

PakTribune, 1 January 2007

Dismembering of Balochistan from Pakistan a fool's dream: Jam

QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan Jam Muhammad Yousaf has said those who are dreaming of dismembering Balochistan from Pakistan is living in a fool's paradise. Quaid of ruling Pakistan Muslim League and workers should work jointly to remove the differences and make the party stronger, Chief Minister stated this while addressing a ceremony regarding centuries celebrations of Pakistan Muslim League here in Provincial PML Secretariate on Sunday.

Daily Times, 1 January 2007

5 percent tariff reduction under SAFTA from 31st

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Friday notified a 5 percent reduction in tariffs on the import of 4,872 items from SAARC member countries. The reduction will be effective from December 31 under the Trade Liberalisation Programme (TLP) approved with the South Asia Free Trade Area (SAFTA) agreement. The Central Board of Revenue (CBR) has issued the notification to enforce the second tariff reduction on import of 4,872 products from the SAARC Least Developed Countries (LDCs) - Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Maldives. However, this tariff reduction would be available only on 1,077 Indian export items to Pakistan. A CBR official said that Pakistan had included all 4,872 items in its notification, but import of these items would only be allowed after the Commerce Ministry's approval.

Dawn, 1 January 2007

Women's rights bill resubmitted to assembly

ISLAMABAD, Dec 30: President of the Pakistan Muslim League (PML) Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain submitted the government's second bill on women's rights to the deputy speaker on Saturday, after it was redrafted to accommodate one change. The "Prevention of Anti-Women Practices (Criminal Law Amendment) Bill 2006 - aimed at protecting the rights of women" was first submitted to the speaker in November. However, the bill was withdrawn and redrafted subsequently, omitting a clause seeking ban on three divorces given in one go. Mr Hussain, accompanied by PML secretary general Mushahid Hussain Sayed, handed over the copy of the bill. to Deputy Speaker Sardar Yaqoob Khan in his office. "The new draft was finalised in consultation with all stakeholders," said Mr Hussain, seeking further suggestions on the bill which will be tabled in the National Assembly on February 6. He said proposals had been solicited from coalition partners and all opposition parties, including the Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal. The bill, drafted in line with the proposals of a nine-member ulema panel, identifies several problems being faced by women due to lack of legislation. The bill features inclusion of section 310A Act XLV of 1860 which prohibits the handover of women, for settling a dispute between groups, either under marriage or as badal-e-sulh, vani or swara. Any violation will carry a three-year prison term and fine.

Dawn, 1 January 2007

Editorial: A year of confusion and uncertainty

PAKISTAN enters the New Year with doubts surrounding one major question: will the general election this year be fair and transparent? The question is important, because the

year 2006 ended yesterday without any clue as to the direction in which the nation is headed. Will the end of 2007 see Pakistan take its place among democracies, or will the nation feel frustrated once again with regard to its cravings for a democratic dispensation? The last 12 months have been one big disappointment, for the confusion among the generals became worse as the year drew to a close. Throughout 2006, the ruling party bigwigs, including Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi, had been dropping hints that the existing assemblies would re-elect Gen Pervez Musharraf as president for another term. On Dec 28 Minister of State for Information Tariq Azeem not only repeated the establishments re-election strategy but also outlined a time-table for it. Three months before the election, he said, the outgoing assemblies would act as an electoral college to re-elect Gen Musharraf as president. The general election would be held on Jan 15, 2008, and Mr Shaukat Aziz would be the Muslim Leagues candidate for prime minister..

Dawn, 1 January 2007

Opinion: Diplomacy of fencing (Tanvir Ahmad Khan)

PAKISTAN and Afghanistan have been having an argument about the causes of the intensification of insurgency in a widening arc in Afghanistan for the past several months. President Bush was part of it first during his February visit to the region and then again in the famous tripartite consultations with Presidents Musharraf and Karzai in Washington. That Pakistan has now announced plans to fence and mine the 2,400-km border selectively shows that one of the interlocutors is succumbing to a counsel of despair if not simply ratcheting up the level of the tactical game being played in the region. If the purpose was to deflect a rising chorus of allegations about why the Taliban were resurgent in Afghanistan, Pakistan is opting for a measure that is universally condemned these days. It is also associated with horrific suffering in Afghanistan, and happens to be a known impediment to rehabilitating Afghan refugees particularly in farming and pasturing. Pleading that landmines would be laid only on the Pakistani side of the frontier will not make the slightest difference to the moral opprobrium..

Dawn, 3 January 2007

Parliament to complete five year term: PM Aziz

KARACHI, JAN 2 (APP) Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz on Tuesday said that for the first time in Pakistans history the parliament would complete its five-year term before the end of the current year. Speaking at a reception at the Governor House here, Aziz said that the sole purpose of the present coalition consisting of Pakistan Muslim League PML-Q, MQM, PML F and PPP is to take the country on the path of progress and prosperity. We want to transform Pakistan from a developing to a developed country. This is not a dream and we will make it a reality. Every Pakistani has to play his role in this regard, he said. Regarding development projects in Karachi, the prime minister said that on Monday he took a tour of the city and observed the construction of roads, underpasses, flyovers, and parks..

Hindustan Times, 3 January 2007

Editorial: Easy rests the crown in Pakistan

Only the somewhat naive will believe that the coming presidential election in Pakistan

will provide genuine options for the people of the country. Last week, Minister of State for Information Tariq Azeem set the cat among the pigeons by suggesting that the existing assemblies will re-elect General Pervez Musharraf for another five-year term, shortly before the term expires in November this year. This appears to be the opposite of what genuine elections are supposed to be. Ever since he overthrew the government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in October 1999, Mr Musharraf has provided a government with a curious liberal authoritarianism, which cannot be classed as democratic by any stretch of imagination. Given his background, the general knows that there is no real choice between the presidency and the leadership role of the army he must have both as there cannot be two power centres in Pakistan..

Times of India, 3 January 2007

PM calls Atal & Co to lunch; Pak on table

NEW DELHI: Early in the New Year, PM Manmohan Singh invited BJP brass for lunch at his residence on Tuesday in what was seen as an effort to repair the estranged government-opposition ties and build a consensus over a range of foreign policy initiatives, including peace talks with Pakistan. The past few months have seen sharp divides emerge between government and the main opposition over issues like the civil nuclear agreement with US, engagement with Pakistan post 7/11 and handling of internal security challenges. While the PM met his Left supporters frequently, interaction with BJP had been minimal. Over a fare that ranged from jumbo prawns to south Indian vegetarian cuisine, the PM and external affairs minister Pranab Mukherjee outlined forthcoming policy engagements..

Dawn, 4 January 2007

Border mining, fencing to go ahead: Aziz

KARACHI, Jan 3: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz on Wednesday declared that Pakistan would go ahead with its plan of fencing and mining parts of its border with Afghanistan to check any cross-border movement of extremists. The prime minister, who is leaving for Kabul on Thursday for substantive talks with the Karzai government, was responding to a question during his press conference at the Governors House here on Wednesday. However, he parried response to the part of the question that pertained to Kabuls objections to fencing and reservations on the status of the Durand Line between the two countries and said: Afghanistan has its own point of view and we have ours. We attach great importance to our relations with Afghanistan and want friendly and cooperative relations with our neighbour. He referred to Pakistan's efforts for furthering the composite dialogue with India for the resolution of the Kashmir issue in accordance with the aspirations of the Kashmiri people and removing hiccups in other bilateral matters..

Daily Times, 4 January 2007

Human Rights violations by law enforcement agencies: United States asked to suspend aid to Pakistan

WASHINGTON: A report released on Wednesday by a leading United States think tank warned Washington to consider suspending financial aid to Pakistan's internal security forces due to their failure to respect human rights...The RAND Corp study evaluated US assistance since 9/11 to security forces in Pakistan, Afghanistan, El Salvador and

Uzbekistan, while examining whether police performance had improved alongside human rights practices...Of the four countries studied, the aid directed to countries moving from an authoritarian system to democratic reform, such as Afghanistan and El Salvador, has been more effective in improving their internal security forces than assistance to governments that remain repressive, such as Pakistan and Uzbekistan, the study said..

The Nation, 4 January 2007

Editorial: Continuity of policy

WHILE talking to Mr Shaukat Aziz and selected leaders of the ruling PML on Saturday, General Musharraf dwelt on major international, regional and domestic issues and emphasized the need for continuation of the present policies. The President maintained that peace in the Middle East would remain elusive if the Palestine issue was not resolved equitably. That is now being recognized by a number of opinion makers in the US also, President Jimmy Carter being the most prominent. In his recently published Palestine: Peace, Not Apartheid, Mr Carter points out that there can be no substantive and permanent peace for any country in the region as long as Israel continues to violate key UN resolutions by occupying Arab lands and oppressing the Palestinians. Islamabad needs to work more actively with other Muslim countries to plead the cause of the Palestinian people, rather than haring off on attempts to recognize Israel. While one may agree with General Musharraf and Mr Aziz that disputes with India should be resolved peacefully, there is a perception that despite Pakistans flexibility, perhaps excessive, India has not budged from its traditional stand on the disputes that go on engendering bitterness between the two..

Daily Times, 4 January 2007

EDITORIAL: Dangerous phase of sectarianism

According to our security agencies, three incidents of terrorism in Karachi in 2006 the blast at the US Consulate, the Nishtar Park massacre and the murder of Allama Hasan Turabi were all carried out by the sectarian militia Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and were planned in South Waziristan under the tutelage of Al Qaeda. The new combination is Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Wana and Al Qaeda. One can also say that Lashkar-e-Jhangvi is the blanket term now used for all manner of jihad in which all the Deobandi-Ahle Hadith militants have made common cause. We also know that all three incidents were staged through the device of suicide-bombings. This is clearly the Arab signature in the violence spreading in Pakistan. The same signature was appended to the attempts made on the lives of President Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz earlier. Therefore one of the lessons that those who object to the hanging of Saddam Hussein on the day of Hajj should remember is that sectarianism is blind to such considerations: the Nishtar Park massacre in which scores of Barelvi leaders died took place on Eid Miladun Nabi!

Dawn, 4 January 2007

Opinion: Need for flexibility on Kashmir (Dr Tariq Rahman)

GENERAL Musharrafs statement that a solution to the Kashmir problem may be sought outside the conventional position adopted by the establishment could prove to be the best thing to have happened in 2006. The real impediments to peace are not the hawks on both sides. Hard-liners do not value peace anyway even after the world has suffered

catastrophes like the two world wars, the Russian aggression in Afghanistan, American aggression in Iraq and Afghanistan and similar devastations. It is the common people who have been brainwashed by over half a century of propaganda into thinking that Kashmir is more important than Pakistan, or for that matter, India. Recently, Amanullah Khan, leader of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, said that the Quaid never called Kashmir the jugular vein of Pakistan. Pakistani hawks have always trumpeted this as the Quaid's saying. Be that as it may, it is true that the rivers of Pakistan run through Kashmir. It is equally true that India has not tampered with those rivers, at least not in a dangerous and radical way so far..

Dawn, 5 January 2007

Barbs fly at Kabul meet (Ahmed Hassan)

Aziz agrees to set up jirga commission 'Karzai complains about aid to Taliban KABUL, Jan 4: Negotiations between Islamabad and Kabul turned out to be unproductive when Afghan President Hamid Karzai said on Thursday that the help resurgent Taliban militants received on the Pakistani side of the border soured relations between the estranged neighbours. In what was seen by many as a disagreeable departure from diplomatic norms, President Karzai, beside himself with anger, told Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz at a joint press conference that top-level visits bore little fruit if Afghanistan remained bedevilled by what he described as cross-border terrorism. If our children continue to be killed, our teachers continue to get killed, and students get discouraged, there would be no use of such high-profile visits by the leaders, he said. Analysts recalled that Mr Karzai, believed to be under tremendous pressure from dissenting members of his cabinet, started his rhetorical barrage against Pakistan in a tearful speech last month when he said terrorists from Pakistan were killing Afghan children..

Daily Times, 5 January 2007

PPP ready for elections under Musharraf: Benazir

LAHORE: Former prime minister Benazir Bhutto has said her Pakistan Peoples Party is ready to participate in general elections under President Gen Pervez Musharraf, but warned that all opposition parties would unite and quit parliament if Gen Musharraf tried to get re-elected president from the present assemblies. In an interview with Geo television, the PPP chairperson said the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz PML-N had participated in the 2002 elections under Gen Musharraf and hoped it would do the same at the next polls. She said Nawaz Sharif had not yet decided whether to participate. Bhutto said her party sent proposals to the Elections Commission EC for free and fair elections but the EC had not responded yet, which weakened her expectations of independent elections. She said her recent meeting with PML President Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain in Dubai was a coincidence and Imran Khan had witnessed this meeting..

Dawn, 5 January 2007

Opinion: Time to restructure Afghan policy (Tayyab Siddiqui)

PAKISTANS latest response to President Hamid Karzais allegations of militant Taliban activities being carried out from sanctuaries in Pakistan has been to announce the fencing of the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan and the laying of landmines in order to

halt the cross-border movement of the Taliban. The proposal shows how out of sync our Afghan policy is with reality and the likely complications of such a policy. Kabul has reacted angrily to the proposed measures with Karzai vowing that Kabul will use every method to resist the proposed plan. Besides, there have been negative reactions internally and internationally. Major political parties in Pakistan have argued that the measure will worsen relations between the two nations and divide the Pashtuns along the border. The mining of the border has evoked serious concerns from the international community, the UN and human rights organisations, especially as Afghanistan continues to be among the worlds most heavily mined countries. Mines have killed thousands of civilians over the years..

Daily Times, 5 January 2007

EDITORIAL: Aziz should break the deadlock with Afghanistan

Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz's visit to Afghanistan should remind him that he is on record as taking credit for increasing Pakistan's trade with Kabul beyond the billion dollar mark. So he should make a determined effort to break the deadlock with Kabul that has developed despite the fact that President Hamid Karzai has been to Pakistan nine times and the president and the prime minister of Pakistan have been to Kabul six times in as many years. Unfortunately, the presidents on both sides have exchanged some very tough accusations in the recent past. Since Mr Aziz has economic contacts close to his heart we hope that he will try to reach a better equation with Mr Karzai. It is a good omen that President Karzai invited him when the two were last together in Turkmenistan, a neighbour that holds the key to the energy requirements and economic prosperity of both countries. Kabul desperately needs to think of making money by breaking out of its old mould of being closed to the economically interconnected world..

Frontier Post, 5 January 2007

Editorial: Assertion that fails to impress

The prime minister may have his reasons to call 2006 the year of all round performance. But did he ever all through the year wonder why had his all round performance left the public so unimpressed and so discontent? Why had it brought cheer to so little faces and despondency to so many faces? After all, of what avail could be a performance that leaves more people bigger impoverished and deprived, as no honest appraiser would deny that his persistently long-promised trickle-down had failed to come about even in the outgoing year? Poverty was still swarming all over the country like locust storm; joblessness was still running riot; and, on the top of it, a runaway cost of living was haunting the citizenry like plague. Of course, he may not be knowing all this, given as he is now to keeping company with the nations filthy rich and affluent whose glittering lifestyle would dazzle to delusion even the most earthly wise. Still, had he cared he would have known of the miserable plight of the mass of the citizens with just a fleeting glance at the media. And it would have dawned on him that the things in the land were not as hunky-dory as had he given himself to believe. These were real bad..

Paktribune, 5 January 2007

BNP acting president, 8 associates arrested

KHUZDAR: Acting President Balochistan National Party Noor uddin Mangal along with

his 8 associates has been arrested under 16 MPO. Police has also claimed of recovering large amount of ammunition from his vehicle. As per details Acting BNP president Noor ud din Mangal was arrested by the police from Sunni area along with his 8 associates while he was on his way to meet other party workers and leaders at Khazdar Central Jail. Police under 16 MPO arrested Noor uddin Mangal and his 8 associates Naseer Ahmed, Maqsood Ahmed, Rahim Shahwani, Ghulam Mustafa, Abdul Wahid, Mohd Baksh Mangal, Malik Farooq, Mohammad Noor and Mohammad Anwar..

The Nation, 6 January 2007

Border fencing decision final, says Pakistan

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan on Friday brushed aside Afghanistans opposition to fencing and mining of Pak-Afghan border saying its decision in this regard is final. Afghanistan is sternly opposing Pakistans decision to fence and mine the border and the top-level talks between Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and Afghan President Hamid Karzai in Kabul on Thursday failed to resolve the row. Reiterating his strong objections to mining and fencing, President Karzai said that after the talks the gap between Afghanistan and Pakistan is widening. However, Foreign Office spokesperson Tasnim Aslam, in her comments, said that Pakistans decision on border fencing was final and it would not be reversed..

Daily Times, 6 January 2007

Benazir, Fazal will support Musharraf, says Sethi

LAHORE: President General Pervez Musharraf will ask the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) to get two-third majority support to keep his uniform on, but it is yet to be seen what the president concedes to the two parties in return for their support, Daily Times Editor Najam Sethi said on Friday. In an interview to Geo television, Sethi said that Musharraf would not remove his uniform in a hurry. He said that the MMA and the ARD would not unite, adding that PPP Chairwoman Benazir Bhutto wanted a deal with Musharraf some way or the other. There is a split in the MMA because unlike the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), the JUI-F wants a deal with the government, said Sethi..

Dawn, 6 January 2007

Editorial: Karzais fulminations

PRIME MINISTER Shaukat Aziz's trip to Kabul was marred by barbed comments by Afghan President Hamid Karzai. What was behind Mr Karzai's tantrums which now seem to be occurring with greater frequency? On Thursday, he demolished the very edifice of international diplomacy by denying the utility of talks among world leaders. What was even more regrettable was that he violated the basic norms of protocol and courtesy by questioning the very purpose of Mr Shaukat Aziz's trip to Kabul by saying that such high-profile visits did not serve any purpose. Standing at the other podium, Pakistans prime minister exercised commendable restraint, for he could have told the Afghan president that summit meetings and high-profile visits are not thrust upon the hosts but that meticulous preparatory work is done by aides through diplomatic channels before the date and venue of a visit and the agenda are finalised. If he believed that the meeting with Mr Aziz would not serve any purpose, he should have advised the prime

minister not to come..

