

The Hindu, 2 January 2007

Pakistan curbs on diplomats' travel (Nirupama Subramanian)

In the continuing bickering between India and Pakistan over travel rights, it is now official that Indian diplomats here have to seek permission to travel to two places where they could previously go at will. Although there has been no announcement, Indian High Commission officials said they had to take permission in recent days to travel to Murree, a hill station near Islamabad, and to Rawalpindi, a twin city of the capital. Trips to the airport at Rawalpindi were exempt from the restriction, the officials said. The permits have apparently been granted without delay...

Daily Times, 4 January 2007

India, Pakistan swap lists of nuclear facilities

Pakistan and India on Monday exchanged lists of their nuclear sites under an agreement to swap such information annually on New Year's Day to prevent attacks against each other's nuclear facilities, said the Foreign Ministry. The agreement, signed in 1988 between the South Asian arch rivals, came into force in 1991 and the first such exchange of information took place on January 1, 1992. Under the agreement, both Pakistan and India are to refrain from attacking each other's nuclear facilities in the event of a war.

Dawn, 5 January 2007

Mukherjee's agenda for talks cleared (Jawed Naqvi)

The Indian government on Thursday cleared Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee's agenda for talks in Pakistan this month and the chief minister of the disputed state of Jammu and Kashmir gave his own version of what New Delhi was prepared to do about Pakistan's idea of joint management of the divided Himalayan region. The Cabinet Committee on Security, headed by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, met to approve Mr Mukherjee's talking points for his visit to Islamabad from Jan 13. Mr Mukherjee gave no details but said: I obtained the brief from the cabinet committee. I apprised them (of the visit) and they approved the brief...

Dawn, 7 January 2007

Four pacts likely with India (Qudssia Akhlaque)

ISLAMABAD, Jan 6: Pakistan and India are likely to sign four agreements aimed at building confidence during Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee's first official visit here next week, diplomatic sources told Dawn on Saturday. A key agreement on reducing risk of nuclear accidents or unauthorised use of nuclear weapons which had been under discussion since August 2005 would be initialled by the foreign ministers of the two countries, said the sources. The two sides had finalised the agreement during the foreign secretary-level talks in Delhi in November last...

The Hindu, 7 January 2007

CPI (M) for continuing peace process with Pakistan

NEW DELHI: The Communist Party of India (Marxist) on Saturday asked the Manmohan Singh Government to continue the peace process with Pakistan and work for a breakthrough in an area in which an agreement could be reached. CPI (M) general secretary Prakash Karat and Polit Bureau member Sitaram Yechury conveyed this to

External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee at a briefing for the party leaders on the situation in India's neighbourhood. The briefing comes in the run-up to the meeting of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation in April. The briefing is the sequel to a similar exercise the Government held for the Bharatiya Janata Party leaders earlier this week....

Daily Times, 9 January 2007

Breakfast in Amritsar, lunch in Lahore and dinner in Kabul (Iftikhar Gilani)

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said on Monday he hoped India and Pakistan would eventually be able to sign a long-term peace treaty. I earnestly hope that relations between our two countries become so friendly that we can generate an atmosphere of trust between each other and that the two nations are able to agree on a treaty of peace, security and friendship, Singh said while addressing the 79th annual general meeting of the Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The prime minister urged Indian corporate captains to compliment the peace process by strengthening the hands of the political leadership in promoting peace, security and friendship in the region. He also sought their help in economic integration of South Asia and asked them to open their doors to India's neighbours....

Dawn, 9 January 2007

Mukherjee briefed on Swiss model for Kashmir

Of the various models for Kashmir doing the rounds on the seminar circuit in recent weeks, Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee was briefed on Monday about yet another Swiss model by former chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir Farooq Abdullah. Mr Mukherjee, whose agenda for his first visit to Islamabad at the weekend has been cleared by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, is holding consultations with people who may offer a concrete thing or two to make the tour a success. In his talks with Mr Abdullah and his son Omar Abdullah, who heads the disputed state's pro-India National Conference party, Mr Mukherjee is reported to have discussed a special economic zone for the divided region along the lines of Switzerland and Channel Islands....

