

Dawn, 1 February 2008

Administrative system changes in NWFP, Fata likely

NWFP Governor Owais Ahmad Ghani on Thursday disclosed that the government was actively considering a set of measures to bring about structural changes in the administrative system in the NWFP and adjoining tribal regions to improve governance and ensure better security. "Extraordinary times require extraordinary decisions," Mr Ghani said in his maiden interaction with senior journalists at the Governor's House. Highlighting the fact that the NWFP had tribal regions straddling its boundaries, was different from Punjab and other provinces, Governor Owais said that he had been able to convince the leadership in Islamabad to bring about structural changes in the system of governance, both in the NWFP and tribal regions.

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Lawyers' countrywide rallies in support of deposed CJ

The legal community mounted protests and processions in the federal capital, the four provincial capitals and other cities and towns across the country on Thursday to mark the "Justice Iftikhar Day" on a call given by the Sindh High Court Bar Association. The call had been endorsed by the Pakistan Bar Council. Thousands of lawyers and jurists took part in the day's events as did the representatives of various civil society groups and political parties. Those who attended the events called for the release of the deposed chief justice of Pakistan, Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry, who has been under "detention" since Nov 3.

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Detention illegal, says Aitzaz

The government of Punjab stopped Supreme Court Bar Association president Aitzaz Ahsan from leaving his house on Thursday after the expiry of the period of his detention. Mr Ahsan was arrested on Nov 3, the day President Gen (ret'd) Musharraf imposed the emergency rule in the country. He was initially detained in solitary confinement in Adiala Jail and then put under house-arrest in Lahore. Mr Ahsan said his last detention order issued on Dec 31, 2007, had lapsed on Wednesday night, but he was being kept confined to his house unlawfully. He refused to accept the copy of a fresh detention order produced an hour after his house arrest order had lapsed.

Dawn, 1 February 2008

US, UK support for president criticised

The United States and other western nations have ignored rights abuses in Pakistan, where President Pervez Musharraf has tilted the electoral playing field by rewriting the constitution and firing the independent judiciary, the Human Rights Watch charged on Thursday. In its annual report, the group criticised the US and Britain for refusing to condition assistance to the government on improving pre-electoral conditions and for ignoring undemocratic acts by President Musharraf because of his support for the 'war on terror'. It charged that Mr Musharraf imposed an emergency in November to head off a Supreme Court ruling on the legality of his re-election and crack down on a movement for judicial independence.

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Musharraf urged to hand over power to Iftikhar

An association of retired military officers on Thursday urged President Pervez Musharraf to step down and hand over power to Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry. Reading out the resolutions unanimously adopted at a meeting of the Ex-Servicemen's Society, Air Marshal (ret'd) Asghar Khan said Justice Iftikhar was still the Chief Justice of Pakistan. He said that after taking over as the president Justice Iftikhar should form a neutral interim government to hold credible election in consultation with the mainstream political parties. He said the current set-up was an extension of the PML-Q government.

Dawn, 2 February 2008

Five security personnel killed in suicide attack

At least five security personnel were killed and 13 others injured when a suicide car bomber blew himself up at the Kajhori checkpoint, some 3km north of Mirali town in North Waziristan on Friday. Local people and military officers said the suicide bomber rammed his explosive-laden car into the military checkpoint at about 4:30pm, breaking the ceasefire declared by the local Taliban a couple of months back. Five FC soldiers and eight personnel of the Khasadar force were injured. The attack took place near the site of the recent alleged missile strike by a US drone in which Al Qaeda commander Abu Laith Al Libi is reported to have been killed.

Dawn, 2 February 2008

N-capable Missile tested

Pakistan on Friday carried out a successful training launch of nuclear capable intermediate range Ghauri (Hatf V) ballistic missile. The missile has a range of 1,300km. According to an official announcement, the launch by the strategic missile group of the Army's Strategic Force Command came at the conclusion of the annual field training exercises. Part of the exercise and the missile launch were witnessed by President Pervez Musharraf and Chief of Army Staff Gen Ashfaq Parvez Kayani. The president said that the nation had developed a strong nuclear deterrence capability.

Dawn, 2 February 2008

Who killed Al Libi: Pakistani or US troops?

Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, who plans to visit Pakistan later this month for talks with the new army chief, said on Friday that he could not disclose whether it were Pakistani or American troops who killed a top Al Qaeda figure earlier this week. "I'm not going to talk any more about the operational side of this, of how that in fact occurred," said Admiral Michael Glenn Mullen. Abu Laith Al Libi, one of Osama bin Laden's top five lieutenants, was killed in North Waziristan on Tuesday. Earlier reports said Libi was killed by a missile fired by a US drone.

Dawn, 2 February 2008

Aitzaz calls for complete boycott of PCO judges

Supreme Court Bar Association president Aitzaz Ahsan has asked lawyers to completely boycott the courts of judges who have taken the oath under the Provisional Constitution Order. Addressing a press conference here on Friday, he said the boycott would be

absolute, except for Sindh where lawyers had to appear before the Sindh High Court to represent political workers arrested after Benazir Bhutto's assassination. Earlier in the day, the SCBA president visited the Lahore High Court Bar Association where he was accorded a warm welcome. The government had withdrawn on Thursday the detention orders of Mr Ahsan.

The Nation, 2 February 2008

US supporting Pakistan to clear terrorists safe havens

A State Department spokesman said Thursday that Pakistan was working closely with the United States in fighting some violent extremists and terrorists on Pakistani territory as he gave full marks to Pervez Musharraf's determination to stamp out such elements. "We have real interests in seeing that those tribal areas are no longer safe havens for terrorists," spokesman Sean McCormack said while answering a series of questions about the level support being given by Musharraf to the Americans and whether Washington was satisfied with his efforts. "We know that Musharraf is absolutely determined to, at every turn, fight terrorists, fight violent extremists," he said.

Dawn, 3 February 2008

Eight-hour battle leaves two cops, 2 militants dead

An eight-hour gunbattle between police and militants barricaded in a house left two policemen, two militants and a hostage dead in a village near here on Saturday. Police laid siege to the house in Palo Dheri village after being tipped off that militants were holed up there. The police asked them to turn themselves in, but the militants responded with a volley of shots. A reply by the law enforcers led to a sustained exchange of gunfire, during which the militants occupied another house in the neighbourhood, making the family hostage. Police said the militants used the hostage women and children as human shield.

Dawn, 3 February 2008

Aitzaz, Tariq under detention, again

The Punjab government put president of the Supreme Court Bar Association Chaudhry Aitzaz Ahsan under detention for a period of 30 days on Saturday, after he was stopped from flying out to Sukkur at the Allama Iqbal International Airport, Lahore, under an order of the Sindh government, issued earlier in the day. Also on Saturday, Justice (retd) Tariq Mehmood was put under 'preventive custody' by the Islamabad administration to pre-empt what it called his plans to create unrest in the capital. Both Mr Ahsan and Justice Mehmood have been leading the legal fraternity's ongoing campaign against the Musharraf government.

