

The News, 1 June 2006

NEC approves Rs 415bn PSDP

ISLAMABAD: The National Economic Council (NEC) that met here on Wednesday with Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz in the chair approved a Rs 415 billion Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) for 2006-07, including foreign assistance of Rs 65.2 billion, provincial component of Rs 115 billion and earthquake reconstruction Rs 50 billion, said Dr Akram Sheikh, deputy chairman Planning Commission at a press briefing.

Dawn, 1 June 2006

Strategic assets must never be sold to foreigners: SC

ISLAMABAD, May 31: A Supreme Court judge on Wednesday observed that even countries wedded to free-market economy observe the universal principle that strategic assets must never be sold to foreigners. "But we are moving opposite," said Justice Javed Iqbal, member of the nine-member bench hearing a set of private petitions which have challenged the sale of Pakistan Steel Mills (PSM), the country's largest industrial complex, for what the petitioners call a 'paltry sum' of Rs21.68 billion

Daily Times, 1 June 2006

AQ Khan boiling point in Pak-US ties

WASHINGTON: Analysts demand for direct access to Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan risks pushing an already delicate United States-Pakistan relationship to the point of over burn - at a time when Islamabad is warming up to Iran, said a report filed in the Christian Science Monitor. Correspondent David Montero said the latest irritant between Washington and Islamabad came last week as US lawmakers urged Pakistan to wring more information from Khan, alleging that he may yet hold the blueprints to some of Iran's nuclear secrets. Islamabad officially closed its investigation earlier this month, and while Dr Khan remains under house arrest, Pakistani officials say they've given Washington all the details they could get out of him

Daily Times, 1 June 2006

Ministry didn't use Rs 20 million for FATA

ISLAMABAD: Only Rs 22 million out of a total allocation of Rs 42 million for population welfare services in FATA were spent by the end of the 2005-2006 fiscal year. The Population Welfare Ministry has returned the remaining Rs 20 million to the Finance Ministry to be used elsewhere.

Daily Times, 2 June 2006

Dubai Ports discussing takeover of Gwadar Port management

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates' Dubai Ports World are discussing the possibility of the company taking over operational management of Pakistan's Gwadar port, a port official said on Thursday. "DP World expressed an interest for management of Gwadar Port and we are discussing it with them," Commodore Munir Wahid, project director of the Gwadar Port Implementation Authority, told Reuters

Daily Times, 2 June 2006

Pakistan, Iran to start passenger bus service

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Iran have agreed to start a regular passenger bus service between Quetta and Mashad via Dalbandin and Zahedan, officials said on Thursday. Pakistan's Ministry of Communication issued a statement saying that the decision had been taken on the fourth two-day meeting of the Pakistan-Iran Joint Commission on Road Transportation held in the Iranian city of Zahedan on May 30-31

Dawn, 2 June 2006

Tighter monetary policy to stem inflation: WB

ISLAMABAD, June 1: Tighter monetary policy in Pakistan is expected to stem increase in the inflation rate, said the World Bank. In its latest report 'Prospects for the Global Economy Recent developments, South Asia regional outlook' the bank termed the increase in the inflation as a serious challenge for the South Asian region. It said that an inflationary spiral should not develop and that while large swings in food prices have contributed to the upswing in regional inflation, rapid increases in domestic demand (notably consumption) and low interest rates likely played a role

Daily Times, 3 June 2006

Army will stay in FATA till peace is restored: Orakzai

PESHAWAR: The Pakistan Army will stay in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) until peace is restored in the region, NWFP Governor Lt Gen (r) Ali Muhammad Jan Orakzai told a tribal council (jirga) on Friday. The South Waziristan Agency jirga consisted of tribal leaders and elders, and represented all tribes and sub-tribes here. Students and journalists congratulating the governor on assuming the office were also present

Daily Times, 3 June 2006

WB okays \$6.5b for Pakistan

WASHINGTON: The World Bank's Board of Executive Directors on Thursday approved a new Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) for Pakistan, covering 2006 to 2009, based on a flexible lending programme of up to \$6.5 billion, with the current year's lending totalling \$1.5 billion

Dawn, 3 June 2006

Military officers to administer tribal areas

PESHAWAR, June 2: In a major policy decision, President Gen Pervez Musharraf is reported to have approved the appointment of senior military officers as administrators of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata). The newly-appointed NWFP Governor, Lt-Gen (ret'd) Ali Mohammad Jan Orakzai, is believed to be giving final touches to a list of officers to be posted as political agents, Dawn has learnt on good authority

Dawn, 3 June 2006

Benazir, Nawaz discuss govt's 'overtures'

ISLAMABAD, June 2: Pakistan People's Party chairperson Benazir Bhutto and Pakistan Muslim League-N leader Nawaz Sharif met in Dubai on Friday and discussed the prevailing political situation in Pakistan, particularly after the May 14 signing of the Charter of Democracy by the two parties, sources in the ARD told Dawn

The News, 3 June 2006

Handing over of Dr A Q Khan

ISLAMABAD: The Senate on Friday unanimously adopted a resolution expressing grave concern over the unwarranted observations of some members of the US House of Representatives, wherein they demanded handing over of Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan for interrogation about Pakistan's nuclear programme. The resolution, moved by senators Wasim Sajjad, Mian Raza Rabbani, Mushahid Hussain Sayed, Liaquat Bangalzai, Sadia Abbasi and Prof Khurshid Ahmad, condemned the character assassination of Dr A Q Khan and other Pakistani scientists to malign Pakistan's nuclear programme. It termed the US lawmakers' observations a blatant violation of Pakistan's sovereignty and interference in the country's internal affairs

The News, 4 June 2006

Probe ordered into Bannu attack

PESHAWAR: Interior Minister Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao has said investigations has been started into suicide bomb attack on army convoy in Bakakhel, Bannu, and the elements involved in the conspiracy would be unveiled. Talking to APP here at Peoples House on Saturday, the minister while expressing remorse over the tragic incident said such incidents amounted to sabotaging the peace efforts in tribal region

The News, 4 June 2006

Screening of The Da Vinci Code banned

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Culture Dr G G Jamal said on Saturday that the government has banned the controversial movie "The Da Vinci Code" because it contains blasphemous material. "Islam teaches us to respect all the Prophets of Allah Almighty and degradation of any Prophet is tantamount to defamation of the rest," the minister told APP. He said the film hurt the feelings of Christians and Muslims. "We in Pakistan are brothers to each other."

Dawn, 4 June 2006

Two gas pipelines blown up

QUETTA, June 3: Two gas pipelines were blown up in Pir Koh area while power supply was suspended to Kohlu and adjoining areas after two big towers of 32kv Barkhan-Kohlu transmission line were damaged in another blast on Saturday. Over a dozen rockets were also fired at different check posts of security forces in Dera Bugti and Kohlu areas

Dawn, 4 June 2006

Levies man killed, three hurt in blast

KHAR, June 3: A Levies soldier was killed and three others, including the political tehsildar, were wounded after a remote-controlled explosive device went off near here on Friday night. Officials said that political tehsildar Amir Zaman was patrolling the area along with some Levies personnel when they found a piece of luggage lying along the road some four kilometres from here. The explosion occurred as the Levies men were trying to unwrap the pack, wrapped with a piece of cloth

Dawn, 4 June 2006

Pakistan not in arms race: PM

ISLAMABAD, June 3: Pakistan is a peaceful country and its defence doctrine is based on minimum credible deterrence for maintaining peace in the region, according to Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz. He was talking to Eritrean Defence Minister Gen Sebhat Ephrem who called on him at the Prime Minister's House here on Saturday

Dawn, 4 June 2006

Arrest warrants of Benazir, Zardari issued

ISLAMABAD, June 3: District and Sessions Judge Rafiuz Zaman here on Saturday issued arrest warrants of Pakistan People's Party chairperson Benazir Bhutto and her husband Asif Zardari in a case filed against them by the National Accountability Bureau for allegedly concealing their assets during elections held in the country 10 years ago. The judge also directed the ministry of interior to seek help from the International Police (Interpol) for the arrest of Ms Bhutto and Mr Zardari and produce them before the court on July 3

Daily Times, 4 June 2006

Taliban have safe havens in Pakistan, says Afghan envoy

WASHINGTON: The Afghan ambassador to the United States, Said Jawad, was quoted here on Saturday as having stated that the Taliban have been emboldened by more advanced weaponry and greater mobility within the country and across the porous border to terrorist safe havens in Pakistan, and that "this is something even the Government of Pakistan does not dispute."

