeline (GUSA) project. Pakistan wanted an increase from the original 1.6 billion cubic feet (Bcf) of gas per day to over 2 Bcf per day. Qatar said it had already made many commitments to other countries to supply gas and could only provide Pakistan the volume of gas originally decided upon in 1990.

Dawn, 18 February 2005

**Malaysia to invest in power, farm sectors**

ISLAMABAD, Feb 17: Pakistan and Malaysia have agreed to investment in power, water, and construction and electricity transmission sectors and to reducing the current trade imbalance between the two countries. The official discussions in this regard were held here on Thursday between Federal Minister for Water and Power Liaquat Ali Jatoi and the visiting Malaysian delegation headed by Dato's Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik, Minister for Energy, Water and Communication. The Malaysian side invited the delegation of Ministry of Water and Power included NPCC and NESPAK to submit their proposals for awarding contracts and signing of MOUs in this regard.

The News, 19 February 2005

**Pak-Malaysia accord on terror fight, economic ties**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Malaysia have agreed to increase cooperation in counter-terrorism efforts and reaffirmed their commitment to further promote bilateral economic and trade ties, a joint communique said on Friday. The two countries also agreed to "increase cooperation in the fields of defence through interactions and exchanges between the relevant ministries." A 21-point joint statement issued before the departure of the Malaysian prime minister after an official visit to Pakistan, said both the countries would strengthen their political and strategic relations.

Dawn, 19 February 2005

**Four agreements to be signed with Iran (Qudssia Akhlaque)**

ISLAMABAD, Feb 18: Pakistan and Iran will sign four important agreements, including the Additional Protocol to the existing Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA), during Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz's visit to Tehran next week, Dawn learnt through diplomatic sources. A key issue to be discussed during the visit would be import of additional electricity from Iran. The signing of the Additional Protocol to PTA, which was concluded between the two countries in March 2004, is seen as a major step to make PTA effective in enhancing bilateral trade. Other agreements to be signed pertain to a joint investment company for export of fruits; anti-narcotics; and transportation links, specifically increasing the frequency of the bus service between the two countries.

Dawn, 19 February 2005

**AJK gov't asked to speed up repair of bus route (Tariq Naqash)**

MUZAFFARABAD, Feb 18: The AJK government has been asked by Islamabad to speed up repair work on a road which connects the two parts of Kashmir, a minister said on Friday. "We have been asked by Islamabad to make the road ready for the Muzaffarabad-Srinagar bus service which begins on April 7," Minister for Communications, Works and Housing, Chaudhry Tariq Farooq, told Dawn. The minister, who had earlier travelled from Muzaffarabad to Chakothi along with highway department officials, said Islamabad had also asked them to build a bridge over the 200-foot wide water channel that marks the Line of Control.

The News, 19 February 2005

**Two terrorists blow themselves up in Quetta** (Muhammad Ejaz Khan)

QUETTA: Two activists of a banned militant outfit blew themselves up with hand grenades during an exchange of fire with police at Ghilzai road here in the wee hours of Friday. Police officials said the two bombers were planning to attack a small Ashura-e-Muharrum procession that was to pass through Ghilzai road area on the same night. Inspector-General Police Balochistan Chaudhary Muhammad Yaqoob told a press conference here that when the police team tried to arrest the attackers, the terrorists detonated the hand grenades tied to their bodies and jumped towards the policemen.

The News, 20 February 2005

**Fund for Muzaffarabad-Srinagar road repairs okayed**

ISLAMABAD: The Azad Kashmir government has approved Rs 120 million for the construction and rehabilitation of a 62 km road to link Muzaffarabad with Held Srinagar. The road would be made as wide as 24 feet and an immigration office and a restaurant would also be constructed, decided a high-level meeting presided over by AJK Chief Secretary Kashif Murtaza. A review committee has also been constituted which would present essential recommendations regarding the bus service to the government.

Daily Times, 20 February 2005

**Sunni and Shia groups sign peace deal in Gilgit** (Ibrahim Shahid)

GILGIT: Sunni and Shia organisations in the Northern Areas signed a six-point peace agreement arranged by Northern Areas Legislative Council (NALC) members on Thursday to ensure peace in the city, which was rocked by sectarian violence last month. According to the peace agreement, the Tanzim Ahle Sunnah wal Jama'at representing Sunnis, and the Central Anjuman-e-Imamia Northern Areas representing Shias, had agreed to immediately stop issuing resolutions (fatwahs) and counter-resolutions against each other. The two organisations will also foster sectarian harmony in the region through a mass media campaign.