Dawn, 3 February 2008

US says president can dismiss parliament if judges restored

President Pervez Musharraf retains the power to dissolve the next parliament if it restores the previous judiciary, says the US State Department. A senior State Department official made these observations while explaining at a recent congressional hearing how the United States views the judicial crisis in Pakistan and how it believes this dispute can be resolved. Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher told a congressional panel that

while the United States views the sacking of judges in Pakistan as "not a good move," it also believes that the issue of an independent judiciary in Pakistan can't be solved that simply.

Dawn, 3 February 2008

Pakistan ready to allay fears about Gwadar port

With the ongoing joint exercises of the Pakistani and Saudi navies entering the combat phase, Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral M. Afzal Tahir brushed aside his Indian counterpart's concerns about Gwadar port. He also advised the world not to be overly concerned about the safety and security of Pakistan's nuclear assets. Responding to a journalist's question regarding his Indian counterpart's statement on the strategic partnership between Pakistan and China, with particular reference to Gwadar port, Admiral Tahir said: "It is purely a commercial venture and being a sovereign country we have all the right to take measures for the economic progress and development of the people of Pakistan." He said that if any country had apprehensions about the project, Pakistan was ready to allay its fears.

Dawn, 3 February 2008

Pakistani and Indian oil ministers to visit Iran

Iran said on Saturday that the petroleum ministers of India and Pakistan would come to Tehran later this month to discuss a multi-billion dollar project to transport Iranian gas to India via Pakistan. "We have invited the Indian petroleum minister with the Pakistanis to come here and they have accepted," Oil Minister Gholam Hossein Nozari told a news conference. "We are making efforts to make it a tripartite deal or it will become a bilateral one," he said, adding that talks were due to be held between February 14 to 16. In November, 2007, Iran gave India a four-month deadline to formally agree its participation after finalising the content of the 7.4-billion-dollar gas export deal with Pakistan.

Dawn, 4 February 2008

Unofficial 'ceasefire' in South Waziristan: Troops on the move, insists ISPR

An unofficial ceasefire agreed between security forces and militants has been holding ground in the troubled South Waziristan tribal region since Saturday, according to a tribal parliamentarian. However, the ISPR denies there has been any truce and says that security forces are advancing and pursuing their operation against militants in the Mehsud-dominated areas. ISPR Director General Maj-Gen Athar Abbas told Dawn that incidents of intermittent firing had been taking place in the area and there was no ceasefire. "Not at all, forces are consolidating their positions in the region and operation is still going on."

The Indian Express, 4 February 2008

600 bombers lying in wait: Report

As many as 600 suicide bombers are present in the Pakistani port city of Karachi where they are planning to carry out a major attack, arrested militants of an al-Qaeda linked banned outfit have told the police. "Around 600 Jundullah militants are present in Karachi. They are mentally prepared and trained to commit suicide attacks," Qasim Toori

and Danish alias Talha, arrested on Jan 29, were quoted as saying by a source privy to the interrogation. Most of the suicide bombers were former students of Islamabad's Lal Masjid which was stormed by the military last July to flush out extremists, the source told the Daily Times.

Dawn, 4 February 2008

Troops claim finding 'torture cells'

Security forces combing the Kohat Frontier Region for suspected hideouts of militants, demolished a number of torture cells, a sub-jail and the headquarters of local militants, officials and residents said. The militants' headquarters was demolished in the Paya area of Tor Chappar on Sunday. A mufti used the place to decide religious matters and issue decrees. The building also housed a sub-jail. In the Bostikhel area, a torture cell, a terrorist training camp and an arms depot were destroyed in a swoop by the forces. A garage was found where stolen government vehicles used to be kept. Paramilitary forces backed by army troops mopped up some hideouts and blew them up.

Dawn, 4 February 2008

Benazir's 'last testament' gives hint about plot to kill her

Former prime minister, the late Benazir Bhutto, in her still-to-be published book (Reconciliation: Islam, Democracy & the West) has asserted that Pakistan had become the epicentre for two epic battles - one, the intra-Islamic debate about the political and social values of democracy and modernity and the other, the looming potential for a catastrophic showdown between Islam and the West. In the book some extracts of which were carried by The Sunday Times (Exclusive: Benazir Bhutto's last testament) Ms Bhutto gives a hint about the hands that wrote the plot to kill her.

Dawn, 4 February 2008

Another suicide attack feared

Police in the twin cities of Rawalpindi- Islamabad have been directed to step up security around the Islamabad international airport, police and military installations, prominent political figures and foreigners in the light of intelligence that militants were planning to target them in retaliation to the ongoing operations in Swat and South Waziristan in very near future, Dawn has learnt. The city police officer of Rawalpindi and the senior superintendent of police Islamabad have also been intimated that this time the suicide bombers might use cyanide-dipped nails in the explosives which can increase the loss of lives and create panic among the security personnel.

Dawn, 5 February 2008

Terror revisits Pindi security zone: Two army officers, six others die

A lieutenant-colonel, a major and six others were killed in the city's high-security zone on Monday when a suicide bomber rammed his motorcycle into a minibus carrying trainees of the Armed Forces Post-Graduate Medical Institute (AFPGMI). Among others who lost their lives were a subedar, a naib subedar and an employee of the MES. The driver of the minibus and a motorcyclist also died. The eighth victim remained unidentified. At least 47 other people were injured in the powerful explosion, which was heard several kilometres away from the scene, sending a wave of panic through the vicinity.

Dawn, 5 February 2008

Bush seeks \$830m for Pakistan

US President George W. Bush on Monday unveiled a \$3.1 trillion budget plan for 2009, which includes a financial assistance of \$830 million for Pakistan. The purpose of this assistance is to "sustain our strategic partnership with Pakistan," the White House said. "Approximately \$830 million (will) help Pakistan achieve stability, development, and democracy goals." The US assistance focuses "on security, economic development, and combating terrorism in Pakistan's western frontier regions," the White House said. President Bush also has requested \$1.1 billion to "help build a stable Afghanistan."

The News, 5 February 2008

Deposed judges can never be reinstated: Musharraf

President Pervez Musharraf has said that the deposed judges would not be restored in any circumstances and a situation will not crop up prompting parliament to restore them since any change in the present status will require two-thirds support in House for such a move. To a question, President Pervez Musharraf said that the presumption of dissolving the next National Assembly in case it opts to restore the deposed judges of the superior courts is out of place. No parliament would like to remove sitting judges of the court. He disclosed that the Supreme Court would be attaining its full strength soon with two more judges being inducted shortly.