The News, 5 June 2006

Economic Survey puts GDP growth at 6.6pc

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's economy gained further traction in 2005-06 with GDP growth at 6.6 per cent despite the extraordinary surge in oil prices and the devastating earthquake. However, inflation, the trade deficit and current account balance continue to pose dangers, revealed the Economic Survey 2005-06. The Survey 2005-06 admits adverse impact of inflation on vulnerable segments of the society as well as its damaging effect on purchasing power of the low-income groups. While the economy delivered yet another year of solid growth, the Survey points to some weaker areas that need to be highlighted. First and foremost is the sharp rise in the prices of some essential food items, particularly during the second half of the current fiscal year

The News, 5 June 2006

FC withdrawing 50 platoons from Sindh, Balochistan, NAs

PESHAWAR: The paramilitary Frontier Constabulary has initiated the process to bring back 50 of its platoons deployed in Sindh, Balochistan and the Northern Areas and assign them traditional patrolling duties on the boundary between the tribal areas and settled districts of NWFP. "We would withdraw the 50 platoons in two weeks' time and mostly deploy the troops to plug the largely informal and unfrequented routes between settled districts and tribal agencies in southern NWFP," said Malik Naveed Khan, commandant, Frontier Constabulary (FC)

The News, 5 June 2006

Three soldiers killed near Miranshah

MIRANSHAH: Assailants fired rockets on Sunday at a military convoy in North Waziristan, killing two soldiers and wounding another two, as curfew was reinstated in Miranshah because of rising violence, officials said.

The News, 5 June 2006

UN warns Pakistan of more water woes

LONDON: The United Nations has warned that increasingly dry rivers and inefficient water use will add to water

shortages, which will particularly affect countries such as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, western China, Chad, Iraq, Niger and Syria. Pakistan, already one of the most water-stressed countries in the world, is facing even more problems as groundwater levels fall and glaciers retreat, according to a United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report being launched on Monday to coincide with World Environment Day. "There will be increased competition for water resources," specialist Andrew Warren of the University College London told reporters here. "It is not the most stable region. There will be really nasty implications."

Daily Times, 5 June 2006

Pakistan's varsity enrolment among world's lowest

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is ranked amongst the lowest in the world in higher education enrolment, with just 2.9 percent of students enrolled in universities in 2005. According to the Economic Survey of Pakistan (2005-2006) released here on Sunday, the current adult literacy rate is 53 percent and net enrolment at primary level is 52 percent. Government spending on education in 2005-06 was just 2.1 percent of GDP, way below the regional average

Daily Times, 6 June 2006

Rs 1.5 trillion pro-poor budget announced

ISLAMABAD: The government presented what it called a pro-poor, growth-oriented and investment friendly budget of Rs 1.5 trillion for the fiscal year 2006-07 on Monday. The budget also includes tax increases on bank services and stock markets and a new tax on real estate to meet the estimated Rs 373.5 billion deficit, which is 4.2 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

Dawn, 6 June 2006

Budget Highlights

ISLAMABAD, June 5: Following are highlights of the budget 2006-07: Rs250 billion allocated for defence, showing an increase of Rs27 billion over the outgoing year's allocation, or 3 per cent of the GDP; Rs415 billion earmarked for the Public Sector Development Programme; An additional amount of Rs94 billion will go to provinces in 2006-07 as part of the National Finance Award with 45 per cent share in divisible pool. This share will be increased to 50 per cent in five years; 15 per cent dearness allowance to be paid to government employees from July 1; Pensioners retiring before May 1, 1977 will get 20 per cent increase, rest to get 15pc raise

Dawn, 6 June 2006

Rs27bn for security, law and order

ISLAMABAD, June 5: The government has allocated Rs27.178 billion for law and order and securities issues for the forthcoming fiscal year. According to the budget 2006-7, of the allocation, Rs19.178 billion has been earmarked for non-development side and Rs8 billion would be spent on development schemes under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP). In the total outlay of the PSDP for the interior division, the share of foreign investment will be Rs3.162 billion

The News, 7 June 2006

Budget 2006-07 : Focus on maximum relief to masses: Shah

ISLAMABAD: The government has come up with a new approach in the federal budget 2006-07, focussing on maximum relief to the masses, ensuring a sound economic foundation and maintaining sustainable growth. Dr Salman Shah, Adviser to the the Prime Minister on Finance and Revenue said at his post-budget conference here on Tuesday that this year Pakistan witnessed solid economic growth despite the massive surge in oil prices and ruinous earthquake. "Pakistan's economy played well and absorbed the two unprecedented shocks and grew to 6.6 per cent this year."

The News, 7 June 2006

Pak-US energy talks by June end

ISLAMABAD: The energy dialogue between Pakistan and the United States would resume in Washington at the technical level at the end of June or beginning of July, the Foreign Office announced on Tuesday. Pakistan has prepared an Energy Security Plan (2005-2030), which forecasts a seven-fold increase in its total primary consumption and an over eight-fold increase in requirement over the next 25 years. "Dates for the energy dialogue are being worked out and it is being proposed that these talks should be held at the end of this month or early July," Foreign Office spokeswoman Tasnim Aslam told a weekly press briefing

The News, 7 June 2006

Backchannel PML-JUI talks on to re-elect Musharraf

ISLAMABAD: The ruling Pakistan Muslim League (PML) has established a "backchannel" for holding political talks with the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal's major component, the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam of Maulana Fazlur Rehman. "If our negotiations make headway, presidential elections — to re-elect President Gen Pervez Musharraf — would be held on or before the completion of his five-year term," said a top ruling party leader. He said these talks are being held at the highest level of both the political outfits and revolve around two key points: First, support of the JUI in presidential election; and two, appointment of caretaker set-ups both at the centre and provinces before polls are held in 2007

The News, 7 June 2006

Three killed in Kalpar-Bugti clash

QUETTA: At least four persons were killed in different incidents of violence in Dera Bugti and Panjgur districts as Frontier Corps officials claimed to have arrested 30 Afghan nationals on the charge of illegally entering Pakistan through the Pak-Afghan border on Tuesday. Reports reaching here from Dera Bugti said armed men opened fire on a convoy of Kalpar Bugti tribesmen going to the Gundoi area. The attack was retaliated and three people were killed in the exchange of gunfire, which continued for half an hour. The names of those killed could not be confirmed till our going to the press

The News, 7 June 2006

Pakistan and the SCO (Ansar Mahmood Bhatti)

The leaders of Russia, China and three Central Asian states presumably did not know that their brainchild -- Shanghai Five, would later on translate into a formidable force, providing a bulwark against policies of expansionism and unilateralism exercised mainly by the sole super power. The scheme, in the beginning was to strengthen border security along with tracking down the separatist movements and terrorism; ultimately rooting it out for good. But on June 15, 2001, this partnership turned into a political and economic alliance and was renamed as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) comprising six members as Uzbekistan had also joined it by that time. Pakistan and India are employing all available options for full membership of the SCO after getting observer status in July 2005

The News, 7 June 2006

Emerging threat from US-India nexus (Shireen Mazari)

The US may claim that it has de-linked its relationship with India from that with Pakistan, but ironically, its policies relating to India now impact Pakistan's security concerns as never before and US government representatives continue to identify common security issues for Pakistan and India. In the context of the former, much has already been written in this column earlier on the direct security threat that the US-India nuclear deal poses to Pakistan, which will provide safeguarded US nuclear fuel for India's civil reactors and thereby liberate a large quantity of un-safeguarded Indian fissile material from these reactors. This can now be diverted to weapons production, allowing India to stockpile a vast nuclear arsenal

Dawn, 7 June 2006

Opinion: Jihad of several kinds (Hafizur Rahman)

IF I had the authority I would ban the use of the word "jihad" except for jihad proper. Which means that a committee of the most reputed Islamic scholars would decide whether the campaign or movement for which the word was intended to be employed warranted the use of the word. Since I can never hope to be such an authority, I hope the MMA, the party of clerics, will do this for me. It is not only the public which misuses this sacred expression, every ruling regime is constantly announcing the launching of jihad to weed out corruption, lawlessness and violence from society, or some other social ill. A cynic, and a wag to boot, once asked me, "Does this mean the government is going to wage jihad against itself?"