Daily Times, 6 January 2007

EDITORIAL: PPPs well-considered strategy

The leader of the Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) and former prime minister of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto, says she is ready to participate in general elections under President General Pervez Musharraf. But she has warned that all opposition parties would unite and quit parliament if General Musharraf tried to get re-elected as president from the present assemblies. She hoped that the leader of the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN) and former prime minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif, too would take the same decision because his party had taken part in the 2002 elections. These two mainstream leaders had led their parties into the Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy (ARD) and had buried the hatchet in 2006 to sign a Charter of Democracy in which they had laid down certain conditions under which they would take part in the elections. Outside the text of the Charter the mood was upbeat. The two parties had sworn that they would not repeat the mutually bruising partisanship of the past but cooperate to bring about an era in which the army would be ousted from the political system forever..

The Nation, 6 January 2007

Editorial: Democracy at work

MUCH ahead of Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjees visit to Islamabad, the Indian Government cleared the agenda of his talks with the Pakistani leadership about General Musharraf's idea of joint management of Kashmir. Before presiding over a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security, which approved on Thursday Mr Mukherjees talking points for his visit, Dr Manmohan Singh gave an exhaustive briefing to senior BJP leaders, including Mr Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Mr L.K. Advani and former National Security Adviser Brajesh Mishra, about the discussions at various levels with Pakistan over the Kashmir dispute. Meanwhile, the Communist Party of India, which was also consulted by the ruling leadership, stated that Mr Mukherjees visit to Islamabad would vastly improve the ongoing peace process between the two South Asian neighbours. CPI(M) General Secretary A B Bardhan said it was a good sign that Pakistan had made some very positive gestures and announcements for resolving all disputes including Kashmir..

Dawn, 6 January 2007

MQM chief withdraws decision to renounce leadership

KARACHI, Jan 5: Muttahida Quami Movement chief Altaf Hussain on Friday night changed his mind about renouncing the leadership of his party when thousands of stunned workers flocked to the party headquarters and pleaded with him to reverse his decision. Earlier, Mr Hussain expressed his inability to continue to lead the party and lashed out at those of his party leaders who he said had adopted a feudal mentality and were trying to change the course and philosophy of the movement. In an emotionally charged speech, which was in progress when this report was filed, Mr Hussain criticised those party leaders who were seen being driven around in flashy rented cars while ordinary activists followed rigorous discipline and worked tirelessly for the party..

Dawn, 7 January 2007

Uniform, democracy not linked: president

DERA ISMAIL KHAN, Jan 6: President Gen Pervez Musharraf said on Saturday that his uniform had nothing to do with democracy, urging the masses to reject elements opposed to progress and prosperity in the next elections. For the first time, the assemblies are completing their tenure. The year 2007 is the election year and people should elect progressive and moderate people, he added. The president was addressing a public gathering here on Saturday after inaugurating a project to supply natural gas to six southern districts of the Frontier province. NWFP Governor Ali Muhammad Jan Aurakzai, Chief Minister Akram Khan Durrani and several federal ministers were also present. President Musharraf said some elements had been misleading the people by raising the issue of uniform. The uniform has nothing to do with democracy. It must not be confused and the vested interest is out to mislead the nation, he remarked..

Dawn, 7 January 2007

Pakistan backs Irans N-plan

TEHRAN, Jan 6: Pakistan Muslim League (PML) secretary-general Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed has reiterated that Pakistan fully supports Iran's peaceful nuclear programme. He was talking to Alaeddin Boroujerdi, head of Iran's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission, on Saturday. The two sides discussed issues of mutual interests, Irna reported, quoting the commission's press bureau. Senator Sayed said the dispute between Iran and the West over the former's peaceful nuclear programme should be resolved under the supervision of IAEA and any action against Iranian national interest should be avoided. Pakistan supports transfer of Iranian gas via Pakistan, he said, adding that the new contract for laying gas pipelines would open a new chapter in friendly ties between the two countries..

Daily Times, 7 January 2007

Human pipeline of terror linked to Pakistan: report

WASHINGTON: There is a human pipeline that arranges for alienated British Muslim youths many of them born in the UK of Pakistani heritage to travel to Pakistan for indoctrination and training at temporary terrorist camps, believed to be operated by Al Qaeda leaders, according to a report in the current issue of Newsweek. The report quoted US authorities as saying that the UK-Pakistan pipeline had played a role in several planned terrorist plots. A US intelligence official said that agencies on both sides of the Atlantic had information linking a 26-year-old London man, Muhammed Al-Ghabra, as a major organiser for Al Qaeda and other terror groups to some of the well-known plots..

Dawn, 7 January 2007

Airspace violations terrify tribal people: Foreign militants blamed in Kurram Agency

PESHAWAR, Jan 6: Panic has gripped Kurram Agency with locals feeling growing fear about their safety because of a rise in violations of Pakistan's airspace by suspected American planes. Local people believe that the foreign planes might bomb their area during such extended operations because of the activities of suspected militant elements,

who, they say, are outsiders. The surveillance missions usually originate from Khost and the aircraft fly over the Spin Ghar area toward Tora Bora in Nangarhar and up to 50km deep into Pakistan, local tribesmen said. Kurram borders Afghanistan's Khost, Paktika, Paktia and Nangarhar provinces. But the Foreign Office denied any knowledge of airspace violations and said that the matter should 'better be raised with the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR)..

Daily Times, 8 January 2007

Patrolling intensified on Pakistan-Iran border to check human smuggling

ISLAMABAD: Law enforcement agencies and border security forces have intensified patrolling on the Pakistan-Iran border after the Iranian authorities handed over 217 suspected human smugglers who attempted to cross the border illegally, sources in the Interior Ministry told Daily Times on Sunday. The sources said that the Levies got custody of the 217 suspects in various flag meetings held between the border security agencies of Pakistan and Iran in the last two-and-a-half months. A joint team of Frontier Corps, Coast Guards, Levies and Maritime Security Agency has been actively engaged in tightening the noose around human smugglers and sealing one of the most common illegal crossing points on the border, they said. The sources said that the Balochistan Levies had registered 49 cases against suspected human traffickers who had been arrested at the border..

Dawn, 8 January 2007

Political agenda dictated sectarian indoctrination

KARACHI, Jan 7: Recognising the link between education and high priority social issues, a White Paper obtained by Dawn, states that only through education can a society achieve awareness, sensitisation and clarity of conception that can help cure it of the evils that retard its growth. The White Paper identifies five areas on which education has a direct bearing. They are sectarianism, population growth, health, democracy and environment. It attributes the rise of sectarianism to societal polarisation based on sectarian intolerance, disputes emanating from disunity and extremism. These were the direct result of indoctrination pursued according to political agendas. Education did not try to neutralise the protagonists of divisionary extremism who had a field day..

The Nation, 8 January 2007

Pak seeks NATO's help for mining border

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan has sought the NATO's support for its plan to fence and mine the Afghan border and the vital issue will be discussed thoroughly during the two-day visit of Canadian Foreign Minister, Peter Mackey, who arrives here today (Monday). Canadian Foreign Minister will hold formal talks with his counterpart, Khurshid Kasuri on Tuesday. He will also call on the President Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz. Pakistani leadership, which has been in close contact with other NATO states on fencing of Afghan border, will ask for Canadian support to win over the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in this regard, said the official sources here on Sunday. About 2500 Canadian troops are currently serving as part of Joint Task Force Afghanistan (JTF AFG). They play a key role in the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission whose goal is to improve the security situation in

Afghanistan..

Daily Times, 8 January 2007

EDITORIAL: The future of Nawaz League

Mr Nawaz Sharif has finally decided to adhere to the Charter of Democracy signed with Ms Benazir Bhutto last year and not allow his Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN) to take part in the next general elections if President General Pervez Musharraf is in charge of conducting them. Mr Sharif believes that the elections will not be fair as long as a serving general is in control of the political system. His party spokesperson has stated that the Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarian (PPPP), by deciding to participate in the elections, has gone against the decision taken last year in the Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy (ARD). The PMLN has already announced that it intends to convene an all parties conference (APC) next month in London to seek a joint strategy for the revival of the constitution, democracy, supremacy of parliament, transparent elections, consensus caretaker government and an independent judiciary clearly a reference to the principles seemingly flouted by the PPPPs decision to participate in the elections under the stewardship of the military..

Dawn, 8 January 2007

Editorial: Provincial autonomy

THE assurance by the federal minister for provincial coordination about autonomy being granted to the provinces by June will be received with a measure of skepticism. Since last year autonomy has been the most popular subject on which official statements have been issued. But not much has happened so far. Neither has much been disclosed about the nature of the autonomy to be granted. Now Salim Saifullah Khan would have us believe that the Concurrent List in the Constitution would be abolished in two phases before the end of the fiscal year. From this it would appear that this list was the major obstacle in the way of autonomy and its abolition would solve the problem of an over-centralised federation that has created so much unrest in smaller provinces. The fact is that there is much more involved in the dispute over autonomy than merely the lists defining the subjects on which the National Assembly and the provincial assemblies can legislate. If the federal government is willing to part with some of its powers, it will have to allow the provincial governments a greater say in the management of their own affairs..

Daily Times, 9 January 2007

UN, Canada press Pakistan to drop border mines

Kabul: The United Nations and Canada added to the pressure on Pakistan Monday to shelve a plan to plant landmines on parts of its border with Afghanistan in a growing row about Taliban fighters crossing the frontier. This will not contribute to better security in either country, UN deputy representative in Afghanistan Chris Alexander told reporters in Kabul, urging all nations to persuade Pakistan to abandon the use of landmines. We hope all the nations of the world can convince Pakistan and the other countries that havent signed the convention of the threat and dangers to ordinary human beings that landmines present, Alexander said. Canadian Foreign Minister Peter MacKay, on a visit to the southern Afghan province of Kandahar, said he intended to tell Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf in Islamabad Tuesday that the mining of the border was unacceptable. I do not

accept the use of landmines, MacKay told reporters after he met some of the 2,500 Canadian soldiers facing some of the worst violence of the Taliban insurgency here..

Daily Times, 9 January 2007

Pakistan rejects EU threat of sanctions over elections

Islamabad: The Foreign Office has rejected threats from the European Union EU of imposition of restrictions if the next elections are not transparent, saying that it is Pakistans internal matter and the country will not be deterred by such threats. Speaking at her weekly press briefing, FO spokeswoman Tasnim Aslam said that relations between the EU and Pakistan were based on mutual interest, equality and respect. On Pakistan-Afghanistan relations, Aslam said that positive developments had been made during Prime Minister Shaukat Azizs recent visit to Kabul and both countries had made various agreements including the return of refugees and their settlement in Afghanistan besides closure of camps close to the border, cooperation in combating extremism and terrorism and laying of a railway line from Chaman to Spin Boldak. She said that Pakistan had also announced an additional \$50 million contribution for Afghanistan's reconstruction, raising the total amount to \$300 million..

Dawn, 9 January 2007

Editorial: Escalating violence

THE findings of the Institute of Peace Studies giving data on the incidence of terrorist attacks in Pakistan are quite shocking. The 657 attacks reported in the research study of the institute took a heavy toll 907 dead and 1,543 injured in 2006. This is a disturbing trend, especially because the two areas which were worst affected, namely Fata with 144 attacks killing 379 people, and Balochistan with 403 attacks leaving 277 dead, are also politically the most sensitive. This finding also belies the government's claim that the situation in these areas is returning to normal. This means that stepping up policing in the vulnerable areas has not had the desired impact. Nearly 1,552 people were arrested and yet the government could not trace all the perpetrators or pre-empt further violence. This does not reflect well on the government's anti-terror strategy. This failure has had a deleterious effect on the country and the people. In Balochistan, where the most incidents took place, terrorism as the violence is referred to by the government is a manifestation of the political unrest that has gripped the province for the last three years and has escalated in the wake of the move to crack down on dissidents and abandon the dialogue process..

Dawn, 9 January 2007

Opinion: A difficult neighbour (Shahid Burki)

AFGANISTAN has been Pakistans uneasy neighbour for nearly 60 years. It was the only country that refused to recognise Pakistan as an independent state when the British left South Asia and handed over power to a Hindu majority India and a Muslim majority Pakistan. The Afghans disapproved of the British act. They wanted London to redraw the boundary it had drawn between the areas it ruled and the areas that were left to be governed by Kabul. They did not want the Durand Line the border between Afghanistan and British India drawn arbitrarily by the British in 1893 to not become the permanent border in the post-colonial world. By withholding recognition from Pakistan, the Afghans believed that they could undo the injustice that was done to them by the British decades

earlier. Afghanistan believed that it was wrong for the British to split the Pashtun population into two halves while they governed India and it was even worse to perpetuate that mistake after they left India..

Paktribune, 9 January 2007

Sherpao willing to broker Musharraf-BB agreement

Karachi: Interior minister Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao has offered his services to broker an agreement between President General Pervez Musharraf and former prime minister Benazir Bhutto. While talking to journalists at the inauguration of a private sector operated CNG vehicle plant, on Tuesday he said that there was absolutely no question of re-joining PPP, however he would gladly corroborate in any political alliance approved by, and on lines of moderation and enlightenment policies as projected by President Musharraf. While reflecting on the present situation of Afghanistan, he said that Pakistan wants peace to prevail in Afghanistan, and announced setting up three check posts on the Quetta and Chaman routes, without affecting the rights and dignity of tribals of these areas..

Daily Times, 9 January 2007

Pakistan denies 'covert assistance' to Taliban

Washington: The Pakistan embassy has taken exception to allegations that Islamabad is providing covert assistance to the Taliban to fight NATO and US forces in Afghanistan. The charge was made some days earlier by veteran correspondent Arnaud de Borchgrave in the Washington Times. In a rejoinder published on Monday, embassy spokesman M Akram Shaheedi says that on the contrary, President Pervez Musharraf's geopolitical assessment has led him to direct the Pakistan security agencies to wage war against Taliban and Al Qaeda, as these evils pose grave danger to the peace and security of Pakistan and Afghanistan and consequently to the world at large. Pakistans leadership understands that the fight against the Taliban is in the countrys national interest. As such, how can Pakistan repeatedly choose the Taliban as Afghan rulers, the official asks'

Dawn, 10 January 2007

Border mining being reviewed: Canadian FM holds talks

Islamabad, Jan 9: Canada on Tuesday endorsed Pakistans decision to selectively fence its border with Afghanistan and offered better alternatives to laying landmines which President Pervez Musharraf agreed to examine. This development clearly suggests that Pakistan could abandon its plan to partially mine the border region which has evoked a negative reaction from the international community. This transpired at a joint press conference addressed here by the visiting Canadian Foreign Minister Peter Gordon MacKay along with his Pakistani counterpart Khurshid Kasuri after their broad-ranging talks that focused largely on the worsening Afghanistan situation, particularly the alleged movement of militants across the border. Both foreign ministers described their interaction as very useful and constructive and they were confident that as a result of their extensive discussions bilateral cooperation in diverse fields would further deepen. They also reaffirmed their commitment to working together to promote the shared objective of a peaceful, stable and prosperous Afghanistan..

Daily Times, 10 January 2007

Sherpao to head Pak commission for peace jirga

Peshawar: Federal Interior Minister Aftab Sherpao will head the Pakistani commission that is to decide the modalities for a peace jirga on both sides of the Pak-Afghan border, NWFP Governor Ali Mohammad Jan Orakzai said on Tuesday. The government has not yet decided on the other members of the commission, Orakzai told reporters at Peshawar Museum. During a recent visit to Kabul, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and Afghan President Hamid Karzai agreed to set up two commissions on each side to look into ways to set up a peace jirga on both sides of the border. Asked to comment on Afghanists reaction to Pakistans plan to fence and mine the Pak-Afghan border, Orakzai said that he personally opposed the mining plan, but Pakistan has no option but to counter the Afghan governments charges of cross-border incursions by fencing and mining the border. The governor said that instead of resolving the issues through talks, Afghan officials were accusing Pakistan of supporting terrorists, and that compelled Islamabad to fence and mine the border..

The Nation, 10 January 2007

Editorial: In open court

THE Human Rights Commission of Pakistan has pointed out the neglect of political prisoners rights in the light of Sardar Akhtar Mengals trial. Instead of being treated as a political prisoner, the former Chief Minister of Balochistan was humiliated, denied basic amenities and isolated from the rest of the world. His trial not being open to all raises suspicion about its fairness due to the involvement of military intelligence as the HRCP official has quoted Mengal as saying so. The situation in Balochistan has aggravated since Nawab Akbar Bugtis murder as the regime continues using repressive measures rather than improving the situation through negotiation..

Paktribune, 10 January 2007

Pak keen to develop strategic relations with Canada: PM Aziz

Islamabad: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz has said that Pakistan is keen to develop a strategic relationship with Canada covering diplomatic, political, economic, defence and security fields to the mutual benefit of both countries. The Prime was talking to Mr. Peter Gordon Mackay, Canadian Foreign Minister who called on him at the PM`s House Tuesday. The Prime Minister said that the decision to hold regular political consultations between the Foreign Ministers of the two countries will go a long way to further cement the relationship between the two countries. He noted with satisfaction the upward trend in the bilateral trade and investment between the two countries. The Prime Minister said Pakistan is keen to get greater access to Canadian markets which will be possible after a Free Trade Agreement is signed between the two countries. The Prime Minister said that Pakistan is fast becoming a regional hub for investment and last year attracted an FDI of \$ 3.2 billion-the highest in the country`s history. The Prime Minister said that Pakistan offers level playing field to local and foreign investors without discrimination and would welcome Canadian investment in agribusiness, telecom, IT, oil and gas and textile sectors..

Daily Times, 10 January 2007

Pakistan takes over chairmanship of G-77 today

UNITED NATIONS: Pakistan will take over chairmanship of the Group of 77 (developing countries) and China today (Wednesday). South Africa will hand over the chairmanship to Pakistan at a special ceremony at the United Nations, to be presided over by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon. Pakistan, which has been elected for a third time, will become the 37th chairman of the group. State Minister for Foreign Affairs Makhdum Khusro Bakhtyar is arriving in New York to lead the Pakistan delegation at the ceremony. Congratulating Pakistan, China said it had maintained close communication and cooperation with the Group of 77..