Dawn, 5 February 2008

Kashmir Solidarity Day today

The Kashmir Solidarity Day is being observed across Pakistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir on Tuesday, but in an atmosphere when the alleged flip-flopping by Islamabad on the issue has raised several eyebrows in the Kashmiri quarters. Some like the hardline Kashmiri leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani have even questioned the "moral standing" of the incumbent regime in Pakistan to observe "solidarity" with the struggling Kashmiris in the face of "unilateral concessions to India on Kashmir."

Dawn, 5 February 2008

Accord to exchange security information signed with India

India and Pakistan on Monday signed an agreement to exchange security information, officials said, opening up a new channel of communication between the two countries. The accord clears the way for regular contact between India's military-funded Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA) and Pakistan's state-run Institute for Strategic Studies (ISS). "The purpose is to build channels of communication at the level of scholars, because exchanges of security studies had been limited because of the strained ties we have had," ISDA director Narendra Sisodia told AFP.

The News, 6 February 2008

Benazir's will endorses Zardari as successor

The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) on Tuesday made public the will of slain party leader Benazir Bhutto that named her husband and party co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari as her political heir. PPP Central Information Secretary Sherry Rehman unveiled the

handwritten will - dated October 16, just two days before the former prime minister returned to the country from almost eight years of self-exile - at the Naudero home of Benazir Bhutto. "I would like my husband Asif Ali Zardari to lead you (the PPP) in this interim period until you and he decide what is best. I say this because he is a man of courage and honour," the will stated.

Dawn, 6 February 2008

Taliban issue new warning in Darra: DCO convenes jirga

Militants resurfaced in the Frontier Region of Darra Adamkhel on Tuesday and warned local tribesmen of dire consequences if they did not stop cooperating with the government and security forces. Handbills and pamphlets purportedly distributed in the Darra bazaar by the Islami Taliban and Tehrik-i-Taliban warned local people against cooperating with the army and paramilitary personnel. The tribal Khasadar force should not escort security personnel during their movement in the area, warned a pamphlet. "If anyone is found violating the Taliban directive they will be considered as agents of the government and will be treated as traitors," the pamphlet said.

Dawn, 6 February 2008

N-assets facing no serious threat, says US official

Political turmoil in Pakistan has not seriously threatened the military's control of its nuclear weapons "but vulnerabilities exist," the US intelligence chief told a congressional panel on Tuesday. J. Michael McConnell, director of US National Intelligence, also blamed 'terrorists' for killing former prime minister Benazir Bhutto and warned that it "could embolden militants, increasing their confidence that they can strike the Pakistani establishment anywhere in the country". In his annual report to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Mr McConnell noted that India and Pakistan were not involved in a Cold War-style nuclear arms race.

Dawn, 6 February 2008

Pakistan assures full support to Kashmiris

Pakistan has reassured the people of occupied Kashmir of steadfastness in extending political, moral and diplomatic support to their struggle for freedom. The assurance came in a message by caretaker prime minister Mohammedmian Soomro on the Kashmir Solidarity Day, which was observed in Pakistan and Azad Kashmir on Tuesday. Mr Soomro said it unfortunate that the United Nations had not lived up to its commitment to Kashmiris made 60 years ago. Pakistan, he said, was pursuing a sustained dialogue with India for a peaceful solution to the Kashmir issue in accordance with the wishes of Kashmiri people.

The News, 6 February 2008

Taliban in Pakistan a global threat: UK think tank

Senior researchers at Britain's International Institute for Strategic Studies warned on Tuesday that 'neo-Taliban' groups operating in Pakistan's tribal areas may soon become a global menace. "They have the potential to turn a local threat into a trans-national threat," said Nigel Inkster, who directs a risk analysis unit at the London-based security think tank. "There is some evidence they were involved with the assassination of Benazir

Bhutto and that they have dispatched terrorists to the United Kingdom and Spain." He said international terrorism remains a 'growth industry' and that the groups in Pakistan had earned the 'dubious honour' of making the most strides during the past year.

Dawn, 7 February 2008

Baitullah declares 'unilateral ceasefire'

Tehrik-i-Taliban chief Baitullah Mehsud declared a unilateral ceasefire in South Waziristan on Wednesday after the security forces started vacating positions in some key places. "Since the army has minimised the scale of operations, the Taliban shura decided to halt activities across the country for an indefinite period," Maulvi Umar, Mr Mehsud's spokesman, told Dawn by phone. "No, there is no secret deal with the government. This is our unilateral decision," the spokesman said in reply to a question whether militants had struck a fresh deal with the security forces. Mr Umar said the shura meeting that endorsed the truce was held at a secret place.

The News, 7 February 2008

General among seven Army officers killed

Seven Pakistan Army officers, including General Officer Commanding (GOC), Kohat, Maj Gen Javed Sultan, besides a Lance Naik were killed when a military helicopter crashed in the troubled South Waziristan Agency (SWA) on Wednesday. Officials and tribal sources told The News that the military helicopter was carrying senior officers back to Kohat from Wana, South Waziristan's regional headquarters, when it crashed near Tanai town at around 2:30 pm. They said the copter developed some technical fault five minutes after it left for Kohat. Military spokesman Maj Gen Athar Abbas, when reached on telephone, told The News that the copter crashed due to purely technical problems.

Dawn, 7 February 2008

Jirga formed to negotiate with militants

The government has decided to form a 'grand jirga' to work out a peace agreement with tribal leaders in Waziristan. Among the chiefs the administration plans to negotiate with is Baitullah Mehsud. "The government, in collaboration with a jirga consisting of influential and local people from the Fata and the Frontier regions, would soon take measures for sustainable peace in the tribal areas," caretaker Interior Minister Lt-Gen (retd) Hamid Nawaz Khan told journalists during a briefing. "The demand of initiating a peace process was made by the Mehsuds, who are on the run after being crushed by the security forces in Waziristan," he added.

Dawn, 7 February 2008

Zardari denies he's candidate for PM's job

One needed to contest elections to first become an MNA before seeking the post of prime minister, says Pakistan People's Party co-chairperson Asif Ali Zardari. He was talking to a delegation of journalists in Naudero on Wednesday. "I am not contesting the elections and, therefore, the question of my becoming a candidate for the post of prime minister does not arise," Mr Zardari said. He said he had spoken to Babar Awan who had issued a statement in this regard and Mr Awan clarified that he expressed his personal desire. He added that the statement had been 'misinterpreted'.

Dawn, 7 February 2008

US helping expand commando force

US military advisers are helping the Pakistanis double the size of their elite commando force in a continuing effort to blunt the rising threat of terror groups and anti-government militants operating in the unruly tribal areas, a senior Defence Department official said on Wednesday. The American military presence is fewer than 100 personnel, said Mike Vickers, assistant secretary of defence for special operations and low-intensity conflict, and is focused on what he called "targeted training." That includes assisting Pakistan's Special Service Group and teaching specialised fighting techniques, such as helicopter assaults.