Dawn, 7 June 2006

Editorial: The federal budget

THE budget for the next fiscal year, presented by the minister of state for finance, Omar Ayub Khan, in the National Assembly on Monday, carries a substantial package of relief for the common man. It also makes a tentative attempt to broaden the direct tax base by bringing some important parts of economic activity, like the real

estate business, under the tax net. A number of attractive measures have been proposed to encourage investment as well, especially in the dairy and IT sectors

The News, 8 June 2006

Pakistan reiterates support for Palestinian cause

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Wednesday reiterated its support for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. "Pakistan remains steadfast in its support for the Palestinian cause, the fundamental elements of which are complete withdrawal of Israel from the occupied Arab territories and establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital," Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said, while talking to Dr Mahmood Al-Zahar, the Foreign Minister of Palestine, who called on him at the Prime Minister's House here

The News, 8 June 2006

Harnai-Sibi train track blown up again

QUETTA: The Harnai-Sibi railway track was once again blown up on Wednesday by unknown armed men who used high-power explosive material. However, no loss of life was reported. Provincial officials told The News that some unknown saboteurs had planted powerful explosive material in Sundhari area, some 25 kms away from Harnai. The explosive device went off with a big bang and damaged a big portion of the train track. Officials and Levies force have launched a probe

The News, 8 June 2006

Bugti's men violated agreement, says Sherpao

SUKKUR: Interior Minister Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao has said that an agreement had been reached with Nawab Akbar Bugti regarding ending of check-posts and cordon of the area of the Masoori tribe, but his (Bugti's) men kidnapped policemen and targeted vital national assets in violation of the accord. Talking to newsmen at the residence of Sindh Minister Mir Manzoor Panhwar in Jacobabad on Wednesday, Sherpao said talks could be held only with those who believe in integrity and solidarity of the country. He ruled out negotiation with "those who do not believe in the writ of the law"

The News, 8 June 2006

US consulate enjoys more security than NWFP CM House

PESHAWAR: The number of security personnel guarding the US consulate-general in Peshawar has surpassed those deployed at the Chief Minister House. Besides two platoons of the NWFP Police and three of FC, private security personnel are also guarding the US consulate, putting the total number of security men around the building at 110. All the roads leading to the building from different directions have been blocked hundreds of metres away by barricades and armoured personnel carriers (APCs) since 9/11

The News, 8 June 2006

Editorial: Dialogue on Balochistan

On the heels of former army chief Jehangir Karamat's advice to the government not to take a military route in Balochistan now comes a plea for dialogue by the deputy speaker of the Balochistan Assembly, and a member of the ruling PML. He has also said that the military operation in the province needs to be halted and that the government needs to change its view of the tribal sardars because whether Islamabad likes it or not they do represent substantial public opinion in the province. One reason why governments at the centre have been reluctant to tackle Balochistan's problems politically is that it has seen the politicians of the province to be mainly tribal chiefs and therefore unsuitable dialogue partners. There is a tendency in the rest of Pakistan as well to paint politicians in Balochistan with the same tribal brush. Most prominent politicians of Balochistan do happen to be tribal leaders. Some of them, like Akbar Bugti, have dominated provincial politics for decades. Admittedly, too many of them have sought to perpetuate their tribal fiefdoms, with little regard for progress in their respective areas. But, as the deputy speaker has pointed out, they do after all represent a certain quantum of Baloch opinion and hence their influence and potential role in achieving some kind of political compromise should not be overlooked

The News, 8 June 2006

Opinion: India's presence in Afghanistan (Rahimullah Yusufzai)

The recent abduction and beheading of Indian telecommunication engineer K Suryanarayana in Afghanistan has highlighted the brutal nature of the Afghan conflict. It also showed the violent Taliban opposition to India due to

the latter's support for President Hamid Karzai's government and the presence of US-led foreign forces in the war-ravaged country. Aware of Pakistan's concern over growing Indian influence in Afghanistan, it was obvious that India would soon cry foul and find a Pakistani hand in Suryanayana's abduction and beheading in Zabul province. Before long, the Indian media had seized on an unsubstantiated story by the private Afghan TV channel, Tolo, to claim Pakistan Army's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) was involved in Suryanarayana's murder. For the second time in the recent past, Tolo had interviewed a turbaned Afghan after introducing him as a Taliban spokesman and prompted him to declare that the ISI had overruled Taliban objections and ordered the execution of the kidnapped Indian engineer. The Taliban promptly denied that any of their three spokesmen had granted an interview to the channel and termed the man who was interviewed as an impostor

Dawn, 8 June 2006

Muttahida to contest AJK polls

KARACHI, June 7: The Muttahida Qaumi Movement on Wednesday announced its decision to participate in elections for the legislative assembly in Azad Kashmir and expressed satisfaction at being allotted "kite" as its election symbol

The News, 9 June 2006

'Significant' development: FO

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Thursday described the death of the Al-Qaeda chief in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, as a "significant" development. "It is a significant development, if it is true," foreign ministry spokeswoman Tasnim Aslam told AFP. "We are also watching the developments," she said in her brief initial reaction. In a statement later, she said: "Pakistan keeps eye on the report of killing of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. It is significant forward movement in war on terror. Pakistan hopes law and order situation in Iraq will improve now."

The News, 9 June 2006

'Zarqawi's martyrdom will spark more Iraqi violence'

ISLAMABAD: Khalid Khawaja, a former Pakistani intelligence officer, who aided militants during the Afghan Jihad, said al-Zarqawi's killing won't end the "Jihad" being fought against US-led coalition forces in Iraq. "Al-Zarqawi's martyrdom is not going to weaken the Jihad in Iraq," Khawaja told The Associated Press. "Rather, you will soon see more retaliatory attacks by his successors." A leader of outlawed Jaish-e-Muhammad said Muslims from many countries had gone to Iraq to fight against the Americans and al-Zarqawi's death won't stop this. "The killing of one leader cannot weaken the Jihad because many more leaders will rise," he said in a telephone interview

The News, 9 June 2006

Opinion: Guns, butter and trees (Shafqat Mahmood)

There is a familiar pattern to the budgetary ritual every year. The government claims that the fortunes of the poor have changed. Opposition says that the common man's back has been broken. The government claims an outstanding economic turnaround; opposition calls it a jugglery of figures. The government acts self righteous; the opposition is indignant

The News, 9 June 2006

Opinion: Peace in FATA (Asad Munir)

There are three distinct spheres of leadership in the tribal areas--- representative of the political administration, the traditional elders/maliks and religious functionaries. Persons from these spheres of leadership compete for power, status and legitimacy. The political agent, his staff and the maliks are in some form of alliance. They derive legitimacy from the established state authority. The role of the religious leader is least defined in the context of tribal administration. He, therefore, has to make efforts to create space for himself in the society. The events in the aftermath of 9/11 have provided that space and a role has been created for him in the tribal administration, especially in both South and North Waziristan. The political administration and the army are now interacting with religious leaders for conflict resolution and control of law and order situation

The Nation, 9 June 2006

Opinion: Budget politics (M.A Niazi)

The 2006-7 Budget reveals that the government is has no intention of holding elections before this Parliament's life expires, or else it is singularly inept politically, and has little idea of the electoral dynamics of microeconomic

performance. If P's Adviser on Finance Salman Shah was telling the truth when he told the traditional post-budget press conference that this was not an 'election budget', as the elections could take place after the next budget, for 2007-8. That will have to be an election year budget, because even if one accepts Parliamentary Affairs Minister Sher Afgan Niazi's generous reckoning, there is no way the general election can go beyond February 200

Dawn, 10 June 2006

Blast in Hub restaurant; 11 injured

QUETTA, June 9: Eleven people were injured when a bomb exploded in a restaurant in the industrial town of Hub on Friday. "Five of the victims have been taken to Karachi for serious wounds," sources said. Police sources said the bomb planted inside the Taj Mahal restaurant in front of the Hub police station went off at around 5.50pm. Eleven people, including the restaurant owner, were injured