Daily Times, 10 January 2007

PPP vows not to cooperate with General Musharraf

Islamabad: The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) on Tuesday pledged not to cooperate with President General Pervez, as party chief Benazir Bhutto assured her party she would return to Pakistan before the next general elections, a party source privy to the meeting in Dubai told Daily Times. It was the unanimous opinion of the party leaders that no compromise with General Musharraf is acceptable, but Makhdoom Amin Fahim was of the view that the party could consider cooperating with Musharraf if he sheds his uniform and holds free and fair elections, the source said. PPP leaders Raja Pervez Ashraf, Sherry Rehman, Mian Raza Rabbani, Naheed Khan, her spouse Safdar Abbasi, and Shah Mehmood Qureshi who were summoned to the meeting from Pakistan to review the country's political situation and discuss the elections believed cooperation with Musharraf would severely damage the party, said the source. The party leaders proposed April 4 for Bhuttos return to Pakistan, but she left it to the partys central executive body to decide the date of her return..

Dawn, 11 January 2007

Fencing issue on tripartite agenda

RAWALPINDI, Jan 10: The proposed fencing and mining of the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan border is most likely to figure in the 20th meeting of the trilateral commission, comprising Pakistan, United States and Afghanistan, which meets here on Thursday. Pakistan indicated its willingness on Wednesday to review the proposal after the Canadian Foreign Ministers meetings with President Gen Pervez Musharraf, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and Foreign Minister Khurshid M. Kasuri. Afghanistan is opposing the proposal to mine the border areas. Chief of General Staff of the Afghan National Army General Bismillah Khan and Commander International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan (Isaf) Gen David Richards arrived here on Wednesday along with their respective delegations to participate in the tripartite meeting..

The Nation, 11 January 2007

Checkposts attacked with rockets, grenades

KHAR, Bajaur Agency: Awami National Party won the NA-44 seat when its candidate Shahabud Din Khan emerged successful by securing 17,200 votes against his rival candidate from PML-Q, Haji Said Badshah, who bagged 8,500 votes in the by-elections

held here on Tuesday. The unofficial announcement of Shahabs victory was made after the completion of votes counting held at all 61 polling stations. The by-elections were held on the seat, which fell vacant when Jamat-e-Islami MNA Sahibzada Haroonur Rashid resigned on October 30 to protest against the air attack at a madrassa in the region. Besides Shahabud Din and Said Badshah, the third candidate was Ihsan Ullah who contested the by-elections as independent. Although the JI boycotted the by-elections and staged demonstration, the tribesmen from different parts of the Agency cast their votes during the polling which was held peacefully from 9:00am to 5:00pm in all over the Agency..

Paktribune, 11 January 2007

PM Shaukat approves commission for organizing and holding of Jirgas

ISLAMABAD: The Prime Minister has approved the appointment of a Commission for organizing and holding Jirgas and keeping liaison with the Afghan Jirga Commission already set up by the Afghan Government. The Commission will be headed by Minister for Interior Mr. Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao. The Commission shall include Governor of NWFP Lt. Gen (r) Ali Muhammad Jan Aurakzai, Governor of Balochistan Mr. Owais Ahmed Ghani, Minister for Culture Dr. Syed Ghazi Gulab Jamal and Minister for States and Frontier Regions Sardar Yar Muhammad Rind. The Commission shall formulate its recommendations regarding the modalities for holding of Jirgas. Meanwhile, an international organization working for de-mining across the globe, International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), has demanded of the Pakistani government to review its decision of mining Afghan border for checking cross border movement of terrorists..

Dawn, 11 January 2007

Opinion: The enduring energy crisis (Sultan Ahmed)

OFFICIAL inaction in the area of adequately increasing the energy output or its ready availability to meet the needs of the people for the last seven years has made them face the prospect of increasing loadshedding with all its crippling impact and the Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) fears a shortfall of Rs84 billion to meet the challenge. The government will again come to its help and enable it receive the financial assistance in the form of a large budgetary support, commercial bank loans and sanctions for higher electricity rates apart from permission to import furnace oil. All that will add to the financial liabilities of the Authority, earlier dubbed as white elephant. The cheapest source of power is the hydel power from large dams, but the government has waited for seven long years to decide on the five dams led by the Kalabagh dam, Daimer, Basha dam, Akori dam etc. It could have taken a decision on the other four dams and got down to work earlier if a political consensus on the Kalabagh was not coming forth..

The Nation, 11 January 2007

PPP top leaders not to attend London APC

ISLAMABAD - PPP has decided in principle not to attend the All Parties Conference at the top leadership level, and tasked the Central Executive Committee (CEC) to announce the decision in the third week of January. The decision was taken in the Dubai meeting chaired by PPP chairperson Benazir Bhutto, a source in the party told TheNation on

Wednesday. However, Benazir agreed to send her representative to the PML-N proposed conference, citing tight engagements in the next month. The PPP in the meeting expressed its reservations over the proposed convening of the APC by Nawaz League. Its first and foremost concern was that the APC had not been called from the platform of the Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy (ARD). Its other concern was that the religious alliance, Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) had also been invited to the APC, therefore, PPP did not want to be associated with the religious leaders in one way or the other..

Daily Times, 12 January 2007

Pakistan genuinely fighting terror: US

KABUL: Pakistans commitment to fighting terrorism is genuine and the country remains an important ally of the United States, a senior US official said on Thursday. Pakistan is committed to this not just because we are all concerned about terrorism, but because of the commitment that they have ... of orienting Pakistan in a different direction, Richard Boucher, the US assistant secretary of state for South and Central Asia, told reporters in the capital Kabul. Pakistan wants to create a modern society that is free from the kind of extremism, terrorism that has beset Pakistan and some of its neighbours in the past, he said. Boucher did not say whether the US supports Pakistans plan to mine and fence parts of its border with Afghanistan. The issue to us is the control of the border and control of the border areas, Boucher said. Pakistan does not want to see Al Qaeda, Taliban operating in Pakistan and they are taking a series of steps ... to try to control those areas better and we are supporting that, he said..

Dawn, 12 January 2007

Rising crime graph worries Musharraf

ISLAMABAD, Jan 11: President Gen Pervez Musharraf on Thursday took serious notice of the worsening law and order situation in the country, and directed the federal and provincial governments to take effective measures to eradicate the menace of terrorism and to curb crime. The president is quite worried about the increasing crime rate in the country, especially the cases of terrorism, extremism, sectarianism and street crimes, federal Interior Minister Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao told journalists after a high-level meeting on law and order held at the Army House. The president directed the heads of security departments in federal and provincial governments to curb the menace of terrorism, extremism and sectarianism, and termed them root causes of deteriorating law and order situation in the country, the minister said. Mr Sherpao said that keeping in view the sensitivity of the coming month of Muharrumul Haram, the president directed the federal and provincial governments to work out a comprehensive strategy to maintain law and order during the holy month..

Paktribune, 12 January 2007

Pakistan tops list of abductions, killings of journalists during year 2006

ISLAMABAD: Despite remaining independent, the media in Pakistan continued facing outbursts of intolerance by the security agencies and a section of the establishment and Pakistan topped the list of abductions and killings of journalists during the year, according to a report released by South Asia Free Media Association on Thursday. The

tribal areas have been turned into no-go areas for journalists. The situation in Balochistan and interior Sindh remained quite dangerous for journalists. The government further amended the PEMRA law to curtail the freedom of electronic media and weighed its options on bringing in yet another black law, PAPRA, to contain the print media, according to a report released by Secretary General Amtiaz Alam on South Asian Media: Continuing to Negotiate with Difficulties on Thursday at a function organized by SAFMA..

The Nation, 12 January 2007

Diplomats inspect Gwadar

ISLAMABAD (APP) - A delegation of Islamabad-based ambassadors and diplomats from 44 countries visited Gwadar Port on Thursday. Minister for Communications Muhammad Shamim Siddiqui said Thursday that Gwadar seaport located at the tip of Persian Gulf, has immense potential to become a regional trade hub besides providing a vital link to China and Central Asian Republics. This he said while delivering his welcome address at Gwadar to a delegation of Islamabad-based ambassadors and diplomats from 44 countries. The Minister said that according to realistic forecasts, Gwadar would generate substantial cargo from Western China and land-locked Central Asian Republics. For industries located in western China, Gwadar will be shortest and most viable access to warm waters via Karakoram highway, Indus Highway and proposed linkages through Ratodero and Khuzdar, he said. The minister further said This route will open up new vistas and mutually beneficial trade between China and Pakistan in the coming decades. Shamim Siddiqui told the diplomats that port facilities in Gwadar are being developed in two phases and in the first phase three multipurpose berths of 200 meter length each with 350;9^\$\$\$nn] Up and ancillary facilities have been built..

Dawn, 12 January 2007

EDITORIAL: Jirgas role in peace-making

THE commission set up by the government for organising jirgas in coordination with the Afghan government has a vital role to play. This move is in pursuance of the decision taken by President Pervez Musharraf and President Hamid Karzai in their September summit in Washington to hold a meeting of the tribal elders in the border areas. The success or otherwise of this move will depend on the format of the consultation and the degree of cooperation between Islamabad and Kabul. Given the porous nature of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and the ethnic composition of this area where tribes straddle the Durand Line it is not possible to isolate one side from the impact of events on the other side. It is important that the policies adopted by the governments on both sides should be carefully coordinated. Moreover, it is not possible to exclude the indigenous stakeholders the tribal leaders from the strategy that is pursued. Therefore, the idea of holding jirgas to consult them and take them into confidence makes sense. To go a step further and have some kind of coordination between the jirgas on both sides is equally important..

Daily Times, 12 January 2007

EDITORIAL: Are we facing a grand Islamic schism?

President General Pervez Musharraf says that Pakistan must unite and address the

challenge of sectarianism, 'not just for the countrys security, but for the entire Muslim world. He thinks there might soon be a sectarian catastrophe in the Muslim world. He expressed these thoughts at the 24th Convocation of the Army Medical College (AMC), and warned Pakistan to lay off sectarianism. This was a good place to talk about sectarianism because the disease was contracted under General Zia-ul Haq when the army ruled supreme. The other party he has to address is the mullah with whom the military has long had a cosy relationship and who keeps the fire of schism burning. After the hanging of Saddam Hussein there were many protests against the verdict. Everybody thought these protests were against the United States. In India, where demonstrations were far bigger than in Pakistan, angry Muslims would not let go even after two days. In Indian-held Jammu & Kashmir the protest was most intense. In Lucknow, the traditional centre of Shiaism, the protest was loudest and it was led by Sunni mullahs. Noting that the Muslims were finally cursing the United States, the Communist Party of India (CPI) joined in with other normally anti-US leftwing Indian politicians..

Indian Express, 12 January 2007

Musharrafs democracy riddle (Husain Haqqani)

General Pervez Musharraf recently told a public gathering in Dera Ismail Khan that for the first time, the assemblies are completing their tenure. The year 2007 is the election year and people should elect progressive and moderate people. Musharraf asserted naively, The uniform has nothing to do with democracy. It must not be confused and vested interests are out to mislead the nation. In reality, Musharrafs uniform has everything to do with Pakistan not being on the road to democracy. Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto shares the hope with many Pakistanis, is that a transitional arrangement could somehow emerge that would allow Musharraf to wield power for a while and then allow him to fade away. However, in Pakistan, phased transitions from military to civil rule have faltered in the past. For a power-sharing arrangement to be meaningful it is important that it should be more than an arrangement between individuals and parties but rather a social contract between Pakistans all-powerful military and its political parties..

Daily Times, 13 January 2007

US says Al Qaeda leaders are in Pakistan, Islamabad denies

WASHINGTON: Al Qaedas leaders are holed up in a secure hideout in Pakistan, from which they are revitalising their bruised but resilient network, US intelligence chief John Negroponte said. Negroponte told the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence that Pakistan is the centre of a web of Al Qaeda connections that stretches across the globe into Europe. Al Qaeda is cultivating stronger operational connections and relationships that radiate outward from their leaders' secure hideout in Pakistan, he said. Pakistan is our partner in the terror war, but it is also a major source of extremism, Negroponte said. Eliminating the haven extremists have found in Pakistans tribal areas is not sufficient to end the Afghan insurgency, but is necessary. Pakistans Foreign Ministry described Negropontes comments as questionable criticism and urged him to acknowledge Pakistans role in breaking Al Qaeda..

Dawn, 13 January 2007

Mukherjee arrives today; Siachen high on agenda

ISLAMABAD, Jan 12: Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee arrives here on Saturday afternoon on a two-day official visit amid optimism that it may break the ice on the Siachen issue which could ultimately pave the way for a settlement of the longstanding Kashmir dispute. Mr Mukherjee will be leading a seven-member delegation including foreign secretary Shivshankar Menon who has formerly served as High Commissioner to Pakistan and has been actively involved in the ongoing peace process. On arrival at the Chaklala Airbase aboard his special aircraft Mr Mukherjee will be received by foreign secretary Riaz Mohammad Khan and Pakistans High Commissioner to India Shahid Malik who is here for the talks. His official engagements will start with a call on President Gen Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz. In the evening he will hold formal talks with his counterpart foreign minister Khurshid Kasuri at the Foreign Office that will be followed by a joint press conference..

Paktribune, 13 January 2007

PM calls for expanded Pak-Iran economic ties

Islamabad: Underlining the historically close relationship enjoyed by Pakistan and Iran, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz has emphasized the need to transform the existing goodwill and affinity between the two countries into expanded economic relationship. Talking to Dr. Kamran Bagheri Lankarani, Iranian Minister for Health and Medical Education who called on him here Friday, the Prime Minister said the huge potential of cooperation between the two countries remains under leveraged and underutilized. He expressed the hope that setting up of Pak-Iran Investment Company and signing of the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) will boost the trade and economic ties between Pakistan and Iran. The Prime Minister said Iran is Pakistan's important neighbour and the two countries enjoy long and lasting relationship based on common faith, shared history, heritage and values and Pakistan values its relationship with Iran. The Prime Minister said as a result of the high growth and economic turnaround achieved by Pakistan the energy needs of the country are growing and Pakistan desires to enhance cooperation with Iran in the energy sector. Pakistan, the Prime Minister said, is keen to increase the export of electricity from Iran to Pakistan..

Dawn, 13 January 2007

EDITORIAL: Sectarian schism

PRESIDENT Pervez Musharrafs warning about a sectarian crisis brewing in the Muslim world deserves to be heeded. It should be noted, however, that the Islamic world does not have a history of serious sectarian conflict, unlike Europe, which was reduced to primitivism during the holocaust that was the 30-year war ending in 1648 with the peace of Westphalia. It is only when the former Ottoman territories were broken up into new entities that ethnic and sectarian considerations came to the fore. Iran and Iraq have a Shia majority, but never did they have sectarian trouble, and the cause of the Iran-Iraq war can be traced to Saddam Hussein's foolish megalomania. Currently, too, the wave of sectarian killings in Iraq is a post-Baathist phenomenon triggered by Britain and America. In Pakistan, sectarianism raised its head in the wake of the US-led 'jihad'

against the USSR in Afghanistan. The CIA funded and armed some Pakistani religious parties, which, after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, acquired a vested interest in maintaining well armed militias and defied the government when it suited them. Some of these parties, like the banned Sipah i Sahaba, had a sectarian agenda. Even though banned, it continues to exist underground..

Daily Times, 13 January 2007

Pak-Afghan border fencing: no decision yet (Rana Qaisar)

ISLAMABAD: US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Richard Boucher said on Friday the situation on Pakistan-Afghan border had not changed despite a peace treaty between the government of Pakistan and the tribal elders in North Waziristan. Talking to journalists at the residence of US Ambassador Ryan C Crocker, Boucher said that cross-border movement still continued and extremist elements were continuing their activities and operations. However, he said: We have also not succeeded there (in Afghanistan). Boucher said the US was engaged with Pakistan and recognised the country's efforts against extremism and terrorism. On fencing and mining of the areas along the Pak-Afghan border, Boucher said that no final decision had yet been taken. The matter is still under discussion and consideration. The objective is to ensure that the border areas are more stable and extremists are stopped from crossing the border, he said. Boucher said there was a serious threat from the Taliban and narcotics traffickers. We are concerned over these issues, he said, adding that despite conflicting statements from Pakistan and Afghanistan, there was better communication between the two countries than ever..

Daily Times, 14 January 2007

Pakistani tribesmen back Afghan border fence

WANA: Tribesmen from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas FATA have announced support for the governments decision to fence the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, but opposition to mining. In a grand jirga on Saturday, tribesmen said the measure would bring an end to the Afghan authorities accusations of terrorist infiltration. Tribal elders Malik Saifullah, Malik Gul Rahman, Malik Said Nawaz and Mushtaq Shalozani from North and South Waziristan and Kurram Agency addressed the jirga. Pakistani tribesman, they said, had no role in the deteriorating law and order in Afghanistan. The fencing of the border would not divide families, they said, but increase love among tribesmen. They said the people of the tribal areas had chosen to join Pakistan and were not taken into confidence earlier when the Afghans and the British made the Durand Line deal.

Daily Times, 14 January 2007

OPINION: Provincial autonomy: a holistic view (Dr Hasan-Askari Rizvi)

The official rhetoric on enhancing provincial autonomy does not match the domineering role of the federal government. Therefore, a genuine move towards provincial autonomy is not possible under the Musharraf government Official circles are suggesting that the government intends to amend the constitution to enhance provincial autonomy. It wants to review the distribution of powers in the federation with the objective of strengthening the role and position of the provinces. There is also talk of abolishing the concurrent list and transferring most of the subjects of this list to the provinces. The Federal Minister for

Provincial Coordination, Salim Saifullah Khan, has promised that the provinces would get more autonomy by the end of the current financial year on June 30, 2007. And the ruling Pakistan Muslim League PML has asked the National Reconstruction Bureau NRB to prepare concrete proposals towards this end. That the government wants to grant more autonomy political, administrative and financial to the provinces is a positive development. However, while it is easy to talk about it, the real challenge is come up with and implement concrete measures to curtail the domineering role of the federal government..