Daily Times, 10 January 2007

India may seek formal proposals on Kashmir (Iftikhar Gilani)

The sources said that all Kashmiri leaders who met External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee in the past week stressed that India should respond to Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf's proposals on joint management and demilitarisation of the Kashmir valley. They added that Mukherjee told them that the Indian government could not react since Pakistan had not officially communicated any such proposal. We told him (Mukherjee) to ask Pakistan to officially place proposals on the table, said a senior Kashmir leader who was part of the discussions. He added that the Kashmiri leaders got an impression that the Indian leadership was keen to make Musharraf's proposals part of official discussions....

Daily Times, 10 January 2007

Kashmir is key to friendship: Musharraf

President Gen Pervez Musharraf said on Tuesday that the resolution of the Kashmir

dispute was imperative for durable and long-lasting friendship between Pakistan and India, and both countries should work together for development in the region. Musharraf was talking to Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan designate Satyabrata Pal, who called on him at Aiwan-e-Sadr and presented his credentials. He said Pakistan and India should jointly work for peace and stability in South Asia, but this was only possible if the Kashmir dispute was resolved in a just and amicable manner. He said that relations between the two countries could be normalised if the Kashmir issue was settled....

Dawn, 10 January 2007

India cuts duty on edible oil

India has slashed customs duty on edible oil imports from Pakistan and Sri Lanka by more than 23 per cent under the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (Safta). Exporters of the two South Asian countries would now clear their consignments of edible oils to India on a reduced rate of 52.5 per cent as against the earlier customs duty rate of 68.75 per cent. A commerce ministry official told Dawn that the reduction would help increase Pakistan's edible oil export to India. India is one of the world's largest importers of edible oils which it imports largely from Malaysia, Indonesia, Argentina and Brazil....

Daily Times, 10 January 2007

EDITORIAL: Mystery of Peace Treaties between India and Pakistan

The Indian prime minister, Manmohan Singh, told the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry on Sunday that he wanted to sign a long-term peace treaty with Pakistan. This is not the first time he has expressed such a desire. But this time he also said something that hasn't yet sunk into most members of the establishments in India and Pakistan: India cannot be a prosperous, dynamic economy and a stable polity if our neighbourhood as a whole is also not economically prosperous and politically stable. And similarly, our neighbours cannot prosper if India does not do so as well....

Dawn, 10 January 2007

Indian PM's vision

The Foreign Office's reaction to the Indian prime minister's reiteration of his proposal for a treaty of peace and friendship between the two countries is in keeping with Pakistan's emphasis on the need for a solution of the Kashmir issue for peace to be durable. On Monday, speaking to a meeting of Indian businessmen in New Delhi, Dr Manmohan Singh repeated his hope for a treaty of peace and friendship with Pakistan and emphasised the linkage among the South Asian states economic development. This is the second time Dr Singh has spoken of such a treaty in less than a month. Last month, he had initiated his idea of a treaty of peace and friendship at a public rally in Amritsar. Reacting to the Monday speech, the Pakistan foreign office spokesperson said that the Indian prime minister's views were something that related to the future. Pakistan, she said, was trying to normalise relations with India, and for that it was important that outstanding issues between them, including Kashmir, were first solved....

Daily Times, 11 January 2007

India may ease bar on movement of Pakistani diplomats (Iftikhar Gilani)

NEW DELHI: Pakistani diplomats may once gain be able to play golf in Delhi suburbs of

Noida and Gurgaon soon, as India is planning to ease travel restrictions in lieu of its diplomats in Islamabad being allowed to visit Murree. Following acrimony over tit-for-tat restrictions on the movement of diplomats, Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh is understood to have stepped in to ask for details on the subject from External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee. Sources here said Mukherjee had indicated that in the face of evolving relations that demanded trust, the imposition of such restrictions on the two countries diplomats could have been avoided. It is likely that he will bring up the issue during his visit to Pakistan....