Dawn, 7 February 2008

'Economy is weakening amid strife sweeping Pakistan'

Pakistan's economy is weakening amid the strife sweeping the country, according to a report in The Wall Street Journal. "Anaemic textile exports, rising food prices and energy shortages have undercut growth, causing the government to miss a range of economic targets, the newspaper said in a dispatch from Karachi. Last month the government said growth would fall below its original target of 7.2 per cent for the fiscal year ending June 30." After spasms of violence that followed the assassination of PPP leader Benazir Bhutto, and the approach of national elections on Feb 18 that held the potential for more unrest, the Journal, citing analysts, said that the economy could slacken further.

The News, 8 February 2008

SY hand Benazir' probe report to interior ministry

The British detective team of Scotland Yard handed the investigation report on Benazir Bhutto's murder at Liaquat Bagh on December 27 to the officials of interior ministry on Friday morning. IG Punjab and British diplomat were also present on the occasion. It should be mentioned that a US-based newspaper published some of the excerpts of the report in its Friday edition. The newspaper report said that it was not bullet that killed Benazir Bhutto; instead, the force of blast caused her death.

Dawn, 8 February 2008

Two suspects held in Benazir case

Police said on Thursday they had arrested two more suspects in connection with the assassination of PPP chairperson Benazir Bhutto, as a Scotland Yard team helping Pakistani investigators into the terror attack of Dec 27 returned to Islamabad from Britain. A senior police official confirmed the arrest of the two suspects and said they were being interrogated. "Two very important terrorists - Hasnain and Razaqat - have been arrested this morning with the help of Rawalpindi police," a police statement said. Police said that Hasnain and Razaqat were relatives of two key suspects arrested earlier in connection with the assassination.

Dawn, 8 February 2008

Plan to withdraw army officers from civil departments

Chief of the Army Staff Gen Ashfaq Parvez Kayani has said the army will have no role in

the electoral process except maintaining law and order. Presiding over the 106th Corps Commanders' Conference here on Thursday, he emphasised that holding free and fair elections was the sole responsibility of the Election Commission. "The army will meet only its constitutional obligations and help the civil administration maintain law and order, as and when required," he said. According to an official press release, he approved a policy about 'de-induction' of serving officers seconded to civil departments.

Dawn, 8 February 2008

What next in South Waziristan?

THE wheel has come full circle in South Waziristan. It has been a little over three and a half years since the launch of the military operation in areas dominated by the Mehsud tribe after the government had used similar tactics to force tribal militants to submit to state authority and expel foreign militants. The three-pronged operation is a repeat of a similar exercise that led the military into the Mehsud territory between March and July of 2004. The military did prevail after encountering stiff resistance but what it had won through hard battle it lost through negotiations in Sararogha in February, 2005. A senior government official at the time had asked: "Whose compulsion is it to strike a deal, ours or the militants"?

The News, 8 February 2008

Mehsud replaces Osama as biggest threat to West

Baitullah Mehsud has replaced Osama bin Laden as the West's deadliest threat and public enemy number one. Mehsud who is suspected of masterminding the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, was the most significant non-state threat to global security to have emerged in the past year, said Nigel Inkster, former deputy chief of the British Intelligence Service, MI6, speaking at the International Institute of Strategic Studies. He said international terrorism remained a growth industry and the new generation of the Taliban had earned the dubious honour of enabling it to rise even faster than the earlier one.

The Nation, 8 February 2008

US reacts cautiously to Taliban's ceasefire move

The United States reacted cautiously to Wednesday's declaration by a coalition of Taliban militants in northwestern Pakistan of an "indefinite ceasefire" in fighting against security forces, saying it must see the agreement first. "I don't have any information that would support that there's any kind of renewal of the previous agreement that had been placed," State Department deputy spokesman Tom Casey said, while responding to questions on the Taliban's move. "I think everyone understands, including President (Pervez) Musharraf by his own statements, that that agreement with tribal leaders did not, in fact, produce the results that everyone, including President Musharraf, had intended," he said.

Dawn, 9 February 2008

Questions raised over Scotland Yard report: 'Benazir killed by bomb, not bullet'

The Scotland Yard's report into the assassination of Benazir Bhutto raises many questions as its author seems to be uncertain about the actual cause of her death and the identity of the killers remains a mystery. In the four-page investigation report made public on Friday

in a press conference by the head of the local investigation team, Chaudhry Abdul Majeed, the UK investigators said Ms Bhutto died of a severe head injury sustained from the effect of the bomb blast, not by the gunfire.

Dawn, 9 February 2008

PPP disagrees with findings, insists on UN probe

The Pakistan People's Party will continue its demand for a UN-led investigation to expose the hands which organised, financed, sponsored and perpetrated the assassination of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto. This was stated by the party's Information Secretary Sherry Rehman during an interview with private television channels and in response to Dawn's questions about Scotland Yard's report handed over to the authorities concerned and the PPP leadership on Friday. "We disagree with the finding on the cause of the death," said Ms Rehman.

The News, 9 February 2008

US reject any deal that allow Taliban to re-organize

United States said it would not accept any deal that allows Taliban to re-organize themselves in Pakistani tribal areas. In Washington, the State Department signaled it would oppose any agreement that resembled the last truce. "I think everyone understands that that agreement with tribal leaders did not in fact produce the results that everyone had intended," deputy spokesman Tom Casey told reporters. "We would certainly want to see that any arrangement made was effective at pursuing common goal of United states and Pakistan, which is being able to defend against these kinds of extremist groups," he said.

Dawn, 9 February 2008

US Senate resolution seeks review of aid package for Pakistan

A resolution introduced in the US Senate urges President George W. Bush to review all US aid packages to Pakistan to ensure that they promote democracy in the country. The resolution, sponsored jointly by Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Joseph R. Biden and Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama, describes the creation of 'a free and democratic Pakistan' as one of the common goals shared by both countries to combat violent radicalism. The resolution says that former prime minister Benazir Bhutto's murder calls for a concerted effort to ensure that Pakistan returns to the democratic path.

The News, 9 February 2008

Nawaz claims rejecting Musharraf's reconciliation bid five times

PML-N Quaid Mian Nawaz Sharif has said President Pervez Musharraf sent five emissaries to him for reconciliation but he had refused to negotiate with them. He said Musharraf had expressed his willingness to work with him if he was elected prime minister. However, Nawaz clarified that there was no question of maintaining any working relationship with a person who had sacked an elected government. He said he could not compromise the interests of 160 million people just for personal gains. Addressing a public gathering at Sangla Hill on Friday, Nawaz Sharif held Pervez Musharraf responsible for the killing of innocent students of Lal Masjid and thousands of missing persons.