Dawn, 20 February 2005

**Security for foreigners to be tightened** (Mohammad Asghar)

RAWALPINDI, Feb 19: In a move to enhance security of foreigners and counter terrorism by foreign elements, the federal government has established a special cell in the ministry of interior to deal with the scrutiny of foreigners working or residing in Pakistan. An official source told Dawn that all the law enforcement and intelligence agencies have been directed to share information with the cell to ensure the security of foreigners working on different projects in the country. The federal government has also directed the provincial governments have been asked to send complete data of foreigners to the ministry of interior.

The News, 20 February 2005

**Pakistan opposes use of force against Iran**

LAHORE: Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri has said Pakistan opposes use of force against Iran, as disturbance on its borders after Afghanistan is not in the regional interest. After Afghanistan and Iraq, he said Pakistan was in deep trouble at its borders and "now the threat of use of force against Iran has raised alarms for us". Instead of using force, the issue should be resolved through talks in a peaceful manner, he added.

The News, 20 February 2005

**Pak-Japanese security dialogue next week** (Muhammad Saleh Zaafir)

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Japan will hold a security dialogue next week and Islamabad contemplates to brief Tokyo about the acquisition of a new nuclear missile system by India from the United States. Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri is leaving for Tokyo at the invitation of his Japanese counterpart, Nobutaka Machimura. Diplomatic sources told The News that Japan might resume soft loans facility to Pakistan immediately after the foreign minister's visit.

The News, 22 February 2005

**Blasts damage power supply tower near Sibi** (Muhammad Ejaz Khan)

QUETTA: A power supply tower of 132 KV, Sibi-Harnai transmission line, was badly damaged in powerful bomb explosions near Sibi, official sources said on Monday night. The sources told The News on condition of anonymity that unidentified saboteurs planted bombs near tower number 69 of 132 KV Sibi-Harnai transmission line at Nari Gach area, some 32 kilometres off Sibi. The bombs explode damaging the tower. However, power supply to Sibi and Harnai remained undisturbed.

Daily Times, 22 February 2005

**Pakistan Army told to fire at intruding Americans** (Khalid Hasan)

Washington: Pakistan has issued new rules of engagement permitting its Army to fire at US forces that cross the border from Afghanistan without coordinating first, according to a report contributed to the magazine 'American Conservative' by a former CIA officer. Musharraf is also said to be unhappy about the recent abrupt withdrawal of Predators and other surveillance resources from Pakistan for transfer to Iraq for use against Iran.

Dawn, 23 February 2005

**Pakistan backs Japan for UN seat**

TOKYO, Feb 22: Pakistan's visiting Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri voiced support on Tuesday for Japan's goal of a permanent seat on the UN Security Council but had reservations about the bid of India, a diplomat said. Mr Kasuri told Japan's main opposition leader Katsuya Okada that there should be "objective criteria" on choosing members of an enlarged UN Security Council. "Japan would certainly qualify under whatever criteria. In the post-Second World War period Japan has been completely on the right side of all major issues," Mr Niaz told AFP, quoting discussions.

The News, 23 February 2005

**Akbar Bugti threatens armed resistance**

KARACHI: Jamhoori Wattan Party chief Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti threatened armed resistance on Tuesday if the government uses force to tame tribesmen amid an "alarming" situation in Balochistan. "The situation in Balochistan is alarming and there could be an armed resistance if a military option is opted", Bugti told a telephonic press conference from Dera Bugti. Regular and paramilitary forces have moved into the area and Bugti said the large Army presence around Sui indicated "an Army operation is possible".

Dawn, 23 February 2005

**PM rules out mediation on Iran's nuclear plan** (Intikhab Hanif)

TEHRAN, Feb 22: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said here on Tuesday that Pakistan did not have any illusion about mediating on Iran's nuclear programme but, if asked, would assist it as a brotherly country. "We are not here to act as a mediator. Neither are we carrying any message. Iran is capable of looking after its own affairs. We want peace so does Iran and this is our common ground," Mr Aziz said while talking to journalists along with Iranian First Vice-President Dr Reza Aref.

The News, 24 February 2005

**Pakistan, Iran ink four accords**

TEHRAN: Pakistan and Iran on Wednesday signed four agreements to bolster bilateral economic relations and agreed to set up a mechanism to ensure their implementation aimed at increasing two-way trade to \$1 billion. Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and Vice-President Mohammad Reza Aref, who witnessed the signing ceremony, said the two countries had agreed to set up a mechanism to meet the deadline and have monitoring system to implement these agreements. Petroleum ministers of the two countries are likely to meet in few weeks in Islamabad to work out technical details of the 2700 kms pipeline project.