Daily Times, 11 January 2007

Low expectations at Indo-Pak talks

NEW DELHI: The Indian foreign minister is to make a rare visit to Pakistan this weekend, with the trip expected to firm up peace efforts between the nuclear-armed rivals rather than yield any breakthrough. The ministers will assess the progress made so far and pave the way for the start of the next round of talks, an Indian foreign ministry official told AFP. Indian security analyst Uday Bhaskar said there was now a greater content and a greater resilience in the peace process, but stressed any solution would take time....

The Nation, 11 January 2007

Kashmir lingers on (Shaiq Hussain)

ISLAMABAD - Being close neighbouring states and rivals for about sixty years, the ties between Pakistan and India never went in a straightforward way. There was no exception in 2006, as the two sides remained unable to resolve the thorny issues like Kashmir despite the slight warming of ties in the last two months of the outgoing year. The efforts by the two sides to ease the relations continued this year. The bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad suspended after the October 8, 2005 deadly earthquake was resumed while a new one was started between Amritsar and Nankana Sahib early this year....

The Hindu, 11 January 2007

Pakistan showcases Gwadar port (Nirupama Subramanian)

ISLAMABAD: Indian High Commissioner Satyabrata Pal is among 40 Islamabad-based diplomats who will be flown by the Pakistan Government to Gwadar in Balochistan on Thursday for a day-long visit to the new deep sea port that is coming up there. Pakistan is building the port with Chinese assistance. The first phase was completed in December 2005, and work is in progress on the second phase....

The Hindu, 11 January 2007

Freed fishermen reach Wagah (Nirupama Subramanian)

ISLAMABAD: Guards manning the Wagah border reopened the gates hours after the ceremonial sundown closure on Wednesday to allow 115 fishermen released from Pakistani prisons to cross over into India. Officials here said the fishermen crossed the border around 8 p.m. They were released from Landhi jail in Karachi on Tuesday as a goodwill gesture ahead of the visit by External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee. They were bussed to the border. The journey takes 24 hours, but it took longer this time because the vehicle broke down...

The Nation, 11 January 2007

Iran, Pak to bypass India, US on gasline (Afzal Bajwa)

ISLAMABAD - Gas starved Pakistan and keen seller Iran are poised to proceed expeditiously on the pipeline project by neither waiting for reluctant co-buyer India nor bothering the US, which is opposed to anything Iranian. According to well-placed sources, the Iranian envoy in Pakistan has conveyed a message to the Pakistani authorities for an early ministerial level meeting on the bilateral gas pipeline. Petroleum Minister Amanullah Khan Jadoon would meet his Iranian counterpart immediately after Eid for furtherance of the recent head of the state level telephonic talk on the Pak-Iran Gas Pipeline project....

The Hindu, 12 January 2007

Pakistan may authenticate Siachen ground positions (Amit Baruah)

NEW DELHI: There have been "indications" that Pakistan would be willing to authenticate the ground positions on the Siachen glacier. Briefing presspersons, senior officials said they see some change in Pakistan's approach on the issue that has divided the two countries since the 1980s. The officials, speaking ahead of External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee's visit to Pakistan, pointed out that this was his first visit to Pakistan in his long political career. Cooperation in counter-terrorism cooperation remained high on the Indian agenda, the officials said and hoped that Islamabad would respond positively to the information provided in the November Foreign Secretary-level talks....

The Hindustan Times, 12 January 2007

Pak may relax visa policy for Indian tourists

Pakistan is mulling steps to relax visa policy for Indian tourists by increasing their duration of stay in the country from five to 15 days. "The extended time for Indian tourists would provide them an opportunity to visit other scenic spots in the country besides the places where they want to go," Pakistan's Minister for Tourism Nilofer Bakhtiar said. Besides a tourist section would also be introduced in the passports for the purpose, she said while addressing a function in Peshawar on Thursday....