Dawn, 10 June 2006

Balochistan seeks IPI gas pipeline royalty

QUETTA, June 9: The Balochistan Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution on Friday demanding royalty for the Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) gas pipeline. Deputy Speaker Mir Mohammad Aslam Bhootani, who was presiding over the session, asked the provincial government to take up with the federal government the issues of illegal fishing and shifting of Balochistan assets to Karachi by the Gwadar seaport authority

Dawn, 10 June 2006

Opinion: Defence spending and development (Vaseem Jafrey)

The implications of the defence strategy may now be considered. Minimum deterrence requires Pakistan to support a military force equal to at least one third of India, when the size of Pakistan's economy is about one seventh of India. (Figures for the size of GDP in 2004 reported by World Bank are \$691 billion for India, \$96 billion for Pakistan). Clearly, the defence burden on the Pakistan economy is twice as much than on the Indian economy. As a corollary, India has more resources, as a proportion of GDP for socio-economic development, compared to Pakistan. India already has an edge over Pakistan in economic and social indicators and this will tend to widen in the long run

The News, 10 June 2006

Editorial: Death of Zarqawi

If America is indeed such a champion of peace and democracy and wants to bring these good things to the Middle East, it should leave Iraq as soon as it can and impress upon its various allies in the region to undertake serious political and social reforms. It is that or what Mullah Omar is predicting will come true and there will be many more Zarqawis

The News, 10 June 2006

Opinion: Zarqawi is dead, long live Zarqawi? (Kamran Shafi)

Ahmad Fadhil Al Khalaileh aka Abu Musab al Zarqawi, by his own admission a cold-hearted killer who used to revel in slaughtering innocent people by decapitating them, is dead. Those who live by the sword, die by the sword and all that. But will Zarqawi's death bring to an end the murder and the mayhem let loose in Iraq ever since that country was assaulted by the United States and Britain for no good reason at all? Or will it be "Zarqawi is dead, long live Zarqawi" as another, then another, takes his place?

The News, 11 June 2006

20 militants killed in Waziristan

MIRANSHAH: Security forces killed up to 20 suspected militants and destroyed their hideout in North Waziristan tribal agency on Saturday, officials said. The pre-dawn strike by helicopter gunships and artillery targeted militants in Drub Lokai, near Datta Khel from where attacks were being launched on security forces, a security official told AFP

The News, 11 June 2006

Night curfew in Bara as armed Lashkar resurfaces

PESHAWAR: A nighttime curfew has been imposed in the Bara Tehsil of the Khyber tribal agency and fresh contingents of paramilitary troops were deployed to meet any eventuality, as the self-declared Lashkar-e-Islami announced a parallel set of governance in the guise of Islamic Shariah

The News, 11 June 2006

Strategy in place to ensure peace in Fata: Musharraf

RAWALPINDI: President Pervez Musharraf on Saturday said that due to its important geo-strategic location, Pakistan is and will continue to play its rightful role and contribute positively towards peace and harmony in the region. The president made these remarks while presiding over a daylong 96th Corps Commanders' Conference at the General Headquarters. The vice chief of army staff, corps commanders, and principal staff officers at the GHQ attended the conference

Daily Times, 11 June 2006

EDITORIAL: Our quest for a 'soft image' and our love for Al Zarfawi don't square

President Pervez Musharraf on Friday directed the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and other relevant departments to highlight the "soft image" of Pakistan in the country and abroad. As he spoke, the National Assembly was busy doing just the opposite. The Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) demanded that the house offer fateha for the soul of Abu Musa'b Al Zarfawi. MMA legislators Maulana Ghafoor Haideri and Dr Farid Paracha wanted to call down blessings on Al Zarfawi. The speaker prevented the embarrassing situation from getting out of hand by quoting the rules, which say the house could offer fateha only on the demise of a present or former member of parliament or his relatives

Dawn, 11 June 2006

Pakistan main asylum country: report

RAWALPINDI, June 10: Pakistan continues to be the main asylum country followed by Iran. By the end of 2005, both countries together hosted one out of five (21 per cent) of the world's refugees. Both, however, experienced a 16 and 32 per cent decrease respectively during the year as a result of the voluntary repatriation of some 751,000 Afghan refugees, according to statistics released by UNHCR

The Nation, 11 June 2006

Pak to purchase mily hardware from Russia

ISLAMABAD (NNI) – President Pervez Musharraf has said that he highly values Islamabad-Moscow relations and there is natural understanding between the two on political and diplomatic levels

The News, 12 June 2006

\$350m cut in Pak aid

ISLAMABAD: There is expectation in Islamabad that the US administration will reconsider the decision of the House of Representatives, which has slashed \$350 million in foreign aid to Pakistan, citing its poor human rights record and failure to do enough to improve democracy. "We are in touch with the US administration and there are expectations that the original sum of foreign aid to Pakistan would be fully restored", spokesperson at the Foreign Office told The News

The News, 12 June 2006

Opposition has no solid point against budget: Shaukat

ISLAMABAD: The feedback on the budget is satisfactory and the government will take more measures for people's welfare of the people, said Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz. "We are implementing policies under the leadership of President Pervez Musharraf in a transparent way and all decisions are being taken in the supreme national interest," he said, while talking to the newsmen at the Prime Minister's House on Sunday

The News, 12 June 2006

Consensus on amending Hudood Ordinance

KARACHI: In a major breakthrough some eminent Islamic scholars on Sunday reached a consensus in a Geo TV programme about rectifying the lacunae in a much-talked-about Islamic law promulgated during the dictatorship of Gen Ziaul Haq in 1979. The scholars belonging to different schools of thought and having ideological differences reached the consensus after a heated debate in the Zara Sochieye debate programme, a part of Geo TV's Hudood Ordinance initiative

The News, 12 June 2006

Coalition strike kills two in S Waziristan

WANA: At least two persons were killed and one other was injured following the air strike of coalition forces in a suburb of South Waziristan. Reports said that the coalition forces bombarded Khwaja Khizar Mountains, some 3 kms from Angoor Adda. As a result, two persons were killed on the spot while another sustained serious injuries. It is worth mentioning here, several labourers, who were busy in work in coal mine were killed due to the bombardment of the coalition forces last month

Dawn, 12 June 2006

Provinces' water share likely to be reduced

ISLAMABAD, June 11: The Indus River System Authority (Irsa) is likely to reduce the provincial water share on Monday owing to an overall decline of 173,000 cusec in four rivers during the last 20 days. Reliable sources told Dawn on Sunday that the average flow in four rivers — Indus, Kabul, Jhelum and Chenab — declined from 380,000 cusec per day on May 22 to 206,981 cusec on June 10 showing a reduction of about 46 per cent

The News, 13 June 2006

Five killed in Quetta blast

QUETTA: Ten people were killed in a bomb explosion at a hotel on Sariab Road here and a gun battle between security forces and armed tribesmen late on Sunday night near Sangsila, a tribal village about 350 kms southeast of Quetta

Dawn, 13 June 2006

Editorial: Case for provincial autonomy

THE federal minister for inter-provincial coordination struck the right note when he called for maximum autonomy to enable the provinces to run their own affairs. Mr Saleem Saifullah Khan was speaking in the context of Balochistan after his visit to Quetta. But it is not Balochistan alone which needs and has been demanding greater provincial autonomy. Other smaller provinces, too, would do better if they are not too tightly controlled by Islamabad. Ever since Pakistan came into being, inter-provincial relations and autonomy have figured as key contentious issues. In fact, the federal government's failure to resolve them has undermined national harmony and even led to the break-up of the country in 1971. The on-going conflict in Balochistan and its implications should make the government wake up and address the provincial autonomy issue in right earnest

The News, 14 June 2006

Musharraf can contest election in uniform: law minister

ISLAMABAD: Law, Justice and Human Rights Minister Wasi Zafar on Tuesday said President Musharraf could contest next presidential election in uniform. According to a press release issued here from Law Ministry, the minister said the president is elected under Article 41 of the Constitution. The candidate has to enjoy the qualifications, which are prescribed for the members of the National Assembly under Article 62 as well other qualification prescribed under Article 41 sub-clause (1), the press release said, adding: Disqualification enjoined under Article 63 is only attracted to in the case of the members of parliament. These are no applicable in case of the president."