Dawn, 10 February 2008

ANP rally bombed, 25 dead: Charsadda rocked thrice in 10 months; PA candidate injured

A powerful bomb ripped through a public meeting of the Awami National Party here on Saturday, killing 25 people and injuring 51 others. Officials said the bomb had been planted near the stage and the explosion occurred as soon as recitation from the Holy Quran began. The meeting was organised in the Hujra (cell) of Khursheed Khan, a local leader of the party. "I was near the stage when the explosion took place. There was no one near the place of the blast," said Laiq Shah, an injured guard. But federal Interior Minister Hamid Nawaz termed it a suicide attack.

Dawn, 10 February 2008

US general rules out unilateral action in Pakistan

The United States will not attack or invade Pakistan and the two countries would have to work together for a 'very long time', the Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen, said at a press conference on Saturday. The admiral earlier met President Pervez Musharraf, Gen Tariq Majeed, the Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, army chief Gen Ashfaq Parvez Kayani and chief of the Strategic Planning Division, Lt-Gen (ret) Khalid Kidwai. He said he had held very constructive talks, particularly about intensifying the war on terror in the region.

Dawn, 10 February 2008

Zardari proposes 'political contract'

The Pakistan People's Party would work for a new 'political contract' between the federating units and the centre. The assassination of Benazir Bhutto 'by the people running the old system' had made this necessary, PPP co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari told a public meeting here on Saturday. Speaking at the meeting - the first election event held by the PPP since Ms Bhutto's assassination - he said the slain leader sacrificed her life for the prosperity and integrity of Pakistan, warning that if polls were rigged, things might go out of control. The PPP co-chairman said he would not allow the 'people in power in Islamabad' to continue 'oppression and tyranny' against the common man in all the provinces.

Dawn, 10 February 2008

FO dismisses claims Omar, Osama are in Pakistan: US opposes talks with militants

Mullah Omar and other Taliban leaders are directing operations against the US-led forces in Afghanistan from Quetta while Osama bin Laden and his deputy, Ayman al Zawahri, are hiding in the tribal area, a US official said on Friday. In Islamabad, a spokesman for the Foreign Office dismissed the US claim. "The claim by an unnamed official is baseless," Mohammad Sadiq, the spokesman, said during a briefing on Saturday. Islamabad would take action if Washington gave it intelligence to substantiate the claim, Mr Sadiq added. The US claim followed reports that Islamabad was negotiating a truce with tribal leaders in South Waziristan - a move consistently opposed by Washington.

Dawn, 10 February 2008

Security forces drive out militants from Kabal

Security forces on Saturday launched a massive search operation, arresting 16 of the militants said to be loyal to radical cleric Maulana Fazlullah and forcing them to flee Kabal tehsil, their last stronghold in Swat Valley. This was the first time police and troops of the Frontier Corps entered Deulai, Thootano Bandai, Shah Dheri, Kala Kalley and Monja areas since the start of the operation in Swat. During the joint operation, officials said, a huge cache of arms and ammunition was seized. "Militants are on the run now in the length and breadth of Swat Valley. The troops are encountering no resistance," an official claimed.

Dawn, 11 February 2008

Al Qaeda posing direct threat to govt: US: Europe warned against defeat in Afghanistan

US Defence Secretary Robert Gates has warned that Al Qaeda and Taliban forces in the tribal region pose a direct threat to the government. The presence of the extremists in the tribal region was not just 'a nuisance' to Pakistan, but "is potentially a threat to their government," Mr Gates told an international security conference here on Sunday. He suggested that the time had come for a Pakistani anti-insurgency sweep on its side of the Afghan border. Mr Gates warned that the failure of the international force in Afghanistan would increase the security threat to Europe.

The Nation, 11 February 2008

70pc want Musharraf to quit: poll

Sympathy for Al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden and the Taliban has dropped sharply in Pakistan amid a wave of deadly violence, according to the results of a recent opinion poll, reports USA Today. The survey also identified Benazir Bhutto's PPP as the country's most popular ahead of elections, and said most Pakistanis want President Pervez Musharraf to quit. The poll, conducted last month for the US-based Terror Free Tomorrow organisation, suggests Pakistanis are looking to peaceful opposition groups after months of political turmoil and a wave of suicide attacks. Also, in a sharp rebuke to Musharraf - who seized power in a 1999 coup and whose standing has slumped since he tried to fire country's chief justice last March - 70 per cent of voters think he should quit immediately.

The News, 11 February 2008

Kabul backs US assertion on Osama's whereabouts

Afghanistan said on Sunday it backed a senior US official's assertion that al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden and Taliban chief Mullah Mohammad Omar were operating from neighbouring Pakistan. The US official said Osama, his deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri and other network members were operating out of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, bordering Afghanistan. Mullah Omar and other ousted Afghan Taliban leaders, meanwhile, were directing insurgent operations in Afghanistan from Quetta, said the US official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. Pakistan has rejected the charge, but a spokesman for the Afghan President Hamid Karzai welcomed it.

Dawn, 11 February 2008

Two would-be bombers among 36 held in Swat

About 36 militants, including two would-be suicide bombers, were arrested and a large quantity of arms and ammunition was seized during a search operation in Kabal tehsil on Sunday. According to the Swat Media Centre, security forces have resumed the operation early in the morning in Thutano Bandai, Teghak Banbai, Galeuch, Sersanai and Manja areas and seized weapons, including Kalashnikovs, pistols, shot guns, hand-grenades, detonators and live rounds. The forces pounded militant hideouts and arrested two boys aged between 15 and 18 years who allegedly had received training for carrying out suicide attacks.

Dawn, 11 February 2008

N-arms with 'volatile states a threat to India'

India said on Sunday that it faces threats from countries that are "authoritarian, anti-democratic and anti-secular" and expressed concern over risks from nuclear weapons in the hands of 'volatile states', a possible reference to Pakistan. India's National Security Adviser M. K. Narayanan was quoted as saying in Munich that South Asia has been a 'source' as well as a 'destination' of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and said it was a matter of concern if proper steps were not put in place.