The Nation, 13 January 2007

Pranab Mukherjee arrives today (Shaiq Hussain)

Pakistan and India are set to hold vital talks on Kashmir, Siachen, Sir Creek and other disputes to iron out differences on these contentious issues as Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee arrives here today (Saturday) on a two-day visit. During his visit, the Indian FM will review with his Pakistani counterpart Khurshid Kasuri, the progress on peace process launched back in 2004. The two FMs would discuss all the eight contentious issues on composite dialogue agenda with focus on Kashmir, Siachen and Sir Creek but no breakthrough was expected, said the official sources here on Friday....

Daily Times, 13 January 2007

Kashmir committee rejects Nicholson's report as biased

A Special Parliamentary Committee on Kashmir has unanimously rejected the Kashmir

report submitted with the European Union (EU) Parliament by Emma Nicholson as biased and against the ground realities in Kashmir, and has decided to send a delegation to Brussels to apprise the EU of the correct position. A delegation of the Kashmir committee will go to Brussels to apprise members of the European parliament of the factual situation in Kashmir, the committee was told by chairman Hamid Nasir Chattha here on Friday. However, some opposition members expressed their reservations about President General Pervez Musharraf running the Kashmir policy unilaterally without taking the committee into confidence....

The Hindu, 13 January 2007

Pranab expected to hold substantive discussions (Nirupama Subramanian)

As External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee arrives here on Saturday on his first visit to Pakistan, expectations are that it will boost the peace process. Although no major breakthrough is expected, officials say he is likely to hold "substantive" discussions on the peace process including Kashmir, Siachen and all other bilateral issues. Mr. Mukherjee will meet President Pervez Musharraf, to whom he will hand over an invitation for the New Delhi SAARC summit in April, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri. He will review the third round of the composite dialogue process with Mr. Kasuri....

Dawn, 13 January 2007

Kashmir resolution first, says Kasuri (Jawed Naqvi)

Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri said on Friday that tough bargaining on `trickier bilateral issues was the only certainty in the talks his Indian counterpart would hold in Islamabad. Indian officials have been sending out signals through their media to the effect that Pakistan may be preparing to agree to an endorsement of the Actual Ground Position Line (AGPL) in Siachen. If so, it remained unclear whether New Delhi would keep its part of the bargain by not seeing such an endorsement as proof of its rights on the glacier. According to the Indian brief to the media, terrorism would remain a key issue in the bilateral talks...

The Nation, 15 January 2007

Sir Creek survey begins today

Pakistan and India will begin a 20-day long joint survey of Sir Creek area today (Monday), a move that will help the South Asian nuclear rivals to demarcate the maritime zone. Pakistani team of Hydrographers will be led by Maj Gen Jamil-ur-Rehman Afridi whereas the Indian side will be headed by Chief Naval Hydrographer, Rear Admiral B R Rao, said the official sources here on Sunday. They said that the two officials had already finalized the modalities during their meeting here on December 23 last during which they agreed to commence the survey from January 15, 2007....

Daily Times, 15 January 2007

Indo-Pak talks high on atmospheric, low on results

Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee met Pakistani political party leaders on Sunday, a day after talks that heralded a new phase in a three-year-old peace process that has yet to resolve any territorial disputes. Mukherjee is the first Indian foreign minister to

have visited Pakistan in 15 months, and while there were no fresh accords struck on Saturday there were plenty of commitments by the nuclear-armed rivals. There is a new level of atmospherics. There is greater hope. But we have to wait until something concrete comes out, said Talat Masood, a former army general turned analyst....

The Times of India, 16 January 2007

Army not out of picture in Siachen thaw

NEW DELHI: With foreign policy back on a pragmatic course after a period marked by a premium on 'out-of-box' proposals, a confident Army chief J J Singh declared on Monday that government would not disregard Army's concerns while discussing Siachen with Pakistan. "We have submitted our views to the government on the issue. I am sure the government will keep them in mind," Singh said in a clear reference to Army's stress on authentication of troop positions along the actual ground position line (AGPL)....