Dawn, 14 January 2007

4th round of peace talks in March: ‘ Three pacts likely next month ‘ Meeting on terrorism soon

ISLAMABAD, Jan 13: In a bid to move the peace process forward Pakistan and India on Saturday agreed to launch the fourth round of Composite Dialogue on March 13-14 in Islamabad and hold the Joint Commission meeting next month in New Delhi. This was announced by visiting Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee at a joint press conference with Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri after their lengthy discussions that focused largely on Kashmir, Siachen issue and terrorism. Reading out a number of other important decisions taken at the meeting, Mr Mukherjee announced that the first meeting of the joint anti-terrorism mechanism would take place before the end of March. Mr Mukherjee said Mr. Kasuri had accepted his invitation to attend the meeting of the Joint Commission in Delhi next month, and added that several agreements which were near or close to finalization would be concluded then. The agreements include: a) The Agreement on Reducing the Risk from Accidents relating to Nuclear Weapons etc.; b) Speedy return of inadvertent Line Crossers; and c) Prevention of Incidents at Sea..

Dawn, 14 January 2007

Pakistan keen to expedite IPI project: Aziz

ISLAMABAD Jan 13: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz on Saturday said that Pakistan was keen to expedite the Iran-Pakistan-India IPI gas pipeline project to meet growing energy requirements of both India and Pakistan and to create linkages and interdependence to promote peace in the region. The prime minister said this while talking to Indian Minister for External Affairs, Mr Pranab Mukherjee, who called on him at the PM House on Saturday. The prime minister said that South Asia was at the cusp of economic take-off and it could become a major force in the world once it was able to resolve bilateral disputes. Mr Aziz said that peace between Pakistan and India should not become hostage to incidents beyond the control of the two countries. Reciprocating, Mr Mukherjee said that India was also keen to resolve all issues with Pakistan to establish good neighbourly relations..

Dawn, 14 January 2007

Editorial: A two-way responsibility

THE familiar refrain about the need for Pakistan to do more seems to be giving way to some belated realisation among the allies in the war on terror that blaming Islamabad for every problem inherent to the situation is not going to help matters. On Friday, US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher injected a measure of realism into the

controversy by saying that both Pakistan and the US had failed to curb terrorism. A day earlier, Gen David Richards, head of the International Security Assistance Force Isaf in Afghanistan, said that steps taken by Pakistan had helped bring down the graph of insurgency ... compared to last winter. Isaf troops, he said, were the beneficiaries of Pakistans policy, which had led to a reduction in the incidents since autumn. The litany of complaints against Pakistan has been led by Afghan President Hamid Karzai who has done nothing to help combat terrorism and has merely relied on foreign forces to do the job for him. However, western ambivalence still remains a source of worry for Pakistan. While Mr Boucher and Gen Richards sounded positive about Islamabad's policies, senior US officials including Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and her newly-appointed deputy, John Negroponte, kept up the pressure by saying that Al Qaeda was present and regrouping in Pakistan's tribal belt..

Daily Times, 14 January 2007

EDITORIAL: Washingtons fractured policy articulation

The US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia, Richard Boucher, was careful not to indict Islamabad for the deteriorating peace conditions in Afghanistan when he was in Kabul before coming to Islamabad. In Islamabad he was equally cautious, saying only that the situation on the Pakistan-Afghan border had not changed despite a peace treaty between the government of Pakistan and the tribal elders in North Waziristan..No one is supposed to show certitude in the midst of insufficient specific knowledge. Pakistan has either taken action or accepted blame for it when it thought it had received actionable intelligence that the top leadership was on its territory. Two strikes in Bajaur alone after which two sets of people were killed in Afghanistan and in Dargai in Pakistan in retaliation should be enough to make the Americans careful about accusing Pakistan directly of harbouring Osama bin Laden and Aiman al-Zawahiri. It is true that Al Qaeda has its areas of influence inside Pakistan. If you hurt it in these areas, it hits back. What no one knows precisely is the physical whereabouts of the top duo of Al Qaeda. Thus no one can say that President Pervez Musharraf is letting Al Qaeda have its way, because he has nearly been killed after being targeted by Al Qaeda. Given this situation, is there confusion in Washington about how to assess Pakistan as an ally'

The Nation, 15 January 2007

Afghan refugee camps terrorists safe haven (AFZAL BAJWA)

ISLAMABAD Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz Sunday hinted at possible reduction in petroleum prices on Monday (today) when the government goes into fortnightly review after the international crude dip so far not passed on to the local consumers. Answering questions at a media interaction after concluding International Conference on Disaster Management, the prime minister avoided announcing the decision a day ahead of the review. We are going into a review tomorrow, you could pray for good news but only after the review you would be able to know the decision, he said and rushed to add, Still the deficits incurred due to capping of domestic prices when they were shooting up internationally are not totally diminished. Since prices are internationally linked, the government hardly comes into it but when prices were going extra-ordinarily high the government had to intervene through subsidy protecting the domestic consumers, the prime minister justified the post-deregulation government interventions. Upon his

attention drawn to the petroleum pricing case in the apex court, he said, That was a subjudice matter and we would not touch it..

Dawn, 15 January 2007

Musharraf, Hillary discuss Afghanistan

LAHORE, Jan 14: A delegation of US Senate led by Senator Hillary Clinton called on President Pervez Musharraf here on Sunday and discussed with him regional situation, Pakistan-US relations and bilateral issues. President Musharraf briefed the delegation about Pakistan's point of view on Afghanistan and told the US senators that a stable, strong and peaceful Afghanistan was in the interest of the region. He reiterated Pakistans commitment to continue its support and cooperation to the world community in the fight against terrorism and to ensure peace and stability in Afghanistan..

The Nation, 15 January 2007

Editorial: Bajaur protests

THOUSANDS of tribesmen staged demonstrations in the Bajaur Agency on Saturday to mark the first anniversary of the airstrike in Damdola village that killed 13 civilians, including women and children, expressing disbelief in the official commitment to protect their lives and rights. They burnt President Bush in effigy in the streets at a time when US Assistant Secretary Richard Boucher announced in a TV interview in Peshawar that his country be working with the Pakistani government to increase development in the NWFP and the tribal region. But for the Pushtun tribes there is hardly any reason to get carried away by such rhetoric when they see no end to the repression they are being subjected to. They feel they cannot trust their own government following the massacre of over 80 people in a madrassa in the area in less than two months after the signing of a peace agreement in North Waziristan..

Hindustan Times, 15 January 2007

Indo-Pak borders will not change, says Pranab (Vinod Sharma)

External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee rounded off his two-day visit to Pakistan on Sunday with a visit to the world heritage site of Taxila. Before that, he met a cross section of the top political leadership, advocating to them a step-by-step approach to issues like Kashmir that have defied solution for six decades. His attention drawn to the flexibility displayed by President Pervez Musharraf to settle the Kashmir question, Mukherjee indirectly brought up Prime Minister Manmohan Singhs proposal for cross-Line of Control consultative mechanisms on subjects that touched Kashmiris on either side. In a replay of the Indian theme that confidence building measures were necessary to reduce the human cost of the conflict, Mukherjee recalled that both armies pitched in for relief efforts after the earthquake that caused havoc in Kashmir. That kind of cooperative spirit, he reasoned, needed to be sustained in normal times. In a related context, Mukherjee reaffirmed the Indian position recognised now by Pakistan against redrawing boundaries. Sources at the meeting said the interaction was cordial..

Daily Times, 15 January 2007

EDITORIAL: Dont hype up the Indo-Pak dialogue!

Pakistan and India are going to launch the fourth round of their composite dialogue on

March 13-14, and the fear is that the ministers who will engage in this dialogue will look over their shoulders to see how the media have given it their spin. After that there will be a regrettable playing to the gallery and the process might go limp no sooner that it has begun. Thus the Indian foreign minister, Pranab Mukherjee, has already secured himself from Indian media rebuke by saying that there can be no timeframe for the resolution of such disputes as Siachen and Kashmir. But his Pakistani counterpart, Khurshid Kasuri, says, defensively, that the two countries have never had such sustained discussions on the Kashmir issue as in current composite dialogue. He also thinks that the big issues have been thrashed out and are ready for resolution and that the Siachen dispute could be resolved within days. Putting the big disputes thus behind them, the foreign ministers went on to announce that Indian and Pakistani diplomats would be allowed to travel without permission in a larger perimeter around the respective capitals than has been the case until now..

Dawn, 16 January 2007

Musharraf debunks US military claim

ISLAMABAD: President Gen Pervez Musharraf on Monday rejected US Maj Gen Benjamin Freakleys claim that Jalaluddin Haqqani was perating from inside Pakistan to foment violence in Afghanistan, and said that the baseless allegations could harm Pak-US cooperation in the war on terror. According to Online, Musharraf was addressing a meeting to review the situation on the Pak-Afghan border and the establishment of 'reconstruction opportunity zones in the tribal areas. He said that Pakistans unprecedented sacrifices in the war on terror could not be ignored. He also declared allegations by several US commanders and others that the Taliban were operating from Pakistan as baseless. He said that a United Nations report on the Taliban's command-and-control infrastructure was enough to prove this. He said that the main objective to fence and mine the Pak-Afghan border was to stop the movement of anti-state elements..

Dawn, 16 January 2007

FO warns against pre-emptive strike

ISLAMABAD, Jan 15: Pakistan on Monday sent out a stern warning against any attempt of a pre-emptive strike inside its territory on the pretext of combating terrorism. As for anyone referring to a pre-emptive strike against Pakistan, they should know that this is unacceptable. Pakistan will not tolerate that, Foreign Office spokesperson Tasnim Aslam categorically stated in response to a question at a weekly news briefing here. She said this when her attention was drawn to the US intelligence agency chiefs reported statement at a Senate briefing last week that Indis patience was running thin on the issue of terrorism being perpetrated inside its territory by groups based in Pakistan and that India might take action to punish Pakistan if any major incident took place in the days ahead. Although noting that she had seen the full transcript of his testimony and did not find such references, Ms Aslam underlined that Pakistans position on the issue was very clear that if India had any information it should come forward and share it with the government. We have repeatedly said that we would investigate and we will take action, she said..

Dawn, 16 January 2007

Opinion: Policy born of frustration (Shahid Javed Burki)

SINCE I wrote my last article on Pakistan's deteriorating relations with Afghanistan which was published in this space on January 9, a number of new developments have occurred. These require some discussion before I go on to present my views on how economics could lead the two countries to live like amicable neighbours rather than sworn enemies. Islamabad and also Kabul needs to rethink its strategy towards the Pashtun tribes that straddle the Afghan-Pakistan border. This is where economics enters the picture. But before using economics to suggest a new approach towards the Afghan-Pakistan rift, let me recount what has happened in the last few weeks. Pakistans prime minister has visited Kabul, the second high-level mission by a Pakistani official in a few weeks. The prime minister followed his foreign minister, presumably to advance further whatever was achieved by the earlier visit. If there was an expectation of a breakthrough, it does not seem to have occurred, at least not according to the reports that have appeared in the western press. If anything, the relations between the two countries seem to have worsened..

Daily Times, 16 January 2007

EDITORIAL: Marathon versus Extremism

Following the successful staging of the third International Marathon in Lahore on Sunday, President General Pervez Musharraf said that the running event in the city and the promotion of tourism in Pakistan have helped in creating a soft image of Pakistan. He thought it was a blow to the Islamic extremists and that, because the people had participated in the race, they had actually rejected the extremists, giving them a clear message that they are keen to organise and participate in such healthy sporting activities...When the programme kicked off in 2005, a lot of unpleasantness was created by the religious parties who saw the mixed marathon as a threat to the cultural order they had already imposed through their own efforts. In Gujranwala, a local clerical leader took on the government and disrupted the race, which led to an exchange of gunfire. The Punjab government then called off the mixed races and retreated from the programme from a number of small cities. Then, in 2006, the clergy marched on the Sangla Hill Christians in Punjab and set fire to their churches and houses while the Punjab government twiddled its thumbs. Indeed, it went on to pamper the offended clergy by allowing it to stage a protest against the Danish cartoons..

Dawn, 16 January 2007

Effective screening ordered along Afghan border

ISLAMABAD, Jan 15: President General Pervez Musharraf on Monday called for installation of the state-of-the-art system to record all movements across the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and documentation of all those who cross the frontier legally and for right reasons. He issued these directives while presiding over a meeting that discussed border security. However, an official handout issued by the Inter Services Public Relations ISPR did not mention what decision had been taken at the meeting on the governments plan to fence and mine parts of the countrys border with Afghanistan, giving an indication that the government had decided to drop the plan. When contacted, ISPR Director General Shaukat Sultan confirmed that the issue of mining and fencing the

border had not been discussed at the meeting. Neither there has been any discussion on the plan, nor has it been dropped, he claimed. The official handout did not either mention what type of system would be used at the Pakistan-Afghanistan border to control any infiltration of terrorists..

Daily Times, 17 January 2007

8 killed in strike on militant camps in Waziristan

Peshawar: Attack helicopters of the Pakistan Army struck hideouts of suspected militants in South Waziristan early on Tuesday morning, leaving eight terrorists dead and 10 injured. Military spokesman Major General Shaukat Sultan said the latest reports he got from the area indicated eight terrorists had been killed and 10 wounded in the airstrike launched at 6:55am. The compounds were being used for training purposes, he told Daily Times. Intelligence sources had confirmed the presence of 25-30 foreign terrorists and their local facilitators, occupying a complex of five compounds in the area, Inter-Services Public Relations ISPR .said. Three out of the five compounds have been destroyed killing most of the terrorists present in those compounds. Tribal MP from South Waziristan Maulana Mirajuddin said that eight innocent labourers were killed in the unjustified airstrike..

Dawn, 17 January 2007

Progress on Waziristan deal reviewed

Peshawar, Jan 16: As tension hovered over the tribal areas, Governor Ali Mohammed Jan Aurakzai held separate meetings with members of the grand jirga who brokered a peace deal in North Wazirsitan and elders from all other tribal agencies to discuss prevailing scenario in the region. Mr Aurakzai had invited 45 members of the grand jirga to the Governor House to review the implementation of the September 5, 2006 peace agreement with the tribe and said that full implementation of the deal was imperative for its total success. All-out efforts are needed to pull Fata out of the difficult situation, and we cannot afford to repeat mistakes committed in the past. Therefore, we must try to resolve the differences peacefully, said the governor, according to a handout. The jirga members had visited Miramshah last month upon completion of 100 days of the peace deal and held meetings with Utmanzai tribal elders and interlocutors of local Taliban shura to assess progress on the implementation of the agreement..

Dawn, 17 January 2007

700 air-to-air US missiles bought

TUCSON (Arizona), Jan 16: Pakistan is buying 700 air-to-air missiles made by US defence group Raytheon for \$284 million, the company said on Monday. Pakistan is purchasing 500 Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missiles AMRAAM, the largest international order for this weapon, and 200 short-range AIM-9M Sidewinder missiles, Raytheon said in a statement. Delivery of the AMRAAM arsenal would begin in 2008 and continue through 2011, it said. Pakistan has signed a letter of offer and acceptance for the 700 missiles, it said. The combined \$284 million procurement augments Pakistans established inventory and will provide the bulk of the air-to-air fire power of the Pakistan Air Force, the statement said..

Daily Times, 17 January 2007

Opinion: Dealing with Afghan refugees (Ijaz Hussain)

The best solution to the refugee problem lies in repatriating them to the towns and villages where they lived before their displacement. It signifies that conditions conducive for their return should be created. There is a consensus in Pakistan that Afghan refugees are an albatross around the country's neck and must be repatriated to Afghanistan at the earliest. Following revelations that elements in this refugee population are using camps located near the Durand Line as bases for operations inside Afghanistan, the demand for repatriation has grown in intensity. A former foreign secretary writing in a newspaper has argued for moving them out of the major Pakistani cities into guarded camps read detention centres as a first step; this is to be followed by their shifting, with or without international cooperation, to Afghanistan. Similarly, the government has asked the Western countries to help it repatriate the refugees since Pakistan could not effectively prevent them from using their camps as safe havens. Pakistan also argues that this exercise would cost the Western powers less than what they are spending in combating Taliban insurgency..

The Nation, 17 January 2007

Editorial: Deal review

IT is distressing to find the government planning to review the North Waziristan Agreement following reservations expressed by the US Administration about the deal signed by the local authorities and tribesmen sometime ago. The issue came under discussion at a high-level meeting convened by General Musharraf on Monday to examine the security situation in the region bordering Afghanistan. News reports quoted official sources as saying the President directed security officials to install a state-of-the-art surveillance system to record all movements across the Durand Line. The need to make the North Waziristan Pact more effective and result-oriented was, however, felt only following US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Bouchers observation in Islamabad that the peace deal had not helped bring down militancy and infiltration was posing a threat to Afghanistans peace and stability..

Dawn, 17 January 2007

Editorial: MMA at the crossroads

WITH a general election less than a year away, the MMA seems to be a house divided against itself. There is no decision yet on one fundamental issue will the six-party alliance take part in it or not? The alliances two major parties seem to be at odds with each other on what to many is an issue that could decide the right-wing groups fate for the subsequent five years. Jamaat-i-Islami chief Qazi Hussain Ahmad is opposed to the MMAs participation in the polls if President Pervez Musharraf remains at the helm of affairs. In this he is not alone but enjoys the support of many other parties. What the JI chief wants is a movement to oust the present military-led government. The MMAs other major component, JUI-F, insists that a boycott is no solution, and its chief, Maulana Fazlur Rahman, feels the alliance must prepare for the election instead of launching an anti-Musharraf movement. This is not the only issue on which there are differences within the MMA; the issue where the alliance suffered its greatest setback was the passage of the womens protection bill. Qazi Hussain Ahmad was for immediate

resignations and insisted that the MMA was with him..

Dawn, 17 January 2007

N. Areas representatives to get constitutional powers

ISLAMABAD, Jan 16: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Northern Areas Maj retd Tahir Iqbal has said that a reform package granting fundamental constitutional powers to representatives of the Northern Areas is in the final stage and will be sent to the federal cabinet for approval soon. It is expected that 90 per cent of the recommendations forwarded by the Northern Areas representatives for inclusion in the Legal Framework Order would be approved, he said while chairing the cabinet meeting of the Northern Areas Legislative Council here on Tuesday. The meeting was attended by the NALC advisers, Secretary Kashmir Affairs and Northern Areas Division, N. Areas Chief Secretary and other officials. The minister expressed hope that after the approval of LFO, NAs representatives would be empowered to work for the betterment of their people..