The News, 14 June 2006

Five militants killed in Dera Bugti operation

QUETTA: At least five alleged miscreants were killed and seven others were arrested on Tuesday during an operation launched by Frontier Corps (FC) in Dera Bugti district, officials said. Balochistan government spokesman Abdul Raziq Bugti told The News that the FC operation continued for more than over six hours during which five miscreants were killed and seven were apprehended. "The FC had destroyed a huge cache of explosive material, he added. Helicopters were also used in the operation," he said

The News, 14 June 2006

President in Shanghai

SHANGHAI: President Gen Pervez Musharraf arrived here on Tuesday evening to represent Pakistan at the summit meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). He was given a warm reception on his arrival at the Pudong Airport. Two children attired in traditional Pakistani dresses presented bouquet to the president and First Lady Begum Sehba Musharraf. Information Minister Muhammad Ali Duranni, Minister for Political Coordination Salim Saifullah Khan, Governor State Bank Shamsad Khan, Foreign Secretary Riaz Muhammad Khan, Chairman Export Promotion Bureau Tariq Ikram and Senator Haroon Akhtar Khan are accompanying the president.

The News, 14 June 2006

Qazi willing to strike an agreement with BB, Nawaz

LAHORE: Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Qazi Hussain Ahmad expressed his willingness to strike an agreement with former Prime Ministers Mian Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto to bring the military dictatorship to an end and set up a civilized democratic society

The News, 14 June 2006

Six 'would-be suicide bombers' held

MULTAN: Police claimed to have arrested six suicide bombers — including the banned Lashkar-i-Jhangvi outfit's South Punjab suicide squad chief — who were planning suicide bomb attacks in Multan and Khangarh on June 24 on the mourning processions in connection with martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA). The main objective of their suicide mission was to avenge the Rashidabad bomb blast that killed more than 40 people in October 2004, said district police spokesman inspector Riaz Khalid

The News, 14 June 2006

ARD to sign Charter of Democracy on July 2: Qaim

LARKANA: The president of Pakistan People's Party, Sindh chapter, Qaim Ali Shah, said on Tuesday that all component parties of the Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy (ARD) would sign the Charter of Democracy in London on July 2

The Nation, 14 June 2006

Opinion: Presidential election - an overview (Omar Aziz Khan)

Under Article 41 of the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973 (the "Constitution") the President of Pakistan is the Head of the State and represents the unity of the Republic. Personal qualifications for election of President are provided in Article 41(2) of the Constitution which mandates that a candidate for President of Pakistan has to be a Muslim not less than 45 years of age who should be qualified to be elected as member of National Assembly. The Electoral College for election of the President is provided in Article 41(3). Members of both Houses (National Assembly as well as Senate) and members of Provincial Assemblies form the Electoral College for election to the office of the President

The Nation, 14 June 2006

Opinion: Irritants in Pak-US relations (Saifullah Khan)

Pakistan has historically remained allied to the US and is a Major Non-NATO Ally (MNNA). The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 highlighted the common interest of Pakistan and the United States in peace and stability in South Asia. Pakistan assisted the US in ousting the Soviets from Afghanistan with the help of mujahideen. The conduct of nuclear tests by India in May 1998 and Pakistan's matching response set back US relations with Pakistan. The relationship improved significantly once Pakistan agreed to support the US campaign to eliminate the Taliban in Afghanistan and to join the United States in the Global War on Terror (GWOT). Since 2001 Pakistan has provided extraordinary assistance in the war on terror and has made many sacrifices. US government officials have reiterated time and again that the present relationship will be of long term unlike the past

Dawn, 15 June 2006

Operation launched in Kohlu district

QUETTA, June 14: Security forces launched an operation in some areas of tehsil Kahan of Kohlu district on Wednesday. According to reports received here, troops attacked what was described as hideouts of armed tribesmen who were involved in attacks on security forces and in planting landmines in different areas of the district. "The forces used helicopter gunships in the action," said Nawabzada Balach Marri while talking to Dawn on telephone from Kahan

Dawn, 15 June 2006

MQM demands political, fiscal autonomy for provinces

ISLAMABAD, June 14: The Muttahida Qaumi Movement has demanded through its proposals on the budget that the provinces should be granted complete political, administrative and fiscal autonomy. The party has forwarded the proposals, containing 17 points, to the finance ministry for incorporation in the budget and its copies were released to the press by party's parliamentary leader in the National Assembly, Dr Farooq Sattar, at a news

conference in the parliament house cafeteria on Wednesday

Dawn, 15 June 2006

Irsa announces further cut in provinces' water share

ISLAMABAD, June 14: The Indus River System Authority (Irsa) on Wednesday enhanced the cut in the provinces' water share to 19 per cent owing to an 'excessive drop in the inflows' an announcement said. Irsa said the morning gauges on Wednesday reported that the inflows were declining constantly. "Therefore, Irsa has decided to further reduce Tarbela outflows by 15,000 cusec," it said

Dawn, 15 June 2006

Seven BLA men held

QUETTA, June 14: Police have arrested seven suspects of the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) for their alleged involvement in blowing up railway lines, bomb explosions and grenade attacks at houses in Mach town. Addressing a press conference on Wednesday, IGP Chaudhry Mohammad Yaqub said: "They have confessed before a judicial magistrate their involvement in 14 subversive incidents in Mach," he said, adding that they targeted the houses of the non-locals under a plan, who were living in Mach for centuries

Dawn, 15 June 2006

OPINION: The budget and parliament (Sultan Ahmed)

PAKISTANI parliamentarians did well to invite a former finance and foreign minister of India to speak on budget-making in his country and how the parliament there controls public spending. What he said was news to many here because the art of budget-making in India has been rather fine-tuned and also made very elaborate. The Indian parliament discusses budget for 75 days. The standing committees of various ministries discuss it for three weeks before the Lok Sabha approves it. Parliament receives supplementary budgets three times a year, unlike once in Pakistan when all the excess spending is done. The finance minister presents an implementation statement about how the money voted had been spent

The News, 15 June 2006

Musharraf for conflict resolution

SHANGHAI: President Gen Pervez Musharraf on Wednesday called for a strong UN system, resolution of existing conflicts like Palestine and Kashmir and sustained efforts against terrorism and extremism to ensure a peaceful and prosperous world

The News, 15 June 2006

Rs 274bn surplus, tax-free budget for Punjab

LAHORE: Punjab Finance Minister Hasnain Bahadur Dareshak on Wednesday presented Rs 274 billion surplus and tax-free budget for 2006-07 in the Punjab Assembly, which included Rs 100 billion allocation for the Annual Development Programme (ADP). The ADP for the coming fiscal is 88.67 per cent higher than last year, while the total budget outlay is 22.13 per cent more than the preceding year. The budget has been presented to reflect the vision of the Punjab chief minister, who is claiming that his policies are meant to make the province self-reliant

The News, 16 June 2006

Sindh unveils surplus, tax-free budget

KARACHI: A Rs 193 billion provincial budget for fiscal 2006-2007 with no new tax and showing a surplus of Rs 302 million was presented in the Sindh Assembly by Senior Minister Syed Sardar Ahmed here on Thursday amid opposition protest

The News, 16 June 2006

Musharraf seeks full SCO membership

SHANGHAI: President Pervez Musharraf on Thursday underscored Pakistan's strong credentials for securing full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and said the country is most suitably positioned to contribute to realising the SCO objectives

The News, 16 June 2006

Editorial: Kashgar bus service

The introduction of a bus service between Gilgit in the Northern Areas and Kashgar in China's Xinjiang

Autonomous Region could help reverse the sharp decline in international tourism in the country. Kashgar lies on the southwestern edge of the famed Taklamakan desert and is one of the main towns situated on the ancient Silk Road. The route from Gilgit to Kashgar -- a distance by road of some 700 kilometres -- traverses some of the highest mountains in the world. On the Pakistan side, the bus passes along some spectacular scenery and at several point the road (the Karakorum Highway) runs so close to the mountains that travellers feel as if they can touch the snow. While Gilgit and Kashgar were connected in the past through a bus service offered by the Northern Areas Transport Corporation, it was not regular and only went up to the Pakistan border at Sost where passengers then had to cross over and board a Chinese bus