Dawn, 16 January 2007

Mukherjee visit successful (Jawed Naqvi)

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has described Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee's first visit to Islamabad as successful, but he also indicated on Monday that it would be premature to see an early solution to the Siachen and Sir Creek disputes, news reports said. Indian news agencies quoted Dr Singh as making the comments to journalists accompanying him on his way back from the Philippines. We have to take a holistic view of our relations with Pakistan, Dr Singh said. We have had several rounds of composite dialogue in which Siachen and Sir Creek issues figured. We are making progress. It will be premature for me to say that we have reached a stage where we can say that an agreement can be found...

Dawn, 16 January 2007

Onward with the peace process

There is optimism in the air following the meetings between leaders from India and Pakistan to revive the peace process. When the Indian foreign minister, Mr Pranab Mukherjee, came to Pakistan over the weekend, the two sides gave clear signals that they were now ready to move ahead with the composite dialogue that had been stalled since last July when a series of bombs exploded in Mumbai. It is therefore a welcome development that the fourth round of peace talks will be launched in March. But before that the joint commission will bring the foreign ministers of the two countries together in New Delhi in February....

The Hindu, 17 January 2007

Consider Siachen plan seriously, Kasuri tells India

Pakistan Foreign Minister Khurshid Mahmood Kasuri on Tuesday said that Pakistan had given a detailed and comprehensive package for the resolution of the Siachen issue and it was time for India to seriously consider the matter. "The ball is in India's court," Mr. Kasuri told reporters at a seminar on international migration here. He said that Pakistani Foreign Secretary Riaz Muhammad Khan had handed over the package on Siachen to his Indian counterpart. The package could be helpful in identifying troop positions at the glacier....

The Daily Times, 17 January 2007

Sir Creek dispute and the fishermen of India and Pakistan

India and Pakistan are carrying out the second survey of a strangely named place, Sir Creek, over which they have been quarrelling for nearly 40 years. Unfortunately, the other outstanding dispute is over the occupation of Siachen, and once again the Indians and Pakistanis are at a loss to grasp the fruits of settling it peacefully. However both are inflicting pain on each other without being at war. Siachen kills through frostbite on the peaks of the Himalayas and Sir Creek yields hundreds of fishermen who are fished out of the Arabian Sea by the two countries and kept shockingly as prisoners of war....

The Hindu, 18 January 2007

Hurriyat team leaves for Pak. today

A three-member Hurriyat Conference delegation led by chairman Mirwaiz Umer Farooq will leave today for Pakistan, where it will meet political leaders including President Pervez Musharraf and top representatives of militant groups. Besides the Mirwaiz, other members of the team are Abdul Gani Bhat and Bilal Lone. During their stay in Pakistan, they will call on Musharraf and other political leaders, and discuss the Kashmir issue with Foreign Minister, Khurshheed Mehmood Kasuri, sources in the separatist amalgam said. The delegation will also visit Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir (PoK), where it will hold parleys with the political establishment for building consensus on ways and means to resolve the Kashmir issue, they said....

Daily Times, 18 January 2007

India considering Siachen proposal (Iftikhar Gilani)

India is favourably considering a Pakistani proposal for a troop pullout from the Siachen glacier, according to sources here. New Delhi is examining opinions on the proposal from various agencies, including the Indian Army, and a final decision is expected very soon, top sources here said on Wednesday. This will pave way for Manmohan Singh's first trip to Islamabad as prime minister to break further ice with President Pervez Musharraf in resolving various disputes between the two neighbours, including the vexed Kashmir issue....

Daily Times, 18 January 2007

Pakistan rejects Indian ceasefire violation claim

Pakistan on Wednesday rejected India's claim of a ceasefire violation near the international frontier in Kashmir an incident in which, according to an Indian BSF spokesman, Pakistani troops fired covering fire for suspected Muslim militants. Two BSF troops, an officer and a constable, were wounded, a senior Indian security official told Reuters. AFP quoted the BSF spokesman as saying, This is the first time since the ceasefire that there was direct firing by Pakistani Rangers. He said the Pakistani guards were providing cover to a group of about 10 suspected militants trying to cross the border. Inter-Services Public Relations termed the statement ludicrous and fabricated....