Dawn, 12 February 2008

Taliban commander Dadullah captured

QUETTA, Feb 11: Security forces captured an important Taliban commander, Mullah Mansoor Dadullah, along with five other Taliban after a gunbattle near the Afghan border on Monday. The clash occurred in Gowal Ismailzai village of Balochistan's Qila Saifullah district. "Mullah Mansoor Dadullah and five other Taliban were injured in a heavy exchange of fire with security forces," an official source told Dawn. He denied reports that Mansoor Dadullah had been killed in the fighting

Dawn, 12 February 2008

Envoy to Kabul goes missing: Tariq Azizuddin feared kidnapped in Khyber Agency

LANDI KOTAL, Feb 11: Pakistan's Ambassador to Afghanistan Tariq Azizuddin was kidnapped along with his bodyguard and driver in Khyber tribal region's Jamrud sub-district on Monday. "He is missing and we believe that he has been kidnapped," a security official said. A political administration official in Jamrud confirmed the incident, but said that the administration had no prior information about his visit

Dawn, 12 February 2008

Army officers recalled from civil departments

ISLAMABAD, Feb 11: Pakistan Army on Monday called back all its serving officers from 23 civil departments, in what is being termed here as part of a plan to improve the image of the armed forces. "More than 300 army officers are presently working in various civil departments and majority of them have been asked to report to the General Headquarters (GHQ) immediately," Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General Maj-Gen Athar Abbas told Dawn here on Monday

Dawn, 12 February 2008

IRI survey sees opposition sweeping polls

WASHINGTON, Feb 11: President Pervez Musharraf's popularity has hit an all-time low while opposition parties can have a landslide victory in the Feb 18 elections, said an opinion survey released on Monday. The surveyors Washington-based International Republican Institute, noted that a major victory for opposition parties could force the president to step down. Released a week before the parliamentary elections, the survey predicted a bleak future for the former ruling party, PML-Q

Dawn, 13 February 2008

Missing envoy untraced

ISLAMABAD / LANDI KOTAL, Feb 12: Security forces have launched a massive search along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border for the missing, reportedly kidnapped, Pakistani Ambassador to Kabul Tariq Azizuddin. "The search operation has started in Tirah Valley, but we are not sure if Mr Azizuddin has been abducted by the Taliban," Interior Ministry spokesman Brig (retd) Javed Iqbal Cheema said on Tuesday

Dawn, 13 February 2008

Over 19,000 polling stations sensitive: Troop deployment begins

ISLAMABAD, Feb 12: Deployment of army troops for maintaining peace in different parts of the country during the elections began on Tuesday and the government declared over 19,000 polling stations sensitive and imposed a complete ban on carrying and display of weapons in the vicinity of the stations

The News, 14 February 2008

Gang of five killed Benazir

RAWALPINDI: The PPP Chairperson, Benazir Bhutto, was killed by assailants who had visited the site of the incident a night before in a taxi to carry out a rehearsal, the Additional Inspector General of Police and CID Chief Abdul Majeed announced here on Wednesday. The News had reported on January 8 that the former prime minister Benazir Bhutto was murdered according to a plan and the killers had rehearsed the operation on the road where she was gunned down

The News, 14 February 2008

Pakistan tests Ghaznavi missile

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Wednesday successfully test-fired a short-range missile capable of carrying a nuclear device. The Army's Strategic Missile Group launched the Ghaznavi missile, which has a range of 290 kilometres (180 miles), from an undisclosed location, a military statement said. Prime Minister Muhammadmian Soomro, top Army officials and scientists witnessed the test, it said. With the launch, the Army's Strategic Force Command "concluded its highly successful winter collective training", the statement said. Wednesday's launch was the third in recent weeks

The News, 14 February 2008

112 EU observers to monitor polls

ISLAMABAD: The European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) has reached its full strength by deploying 31 short term observers (STO) on Wednesday,

which brings the total number of the EU election observers to 112

Daily Times, 15 February 2008

False surveys will disturb peace, says Musharraf

ISLAMABAD: President Pervez Musharraf said on Thursday that he would ensure free, fair and transparent election, but warned foreign organisations against disturbing peace in Pakistan by projecting unrealistic surveys.

Daily Times, 15 February 2008

Editorial: The wave against President Musharraf

According to a new BBC World Service poll, a large majority of Pakistanis "64 percent" believe that stability and security in Pakistan would improve "if President Pervez Musharraf were to resign now", leaving only 25 percent thinking that security would get worse if he were to resign. This shows that President Musharraf's stock is down since the first quarter of 2007 when he made one of his "Kargilian" blunders by using rough tactics in dismissing the chief justice of Pakistan. Before that the "silent majority" that supported him expressed its opinion by refusing to join the "million" marches called by the opposition

Dawn, 15 February 2008

Musharraf hits out at "biased" opinion polls

ISLAMABAD, Feb 14: President Pervez Musharraf has rejected opinion surveys conducted by foreign organisations and said opinions of 3,000 people cannot be taken as the opinion of 160 million people of the country. He asked foreign organisations and NGOs, especially those conducting such surveys not to "disturb the peace of this region. You are playing with the peace of the world."

Dawn, 15 February 2008

Editorial: Political parties and the election caveat

So Mr Asif Ali Zardari is more than testing the waters in Punjab. Settling into the post of the People's Party co-chairmanship, he has called for a broad-based government after Monday's elections, a wish that finds resonance with Mr Nawaz Sharif, the seemingly strong man in his home province. Together, the PPP and the PML-N are arguably the two parties with wider appeal that goes beyond their respective provincial strongholds. Their agreement on working with each other in the post-election scenario, and leaving the door open for other parties like the MQM and the JUI, for instance, who may wish to join them in the quest of putting together a stable democratic government, augurs well for the country

The News, 16 February 2008

COAS seeks public support for peaceful polls

RAWALPINDI: Chief of the Army Staff General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani has requested all segments of the society to help the Army and the law enforcement agencies to maintain law and order during the general elections. He made this request while presiding over a meeting at the GHQ in Rawalpindi on Friday. The COAS expressed satisfaction over the Army's deployment to maintain law and order during the general elections, strictly in

accordance with the dictates of the Constitution

The News, 16 February 2008

Editorial: Denying the obvious

President Pervez Musharraf's veiled threat to foreign organizations conducting opinion polls in the country, some of which have recently released findings showing a sharp decline in the president's popularity, is regrettable. The gist of the argument -- which has been also expounded recently by a government spokesman -- is that by asking a few thousand people, these foreign polling organizations cannot possibly be holding surveys that are representative of the opinions and views of a population of 160 million. However, this argument is facetious at best because it fails to understand the mechanics of how polls are held by such organizations

The News, 16 February 2008

Opinion: The moment of truth for Fazlur Rahman (Rahimullah Yusufzai)

The man who until a few months ago was one of Pakistan's most influential politicians is now mostly confined to his rural home in a remote part of the country in Dera Ismail Khan. Maulana Fazlur Rahman cannot campaign publicly due to security concerns in an election that could drastically reduce his importance and cut down to size the MMA, the religio-political alliance that he and fellow Islamic political leaders led to a spectacular victory and power in the October 2002 general elections

The News, 16 February 2008

Opinion: A sectoral look at party manifestos (Dr Sania Nishtar)

The pre-election political party debates relating to their positions on various sectoral processes of the state on national television have prompted many of us to review party manifestos with the view to exploring strengths and weaknesses in an attempt to determine the deciding edge. Although the process may be indecisive, it leads one to acknowledge the fact that writing a manifesto must not be an easy task as bringing clarity and coherence to a range of party positions is a task that demands both strategic capacity and vision within party ranks.