Dawn, 16 June 2006

Contacts initiated with Bugti through MMA

QUETTA, June 15: Maulana Mohammad Khan Sherani, the provincial president of MMA, a partner in the ruling coalition, has sent a message to JWP Chief Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti in connection with a recent meeting of MMA leaders with President Pervez Musharraf on the situation in Balochistan. This was disclosed by Senior Minister Maulana Abdul Wasay in the provincial assembly during his speech on a resolution on the NFC award moved by opposition member Abdul Rahim Ziaratwal on Thursday

Dawn, 16 June 2006

Pakistan-China bus service inaugurated

GILGIT, June 15: Federal Communications Minister Shamim Haider Siddiqui on Thursday inaugurated a bus service between Gilgit and Kashgher, China. Speaking at the inaugural ceremony, the minister said the bus service would help increase trade between the two countries and boost tourism. He said the bus would travel the 700km distance between the two cities in 14 hours and stop at two points in Sost and Tashqurghan, China

The News, 17 June 2006

China sees Pakistan as energy corridor

SHANGHAI: President Pervez Musharraf and his Chinese counterpart, Hu Jintao, held an hour-long meeting here on Friday and reaffirmed their resolve to strengthen their existing partnership in its all dimensions, particularly the economic sector

The News, 17 June 2006

Kidnapped tribal journalist found dead in Mir Ali

PESHAWAR: Body of tribal journalist Hayatullah Khan Dawar, who had been kidnapped more than seven months ago, was recovered from mountains some six kilometres south of the Mir Ali town in North Waziristan Agency on Friday

The News, 18 June 2006

Musharraf pushes for conflict resolution

ALMATY: The member states of the Conference on Cooperation and confidence-building measures in Asia (CICA) on Saturday condemned terrorism in all its forms and called for fighting it in a consistent and comprehensive manner to avoid double standards. The final summit declaration at the end of summit attended by 17 leaders from the region, stressed "terrorism cannot be and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group."

Daily Times, 18 June 2006

How one jihadi group operates in Pakistan

WASHINGTON: The Pakistani branch of Islamic group al-Muhajiroun has evolved into one of many support networks connecting Western Muslim youths, mostly from Europe, to jihad in southwest Asia. According to an analysis circulated by Stratfor, the US-based online news analysis service, this occurred after the Pakistani branch's 2003 announcement of independence from the parent group in London. The Pakistani branch of al-Muhajiroun had decided to participate more actively in the 'jihad' in Afghanistan, which necessitated its secession from the parent body. Omer Bakri Mohammed, the organisation's founder, blessed this decision as he wanted to maintain plausible deniability for the group as a whole

Daily Times, 18 June 2006

OPINION: The budget debate and the military (Dr Hasan-Askari Rizvi)

The problems in civil-military relations are not insurmountable. There is an urgent need for a civil-military dialogue reviewing the expanded commercial engagements of the military and to examine how far these activities serve its institutional and professional interests. Pakistan needs to learn from the Chinese government's decision to restrict the commercial and business activities of its military

Dawn, 18 June 2006

NWFP to create over 13,450 new jobs: Rs95.9bn budget with Rs26.6bn uplift outlay

PESHAWAR, June 17: Provincial Senior Minister Sirajul Haq on Saturday presented Rs95.987 billion budget for the year 2006-07 in the NWFP Assembly with a total development outlay of Rs26.630 billion. The budget envisages a surplus of Rs13 billion on the current revenue receipts-expenditure side, current expenditure of Rs54.5 billion and capital expenditure of over Rs14 billion. The budget appears to have been prepared keeping in mind the upcoming elections as it unveils a plan to make over 13,450 appointments in different public sector departments in the next financial year

Dawn, 18 June 2006

Govt ready for talks with Bugti, Mengal: Jam

QUETTA, June 17: The Balochistan Chief Minister Jam Mohammad Yousuf on Saturday said that the government is prepared to have a dialogue with all nationalist leaders including Nawab Akbar Bugti and Sardar Attaullah Mengal

The News, 19 June 2006

Pakistan fine with Indo-US N-deal but...

BEIJING: President Pervez Musharraf has said that the recent nuclear deal between the United States and India is a bilateral arrangement but Pakistan should be treated on equal basis for maintaining geo-strategic balance in the region. In an interview with the China Central Television telecast on Sunday, the president said Pakistan deals with the United States bilaterally in accordance with its own interests. As far as the US relationship with India is concerned, he said, Islamabad wants that it should be treated at par with Delhi as far as strategic capabilities are concerned

Dawn, 19 June 2006

OPINION: A major milestone for SCO (Tanvir Ahmad Khan)

IT is in the fitness of things that Pakistan, still only an observer like India, Iran and Mongolia, has participated in the fifth summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) at the level of the head of state. The symbolism of this act cannot be missed. The fifth summit coincides with stirrings in Pakistan that it needs to broaden the base of its international relations. A relatively quiet, work-oriented and undemonstrative organisation like SCO provides a good opportunity to explore the possibilities of achieving a better balance in the foreign policy of the nation

Dawn, 19 June 2006

OPINION: If Musharraf gets re-elected (Anwar Marooj)

The Article in the Constitution on which the attention of the King's party is riveted is, of course 44(2) which reads... "Subject to the Constitution a person holding office as President shall be eligible for re-election to that office, but no person shall hold that office for more than two consecutive terms." As every sixth form student knows there is a difference between "shall be eligible" and "has to be reinstated." But then, the gang of four that is spearheading the campaign of re-electing a president who was never elected in the first place (as the columnist Ayaz Amir so charmingly put it) is not really interested in establishing democracy in this country. It is behaving more like the outdoor relief department of the military.

The News, 20 June 2006

Gwadar port as trade, energy corridor

ISLAMABAD: President Pervez Musharraf held wide-ranging talks on bilateral, regional and global issues of common concern with Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmed al-Jaber al-Sabah at the Aiwan-e-Sadr here on Monday evening

The News, 20 June 2006

Opposition's move to cut defence budget rejected

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly on Monday rejected the opposition demand for cut in the defence budget as

181 cut motions tabled by the opposition were rejected by the treasury benches with majority. The combined opposition demanded release of Dr Qadeer Khan and presentation of all defence expenditures in parliament. Sherry Rehman of the Pakistan People's Party-Parliamentarian (PPPP) said all the details of defence expenditures should be provided in the House, and added that Army officers' pension is being paid from the civilian budget

The News, 20 June 2006

Terrorists wiped out from Balochistan: Musharraf

RAWALPINDI: President Pervez Musharraf has said that the life is returning to normal in Dera Bugti and its adjoining areas as miscreants have been wiped out from entire Balochistan. Talking to Governor Balochistan Awaiz Ahmed Ghani here at the President camp office here on Monday, Musharraf said the life in Sui and other parts of Dera Bugti was returning to normal, as all the terrorists in the area had been eliminated, and no body would be allowed to create hindrance in the development of the province

The News, 20 June 2006

OPINION: Missing Indus water (Fateh Ullah Khan)

A recent report in an English-language daily reported the loss of about 20,000 cusecs of water between Taunsa and Guddu. It further said that water was being lifted on both sides of the River Indus through heavy pumping machines. This gives the impression of water being stolen in the Punjab. On May 25, this newspaper reported that RSA substantially increased the water supply at Sukkur barrage to 27,000 cusecs on May 20, but Kotri received only 7,000 cusecs after five days. This shows that 20,000 cusecs of water went missing en route which have been shown as water losses by the Sindh irrigation department. This gives the impression that water is stolen in Sindh

Dawn, 20 June 2006

OPINION: Stalled trade talks (Shahid Javed Burki)

THERE is a reason why I am returning to the subject of international trade and its consequences for Pakistan. I have contributed columns on this subject before but a number of developments have taken place recently that warrant another discussion in this space. It appears increasingly difficult that the countries negotiating the current WTO Doha round will be able to meet the deadline imposed by the United States' legislative system

The News, 21 June 2006

Deficit budget for Balochistan

QUETTA: Amid pandemonium and walkout by opposition lawmakers, Finance Minister Syed Ehsan Shah on Wednesday unveiled the provincial budget for the financial year 2006-07 in the Balochistan Assembly with a total size of Rs 59.700 billion — showing a deficit of Rs 10.963 billion. Speaker Jamal Shah Kakar was in the chair. The budget includes the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) of Rs 10.820 billion that also contains the Foreign Projects Assistance (FPA) of Rs 3.760 billion while non-development expenditure stands at Rs 37.4526 billion

The News, 21 June 2006

Rawalakot-Poonch bus rolls to cheer Kashmiris

ON THE LINE OF CONTROL: A second bus service rolled between the divided parts of the scenic Himalayan state of Kashmir on Tuesday, a move hailed as a boost for the peace process between the nuclear-armed rivals. Pakistan and India agreed to start the Rawlakot-Poonch bus service to help reunite families living on either side of the Line of Control (LoC). Poonch and Rawalakot are 55 kilometres apart.