Daily Times, 19 January 2007

Indian cabinet okays Indo-Pak N-risk treaty (Iftikhar Gilani)

India on Thursday announced that its cabinet had approved an agreement with Pakistan on reducing the risk from nuclear weapons-related accidents, adding that the two sides would formally sign the treaty next month. Talking to reporters, Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee said that the treaty, reducing the risk from accidents relating to nuclear weapons had been approved during a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CSS), chaired by Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh. The treaty, he added, would be signed next month when Pakistani Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmoud Kasuri visited the country to attend the Joint Commission meeting....

Daily Times, 19 January 2007

"Kashmir talks must be institutionalised"

The dialogue between India and Pakistan should be institutionalised and Kashmiris must be given representation in the process, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, chairman of the Chairman All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), said on Thursday. India and Pakistan are important parties to the Kashmir issue, but the Kashmiris are the main party and therefore their involvement in the dialogue process is vital, Mirwaiz told reporters at the Allama Iqbal International Airport on his arrival from New Delhi. The APHC chairman said that Islamabad and New Delhi were showing great interest in the Kashmir dialogue process and the Kashmiris were keenly observing the developments. The three-member APHC delegation led by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq later reached Islamabad where they will call on President General Pervez Musharraf, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and Foreign Minister Khurshid Mahmood Kasuri....

Daily Times, 19 January 2007

Indo-Pak trust deficit has narrowed: PM

Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz has said that the trust deficit between India and Pakistan has been reduced in the past three years, but more progress in economic and other ties is linked to progress in negotiations on Kashmir. In his first television interview since External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee's visit to Islamabad, Aziz told CNN-IBN's Suhasini Haidar that talks had made some headway, especially on proposals made by President Pervez Musharraf recently. As we see progress on Kashmir, that will determine the progress on economic relations. We have to reach a point where India, Pakistan and the Kashmiri people are happy, and that will take courage, magnanimity, flexibility and leadership?...

Daily Times, 20 January 2007

Kashmiris more important than land: Take unpopular decisions, resolve Kashmir: Shujaat

The time has come to take bold and unpopular decisions to resolve the Kashmir dispute between Pakistan and India, PML President Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain said on Friday. Addressing a press conference at his residence after a breakfast meeting with a three-member APHC delegation led by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, Shujaat said that extraordinary decisions other than UN resolutions must be taken to settle the thorny issue once and for all. The Pakistani and Indian leaderships should make sincere efforts for finding a durable solution to the Kashmir issue instead of politicising it, Shujaat said, adding that Pakistan respected the wishes of the Kashmiri people and they were much

important than the land of Kashmir....

The Nation, 20 January 2007

Discourage opponents of peace, says Musharraf

President Pervez Musharraf said that the elements hostile to the peace process, which has raised hopes for an acceptable solution to Kashmir, must be discouraged. Talking to APHC leaders on Friday, he asked them to counter and reject attempts of these elements who want to create misunderstanding about Pakistan's position, especially in the minds of Kashmiri people. These elements should be strongly countered and rejected, he added. Musharraf held a meeting with APHC Chairman Mirwaiz Omar Farooq and other APHC leaders, Abdul Ghani Bhatt and Bilal Ghani Lone who are currently visiting Pakistan. He discussed with them the efforts being made by Pakistan for a just settlement of the Kashmir dispute in accordance with the aspirations of the Kashmiri people.....

The Nation, 22 January 2007

Geelani blasts Mirwaiz's remarks

Accusing Pakistan and APHC moderate faction of taking a complete U-turn on Kashmir, hardline APHC leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani on Sunday said this change in stance would have no effect on the nature of Kashmir problem, reports Indian news agency. Reacting to the statement of moderate Hurriyat leader Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, Geelani, who arrived in New Delhi on late Saturday night, told reporters that the youth in Jammu and Kashmir did not take to guns as a hobby or romanticism. The Mirwaiz, at present on a tour to Pakistan, had said the other day that militancy had only brought more grave in Kashmir and there was no role for violence now...