The Hindu, 17 February 2008

Pakistan gears up for polls amid tight security

LAHORE: Even as the Pakistan government deployed 81,000 troops in preparation for a historic election on Monday, a suicide bomber killed as many as 37 people at a Pakistan People's Party gathering in a north-west frontier tribal area on Saturday. The attack on the final day of campaigning deepened the widespread sense of insecurity and uncertainty in the country

The Hindu, 17 February 2008

Zardari confident of victory

Lahore: Confident of a victory for his party in a free and fair election on February 18, Pakistan People's Party leader Asif Ali Zardari on Saturday refused to rule out working with President Pervez Musharraf and said the PPP will cross that bridge when we come to it and that it would be collective decision of the party

The Hindu, 18 February 2008

Pakistan goes to polls amid fear of violence

ISLAMABAD: A tense quiet descended over Pakistan a day before the country was to vote in a crucial election on Monday, with fears of suicide blasts, poll-related violence and rigging topping voters concerns and threatening to affect the turnout. Monday's battle is for 272 National Assembly seats. Elections in three parliamentary constituencies have been postponed in Larkana on account of Benazir Bhutto's death, in a constituency in Lahore again due to the death of a candidate, and in South Waziristan due to the tense situation prevailing in the area. Elections are also being held simultaneously for 570 seats in the four provincial assemblies

The Hindu, 18 February 2008

Hostility surprises Musharraf

LONDON: For the first time, Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf has publicly admitted that his ruling alliance, dubbed the "King's party" may not be able to form a government after Monday's elections. In a rare moment of candour, he has also acknowledged his almost total isolation in his own country suggesting that he is surviving on Western support

Daily Times, 20 February 2008

Musharraf must quit: Zardari, Nawaz

LAHORE: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Co-chairman Asif Zardari and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) chief Nawaz Sharif on Tuesday separately called for President Pervez Musharraf to quit after his allies were defeated in the general elections. Earlier, talking to reporters at a press conference at Zardari House in Islamabad, he said he would form a coalition government, but ruled out an alliance with the Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q).

Dawn, 20 February 2008

PML-N single largest party in Punjab

LAHORE, Feb 19: In what has been described here as the "battle for Punjab" the Pakistan Muslim League-N has emerged as the single largest party in the Punjab assembly by securing 102 seats with the Pakistan People's Party and PML-Q trailing behind with 78 and 66 seats, respectively, according to the unofficial results received from different districts of the province till Tuesday night

Dawn, 20 February 2008

Balochistan: saving grace for PML-Q

QUETTA, Feb 19: Despite having been virtually routed in three provinces, the Pakistan Muslim League-Q has emerged as the largest single party in the Balochistan assembly, bagging 17 of 51 seats. The Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal, which had won 12 seats in 2002 and was part of the coalition government led by the PML-Q, could get only seven seats this time. The PPP made a comeback and won seven seats. It had bagged only two seats in the last election.

Dawn, 20 February 2008

KARACHI: MQM major election winner in city, PPP distant second

KARACHI, Feb 19: The Feb 18 poll results seem to have proved wrong electoral assessments about "surprises" in the city as the results of the National Assembly and provincial assembly seats indicate that the Muttahida Qaumi Movement is a major winner. According to official results made available by the election commission, the MQM secured 17 out of 20 NA seats and 35 out of 42 PS seats. The Pakistan People's Party won three NA and seven PS seats. The Awami National Party also secured a seat in the Sindh Assembly.

Dawn, 20 February 2008

Editorial: After the count: what next?

Experts will be working out the various permutations on calculators but one thing ought not to be pushed out of sight in the activity leading up to government formation. The voters have punished all those seen as being supportive of autocratic rule. But they haven't gone ahead and given a huge majority to one single party. One can safely assume that Pakistanis want more self-governance, more provincial autonomy and a relatively weak centre that allows them to lead their lives the way they wish to. As the new parliament comes into existence and starts to discuss and debate the challenges confronting the country, let it not forget that more autonomy to the federating units will be a good antidote to many of the ills afflicting the country today. It will bring the Federation closer together

Dawn, 22 February 2008

Zardari, Nawaz agree to form coalition

ISLAMABAD, Feb 21: Three parties that emerged as the main winners of Monday's election said after their talks on Thursday they had agreed to form a coalition to govern at the centre and in provinces, but ticklish details of what could be a landmark combine of former political foes remained to be sorted out

Dawn, 22 February 2008

US sending conflicting signals on new set-up in Pakistan

WASHINGTON, Feb 21: The United States on Thursday was sending conflicting signals on its position on the current political situation in Pakistan, with the White House saying that it's up to the Pakistani people to decide President Pervez Musharraf's political future and the State Department insisting that Washington hopes to continue to work with the embattled leader.

The News, 22 February 2008

Army ensured free and fair election

ISLAMABAD: Clear instructions were issued to the police and local government Nazims by the relevant military authorities throughout the country not to interfere with the polls on Feb 18, a key decision which turned polling day into a free and fair exercise, despite the script which had been written a long time back

The News, 22 February 2008

Most Nazims may go after political change

ISLAMABAD: A predominant majority of incumbent district and Tehsil Nazims will face no-confidence motions with the installation of new governments of different political parties in the provinces. Leaders of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) and Awami National Party (ANP) say most of the Nazims would be removed because they don't represent the people and were imposed through force

Dawn, 23 February 2008

Pressure on Asif, Nawaz to work with president

ISLAMABAD, Feb 22: Western envoys in Islamabad continued on Friday what seemed to be hectic contacts with the leaders of parties that won last Monday's elections amid mounting worries about President Pervez Musharraf's political future. The president has come under renewed pressures after the elections threw up all opponents of his iron-fisted rule for more than eight years and crushed the main party of his loyalists

Dawn, 23 February 2008

PPP-MQM embrace on the cards

ISLAMABAD / KARACHI, Feb 22: The Zardari House in Islamabad remained the centre of political activities on Friday and a number of key political players, including two allies of President Pervez Musharraf, contacted PPP co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari to discuss possibilities of cooperation inside and outside the parliament. In a significant development, Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) chief Altaf Hussain talked to Mr Zardari on telephone from London and expressed his desire to work with the PPP in the future set-up

The News, 23 February 2008

Bomb kills 16 of wedding party in Swat

PESHAWAR/MINGORA: Sixteen people, including six children, were killed and 12 others injured when a wedding party was targeted with a remote-controlled bomb in the militancy-hit Swat valley on Friday. Police officials said the wedding party was heading for Dorkat village from the adjacent Ochray village in the troubled Matta sub-division when unidentified miscreants attacked it with an improvised explosive device, commonly known as IEDs

Dawn, 24 February 2008

No deal with PML-Q in Punjab, NWFP: PPP

ISLAMABAD, Feb 23: The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has dismissed the idea of forming provincial governments with the help of the Pakistan Muslim League-Q (PML-Q) in either Punjab or the NWFP. The party's newly elected legislators called for correcting the power disparity between the presidency and parliament. Two separate meetings were held at the Zardari House in which PPP's parliamentary groups from Punjab and the Frontier discussed options in the post-election scenario

Dawn, 24 February 2008

Amin Fahim rules out impeachment, for now

ISLAMABAD, Feb 23: PPP Vice-Chairman Makhdoom Amin Fahim, a strong candidate for the post of prime minister, said on Saturday there was no need at the moment to impeach President Pervez Musharraf. But he hastened to add that the parliament was sovereign and it would look into every issue.