The News, 21 June 2006

45 killed — for a little water

SADDA: The death toll in the bloody clash over water between two belligerent tribes in Parachinar on Tuesday shot up to 45, while dozens others sustained injuries. According to reports, the 45 dead belonged to Malikhel and Boshera tribes. However, the political administration did not confirm the casualties. Sources in the District Headquarters Hospital said they have admitted dozens of injured and many of them were in critical condition

The News, 21 June 2006

Only Pakistan not liable for Afghan unrest: Musharraf

ISLAMABAD: President General Pervez Musharraf Tuesday said Pakistan should not only be held responsible for the ongoing situation in Afghanistan but all parties involved must equally take responsibility about what is

happening there

The News, 21 June 2006

Arms proliferation through legal channels

ISLAMABAD: The interior ministry multimillion rupees campaign to recover illegal arms, issuance of non-prohibited licences to parliamentarians and their relatives by Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, and import of weapons by commerce ministry under its trade policy running in parallel

The News, 22 June 2006

Militants deny killing Hayatullah

MIRANSHAH: Pro-Taliban militants on Wednesday distributed leaflets blaming Pakistani authorities for the killing of a reporter who was investigating the death of a key al-Qaeda operative. The Urdu-language pamphlets were circulated in Miranshah town in restive North Waziristan tribal agency, five days after the handcuffed body of journalist Hayatullah Khan, 35, was found in nearby Mir Ali

The News, 22 June 2006

Wanted LJ terrorist arrested in Karachi

KARACHI: Police and intelligence agencies on Wednesday arrested a wanted activist of a banned militant outfit and recovered a hand grenade and a pistol from his possession. Ameer Usman Kurd, alias Saifullah, a leading activist of the outlawed Lashkar-e-Jhangvi militant group, was wanted to Sindh and Balochistan police in various cases of terrorism and sectarian violence — including blasts, target killings, attack on police, worship places and religious gatherings. He carried a head-money of Rs 2 million

The News, 22 June 2006

OPINION: The Zarqawis among us (Ikram Sehgal)

With accurate intelligence locating Abu Musab Al Zarqawi and some of his aides in a hut in Baquba, a US aircraft successfully targeted the most wanted terrorist in Iraq with two 225 lbs bombs. According to the Americans, Zarqawi did not die immediately after the bombing; the 45 minutes leading to his actual death raised a minor controversy. Zarqawi was no intellectual he was simply an operator, made larger than life by media propaganda. In death, the murderous uneducated Jordanian remains very much the man of controversy he was in real life, the tragedy is that as a martyr he will inspire others to more insane acts of terrorism, atrocities not excluded

Dawn, 22 June 2006

'Taliban not at war with Pakistan'

TANK, June 21: A Taliban commander Maulvi Jalal Al Din Haqani has asked his supporters not to wage war against Pakistan, while renewing his pledge to continue Jihad against the United States and the Karzai government. A pamphlet purportedly issued by Maulvi Haqani's son Khalifa Alhaj Sirajuddin in Angoor Adda on Wednesday said that those fighters who had declared Jihad on Pakistan did not have any place in Taliban ranks, as it was not their policy to launch a war against the country

The News, 23 June 2006

Pakistanis hold negative view of Westerners

ISLAMABAD: Support for Osama bin Laden has declined but remains relatively high in Pakistan, where many people regard Westerners as intolerant, cheap and dishonest, according to the results of a global poll released on Thursday. A majority of Pakistanis also expressed concerns about the spread of Islamic militancy, and there has been a marked decline in support for suicide attacks against civilians, the poll, conducted by the Pew Global Attitudes Project in 15 Western and Muslim countries from March to May this year, found

The News, 23 June 2006

Missing journalist produced before court, remanded

SUKKUR: Missing Mukesh Rupeta, correspondent of The News and Geo television, and his cameraman Sanjay Kumar were remanded in police custody for seven days on Thursday, following the registration of a case against them at the Airport police station Jacobabad, on charges of filming Jacobabad airbase and preparing fake national identity cards and passports

The News, 23 June 2006

Taliban claim shooting down Army 'copter

LONDON: Active local Taliban in North Waziristan has claimed shooting down Pakistan Army helicopter on Wednesday in which four army soldiers were killed. Spokesman of local Taliban Abdullah Farhad told BBC on telephone from an undisclosed location that in the past too they have attacked army helicopters, however, they were not successful, but this time they succeeded

The News, 23 June 2006

OPINION: This is not a democracy (Shafqat Mahmood)

The damage that military rule does to national institutions is well documented. It hits the judiciary hard, makes parliament irrelevant, subdues the executive and undermines provincial autonomy turning the federation into a unitary state. The jungle law of might is right replaces rule of law because the constitution is just a book of words. It has no artillery or infantry or tanks under its command to stop the transgressors or the intruders. No wonder dictators push it aside or trample upon it whenever they decide to take over

Dawn, 23 June 2006

Formation of jirga in final stage: Aurakzai

PESHAWAR, June 22: NWFP Governor Ali Mohammad Jan Aurakzai has said that the formation of a grand tribal jirga to settle the Waziristan crisis is in the final stage. Talking to journalists after a ceremony held to burn seized drugs on Thursday, the governor said prominent maliks and elders of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas would be in the jirga

Dawn, 23 June 2006

Forces, militants heading for truce

PESHAWAR, June 22: Government security forces and militants are heading for a tenuous ceasefire in the Waziristan tribal area, credible sources told Dawn on Thursday. These sources said that militants had agreed last week to hold fire in the South Waziristan but it had not yet been extended to the neighbouring North Waziristan

Dawn, 23 June 2006

Pakistan unlikely to join contest for top UN post

ISLAMABAD, June 22: Signals from key policy circles in Islamabad and Rawalpindi are that Pakistan is unlikely to go for a tit-for-tat nomination on India's bid for the post of UN secretary-general. While reports from the UN headquarters in New York suggest that Indian diplomats are trying to explain the move to declare Shashi Tharoor as India's candidate for the secretary-general's job as a response to an anticipated declaration by Pakistan of its own nominee, Islamabad is nearing a decision not to put forward a name

Dawn, 23 June 2006

Stranded Pakistanis hold protests

DHAKA, June 22: The Stranded Pakistanis General Repatriation Committee on Thursday submitted a memorandum to the ministry of home affairs to press their demands including stopping the eviction of the stranded people and resuming relief work. A procession was brought out from Mirpur-11 in Dhaka and marched towards the secretariat, said a press release. Later, a delegation went to the home ministry and submitted a memorandum

Dawn, 24 June 2006

Court scraps PSM deal: Govt asked to refer issue to CCI

ISLAMABAD, June 23: The Supreme Court on Friday annulled the sale of Pakistan Steel Mills to a three-party consortium and directed the government to refer the matter to the Council of Common Interests (CCI) within six weeks. A nine-member full bench of the apex court, headed by Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry, declared the \$362 million transaction with the Russian-Saudi-Pakistani investors null and void

Dawn, 24 June 2006

11 Afghans arrested in Quetta

QUETTA, June 23: Eleven more foreigners were arrested on Friday in a raid on a house on the city outskirts after five foreign Al Qaeda suspects were rounded up overnight from the Zhob area. "Personnel of law-enforcement agencies raided a house in the Kakar Colony and rounded up 11 suspects, including the owner of the house," sources said, adding that they were all Afghans. "They (the 11 Afghans) were arrested on the information provided by the Turk and the Afghan men arrested from Zhob," sources said

Dawn, 24 June 2006

Editorial: Waziristan: a new strategy

THE news from Waziristan has in recent times been quite disturbing, given the fact that it has been the theatre of the war on terror since 2003. Now that Pakistan's military strategy — backed by the American forces in Afghanistan — appears to be failing, the government is changing tack. This is something it should have done earlier. The NWFP governor has now announced that a grand jirga of the tribal leaders of Waziristan is being formed to resolve the crisis. Coming at a time when the security forces in the agency and militant leaders are negotiating a truce, the move for an assembly to promote conciliation gives rise to hope that peace may be in the offing. It is unrealistic of course to believe that the problems will be resolved in a matter of days after the jirga comes into being, as Governor Aurakzai has warned.