Dawn, 23 January 2007

Kashmir report amendments

The European Labour Party on Monday moved a comprehensive set of amendments to overturn the "divisive" and "controversial" Liberal Democrat report on Kashmir prepared by Emma Nicholson, Lib Dem's Member of the European Parliament. Addressing a press conference, MEP Richard Howitt, Labour's Foreign Affairs Spokesman in the European Parliament, said his party had published 54 amendments to the report which he said was "appallingly prejudiced". The amendments will be presented at the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee in Brussels over the next two days...

Daily Times, 23 January 2007

VIEW: Finding keys to the Kashmir gridlock (Rasul Bakhsh Rais)

Resolving stubborn conflicts like Kashmir requires flexibility, bargaining and compromise. The major difficulty in this situation is asymmetry between the contending powers. The Kashmir dispute has consumed too much of the energies of India and Pakistan over the past sixty years. They have fought four rounds of war and have supported proxy elements to damage each other's internal peace and stability. Their failure to settle the issue amicably within the framework of the partition of British India in the early years of independence turned them into bitter enemies. That was not the vision of the founders of the two countries when they decided to create two independent states.....

Daily Times, 23 January 2007

India interested in joint probes (Naveed Siddiqui)

India has forwarded a proposal to Pakistan seeking discussions on formation of a joint investigation team during a meeting of the two countries, foreign ministers next month in New Delhi. Pakistan introduced the idea of a joint body to investigate terrorist incidents in both countries last year and the Indian proposal is a follow-up of this idea, sources told Daily Times. Sources said the proposal came after Indian intelligence agencies arrested three Christians from Sindh allegedly planning a terrorist attack in India for the purpose of fuelling tensions between the two countries....

Daily Times, 24 January 2007

Mirwaiz-led APHC delegation's visit to Pakistan: Gulf between moderate and hardline Kashmiri leaders widening (Iftikhar Gilani)

As the Mirwaiz Umar Farooq-led moderate faction of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) is travelling across Pakistan and Azad Kashmir to strengthen the peace process, the gulf between moderates and hardliners is spilling on the streets back home. Though, pro-India parties in Srinagar are happy with Mirwaiz Umar Farooq's statements, it has left militants and the hardline faction of Syed Ali Geelani fuming. Experts here warn that inter-group clashes, which have taken almost more lives than fights with security forces since the eruption of the armed struggle 17 years ago, may revisit Kashmir once Mirwaiz and his colleagues return. The Mirwaiz-led APHC delegation's departure to Pakistan last week triggered an unprecedented strike in Kashmir Valley....

Daily Times, 25 January 2007

India, Pakistani agree on "affordable" gas

India on Wednesday endorsed the Pakistani view on gas prices at the fourth meeting of the working group on Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) gas pipeline. It said the buyers should get the gas on "affordable prices". The three countries began discussions after a gas pricing report presented by consultant Gaffiney Cline. Dr Ghanimi Fard, special representative of the Iranian minister for petroleum, said that Iran had the largest gas reserves in the region and was looking forward to meet the energy requirements of Pakistan and India through the IPI pipeline. He hoped that the working group meeting would finalise the gas pricing mechanism. Ahmad Waqar, the Pakistani petroleum and natural resources secretary, said Pakistan was keen to implement the project as quickly as possible. According to a message from Tehran, the talks will continue on Thursday....

Daily Times, 25 January 2007

Siachen leading to environmental disaster: minister

NEW DELHI: Pakistani State Minister for Environment Malik Amin Aslam Khan has drawn attention to a new aspect of the Siachen dispute by saying military activity at the world's highest battlefield is leading to an environmental disaster. Speaking at a ministerial conference on Wednesday, he said military activity was affecting the glacier-storage capacity of India and Pakistan. Citing recent studies by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), he said that over the last decade, glaciers in the Himalayan region had melted 30 percent

faster....