Dawn, 24 February 2008

PML-Q to sit on opposition benches

ISLAMABAD, Feb 23: The Pakistan Muslim League (PML-Q) on Saturday unanimously decided not to join a national government and to sit on the opposition benches in the National Assembly and to form government in Balochistan. The party's winning and defeated members for the National Assembly met at the PML House to assess and analyse the reasons and causes of the party's drubbing in the general election.

Dawn, 25 February 2008

PPP apologises to Balochistan for "excesses": Pledge of maximum provincial autonomy

ISLAMABAD, Feb 24: Buoyed by likely support from newly elected independents, the Pakistan People's Party on Sunday seemed eyeing both power and peace in the troubled province of Balochistan, where it did not emerge as the largest party in the Feb 18 election. The party is already sure of leading the next federal government with the Pakistan Muslim League-N and the Sindh provincial government, and sharing a PML-N - led government in Punjab and an ANP-led coalition in the NWFP

Dawn, 25 February 2008

PPP legislators against coalition with Muttahida

ISLAMABAD, Feb 24: Newly-elected MPs of the Pakistan People's Party in Sindh want the party to form government in the province without the support of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement. Sources told Dawn that a number of newly-elected legislators opposed of the PPP entering into a dialogue with the MQM because of what they called "excesses" it committed against PPP workers during its five-year rule in the province

Dawn, 25 February 2008

Baitullah ready for talks with new govt

TANK, Feb 24: Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan chief Baitullah Mehsud has announced that he is ready for talks with the new government if it stops President Musharraf's "war on terror" in tribal areas. Baitullah's spokesman Maulvi Umar told journalists on phone from some place on Sunday that the people of Pakistan had rejected President Musharraf's pro-America policies

The News, 26 February 2008

General, seven others die in Pindi suicide hit

RAWALPINDI: A suicide bomber attacked the Pakistan Army's three-star car Monday afternoon at the busy Mall Road here, killing Surgeon General of Pakistan Army, Lieutenant General Hafiz Muhammad Mushtaq Ahmad Baig, his two staff members - a gunman and driver - and five civilians near the Nadra Centre in the high-security cantonment area

The News, 26 February 2008

Zardari for working relationship with Musharraf

NEW YORK: Pakistan People's Party Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari on Monday was quoted by a major US newspaper as saying that he would seek a working relationship with President Pervez Musharraf since their coalition government may not be able to impeach him

The News, 26 February 2008

US envoy calls on Nawaz

ISLAMABAD: After two meetings with PPP Co-chairperson Asif Ali Zardari, on Monday the US Ambassador to Pakistan, Anne W Patterson, called on the former prime minister and PML-N leader, Mohammed Nawaz Sharif, at the Frontier House and congratulated him on the victory of his party in the recently-concluded general elections

The News, 26 February 2008

Maj Gen Asif to be new DGMI

ISLAMABAD: Major General Muhammad Asif is to be appointed new Director General Military Intelligence (DGMI) of the Pakistan Army in place of Major General Mian Nadeem Ijaz Ahmed who served as DGMI for more than three years, sources said

The News, 26 February 2008

Restoration of peace ANP's top priority: Asfandiyar

PESHAWAR: President of Awami National Party (ANP) Asfandiyar Wali Khan has said that crisis in the tribal areas and other parts of the country could only be resolved by involving all the stakeholders in the peace process. "Our first and utmost priority is to restore peace and normalcy and end the sense of insecurity among the masses," Asfandiyar said while briefing journalists after meeting of the special committee of his party at Baacha Khan Markaz here on Monday

The News, 27 February 2008

24 independent MPAs-elect have joined PML-N: Shahbaz

LAHORE: Inclusion of 24 independent MPAs-elect in the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has considerably strengthened its position in the Punjab Assembly, and more such MPs will be joining them in the coming days, said party President Mian Shahbaz Sharif here Tuesday

The News, 27 February 2008

Muttahida decides to sit in opposition

KARACHI: The Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) has decided to sit in the opposition but would work for the stability and development of the province and to maintain peace and harmony, sources said on Tuesday. The decision to this effect was taken unanimously by the newly-elected MQM MNAs and MPAs as well as the Rabita Committee members at a three-hour marathon meeting held at Nine-Zero, Azizabad, the Muttahida headquarters

The News, 27 February 2008

ISPR blames tribal militants for Pindi blast

ISLAMABAD: The Army said on Tuesday that a suicide attack which killed the Army's top medical officer was likely in retaliation for operations against militants near the Afghan border. Lieutenant General Mushtaq Baig, the Army's surgeon general, was the most senior Pakistani military official to be assassinated since President Pervez Musharraf joined the US-led "war on terror" in 2001

The News, 27 February 2008

No country more important to US than Pakistan: Burns

WASHINGTON: A senior US administration official has strongly defended the American security assistance for Pakistan and vowed to seek the congressional support on realising economic assistance programmes for the development of the country. US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns observed at a Washington think tank discussion that no country is more important to the US than Pakistan in the campaign against terrorism

Daily Times, 27 February 2008

440 militants seized in 3 months: govt

ISLAMABAD: The Interior Ministry said on Tuesday that security forces had arrested more than 440 militants, including 60 would-be suicide bombers, in the last three months. Interior Ministry spokesman Brigadier (r) Javed Cheema told reporters, Security agencies have arrested 442 terrorists and militants during the past three months. From 60 of these terrorists, suicide jackets and other material was confiscated, which shows the law enforcement agencies are in protective mode and stopped them from launching suicide attacks, Cheema said. afp

Daily Times, 28 February 2008

Seven FATA MNAs to support PPP

ISLAMABAD: Seven MNAs-elect from FATA on Wednesday promised to support the PPP in the post-election setup. The members-elect pledged their support in a meeting with PPP Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari at the Parliament Lodges

Daily Times, 29 February 2008

Missile strike on militant hideout in SWA kills 10

PESHAWAR: At least 10 suspected militants were killed in a missile strike on a house in South Waziristan early on Thursday, residents and officials said. The dead were believed to be of Pakistani and foreign origins, they said