Daily Times, 18 January 2007

Present assemblies to re-elect Musharraf

ISLAMABAD: The federal cabinet decided on Wednesday that the present assemblies would elect the next president between September and October this year. Constitutional experts briefed the cabinet that as per the Constitution, the presidential election has to be held between September and October while the present assemblies will complete their tenure on November 16, Information Minister Muhammad Ali Durrani told reporters after the cabinet meeting. Asked if it had been decided categorically that the present assemblies would re-elect the president, Durrani said: All the decisions will be taken as per the Constitution. There is no extraordinary situation to delay it. He said the cabinet also decided that the ruling coalition would contest the next general elections jointly. The cabinet also decided to re-introduce Rs 5 currency notes and the prime minister directed the State Bank to come up with new designs for the cabinet to consider. It also approved new composition, weight and size parameters for coins of Rs 1, 2 and 5 denominations..

Dawn, 18 January 2007

Baitullah vows to avenge attack

PESHAWAR, Jan 17: Top militant commander Baitullah Mehsud on Wednesday vowed to avenge the Hamzola earlier reported as Zamzola air strike in the next two weeks in his native South Waziristan which, in his words, would cause pain to Pakistan. Mr Mehsud did not exactly renounce his peace agreement with the government in February 2005, but said that the military action in Hamzola had forced him to take action. We will definitely avenge this action in 10 to 15 days, the forty something militant commander told a foreign media organisation. And it, the action would be such that it would pain their heart. Baitullah who according to security officials operated the cluster of compounds in Salamat village in Hamzola, 30 km to the east of Razmak, that received a hail of missiles from helicopter gunships on Tuesday, said he did not want to fight the Pakistan Army but had been forced to do so. Asked whether his peace agreement with the government was over, Baitullah said it was up to Pakistan and Maj-Gen Shaukat Sultan the Director General ISPR..

The Nation, 18 January 2007

EU to monitor 2007 elections

ISLAMABAD - German Ambassador Dr Gunter Mulack has said the European Union EU supports the process of democratisation in Pakistan and wants to see the country become a full democratic state. Addressing a press conference at the German Embassy here on Wednesday, Dr Mulack, who was flanked by the EU Counsellor on Economic and Trade Affairs Balthasar Benz and German Counsellor Media and Public Diplomacy Patrick Heinz, said the EU would send observers to monitor election process in Pakistan and the exploratory mission would also visit this part of the world in 2007. He said the EU would closely monitor the elections in Pakistan and desire that they are held in a free and fair manner. He said the EU presidency, which is being chaired by Germany since January 1, would provide technical and financial support to Pakistan in the election process. To a question on the barring of exiled political leadership to take part in polls, the ambassador said Germany encourages all parties to take part in the election process and does not believe in linking the process to certain figures and personalities..

Daily Times, 18 January 2007

EDITORIAL: Seeking credibility

Just as the Washington bureaucracy was joining its voice with the NATO commanders in Afghanistan to protest Pakistan's double-faced approach to the problem of cross-border Taliban raids from Pakistani territory, the Pakistan army has attacked and killed some more terrorists based in South Waziristan. The army spokesman says they were militants training in some local compounds, which means they were Al Qaeda and Taliban elements along with their local Waziristani facilitators. Predictably, however, the tribal member of parliament from the region, Maulana Mirajuddin, says they were simply "locals" working in the compounds with the help of Afghan POWs, or migratory labourers. Unfortunately, such is politics in Pakistan that everyone who is anyone in the opposition will say that the government is lying while those who support the government will feel unsure because the government mysteriously fights shy of supplying sufficient proof whenever the army goes on the offensive and takes out foreign militants. It has happened twice in Bajaur, and one can safely declare that more people disbelieve the official story than believe it..

Dawn, 18 January 2007

Editorial: Now it is South Waziristan

PAKISTAN has once again been caught between the devil and the deep sea that underlines its dilemma in the war on terror being fought alongside the Americans. The missile attack on Tuesday on a cluster of compounds described by the security officials as a militant hideout left 20 or so foreign miscreants as the government calls them dead and many injured in Zamzola in South Waziristan. As has happened on earlier occasions, this led to an angry reaction from the local population who staged protest demonstrations. It may not be easy to sift fact from fiction, given the governments decision to keep independent observers and the media out of the disturbed areas which are also geographically remote and relatively inaccessible. But it is now clearly established that militants have been operating in the tribal areas of Pakistan and there may be some truth

in the allegations made by the Afghans and the Americans that cross-border infiltration is taking place from Waziristan..

The Nation, 18 January 2007

Editorial: Growing insecurity

THE law and order situation has continued to worsen despite the periodic cosmetic changes in the top hierarchy of law enforcement agencies, compelling the Senate and the Lahore High Court to take serious notice. Murders, tortures, kidnappings, robberies, thefts and mysterious disappearance of political dissidents have become the order of the day, with allegations from certain circles that in particular cases these ugly deeds were the handiwork of intelligence outfits. The Senate opposition staged a walkout to register their protest and the treasury members joined it in expressing concern over the stealing of documents from the apartment of PPP-P Senator Rukhsana Zuberi, who has been collecting data and exposing the government about the fixing of oil prices. In the presence of a large number of lawyers, who had assembled in the courtroom to hear the petition of Additional Advocate General Arif Bhinder's father, an LHC full bench summoned the Chief Secretary and IG Police to appear before it to explain why they had failed to maintain law and order..

Paktribune, 18 January 2007

Pakistan rejects Afghan govt allegation on Mullah Omar presence in Quetta

ISLAMABAD: Brushing aside Afghan intelligence spokesman allegation on Mullah Omar presence in Quetta Pakistan has said it does not know any so called Taliban spokesman detained by Afghan government. Reacting to Afghan intelligence spokesman statement foreign office spokesperson Tasneem Aslam said here Wednesday the allegations leveled against Pakistan with respect to Mullah Omars presence in Pakistan are absolutely baseless and unfounded. We dont know about any so called Taliban spokesman who is under detention of Afghan government, she added. Earlier, Afghan intelligence spokesman told a German TV channel in Kabul that detained Taliban spokesman Dr Hanif had said Mullah Omar is commanding Taliban militants from across the border and he is being allegedly backed by ISI. As per Dr Hanif statement Mullah Omar is continuing his activities from Quetta..

Daily Times, 19 January 2007

Musharraf warns Karzai: Stop high profile militants from entering Pakistan

Islamabad: President General Pervez Musharraf on Thursday urged the Afghan government to take measures to stop high profile militants from crossing the border into Pakistan. Chairing the 9th meeting of the National Security Council NSC here, Musharraf said that no country had contributed more in the fight against terrorism than Pakistan, an official statement said. He reiterated Pakistans resolve to combat terrorism and extremism and warned of strong punitive action against any illegal and terrorist activity from its soil. Musharraf said the government had taken effective political and administrative measures in FATA, adding that these steps would bring peace and socio-economic development in the region and would lead to effective monitoring of the Pak-Afghan border. He, however, stressed the need for strict implementation of plans to check cross-border movement of militants and eliminate foreign terrorists..

The Nation, 19 January 2007

Over 400 Afghans nabbed

Quetta - The newly-appointed Balochistan Inspector General Police Tariq Masood Khoso has rebutted the claim of the Afghan government that Taliban leader Mulla Omar is in Quetta. Addressing his first press conference here on Thursday at his office, Khoso said that it was absolutely incorrect and an attempt to malign Pakistan, adding the Foreign Office spokesperson had already rebutted the claim of Afghan. He said that police had arrested over 400 illegal Afghan immigrants including suspected Taliban during the last six months and 300 of them had already been deported while the rest of them were under interrogation. He said that the action against Al-Qaeda and Taliban suspects would continue. He said that the month of Muharram was approaching and he would try his best to maintain law and order during the month as his predecessor did last year..

Dawn, 19 January 2007

No decision on presidential poll, Senate told

ISLAMABAD, Jan 18: The government denied in the Senate on Thursday that the cabinet had decided to get President Pervez Musharraf re-elected by the present parliament and provincial assemblies, calming down a protesting opposition that vowed to resist such a move. But the ruling coalition reaffirmed its position inside and outside the upper house that, under the constitution, the next presidential election must fall between Sept 15 and Oct 15 during the lifetime of the present assemblies elected in 2002 for five years and that General Musharraf would be its candidate. Opposition leader Raza Rabbani raised the issue on the basis of media reports that quoted Information and Broadcasting Minister Mohammad Ali Durrani as telling a news conference on Wednesday that a cabinet meeting the same day had decided to have President Musharraf re-elected by the present assemblies. Mr Rabbani described the reported decision as unconstitutional and based on political bankruptcy and said if it were true, the opposition parties would resist it inside and outside parliament and could exercise the option of resigning from the assemblies before such a vote was taken..

Daily Times, 19 January 2007

Pakistan must address Taliban sanctuary: US

WASHINGTON: Pakistan must do more to address the sanctuary that Taliban fighters enjoy in Pakistan before security can improve in Afghanistan, the head of US spy operations said on Thursday. National Intelligence Director John Negroponte said in testimony before the House of Representatives Intelligence Committee that we all agree that the question of a sanctuary for the Taliban in Pakistan is problematic. There's a recognition that unless and until something is done to more definitively address that question, it's always going to be more of a challenge to address the security problems that arise in Afghanistan, Negroponte said. This is a problem that we're actively working. US officials discuss the problem with Pakistan with great, great regularity and more work needs to be done on that, Negroponte told lawmakers. He added that Pakistan over the past several years, they have put a lot of Al Qaeda and foreign fighters out of commission during that period of time. So I have no doubt whatsoever about their commitment to the war..

Daily Times, 19 January 2007

Musharraf will inaugurate Gwadar Port on March 23

ISLAMABAD: Senator Babar Khan Ghauri told the Senate on Thursday that Gwadar Port was almost complete and President General Pervez Musharraf would inaugurate it on March 23. The Gwadar Port will usher in a new era of prosperity in Balochistan, Ghauri said while answering questions during the Senate proceedings. He said that the federal government had launched several major projects in Balochistan to bring it at par with other provinces. Ghauri said that the government was also providing jobs to Baloch youths to remove the sense of deprivation among the people of the province. The PMLs Pari Gul Agha joined her opposition colleagues from Balochistan in their token walkout against what they said was the federal government's discriminatory behaviour towards their province. They were protesting over the fact that there was not a single employee from Balochistan in the Ministry of Labour, Manpower and Overseas Pakistanis among the 84 sanctioned posts of the Overseas Pakistanis Division in BPS-1 to 15. They criticised Labour and Overseas Pakistanis Minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan for saying that this practice was being followed since 1979..

The Nation, 19 January 2007

Editorial: Coming under clouds

PAKISTAN should be seriously concerned at the increasing criticism it is being subjected to by its long lasting friend in the context of its role in the USAs so-called War on Terror. While leaving Kabul at the end of his two-day visit, US Defence Secretary Robert Gates maintained that the militancy on the Pakistani side of the border would have to be dealt with, adding though that it was an extraordinary ally. And to check the flow of militants he promised that if the US commanders on the battlefield recommended the injection of more troops he would look into the request sympathetically. He has been joined from Brussels by NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer in picking holes in Islamabad's inability to control the influx of Taliban into Afghanistan, which it is generally felt is likely to grow this year, when he said, We see simply too many people coming across that border. They should go after those people... who are trying to spoil everything NATO-ISAF under a UN mandate is trying to do..

Daily Times, 20 January 2007

Pakistan building new N-facilities

WASHINGTON: The Institute for Science and International Security ISIS, a Washington-based nuclear think tank, has obtained commercial satellite imagery of Pakistans Chashma nuclear industrial park and put it on its website, showing what appears to be the construction of a new reactor and its associated facilities. ISIS says that although it is unclear whether the facility is operational, the nature and rate of the construction suggests that it may soon start operations, if it has not done so already. ISIS believes that the imagery raises the question of whether Pakistan may intend to render operational a new reprocessing facility - capable of separating weapons-grade plutonium out of spent reactor fuel. Such a capability, combined with Pakistans ability to make large quantities of highly enriched uranium HEU for nuclear weapons, would aid Pakistan in developing thermonuclear weapons as well as increasing the size of its nuclear arsenal..

Daily Times, 20 January 2007

Army fired laser-guided missiles in Waziristan

KOT KALAY: Pakistan used laser-guided precision missiles in Tuesdays pre-dawn airstrike on three houses in which eight people were killed, as bereaved families rejected the government's claim that the presence of foreign militants had led to the attack. The residents of Kot Kalay in northeast South Waziristan showed a group of journalists on Friday an unexploded 500-pound missile that had pierced through a rooftop and went four feet into the ground. The provenance of the missiles wasn't clear. Military spokesman Maj Gen Shaukat Sultan told Daily Times over the telephone from Islamabad that laser-guided precision missiles had been used in the attack. We fired the missiles from fighter aircraft. This is not the first time we have used this weapon, he said. However, it is the first time the military has acknowledged using laser-guided precision weapons against militants in Waziristan. Sultan said that three out of five missiles had failed to explode because of possible technical malfunction. He said the military would make efforts at some stage to recover the unexploded missiles..

The Nation, 20 January 2007

Editorial: Curbing infiltration

GENERAL Musharrafs warning that strong punitive action will be taken against those involved in illegal cross-border activity as well as terrorists taking refuge on our soil is the reiteration of Pakistans commitment to eradicate the dual threats of terrorism and extremism. Addressing the ninth meeting of the National Security Council in Islamabad on Thursday, he observed that Pakistan was taking all possible measures to check terrorists movement across the Durand Line while the Afghan government was making no such effort. The meeting also reviewed the ongoing rehabilitation work in the earthquake-hit areas but mainly focused on law and order situation in the tribal region. The President claimed that there had been considerable improvement in the security situation of the tribal belt bordering Afghanistan, but in the same breath stressed the need for strict implementation of the elaborate plan to check infiltration of militants and elimination of foreign terrorists. Earlier he talked about making the peace pact more effective and result-oriented by closely monitoring all movements across the border. This is understandable in the wake of a fresh spate of accusations by the Bush Administration that Pakistan is not doing enough to stop militants infiltration into Afghanistan..

Dawn, 20 January 2007

Opinion: US pressure to do more (Tariq Fatemi)

SOME strange things have been happening these past weeks which have left Pakistanis confused and concerned. I refer to the testimony of John Negroponte, the outgoing US intelligence chief, before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence recently. Negroponte has always had the reputation of being a blunt and forceful personality with strong links to the US intelligence community. During the Reagan administration he was involved in plans to subvert regimes deemed inimical to American interests. Negropontes remarks caused some surprise in the Senate itself, where they were perceived as more critical of Pakistan than on previous occasions. Negroponte began by declaring that Al Qaeda was a terrorist organisation that posed the greatest threat to US interests, including

to the homeland. This was in sharp contrast to earlier US claims that its efforts globally, and particularly in Afghanistan and in Iraq, had disabled Al Qaeda which had consequently lost its ability to cause major damage to American interests, specially on the US mainland. It was, however, his references to Pakistans role and performance in the global war on terror that should be of primary concern to Islamabad..

Paktribune, 20 January 2007

Pakistan, Saudi Arabia enjoy broad-based, deep rooted relations: PM Aziz

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz has said that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia enjoy broad-based and deep rooted relations in every field including diplomatic, cultural, political and economic and the ties between the two countries are growing further. The Prime Minister was talking to Prince Fahd Bin Sultan Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud, Governor of Tabuk who called on him here on Friday. The Prime Minister said Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are strategic partners and the two countries enjoy unanimity of views on all important regional and international issues. Both the countries want peace, resolution of disputes and are collectively working for the cause of Islamic Ummah, the Prime Minister added. The Prime Minister said the Ummah needs to work harder to portray the true image of Islam as a religion of peace, tolerance, compassion and brotherhood. He said the growing divide between the people belonging to various faiths needs to be bridged to create better interfaith, intercultural and inter civilization harmony for a safer and harmonious world..

Daily Times, 20 January 2007

EDITORIAL: President General Musharrafs second term problems

President General Pervez Musharraf personally gave the nation to understand many years ago that he was a transitional figure and would quit after putting the country back on the rails. But he has now made his prolonged presence in the foreseeable future a mystery. No one can deny his achievements in office, but after more than seven years in power there is confusion over his future. Will he be re-elected as president as per the Constitution, and if so, will he also remain chief of the army staff? Since the two conditions of his continuation in office don't mesh there is a periodic uproar among the opposition and embarrassment among those who support him. It is often the federal information ministry that gets to be the butt of all sorts of rebukes when this happens. A few days back it was the deputy information minister who had to issue a denial about his claim that Mr Shaukat Aziz would be prime minister again after the 2007 elections. Now it is the minister himself, Mr Muhammad Ali Durrani, who told the Senate on Thursday that he had been misquoted over the issue of President General Musharrafs re-election through the current Assemblies..

Dawn, 21 January 2007

US in a fix over Pakistan role in global strategy

WASHINGTON, Jan 20: Pakistan, along with Afghanistan and Iraq, is among the three top countries the United States sees as the hub of activities that threaten America's global interests. In an annual report to the US Congress, the Department of Homeland Security mentions Pakistan as a country where many of our most important interests intersect and where the Taliban and Al Qaeda maintain critical sanctuaries. The report, posted on the

State Departments Web site on Friday, also mentions the possibility of a nuclear conflict between India and Pakistan, noting that the prospect of renewed tensions with nuclear-armed India remains despite improved relations between the two countries. Pakistan also gets a special mention in a separate assessment of proliferation threats: We are mindful that Pakistan was a major source of nuclear proliferation until our efforts disrupted A.Q. Khan's network. The report that Homeland Security chief John Negroponte presented to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, describes Pakistan as a frontline partner in the war on terror, which remains a major source of Islamic extremism and the home for some top terrorist leaders..