The News, 24 February 2005

**Rangers, BSF discuss border issues**

LAHORE: The borders authorities of Pakistan and India held a meeting and discussed border issues, including drug smuggling, and return of Indian and Pakistani citizens, here on Wednesday. Talking to reporters Brig Sakhi Marjan said that the commanders of the two sides reviewed the decisions taken during their last meeting and discussed drug trafficking. "We have asked Indians to make appropriate arrangements for controlling narcotics smuggling into Pakistan. We have also discussed exchange of prisoners and people illegally or mistakenly crossing borders."

Dawn, 25 February 2005

**Pakistan, India likely to go for PTA** (Mubarak Zeb Khan)

ISLAMABAD, Feb 24: Pakistan and India are likely to start talks on a preferential trade arrangement (PTA) after receiving the reports of sub-groups constituted recently on customs cooperation, trade facilitation and non-tariff barriers (NTBs). Well-placed sources told Dawn on Thursday that the proposal of PTA came from the Indian government, and they wanted to formally discuss during the first meeting of the Joint Study Group (JSG) headed by commerce secretaries of the two countries held in New Delhi recently.

Daily Times, 25 February 2005

**Musharraf-attack explosive was stolen from PAF depot**

LAHORE: The remote-controlled explosive device used in an attempt on President Pervez Musharraf's life in Rawalpindi in December 2003 was stolen from an arms depot of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF), sources told Daily Times on Thursday. Weapons experts, after examining the shrapnel, found that the device had been used by PAF and it was found missing from the depot that stored expired ammunition. An airman, who had strong religious inclination, was arrested, sources said, adding that he had admitted stealing the explosive device.

Dawn, 26 February 2005

**CIA officers look for Osama in Pakistan: Congress report released**

The Congressional Research Service, which advises Congress and writes policy briefs for US lawmakers, says in a recent report that some of these agents are based in Pakistan as "civilian contractors." The report points out that both Osama bin Laden and Al Zawahiri escaped the December 2001 US invasion of Afghanistan and, "according to most assessments, fled into Pakistan, where they have continued to elude capture by Pakistani forces and agents." The report notes that a March 2004 Pakistan forces' offensive against suspected terrorist hideouts in the South Waziristan region, failed to find these two or other major Al Qaeda figures.

The News, 26 February 2005

**Ecneq okays security plan for Balochistan**

ISLAMABAD: The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecne) has approved Rs 17.2 billion Kurram Tangi dam in Fata and Rs 9.6 billion for converting 'B' Areas of Balochistan into 'A' and raising of 6,000 additional force for Balochistan Constabulary. The Ecne also approved 39 projects worth Rs 124.5 billion. Some of the major projects include upward cost revision of Gwadar deep seaport, devolution and area development in Fata and Azad Kashmir, road development and sub-regional connectivity in the NWFP and repair work of the Sukkur barrage.

The News, 26 February 2005

**Pakistan, China to sign FTA in April** (Nadeem Malik)

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and China want finalisation of an early harvest programme to finally sign a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the two countries. Two sides are actively pursuing various options, including a list of items to be traded zero-rated duty under the Early Harvest Programme, promotion of bilateral trade in border areas, expanded investment cooperation and facilitating export of Pakistani rice, fruits and vegetables to China.

Dawn, 27 February 2005

**Two blasts hit Quetta**

QUETTA, Feb 26: Unknown persons hurled a hand grenade at the building of Radio Pakistan Quetta and a bomb exploded in the city on Saturday night. According to police sources, a hand grenade exploded with a bang in the lawn of Radio Pakistan building around 9.20pm. However, no causality was reported, police said, adding that the windowpanes of some rooms of the building were smashed in the explosion. Another explosion occurred near Railway Quarters at Zarghoon road around 9pm. Unknown persons used a local device along with timer for the blast, sources said.

Daily Times, 27 February 2005

**PML recommendations to Balochistan committee: Funds be allocated on poverty basis**

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Muslim League (PML) has submitted a draft of recommendations to the parliamentary sub-committee on Balochistan that is dealing with constitutional issues regarding the province's autonomy. The ruling party has proposed an extensive review of the concurrent list so as to ensure that proper devolution of power takes place, which will go a long way in promoting inter-provincial harmony and strengthening the federation by ensuring provincial autonomy. It suggested making the Council of Common Interests more effective and operational in order to enable it to fulfil its constitutional role.