The Hindu, 25 January 2007

"Pakistan's stand hampering SAFTA"

Kabul: India said on Wednesday that Pakistan's refusal to agree on free trade was hampering the implementation of the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA), and hoped that the issue would be sorted out soon. Winding up his two-day visit here, External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee hailed Afghanistan's entry into the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) as a step that would strengthen the regional grouping. Afghanistan becomes the eighth member....

Dawn, 26 January 2007

Pakistani, Indian troops trade fire

Indian and Pakistani troops exchanged small arms fire on Thursday after an alleged attempt by anti-India militants to cross heavily-guarded Line of Control in the disputed territory of Kashmir, an Indian army spokesman claimed. The (firing) has been going on for quite some time now between the two sides after an infiltration bid was foiled, Lieutenant Colonel G.D. Goswami asserted. He said one militant had been killed in the incident in the Poonch district, 250 km northwest of Jammu. Security has been beefed up in Kashmir and other parts of India ahead of the Republic Day on Friday when India marks the day in 1950 it adopted its republican constitution with a military parade in New Delhi....

The News, 27 January 2007

Iran, India, Pakistan agree on gas pricing formula

Officials from Iran, India and Pakistan have agreed on a pricing formula for the export of Iranian gas to meet India's burgeoning energy demands, an Iranian oil official said on Friday. After years of efforts we could reach an understanding in terms of a pricing formula, Hojatollah Ghanimi-fard, director of international affairs at the National Iranian Oil Company told state radio. The three sides will take this proposal, this agreement to their (governments) and we hope to take the next steps after they give their opinions, Ghanimi-fard said after three days of negotiations with Indian and Pakistani officials in Tehran....

Daily Times, 28 January 2007

UN's Kashmir resolutions bedrock of Pakistan's position, says Mushahid

Pakistan has not abandoned the UN Security Council resolutions on Kashmir, which remain the bedrock on which its case rests, but if India is prepared to go beyond its stated position, Pakistan will be willing to do likewise, according to Senator Mushahid Hussain. He was asked if Pakistan had abandoned the UN resolutions on Kashmir, as many believed. He was emphatic in his answer, which some thought was at variance with statements and declarations emerging from a number of official quarters in Pakistan, notably from the President of Pakistan himself. Mushahid Hussain was addressing a student gathering on India-Pakistan relations at George Mason University in Virginia...

Daily Times, 29 January 2007

Kasuri speaks at America and India forum

Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri addressed a seminar titled America and India: Pakistan's friends or foes organised by the Pakistan Thinkers Forum at a local hotel on Sunday. Replying to questions the foreign minister said that no country could force India or Pakistan to change their stances over the Kashmir dispute. He made it clear that Pakistan will not accept any plan without input from the Kashmiri people. Kasuri further stated that Pakistan won't compromise its stance on river waters. The current government has decided that a dialogue is the only way to solve the Kashmir issue and this dialogue has been underway for three years, he said...

Daily Times, 29 January 2007

Pakistan, India to sign pact for easier visas on Feb 21

Pakistan and India are expected to sign agreements to ease the visa regime and for the speedy return of inadvertent border crossers during Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri's visit to India which starts on February 20. Foreign Office sources said that Pakistan and India were also to sign agreements on reducing the risk from accidents relating to nuclear weapons and prevention of incidents at sea on February 21. Kasuri will represent Pakistan at a meeting of the Pakistan-India Joint Commission on February 21-22 in New Delhi, the sources said. The meeting will review the progress of the joint commission in promoting cooperation in information technology, health and food, science and technology and education....

Daily Times, 30 January 2007

Pakistan, India to sign pact for easier visas on Feb 21

Pakistan and India are expected to sign agreements to ease the visa regime and for the speedy return of inadvertent border crossers during Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri's visit to India which starts on February 20. Foreign Office sources said that Pakistan and India were also to sign agreements on reducing the risk from accidents relating to nuclear weapons and prevention of incidents at sea on February 21. Kasuri will represent Pakistan at a meeting of the Pakistan-India Joint Commission on February 21-22 in New Delhi, the sources said. The meeting will review the progress of the joint commission in promoting cooperation in information technology, health and food, science and technology and education....