The Nation, 21 January 2007

No real democracy in Pak: US

WASHINGTON - US Assistant Secretary of State Nicholas Burns has maintained that the absence of real democracy in Pakistan is not a hidden fact. He said this while talking to newsmen at the residence of a reputed Pakistani businessman in Virginia. He said that America was in touch with President Musharraf on this issue and it had been made clear to him that only civilian rulers should rule the civilians. He, however, hoped that President Musharraf would resolve the issue before 2007 elections, leaving it to him how to get it done. He also hoped that the human rights situation in Pakistan would get better in future. He disclosed that the US was giving full cooperation to Pakistan to strengthen its economy. He said that the US congress would grant funds for boosting trade cooperation with Pakistan and to help in creating jobs opportunities for the people of Waziristan and Balochistan..

Dawn, 21 January 2007

Editorial: Hurriyet leaders stand

SPEAKING at a dinner meeting in Islamabad on Friday, the visiting All Parties Hurriyet Conference chairman, Mirwaiz Umer Farooq, said that it was time the armed struggle in Kashmir gave way before negotiations for a peaceful settlement of the dispute. He also spoke supportively of President Musharrafs four-point peace proposal as a positive move in that direction. Seen against the backdrop of the progress made by India and Pakistan in their peace process, the Kashmiri leaderships willingness to explore new approaches to conflict resolution will be widely welcomed. It will give a boost to the efforts Islamabad and New Delhi have been making to end the dispute over Kashmir. The major goal of the peace process at this stage should be to lower the level of militarisation in Kashmir, end the human rights violations there by the Indian forces and the militants and ultimately devise a formula which is acceptable to the Kashmiri leadership on both sides of the Line of Control. Since President Musharrafs four-point peace plan has not been rejected by any of the stakeholders involved in the Kashmir dispute, it offers a plausible starting point. Maulvi Umer Farooqs suggestion that Kashmiris be given institutionalised representation in the India-Pakistan dialogue on Kashmir is eminently logical..

The Nation, 21 January 2007

Opinion: Question of eligibility (Tanvir Zahid)

The year 2007 is quite important because it is going to be a year of two major elections. As a matter of fact General Pervez Musharraf will be elected to the presidency for the

first time. Earlier, the assemblies had only given him a vote of confidence after he got himself elected to the office through a referendum ahead of the 2002 polls. Now that the presidential elections are going to be held in accordance with the procedure laid down in the Constitution General Pervez Musharraf, who is going to be a joint candidate of the PML QA , PPP Patriots, MQM and other members of the present ruling coalition, may have to contest against another candidate likely to be fielded by the combined opposition. The question is not whether the present assemblies can elect the next President just ahead of the end of their present term but of eligibility of the candidates desirous of contesting the election. There is no bar under the Constitution on the present assemblies in any manner to cast vote in the presidential polls. What is essentially required is the eligibility of the prospective candidates for the presidential election. If General Pervez Musharraf is eligible to contest he may do so. He can surely become eligible by doffing his uniform and striking down a two-year bar on a retired public servant from venturing into political arena with one stroke of his pen as the sitting President. Is General Pervez Musharraf willing to step down as the COAS and run for the presidential election sans uniform'

Dawn, 21 January 2007

Opinion: Autonomy before reforms (Kunwar Idris)

THE World Bank is prepared to give money to Pakistan to strengthen its institutions for good governance providing it reforms its civil services first. The proviso must leave Gen Musharraf wondering what he and his National Reconstruction Bureau had been doing all this while. To him governance along with the salvaging of the economy had been at the centre-stage of his seven-year rule. The NRB, created by Musharraf soon after he took control of the government, proceeded on the populist assumption that the civil services, despite more than half a century of freedom, were still steeped in feudal imperial traditions in which the will or welfare of the people found no place. Headed first by a general and later by a member of parliament, the NRB had plenty of boffins and consultants on its rolls but no administrator worth the name. The NRB has been at work for seven years promulgating new laws and amending existing ones wholesale in all aspects of governance. Centuries-old institutions have been abolished and new ones created, all adding up to what Musharraf in his memoirs describes as a silent revolution. It was accompanied, though, by a lot of noisy protests and cynical reactions..

Daily Times, 22 January 2007

Pakistan should join Iraq peace effort

WASHINGTON: Pakistan should be one of the countries invited to attend an international conference to end the conflict in Iraq, Henry Kissinger suggested on Sunday. Writing in the Washington Post, he proposed that two levels of diplomatic effort are necessary under the circumstances. A contact group should be created, assembling neighbouring countries whose interests are directly affected and which rely on American support. This group should include Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan. Its function should be to advise on ending the international conflict and to create a united front against outside domination. Kissinger said, Parallel negotiations should be conducted with Syria and Iran, which now appear as adversaries, to give them an opportunity to participate in peaceful regional order. Both categories of consultations should lead to an international conference including all countries that have to play a stabilising role in the

outcome, specifically the permanent members of the UN Security Council as well as such countries as Indonesia, India and Pakistan..

Dawn, 22 January 2007

Karzai says Pakistani circles behind Violence

KABUL, Jan 21: Afghan President Hamid Karzai said on Sunday certain Pakistani circles were protecting insurgents fighting in Afghanistan and added that drugs and corruption in his government were contributing to the violence. Mr Karzai, speaking at the opening of a new session of the Afghan parliament, said the danger from the insurgency and drugs would intensify in the coming year. He called on the people to rally to the defence of the nation. The enemies of Afghanistan's freedom and independence very disgracefully continued their intervention and meddling in our internal affairs, Mr Karzai said, referring to last year which was the bloodiest since US-led forces defeated the Taliban in 2001. They formed terrorist groups consisting of international terrorist networks under the protection of certain Pakistani circles for martyring mercilessly our children, teachers and clerics, he remarked. He did not elaborate..

Dawn, 22 January 2007

Editorial: Was PMs Kabul trip useful' (Amir Usman)

THE success or failure of a high-level visit is determined by its outcome. Has Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz's recent visit to Kabul resulted in strengthening the existing relationship between the two countries? How many substantive agreements were signed? Was an identity of approach on bilateral, regional and international issues achieved during the visit? If answers to these questions are in the affirmative, the visit could be considered a success, otherwise it can at best be termed a tourist jaunt or a private pilgrimage. In order to achieve these objectives, extensive negotiations are necessary at the diplomatic level before the visit as well as meticulous arrangements for the visit. The need for such measures becomes even more urgent if relations between the two countries are somewhat sour or not very friendly. Results can be disappointing and at times even counterproductive if high-level visits are undertaken in a haphazard manner. Whether these prerequisites were finalised before the prime minister's recent visit to Kabul and did he achieve the objectives for which the visit was undertaken are the subject of this discussion..

The Nation, 22 January 2007

Editorial: Need for unity

After keeping its cards close to its chest for sometime the PPP has finally decided against attending the MPC convened by Mian Nawaz Sharif in London while suggesting that the conference should be held at the ARD platform with a wider agenda. The decision was caused by a clear division among the party members who discussed the issue at length at a joint meeting of the party's CEC and federal council on Saturday. Party sources were quoted as saying that some members believed that Ms Benazir Bhutto's participation in the London Conference could put to rest all speculations about the PPP's back-channel contacts with the Establishment while others were vexed by the presence of the MMA leaders at the moot. Their annoyance is justified because they have seen the religious leadership repeatedly deceiving the combined opposition in the past. Those opposed to

the idea of attending the MPC argued that since Mian Nawaz could not return home soon, he should not be allowed to hijack the ARD and persuade its leadership to boycott the next general elections..

Dawn, 22 January 2007

Opinion: The president and his advisers (SM Hussain)

The opposition, however fractious and seemingly impotent it might seem at this time, can easily resign from the assemblies and mount a public campaign against General Musharraf's election. It is always easier to mobilise public opinion against one person than a whole government. Over the last few weeks as I watched President General Pervez Musharraf on television and read some of the speeches being made by him, I realised that the election campaign he was starting is his own. The other thing I realised is that his political advisers have evidently convinced him that he should subject himself to election first and that also by the present assemblies. I have no insider information but from what I see and read, it seems to me that members of the official coalition with perhaps the exception of the MQM are quite afraid to go out and contest elections at this time. The way things are and the mood the people are in, without serious rigging it is quite possible that many, if not most of them, might not be returned to the assemblies if elections are held now..

Daily Times, 23 January 2007

4 soldiers killed in suicide attack

PESHAWAR: A suicide car bomber attacked an army convoy on its way from Bannu to Miranshah in North Waziristan on Monday, killing four soldiers. The attack comes seven days after a military strike against suspected militant hideouts in Zamazola, South Waziristan. Pro-Taliban militant leader Baitullah Mehsud had vowed to avenge the attack on Zamazola with a suicide attack. Today at about 1030 hours an administrative convoy moving from Bannu to Miranshah the main town in North Waziristan was attacked by a suicide bomber with an explosive-laden car near Khajuri check-post. Four security forces personnel embraced shahadat while a few were injured including one who is in critical condition, an ISPR statement said. Military spokesman Maj-Gen Shaukat Sultan held enemies of peace responsible for the suicide attack, the first such incident since the government struck a peace deal with pro-Taliban tribal militants on September 5 last year. Those who do not support the peace deal are likely to be behind the attack, he told Daily Times..

Dawn, 23 January 2007

Editorial: No trifling with dams

PAKISTAN faces crises of all kinds. There is the water crisis on account of the shortage of water in the rivers and a shortfall in its storage capacity. The country is also in the midst of a power crisis because of inadequate generation of electricity. These shortages have affected agriculture as well as industry which could cause a slowdown in economic growth. Obviously, this is worrying for the government which has pinned its political future on its economic success. Hence the official knee-jerk reaction, with Islamabad making it known that it plans to build five big and small dams by 2016 in nine years from now. The dams have acquired the status of a magic wand which is waved from time to

time in the belief that it will solve the countrys water and power problems. But the reality is quite different. While one cannot be certain that all these dams, namely, Kalabagh, Bhasha, Munda, Kurram Tangi and Akhori, are feasible and environmentally safe, technical opinion is also divided on their feasibility. This is only one aspect..

Daily Times, 23 January 2007

EDITORIAL: Musharrafs Middle East diplomacy

Just as President General Pervez Musharraf was receiving the highest Saudi civil award in Riyadh, Iran announced its plans for military manoeuvres in the north of Tehran, particularly emphasising short range missiles like Zalzal and Fajr. Last year it had three military exercises, especially when it was most under pressure from the United States and the United Nations Security Council. But President General Musharraf says he is visiting four Middle Eastern capitals to discuss Palestine, and that his visit is unconnected with the regional tension building up in the wake of a fresh Iran-US standoff. The American initiative in Palestine is also on, with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visiting Israel and meeting the Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas, in what can be called the first move by the Bush Administration towards kicking-starting the road map of peace between Israel and the Palestinians. Before President Musharraf, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz too went to Saudi Arabia for four days amid announcements of broad military cooperation between Pakistan and the Gulf Cooperation Council GCC. President Musharraf will meet Egypt's Hosni Mubarak, Jordas King Abdullah and Syrias President Bashar Assad in this rather significantly long tour..

The Nation, 23 January 2007

Opinion: Between the lines (Kuldip Nayar)

That the existing national and provincial assemblies in Pakistan will elect the countrys next President does not come as a surprise. It has been in the air for some time. One minister at Islamabad had even blurted it out although he was chastised for speaking out of turn. The debate which I heard in Pakistan a few weeks ago was not whether President General Musharraf could get himself reelected or not, but whether he could do so under the constitution. It was taken for granted that he would be reelected and that he would use the present assemblies to do so. The argument was on the constitutional validity of such a step. The discussion was heated, but it was like foam that settles down and nothing beyond. I do not think there is any constitutional bar on assemblies to reelect him because these are the ones, which returned him as the President last time in 2002. However, it would look ridiculous that the assemblies, which end their tenure in 2007 should elect the President who would finish his term in 2012. Next elections would be a futile exercise under a President whose own election might come to be doubted. Although the military junta has lost sensitivity on the criticism of election, Pakistan would damage its image still further in the eyes of the democratic world..

Dawn, 23 January 2007

Coalition attack condemned

ISLAMABAD, Jan 22: The government on Monday condemned a deadly attack on a Pakistani post in the North Waziristan tribal area by US-led coalition forces in Afghanistan earlier in the day and told the Senate such violations would not be tolerated.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Sher Afgan Khan Niazi even said that violation of Pakistani territory from across the troubled western border must be retaliated. Such attacks should be treated just like enemy attacks, the minister said after a pro-government senator from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas Fata raised the matter during an evening sitting of the upper house and called for a strong government reaction. We condemn it, Mr Niazi said and promised to the house that a strong statement over the matter would be issued. A military statement said Pakistan had lodged a strong protest with the coalition authorities against what it called a mistaken firing on the post in the Shawal area of the North Waziristan Agency that killed one Pakistani soldier and wounded two..

Daily Times, 23 January 2007

Opinion: Finding keys to the Kashmir gridlock (RB 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. Contrary to contemporary perceptions, the founding fathers thought India and Pakistan would be friendly and support each other in nation building. Both sides' conflicting claims over Kashmir and subsequent resort to force pushed them in the opposite directions, deepening their antagonism and their strategic culture of confrontation. Pakistan was truly anguished by the Indian annexation of Kashmir, as it took advantage of legal ambiguities and played the game of hard realpolitik, disregarding the wishes of the people and the interests of Pakistan..

The Tribune, 24 January 2007

Opinion: Possibilities in Pak poll (Sushant Sareen)

THE political battle-lines in Pakistan are getting blurred and confusing with the general election approaching fast. The existing alliances are suddenly in danger of breaking apart. New alliances are being thought out. Rumour mills are working overtime, fuelled by deliberate and motivated leaks by political rivals. And yet, it appears as though the end result of all the backdoor shenanigans will be an election fought largely around a single issue. Ironically enough, both the issue and the final line-up will depend largely on the decision and calculation of a party which has been in political wilderness for more than a decade the PPP. There are broadly three possibilities as far as the dominant issue is concerned. The first is that the current Opposition parties the PPP, the PML(N), the MMA, the ANP and others may come together and fight the elections entirely on the issue of General Pervez Musharraf's continuance in power. In this case, the ideological battle-lines will get totally confused since parties with a similar ideology will be fighting against each other and in the company of their ideological foes..

Dawn, 24 January 2007

Protest lodged over air strike: FO summons US, UK envoys

ISLAMABAD, Jan 23: Pakistan Foreign Office on Tuesday summoned American Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker and lodged a strong protest over an air strike by the US-led coalition forces in North Waziristan that killed one Pakistani soldier and injured two others a day earlier. Separately, a protest was lodged with the High Commissioner of the UK at the Foreign Office and a thorough investigation into the matter was demanded. In a long-drawn meeting with the Additional Secretary Americas Shahid Kemal, at which the Additional Secretary Afghanistan Khalid Khattak was also present, the US ambassador was pointedly told that there should be no repeat of such episodes. A one paragraph statement issued by the Foreign Office Spokesperson later said: A strong protest was lodged with the Coalition authorities through the Ambassador of the United States and, separately, the High Commissioner of the United Kingdom at the Foreign Office today. It added: They were told that the Coalition authorities should investigate the incident and ensure that such incidents do not occur in the future. According to the statement both the envoys expressed deep regret and said that the incident was being investigated..

Daily Times, 24 January 2007

Musharraf stresses Muslim harmony

AMMAN: President Pervez Musharraf on Tuesday called for a strong initiative to restore stability in the Middle East, after talks with Jordan's King Abdullah II and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. In Amman, Musharraf and King Abdullah discussed the situation facing the Muslim Ummah, particularly in the context of the deteriorating situation in the Middle East, and its implications for all of us. Talks focused on the unresolved Palestinian issue as well as violence and political tensions in Iraq and Lebanon, Musharraf said before leaving Jordan for Syria ahead of a wrapping up a regional tour in the United Arab Emirates. At the same time there is the serious challenge in the shape of our common fight against terrorism and extremism, Musharraf said, reading from a prepared text, with Jordans monarch at his side. There is an ever-increasing need for harmony within the Muslim world, he added. Together we need to play a role to avert the dangers facing us, said Musharraf, who arrived overnight in Jordan on the third leg of a tour that has already taken him to Saudi Arabia and Egypt..

Dawn, 24 January 2007

Editorial: Bad day for war on terror

MONDAY was a bad day for the war on terror. Two incidents highlighted this truth. One showed the vulnerability of our security forces to indoctrinated fanatics; the other threw into bold relief the need for greater coordination between Pakistan and those on the other side of the Durand Line. Those on the other side of the Durand Line is perhaps the apt way of describing the coalition that has been operating in Afghanistan without having achieved any results during the last five years. But first the suicide attack that left four Pakistani security men and a woman dead. The attack on the military convoy near Mirali is the first major incident in North Waziristan since the signing last Sept 5 of the peace agreement between the government and the militants. Tribal leaders condemned Mondays incident and later held consultations among themselves to decide who could possibly be behind the crime. The Taliban denounced it, saying that they wanted to abide

by last years agreement, while expecting the government to do the same..

Paktribune, 24 January 2007

PM Aziz gives approval in principal vis-a-vis handing over of Gwadar Port to Singapore Port Authority

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz has in principal approved the handing over of Gwader Port operations to Singapore Port Authority. The decision has been made on the recommendation of Gwader Port Implementation Authority GPIA and the special committee constituted to negotiate the agreement for operations of Gwader port. The Prime Minister was chairing a meeting of the Policy Board on development of Gwader Port here today. The Prime Minister also gave approval of the master plan and business strategy to develop Gwader as a port and industrial city. Addressing the meeting, the Prime Minister said Gwader because of its geo strategic location had the potential to become a regional maritime hub. He said Gwader Port would emerge as the national gateway to and from Pakistan and a major transshipment Port of the region catering to the needs of Pakistan and Central Asian States. He said the 14.5 meter deep draft of Gwader Port would be able to attract up to fifth generation ships including Panamax and mother vessels. In addition to the location of Gwader and the depth of the channel, low operations cost will provide competitive advantage to the Gwader Port, the Prime Minister added..

Daily Times, 24 January 2007

EDITORIAL: Weakness in Waziristan can no longer be concealed

A suicide car bomber killed four soldiers of the Pakistan army when it hit an army convoy on its way from Bannu to Miranshah in North Waziristan on Monday. This killing was supposed to be in retaliation against the Pakistan army's attack a week ago in a suspected militant hideout of warlord Baitullah Mehsud in Zamazola in South Waziristan. He has now hit back and killed our soldiers. And the style adopted was purely Arab, meaning that our warlords are indoctrinated and trained by the Arabs of Al Qaeda. The military spokesman says the attack was carried out by those who dont like the peace deals made by the government with local pro-Taliban leaders of the region. The place where the attack was mounted is near the border with North Waziristan, the area from which the army had removed all its checkposts following the deal. While this tragic incident took place in the tribal agency, NATO soldiers fired on the Pakistani border check-post from Paktika and killed a Pakistani soldier, saying they had received fire from him. This is symptomatic of the distrust that NATO forces on the other side of the border have been expressing about Pakistans claim that it is not sheltering the Taliban invaders and not hiding the Al Qaeda leadership..

Dawn, 25 January 2007

US legislation seeks ban on assistance to Pakistan

WASHINGTON, Jan 24: A new legislation, already endorsed by the House of Representatives, calls for stopping US military assistance to Pakistan if Islamabad fails to halt the resurgence of Taliban inside its territory. The first piece of legislation by the new Congress since it was sworn in earlier this month also urges the Bush administration to help resolve the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan. Meanwhile, at a briefing at

the Pakistani embassy, Ambassador Mahmud Ali Durrani acknowledged that anti-Pakistan feelings were strong in the United States because of misperceptions about the country's role in the war against terrorism. We are already standing on our head, what else we could do, he asked. They should not blame us for their failures. The proposed legislation urges the US president to certify that Islamabad is making all efforts to prevent Taliban from operating in areas under its sovereign control, including in the cities of Quetta and Chaman before releasing any funds or approving licenses for enhancing its military capability..

Daily Times, 25 January 2007

Pakistan warns NATO

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Wednesday conveyed its concern to NATO over the killing of one of its soldiers in cross-border firing in North Waziristan, and said that such incidents could jeopardise the Pakistan-US partnership in the war on terror. According to a press release, the issue was discussed at a meeting between Defence Secretary Lt General Tariq Waseem Ghazi and a NATO delegation, led by Baldwin De Vidts, the head of NATO's legal office. Baldwin hoped that such incidents would not take place in future. The two sides also exchanged views on the facilitation and coordination of transit arrangements. Sources privy to the meeting told Daily Times that Pakistan turned down the delegation's demand that NATO be exempted from taxes and duties on the import of its military paraphernalia. The sources said that issue of providing diplomatic immunity to NATO soldiers while they were in Pakistan was also discussed, but Pakistan refused to provide this facility as well..

The Nation, 25 January 2007

Pak opposes military action against Iran

ABU DHABI (Agencies) - President Pervez Musharraf said Wednesday that he had agreed with five Arab leaders to develop a Muslim peace initiative for the Palestinian conflict, which he said lay at the root of worsening violence around the region. Destructive violence is going on in Iraq, Lebanon is mired in crisis, and the most dangerous aspects of these two are the visible sectarian undertones which cause a special concern to us in Pakistan, Musharraf told reporters in the United Arab Emirates at the end of a five-nation Middle East tour. The core lies in the Palestinian dispute and the core lies in the disharmony within the Muslim world, which is leading to terrorism and extremism, he said. This is a time to act and adopt a reconciliatory approach... towards starting a fresh initiative to facilitate peace, a resolution of the Palestinian dispute and bringing harmony to the Muslim world..

The Nation, 25 January 2007

Iran, Pakistan, India agree on gas price

ISLAMABAD - Iran, Pakistan, and India IPI are up for groundbreaking of the trilateral gas pipeline project within this year as the heads of the three states are to do away with pricing impediment least bothering the so-called US pressure. Although the secretary-level working group of the three countries is meeting in Tehran and hammering out respective options with regard to the consultant's report, final stroke to an agreeable price is to be given by the apex authorities, well-placed sources told The Nation on

Wednesday. However, reports from Tehran quoted Director of International Affairs of the National Iranian Oil Company Hojjatollah Ghanimifard as saying, representatives of the oil ministries of Iran, Pakistan, and India reached agreement on price. President General Pervez Musharraf and his Iranian counterpart Mahmoud Ahmedinejad have already resolved to be flexible in striking a mutually agreeable price during their telephonic conversation last month..

Dawn, 25 January 2007

Editorial: Not that simple a matter

MR Hamid Karzai seems to be getting a little wiser. On Sunday, there was less of a bite in his anti-Pakistan outbursts, and he appears to have realised that there were problems with his own government. Speaking in parliament, the Afghan president refrained from blaming Pakistan as he is wont to for the insurgency in his country and instead criticised certain Pakistani circles for protecting terrorists. More important, he admitted, perhaps for the first time, that drugs and corruption in his government contributed to the violence in his country. His speech coincided with the release in Washington of an official report which provides a fairly good indication of how the Bush administration views Islamabad's role in the war on terror and the problems involved. In its annual report to Congress, the Homeland Security Department, headed by Mr John Negroponte, acknowledges Pakistan as a frontline partner in the war on terror and emphasises that eliminating Taliban safe havens in the tribal area is essential for an end to the insurgency in Afghanistan. Parts of the report, however, seem to acknowledge some realities that Islamabad is faced with and point out that operations against the religious militants have been costly for Pakistan's security forces..

Daily Times, 25 January 2007

EDITORIAL: Abiding curse of Blasphemy Law

Before Al Qaeda and jihad became the buzzword of hate against the Muslims in the world, it was the notion of blasphemy in Pakistan that made the global blood curdle; and, shamefully, this was Pakistan's pious contribution to modern Islamic jurisprudence. The party that promoted it as a legacy of General Ziaul Haq and his Islamisation was the Pakistan Muslim League. Now that its splinter is ruling Pakistan, it is heartening to hear that Islamabad plans to reform its blasphemy law that Christian churches and human rights groups say the Muslim majority uses to oppress religious minorities. Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, who made this statement, also said in Paris NBI that the law, which gave the death penalty for insulting the Prophet PBUH, would be changed after the general elections due late this year or early next year: We don't want to hand another election issue to our friends, said he, referring to the opposition Islamic parties. But he did not explain how the law would be changed because he probably didn't know how his party would strategise its next move in this direction..

Indian Express, 25 January 2007

Opinion: A General decline (Husain Haqqani)

General Pervez Musharraf's well-wishers had expected him to legitimise his rule and put Pakistan firmly on the road to constitutional democracy by holding free and fair elections in 2007. Instead, Musharraf will be elected president by Parliament and provincial

legislatures that were elected in the tainted 2002 elections just as their term enters its last days. Some observers see Musharraf's decision as reflective of his total hold on power in Pakistan. In fact, it indicates the weakness of a military ruler embattled at home and abroad. The president, under the Pakistani Constitution, is head of state and symbol of the unity of the federation. He is elected by an electoral college comprising the National Assembly, Senate and four provincial assemblies and derives his authority from the mandate given by the people to their elected representatives. The four presidents elected under the Constitution since its adoption in 1973 were elected by newly-elected assemblies at the beginning of their five-year terms. Musharraf, on the other hand, is seeking election from assemblies whose own flawed mandate is about to end..

The Nation, 26 January 2007

Afghan drug money behind terror acts: PM

DAVOS (Switzerland) - Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz Thursday said in clear terms that drug money in Afghanistan is being used to carry out terrorist activities and the nexus is very dangerous for the world peace. Pakistan believes that the solution lies in Afghanistan as the nexus between the terrorists and drug money use is very dangerous for the global peace and prosperity, the prime minister said while taking part in a panel discussion on the topic of Comprehensive Response to Terrorism here at the second day of the World Economic Forum WEF. US Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff, Leader of Conservative Party United Kingdom David Cameron, President and Chief Executive Officer David Rothkopf and Counter Terrorism Coordinator Gijs M De Vries of Council of the European Union, Brussels also took part in the discussion. Aziz maintained that Pakistan stands for a vibrant and safe Afghanistan which is not only beneficial for both the countries but also for the whole world. The world needs to move faster while finding solution to the root-causes of terrorism..

Daily Times, 26 January 2007

Opinion: Singh should weigh this (Jonathan Power)

The present reality is that if India willed it Kashmir could be settled quite fast. And that would undercut the influence that the militants inside Pakistan have on public opinion on the Pakistani side Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has a question for Pakistan and its military president, Pervez Musharraf. I can summarise a recent long conversation with him in these few words: how can you expect me to push through a peace agreement on Kashmir when militants coming from Pakistan every two months set off bombs in India? No leader can be too far ahead of public opinion. The dispute over the Muslim-dominated province of Kashmir, claimed by both India and Pakistan since independence, has led to three wars and, in the opinion of the US CIA, has nearly led to nuclear war on at least one occasion. Since the consensus among senior diplomats that it is Singh who is at the forefront of India's doves and if he can't bring India to settle then perhaps no one can then this question of his becomes the central issue. But when I put it to Musharraf he responded sharply: I don't agree. If everyone in the world looked for calm and peace before reaching a solution we would never achieve peace anywhere. It is the political deal itself than can produce calm. Bomb blasts are a result of the problem. Let's not put the cart before the horse..

Dawn, 26 January 2007

New US legislation may revive nuclear proliferation row

WASHINGTON, Jan 25: Pakistans nuclear and missile programmes are not consistent with its friendship with the United States, says a proposed US legislation partly reported in Thursdays Dawn, which was recently adopted by the House of Representatives. Diplomatic circles in Washington feel that the proposed law, now before the US Senate, can lead to new controversies over Pakistans nuclear programme. Some US lawmakers had recently demanded a congressional inquiry into the activities of the so-called A. Q. Khan network of proliferators. Most of these lawmakers were from the Democratic Party, which now controls both chambers of the Congress. Pakistan cooperated with the United States and other Western powers in unearthing the network on Washington's assurance that if it helped undo the ring, Islamabad will not be blamed for the activities of an individual. But the Implementation of 9/11 Commission Recommendations Act reopens the question of Pakistans nuclear and missile programmes in a manner that is bound to worry Islamabad..

The Nation, 26 January 2007

Editorial: Palestine and Kashmir

GENERAL Musharraf was right in claiming, in Abu Dhabi near the end of his tour of the Middle East, that the Palestinian conflict lay at the root of the worsening conflict in the region. Indeed, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has fuelled a significant proportion of the resentment that has translated into militant Islamic extremism, not just in the region but the world over. The President floated a Middle East peace initiative, in relation to which he met with the leaders of Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Syria, as well as the United Arab Emirates. But he gave no details of how he intended to advance the initiative or how it would mesh with the internationally drafted peace roadmap, which has made no progress since its launch four years ago. We have agreed to undertake this mission in a responsible, pragmatic, but forceful manner, he said. By this he meant that any initiative would have to involve a large measure of compromise on the Arab side. The major players of the world must have faith in this new initiative. It has to be the middle-course initiative acceptable to both extremes. The modus operandi of the proposed initiative seem to be close to that of how this government has been handling the Kashmir issue..

The Nation, 26 January 2007

Opinion: Our Afghan policy (Dr Ijaz Ahsan)

The fact that our Afghan policy is in shambles is shown by reports that on the same day, while four of our soldiers were killed by a militant suicide bomber, one was killed in a border post by US-led coalition forces. Thus our army is at the same time under attack from the militants and the coalition forces. The suicide bomber attacked a military convoy near the town of Mir Ali. The fifth soldier to die was killed when gunship helicopters from the US-led coalition forces bombed Zoeba security check-post in the Shawal area of North Waziristan near the Pak-Afghan border. Many tribesmen believe the suicide attack was in retaliation for last weeks air strikes in Shak Toi area in which eight tribesmen were killed. The Pakistan army claimed responsibility for the air strikes, but most people blamed the US military for attacking the remote Jamazola village using its pilotless Predator spy plane. Pakistans initial protest against the killing of our soldier

was so weak as to be hardly a protest. In an unfortunate incident close to the Pak Afghan border, Coalition Forces mistakenly fired upon one our posts near Shawal, North Waziristan agency said the Inter Services Public Relations statement. In the incident one soldier embraced shahadat and two were injured. Dear reader, it was up to the US side, and not the Pakistan government, to say it was a mistake. We are such slaves of America that we dare not criticise them even when they kill our soldier in a post inside Pakistan, a post that obviously must have been known for what it was..

Dawn, 26 January 2007

Pakistan, Nato finalise draft accord

RAWALPINDI, Jan 25: Pakistan and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation Nato have finalised a draft agreement on transit and logistical facilities for Nato forces stationed in Afghanistan. The draft was given a final shape at a two-day meeting between the two sides which concluded here on Thursday. The meeting was co-chaired by Mr Baldwin De Vidts, head of Natos legal office and Rear Admiral Tanveer Faiz, Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Defence. Official sources told Dawn that technical details of the proposed agreement had been worked out and differences on various aspects had been resolved. They said Nato's demand seeking tax exemption on arms and ammunition and other equipment transported to Afghanistan through air and land routes had been rejected. The Nato had also requested that its troops should be allowed to carry weapons during their stay in Pakistan on way to Afghanistan but that too has been turned down, they said. They said Nato troops would not enjoy diplomatic status during their transit stay in Pakistan. They said the draft agreement would be sent to the cabinet for formal approval. The Nato forces would not be allowed to use Pakistani soil for military operations..

Dawn, 27 January 2007

Suicide blast at top hotel in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD, Jan 26: A suspected suicide bomber blew himself up outside a hotel here on Friday, killing a guard and causing serious injuries to five others. The unidentified man detonated explosives strapped to his body after the security guard tried to stop him from entering the Marriott Hotel through a side entrance. It Was a suicide attack. The suicide attacker and a guard were killed, Interior Minister Aftab Sherpao said. The attacker tried to enter the hotel and was stopped by the security guard and there was a scuffle and the blast occurred. He termed the bombing a failed attempt to kill people frequenting an upscale hotel. A brave and timely action by the guards pre-empted a major attack. President Pervez Musharraf condemned the blast and ordered an inquiry. Tariq Mehmmod, the 37-year-old guard from Chakwal, had joined the hotel less than a year ago. He left behind two children. Windscreens of several cars were damaged while the wall of the building was besmirched with blood and pieces of flesh..

Daily Times, 27 January 2007

Reconstruct mosques or Else: Islamabad mullahs threaten suicide attacks

ISLAMABAD: The administration of Lal Masjid on Friday threatened the government of suicide attacks if it continues to demolish mosques and madrassas. The clerics also acquired a commitment to this effect from thousands of worshippers at the Friday congregation. Addressing the Friday sermon, Maulana Abdul Aziz, key prayer leader of

Lal Masjid, asked the government to reconstruct the demolished mosques and urged President Musharraf to seek Allah's forgiveness for demolishing seven mosques in the country. We are ready to carry out suicide attacks if the government does not meet our demands, he said, adding that the clerics would accept General Musharraf president for life if he accepts all their demands in letter and spirit. Maulana Aziz, who is also the principal of Jamia Hafsa and Jamia Fareedia madrassas, issued a decree after citing verses from the Quran that jihad had become obligatory on all men and women against the backdrop of prevailing evil in the country..

Dawn, 27 January 2007

IPI pipeline states agree on gas pricing formula

TEHRAN, Jan 26: 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 the Iranian 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, Mr Ghanimi-fard said after three days of negotiations with Indian and Pakistani officials in Tehran. The three sides have one month to respond, he added, without elaborating on the terms of the accord. He hoped the three countries can take all other measures by the end of June in the next round of discussions. Talks on the proposed multi-billion-dollar pipeline to supply Iranian gas to India through a 2,600km pipeline via Pakistan began in 1994. The talks stalled due to tensions between India and Pakistan but were re-started following the launch of a slow-moving peace process in February 2004..

The Nation, 27 January 2007

US to help Pakistan stabilise tribal areas

The US has said that it would help stabilise all the tribal areas of Pakistan, which posed a threat to the country as well as the whole region in the past. US Assistant Secretary of State said this in an interview with BBC on Friday. Answering a question about Pakistan's role and standing in the war against terror, Richard A Boucher said Pakistan has been an important ally in the war against terrorism. About Pakistan's role in the war against terror he said, The United States recognises the enormous effort made by Pakistan against al-Qaeda and against the Taliban. Consolidating Musharraf's statement about positive changes in the country, he said, evolution of moderate democratic and modern society in Pakistan is a big achievement, as it would also help develop the tribal areas, which had been always difficult to control. To a question Boucher said that to establish writ of the government in tribal areas, to bring the areas in the mainstream national economy and to give them the benefits of being part of the nation is also important for the US. It would help stabilise all the areas, which posed a threat to Pakistan as well as the whole region in the past, he added..

The Nation, 27 January 2007

Editorial: Hazards of dependence

PAKISTANs dependence on the US has isolated it while India's policy has strengthened its position. Last year New Delhi brokered a landmark deal with Washington which allowed it access to civilian nuclear technology. When energy-strapped Islamabad sought a similar treaty, it was bluntly told the concession was meant only for India. On Thursday Russian President Vladimir Putin offered four new nuclear reactors to India. Other Western nations are also keenly eyeing Indias civilian nuclear energy market. Moscow and New Delhi also signed a \$250 million deal for a Russian-built hydel station. In a separate deal, India was given access to Russias Glonass satellite navigation system. Two new arms deals were also signed by the two countries. India has over the years improved relations with one-time antagonist China and hopes to further cement them by enhancing economic ties. Pakistans problems in the region have meanwhile increased. While it agreed to whatever CBMs India proposed, and promised there would be no cross-border movement from its side, there is still no progress on the core issue of Kashmir while other disputes with India also remain unresolved..

Daily Times, 27 January 2007

Opinion: A changing Kashmir scenario' (Abbas Rashid)

While many support Musharraf's proposals on Kashmir, he would do well to realise that neither on Kashmir nor on the Western border with Afghanistan will he be able to deliver without the necessary political support. The visit of the 3-member delegation of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference APHC to Pakistan marks another significant development in the context of the Pakistan-India peace process in which the Kashmir issue remains paramount. Whether it is resolved in tandem with, or before or after other issues that have bedevilled relations between the two countries is another matter. Clearly more manageable issues such as that of Siachen may well be resolved first. But, equally it is important that significant progress be seen to be made on Kashmir itself. The brutalisation of the Kashmiri people at the hands of the Indian military and paramilitary forces has to stop and Kashmiris from both sides of the LoC must be able to come together on the basis of a shared legacy as well as common interests and concerns. It is certainly encouraging that both India and Pakistan now recognise the centrality of the Kashmiri people themselves in shaping a resolution of this thorny issue..

Daily Times, 27 January 2007

EDITORIAL: Finally, turning to a thoroughly ruined Afghanistan

The Bush Administration is going to ask the US Congress for an additional \$10.6 billion in security and reconstruction assistance for Afghanistan in the next two years. Since 2001, when the invasion started, the US has spent less than two billion dollars a year in Afghanistan, mostly on maintaining its troops. In Iraq, it is spending \$10 billion a month, but that is a different matter. The troops are paid out of the money and nearly 100,000 American contractors who serve the troops also take their share of it. In Afghanistan, there are other states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation NATO and they normally dont spend money on wars they dont want to fight. After 2006 became the worst year of fighting in Afghanistan, the US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, thinks more effort should be made to counter the Taliban resurgence in the country. Over five years of

neglect and lack of coordination among the NATO allies has done a lot of damage; Pakistan has been lumped with most of the blame for what has gone wrong. The US allies don't want to put their troops in harm's way and have attached many conditions to their engagement in battle. Last year's summit of the NATO allies made it quite clear that Afghanistan was doomed as an operation which the world approved after 9/11..

Dawn, 28 January 2007

Police chief, 12 others killed in Peshawar blast: Second suicide attack in two days

PESHAWAR, Jan 27: A suspected suicide bomb attack the second such incident in the country in two days near a mosque in the Qisakhawani bazaar killed at least 13 people, including the Peshawar police chief, here on Saturday night. The attack, which occurred about an hour before a Muharram procession had been due to begin, left police chief Malik Saad and DSP Khan Raziq dead. The senior police officials had been making arrangements for the procession. The blast also caused a power cut, making it difficult for police to scout the site, splattered with blood and flesh. The narrow lane in which the blast had occurred was strewn with broken glass from shop fronts. Police found a severed limb covered with a leather sock and believed to be that of the suicide bomber. We have collected the remains of what appears to be a suicide bomber, DSP Ghulam Mohammad told the Reuters news agency. There is no crater in the ground, and it is possible that it was a suicide attack, but we cannot say that with authority at the moment, Interior Minister Aftab Sherpao told the AFP news agency. NWFP police officer Mohammad Sharif Virk told Dawn that police were investigating whether it was a suicide bomb attack or a bomb had been exploded by remote control..

Dawn, 28 January 2007

Editorial: What lies ahead for the fateful triangle (A.R. Siddiqi)

BY the middle of 2007 or earlier, Afghanistan would have joined the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Saarc as a full member to bring India closer to it as a partner in trade, commerce and all other corporate matters within the Association's orbit at par with Pakistan to complete what may well be called the fateful triangle. India as the trading partner under South Asian Free Trade Area Safta protocol could and would in due course demand free land-air access to Afghanistan via Pakistan. Territorial, religious and cultural affinities with Pakistan apart, Afghanistan had never questioned the historical standing of India and viewed Pakistan in the subcontinent as a sort of an intruder in the geo-strategic set-up on the other side of the Durand Line after the British quit India. At the back of Afghanistans anti-Pakistan attitude lay three subtle but compelling factors. There were the Afghan irredentism; Pakistans triumphalism and NWFPs pro-Indianism under the Khan Brothers the redoubtable Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Dr. Khan Sahib. An irredentist Afghanistan, claiming all the trans-Indus territory beyond the Durand Line right upto Attock, narrowly eyed the fledgling state of Pakistan loudly proclaiming its status as the world's fifth largest and the second largest Muslim state, the hub of the Islamic Ummah and laboratory of a modern, vibrant Islam..

Daily Times, 28 January 2007

EDITORIAL: Importance of Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline

If the news is true that Iran, Pakistan and India have agreed on a formula for setting a rate

for Iranian gas, today could be a red-letter day for Pakistan. The top official of the National Iranian Oil Company says the agreement was reached in Tehran and now the three countries have a month in which to confirm it at the governmental level, after which the pipeline is a done deal, promising to transform Pakistan and change the strategic significance of the region by guaranteeing peace instead of war! The project was stalled for so long since 1994 that its cost must have reached \$7 billion by now, but it is still worth having for a number of reasons. It will run for 1,500 miles across Iran and Pakistan, and will supply gas to India too. Pakistan will look after the pipeline for India and will get some rental, with which it will be able to improve the lives of the Baloch through whose territory it will pass. It will also be a project to transform Pakistan and reinvent its foreign image as well as its self-image. We have few energy options on the table and need the pipeline more than India. The pipeline was obstructed by the usual drag of India-Pakistan relations, which nose-dived after 2001 as India returned with its consulates to Afghanistan and Pakistan began to blame it for fuelling the rebellion in Balochistan..

Daily Times, 28 January 2007

Opinion: Getting re-elected aint that difficult (Dr. HA Rizvi)

President Musharraf does not have to adopt a controversial course of action to stay in power. He can get re-elected from the new assemblies, provided he engages the major opposition parties for evolving a mutually acceptable arrangement. It appears that the ruling Pakistan Muslim League PML and the affiliates of the presidency have made up their mind to get President General Pervez Musharraf re-elected from the current provincial assemblies and parliament while he is still in command of the army. They are convinced that his re-election would remove political uncertainty and help the PML to win the general elections. In their view this would ensure the continuity of the current political arrangements in Islamabad for another five years. If President Pervez Musharraf opts for this strategy, in total disregard of constitutional and ethical considerations, Pakistan will be faced with a head-on collision between the pro- and anti-Musharraf elements. Such a confrontation will undermine the political interests of both General Pervez Musharraf and the opposition. It will also have negative ramifications for Pakistan's political credibility at the global level. General Pervez Musharraf, like Pakistan's earlier military rulers, assumed power on October 12, 1999, as a reluctant ruler with a limited 7-point agenda..

Daily Times, 29 January 2007

Peshawar suicide blast:

ISLAMABAD/PESHAWAR: The Interior Ministry has directed law enforcement and intelligence agencies to arrest three activists of the banned Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LJ) for their suspected involvement in Saturday's blast near Qissa Khawani Bazaars Qasim Ali Khan Mosque. Peshawar Police Chief Malik Muhammad Saad and DSP Khan Raziq were among the 15 killed in the attack. Saad has been buried in Kohat, while DSP Khan Raziq has been buried in Nowshera. Daily Times learnt that LJ activists Jalil Ahmed, Ilyas Moawia and Nazir Ahmed are suspected of orchestrating the Peshawar blast. The Interior Ministry issued the directive following reports that the three had been planning to target Shias in Peshawar and Hangu during Muharram. Sources said that law enforcement

agencies had been directed to use all resources to arrest the three terrorists and crack down on the LJ network in the country. Meanwhile, a senior police official said three teams had been formed to investigate Saturdays suicide attack, and police had been deployed in extra strength for peaceful Muharram processions. Teams for the collection of evidence, investigation and arrest purposes have been formed, the new Peshawar police chief, Abdul Majeed Marwat, told Daily Times..

The Nation, 29 January 2007

Pak cant do more for Afghanistan, says Kasuri

LAHORE - Foreign Minister Khurshid Mahmood Kasuri has said that no power in Pakistan can impose a solution to settle Kashmir issue. Back channel diplomacy to settle the issue is in progress and whenever an agreement is reached, the cabinet, parliament and the people of Pakistan will be taken into confidence. He was responding to queries after his address at a seminar on Pakistans relations with the US and India held under the aegis of Pakistan Thinkers Forum PTF at a local hotel on Sunday. The seminar was also addressed by former chief of army staff Gen Jehangir Karamat, former foreign secretary Shamshad Ahmed Khan, The Nation Editor Arif Nizami, writer Agha Ameer Hussain and Jang Group Editor Mahmood Sham. PTF Chairman Shahid Hamid, the moving spirit behind the seminar, spoke on theme of the seminar thereby setting the tone for other speakers to explore foreign policy issues. Kasuri said there was nothing unusual about the secret talks but no solution would be acceptable to Pakistan until it was acceptable to Kashmiris. He said that Foreign Office had full say in formulating each and every initiative..

Daily Times, 29 January 2007

Editorial: IPI price formula

AFTER protracted negotiations, an understanding has been reached at the experts level on the gas pricing formula for purchase of Iranian gas by Pakistan and India in the tripartite talks which concluded in Teheran on Friday. The proposal will now be placed before the governments of the three countries for their approval. That the three sides have also agreed to give response within a month to the price formula indicates the urgency with which they want to move, concerned as India and Pakistan are about the surging demand of energy for their fast growing economies. The understanding on price is a major breakthrough towards finalising the gas pipeline project for which talks were initiated as far back as in 1994. Once the formal agreement on pricing formula is reached, Pakistan and India are expected to work out the transit fee for a pipeline passing through Balochistan and Multan into India. This will yield substantial earnings for Islamabad. Apart from meeting the rising energy needs of the two South Asian countries, the economic benefits of the construction of the 2600-kilometre Iran-Pakistan-India Pipeline, IPI originally estimated to cost seven billion dollars, will be shared in terms of business and employment by the three countries. The chances of building the project have also brightened by the interest shown by the Russians in this giant enterprise..

Dawn, 29 January 2007

Editorial: Time for Islamabad to correct its stance: What lies ahead for the fateful triangle-II (AR Siddiqi)

Overwhelmed by the mujahideen forays and incessant pounding of Kabul, President Najibullah resigned in April 1992 and sought asylum in the UN compound in Kabul. Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif hastened to broker the Peshawar Agreement to set up an interim Mujahideen government in Kabul on a rotating basis. Sibghatullah Mojdeddi was appointed president for six months to be followed by Burhanuddin Rabbani to stay as the head of the state for one year, hold elections and then quit. However, Rabbani prevaricated and prolonged his role until overthrown by the Taliban in September 1996. The dramatic emergence of the Taliban in Kandahar in 1994 upset the balance of power to throw Afghanistan into endless civil strife. While the emergence of the Taliban and their acceptance by the war-weary people had been an internal development, Pakistan had its own axe to grind in their phenomenal rise to power to act as a pro-Pakistan force in Afghanistan it was the first to recognise and accord full diplomatic status to the Taliban regime in Kabul. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates also followed suit and exchanged envoys with Kabul but not at full ambassadorial level..

The Nation, 29 January 2007

Editorial: Another terror strike

As the tribal region is teetering on the edge of a very dangerous situation, the unrest now seems to have spilt over into the country's settled areas. Less than 36 hours after an explosion outside a five-star hotel in Islamabad, another incident of suicide bombing took place in Peshawar on Saturday that left 15 dead, including the city police chief, and 30 others injured, some of them critically. News reports indicated that a powerful blast ripped through a busy area of the provincial capital soon after CCPO Malik Muhammad Saad arrived there along with a heavy police contingent to review the security arrangements for a Muharram procession to be taken out of an imambargah in the late hours. The IG NWFP was not sure whether the terrorist was targeting the imambargah, nearly 250 metres from the site of the blast, or the CCPO, but the provincial home department promptly concluded that the actual target of the suicide attack was police officials and the aim was to create harassment among law enforcers. If so, then it is a sad commentary on the country's intelligence apparatus..

Dawn, 29 January 2007

Opinion: Plight of stranded Pakistanis (Anwar Mooraj)

LAST year, when the anniversary of the fall of Dhaka was observed, the event went largely unnoticed. There was the odd editorial or news report in the press, inserted more out of habit than any sense of conviction. And there were a few organisations, which made the usual patriotic speeches and reminded listeners of one of history's great injustices. But nobody shook an angry fist in parliament or took to the streets to demand the repatriation of the stranded Pakistanis in Bangladesh an unfortunate people that their country has forgotten whose only crime was that they continued to make patriotic gestures after the capitulation of the Pakistan army, and ended up on the losing side of a highly contentious political dispute. This writer is referring to the 250,000-odd Pakistanis stranded in what used to be the former eastern wing of the country. They subsist in ill-

equipped camps spread across various districts of Bangladesh. They have been turned into social outcasts, and continue to live in a twilight zone. They remind this writer of those unfortunate refugees who wandered about in the political wilderness, without passports or other means of identification, after the Nazi Panzer divisions swept across Europe during the Second World War.. Neither Bangladesh nor Pakistan accepts them as citizens, or wants to help them. So far as Bangladesh is concerned, the refugees are collaborators and are tarred with the brush of duplicity..

Daily Times, 30 January 2007

2 killed in suicide attack in DI Khan

PESHAWAR: A suicide bomber killed two people, including a policeman, in Dera Ismail Khan on Monday, said police, while an imambargah in Bannu came under a rocket attack. In the attack in Dera Ismail Khan, the suicide bomber denoted explosives strapped to his body at a checkpoint when police stopped him from entering a Muharram procession near Liaquat Park, said police. Assistant Superintendent of Police ASP Captain Hamad told Daily Times over the telephone that the suicide bomber, wearing a black shawl, blew himself up as policeman Abdul Halim was searching him. He said that Naseer, a civilian working at a nearby petrol pump, was also killed, and seven other people, including two policemen, were injured. The suicide bomber was a young boy. He initially refused to be searched, and when police began searching him, he blew himself up, killing a policeman, a civilian and himself, police officer Aslam Khattak told Daily Times. The bombers age was estimated to be 17 or 18 years. The procession was cancelled. There was no immediate claim of responsibility..

Dawn, 30 January 2007

Verdict on Baglihar dam controversy on Feb 12

ISLAMABAD, Jan 29: The World Bank appointed neutral expert arbitrating the lingering India-Pakistan dispute over the Baglihar hydroelectric project in occupied Kashmir will give his final verdict on February 12 in Switzerland. The verdict of the Swiss neutral expert, Raymond Latiffe, will be conveyed to heads of diplomatic missions of the two countries in either Geneva or Berne, it is learnt. The verdict will be relayed on February 12 to either our permanent representative in Geneva or our ambassador in Berne from where it will be electronically transmitted to the Foreign Office, a senior Foreign Ministry official told Dawn. The neutral expert would invite the diplomats of the two countries to his office and hand them each a written copy of his final verdict, the official said. The verdict would be binding on both the parties. The Baglihar verdict acquires special significance in India-Pakistan context given that it would be the first bilateral dispute to be settled through third party mediation in a transparent process with consensus of both parties. So far the two countries have failed to resolve any outstanding dispute bilaterally despite numerous rounds of talks over the past few decades..

The Nation, 30 January 2007

Editorial: Foreign policy

WHILE Mr Khurshid Kasuris assurance is welcome, that no power in Pakistan can impose a solution to settle the Kashmir issue, perhaps he should have explained who is formulating the guidelines of the policy on Kashmir particularly the agreement the

government is trying to broker through back-channel diplomacy. What is clear is that neither the Cabinet nor the Parliament have any clue about what is going on. This is all the more serious because Kashmir is an issue which has determined the important contours of our foreign, economic and internal policies since the creation of Pakistan, led to a full-scale war with India in 1965 and to the Kargil operation which turned out to be even more costly in terms of the casualties suffered by the army. This explains why many Pakistanis want to know who takes decision on important issues related to Kashmir. Who decided that Pakistan might withdraw from its stated position of resolving the dispute through a referendum? Who made Islamabad abandon its traditional stand that since the LoC is not an international border the Kashmiris have a legal right to cross it? According to Mr Kasuri only five people know about the details of Kashmir talks. If the government has made unprecedented progress towards solving the issue as Mr Kasuri claimed, why doesn't it divulge the results to the public to negate the widely held perception that we have hardly gone beyond a number of CBMs?

Dawn, 30 January 2007

Opinion: Developing the tribal belt (SJ Burki)

THERE is now a raging debate on the role Pakistan is playing or not playing in the revival of the Taliban in the southern districts of Afghanistan. The debate is being conducted in a number of different forums. It is the subject of inquiry and discourse in several Washington-based think-tanks. It has begun to interest several national newspapers, most notably The New York Times and The Washington Post. Most disconcerting from Pakistan's perspective, it has begun to inform the thinking of the administration of President George W. Bush. There are now several senior level officials in the administration who believe that the successes recently achieved by the Taliban across the border in Afghanistan could not have been possible without the support of Pakistan. What kind of support is being given by Pakistan? The answer to this question, as provided by the Washington-based experts, gets to be a bit confusing. This is particularly the case in the coverage provided by the press..

Daily Times, 30 January 2007

EDITORIAL: Death penalty and increasing crime in Pakistan

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan HRCPC has issued an excellent report on the institution of the death penalty in Pakistan. After reading it, we are forced to revisit the entire system of crime and punishment in this country. Pakistan is among the top killers under law in the world. It has approximately 7,400 convicts awaiting execution. Worse, in recent years, instead of relenting in terms of lowering the crime rate because of the deterrent effect of the death penalty, the hangings have actually increased. Interestingly, the Supreme Court of Pakistan has actually ordered that there ought to be more capital punishments! We have retained the death penalty, with a lot of other countries in the world, because we think it will deter the killers among us. But the record shows that death is no deterrence. The big hangings in Pakistan as elsewhere have actually aroused conflicting passions and negated the concept of deterrence. The penal system in Pakistan is so shot through with loopholes and defects that it may be better sometimes not to hang the alleged killers: there is mal-administration of justice, police service dereliction, and cultural prejudices affecting women and religious minorities..

Daily Times, 30 January 2007

Opinion: The pipeline may not be a pipe-dream (RB Rais)

If cooperation in transporting the energy resources of Central Asia and the Gulf region is held hostage to conflict between India and Pakistan or instability in Afghanistan, it will adversely affect the future economic growth and individual well-being of Central, South West and South Asia. One can catch a dreaming glimpse of regional cooperation in the report that Iran, India and Pakistan have finally agreed on a pricing formula after years of haggling. Talks on building the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline began in 1994, more than twelve years back. Progress on this multi-billion-dollar project has been held hostage to India-Pakistan tensions. With a thaw in India-Pakistan relations, and flexibility on the part of Iran on the pricing issue, the pipeline may not be a pipe-dream anymore, as some cynics have been commenting. It is a project of vital importance for these three countries. It will allow Iran to gain access to one of the largest markets for energy resources, while India and Pakistan with their growing economies will have secure and long-term supplies to meet their increasing need..