The News, 24 June 2006

Islamabad wants greater cooperation with Kabul

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Afghanistan on Friday agreed to further intensify security cooperation and fully utilise the Tripartite Commission as well as bilateral channels to improve relations

The News, 24 June 2006

Water availability in watercourses to bolster economy: Musharraf

RAWALPINDI: President Pervez Musharraf said on Friday that improvement in watercourses, being carried out across the country under a Rs 66 billion project, would help conserve the precious natural resource and enable the country to sustain its higher economic growth targets

The News, 24 June 2006

EDITORIAL: Gagging the press

Being a journalist in Pakistan, especially an independent-minded one who would want to practice the profession as it should be done, has never been easy. Other than the relatively low pay compared with what one gets in many other professions, the problem has always been that there is often a heavy price to pay for investigative journalism. In carrying out their professional duties, journalists in this country face threats not only from the state and its various law-enforcement and intelligence agencies but also from non-government parties such as the land mafia, religious and political organisations and sometimes even commercial entities

The News, 25 June 2006

Civilian nuclear deal with US

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is in need of having a civil nuclear energy agreement with the United States and the matter would be raised in the Pak-US energy dialogue scheduled to be held in Washington tomorrow (June 26), Foreign Office spokesperson Tasnim Aslam told reporters at a weekly press briefing here on Saturday

The News, 25 June 2006

Govt urged not to patronise Muttahida

ISLAMABAD: The All Parties Peace Conference (APC), convened by the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), demanded of the government to stop patronising the Muttahida Qaumi Movement and bring back its Quaid Altaf Hussain to Pakistan through Interpol

The News, 25 June 2006

Afghanistan key to trade, energy, says Shaukat

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said that Pakistan is committed to supporting the government of Afghan President Hamid Karzai and closely working with it because a strong, stable and peaceful Afghanistan is as much in our interest as it is in Afghanistan

The News, 25 June 2006

Terrorists blow up music centre in Dir

DIR: Some unidentified terrorists attacked a net cafe and music centre at Dir Town Friday night, causing expulsion but no loss of life. The explosions took place at 9:00 pm when the centres, Dot Com Computer Centre and Rozi Khan cassettes centre were closed that caused injuries to a doctor passing by one of the centres

The News, 25 June 2006

Irsa chief calls for building new dams

LAHORE: The Indus River System Authority chairman Shafqat Masood Saturday highlighted building water reservoirs for storing additional water. Speaking at a moot arranged by the Institution of Engineers Pakistan to mark International Commission for Irrigation and Drainage Day, he said some 75 per cent water was wasted during and before the monsoon. He said the water situation in the country would improve if rainwater was stored

The News, 25 June 2006

Unchecked Hundi business causing huge losses to exchequer

KARACHI: Hanif Akhai, former head of foreign exchange, State Bank of Pakistan and Chief Executive Officer of Akhai Capital Management has disclosed that Hundi business has grown to around \$8 billion to \$9 billion a year. Addressing top foreign exchange executives of commercial banks on Friday evening at the Institute of Bankers Pakistan (IBP) on the topic of 'Demystifying the Hundi Business in Pakistan', he said the policy-makers of the central bank should tighten monitoring and auditing of accounts of exchange companies

Dawn, 25 June 2006

Surrender must for talks, says minister: Balochistan issue

LAHORE, June 24: The government may hold talks with Baloch leaders if their militias surrender arms, Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination Salim Saifullah Khan said on Saturday. Answering a question at a news conference, he said the government could not allow anyone to set up his army nor would it tolerate any damage to national installations

Dawn, 26 June 2006

Waziristan militants offer ceasefire

PESHAWAR, June 25: Militants in the restive North Waziristan Agency on Sunday offered a conditional one month's ceasefire but said they would have the right to defend themselves if attacked by security forces. NWFP Governor Lt-Gen (retired) Ali Mohammad Jan Aurakzai was quick to welcome the offer and hailed it as a good first step towards restoration of peace in the troubled region

Dawn, 26 June 2006

OPINION: Balochistan's chronic budget deficit OPINION: Balochistan's chronic budget deficit (Sabihuddin Ghausi)

BALOCHISTAN is in deep financial crisis and apparently there is no solution in sight right now. For the second consecutive year, Balochistan has come out with a deficit budget for the year 2006-07. In the year 2005-06, the budget declared a deficit of Rs5.24 billion with a note of caution that if federal government did not provide Rs8 billion to finance a Rs9 billion development outlay, the deficit will increase to Rs13.24 billion. The deficit did increase in the current fiscal year for which an additional amount of Rs6 billion was borrowed from the State Bank of Pakistan

Dawn, 26 June 2006

OPINION: National security redefined (Javid Hussain)

The purpose of this article is to assess in the light of the information contained in the budget for 2006-07 and the Pakistan Economic Survey 2005-06 whether we are practising a comprehensive concept of national security or whether we are still executing our national security policy mostly in military terms. Let us see what the Pakistan Economic Survey 2005-06 tells us about our national security policy in the past. We can then examine the implications of the budget for the fiscal year 2006-07 for the future of our national security

Daily Times, 26 June 2006

Chinese diplomats face kidnapping

ISLAMABAD: The Chinese diplomatic mission in Pakistan has said that members of the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) are planning to kidnap senior Chinese diplomats and consular officers in the country

Daily Times, 26 June 2006

EDITORIAL: Qazi Hussain Ahmad versus MQM

At an all-parties conference (APC) called by the Jamaat-e-Islami, a joint resolution has demanded that the government drag Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) chief Altaf Hussain back to the country through Interpol,

dismiss the Sindh government and governor and restore peace in Karachi. The Jamaat chief, Qazi Hussain Ahmad, told the media that the Musharraf regime was patronising the MQM, had supported it in the 2002 general elections and then in the 2005 local government elections, and had put law enforcement agencies at the disposal of the MQM. He also accused the MQM of extorting money from shopkeepers, industrialists and traders by force

The Nation, 26 June 2006

EDITORIAL: Ties with Afghanistan

While asking the visiting Afghan Foreign Minister Rangeen Dadfar Spanta to ensure that his country's soil was not used against Pakistan, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz emphatically declared that Pakistan would not let its territory be used for acts of terrorism in Afghanistan. Seen in the backdrop of mutual recriminations that hit the headlines particularly during President Bush's visit to the Subcontinent last February, the two countries would do well to sit down together whenever either of them suspects the other involved in some mischief. Diplomatic channels rather than the news media, as both leaders agreed during their meeting at Islamabad on Saturday, are the right forum to sort out such misconception.

The News, 27 June 2006

Suicide bomber kills seven soldiers in Waziristan

PESHAWAR: Seven soldiers of the Pakistan Army and paramilitary Frontier Corps were killed and scores of others injured when a suicide bomber rammed an explosives-laden car into a check-post in the restive North Waziristan Agency on Monday

The News, 27 June 2006

MMA plans to checkmate Musharraf

ISLAMABAD: Announcing a countrywide public mobilisation campaign, the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) on Monday said it would resist presidential elections by the existing assemblies. The MMA supreme council, which met here on Monday for four hours with alliance chief Qazi Hussain Ahmed in the chair, decided that it would launch a public mobilisation campaign against General Pervez Musharraf and would hold public meetings at Peshawar, Karachi, Lahore, Hyderabad and Rawalpindi

The News, 27 June 2006

Provinces asked to acquire land for dams

ISLAMABAD: In a major development, the concerned provincial governments have been tasked to start acquiring land for four water reservoirs, including Kalabagh dam — the most controversial reservoir on which the Musharraf regime has so far failed to evolve a consensus — The News learnt on Monday. The other three dams are Basha, Akori, and Kurram Tangi, for which governments in concerned provinces and Northern Areas have been officially communicated to start acquiring land

The News, 27 June 2006

Rice arrives today to discuss terror war

WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will head to Pakistan on Monday for talks on the war on terrorism as the two nations strive to deal with violence by militants ousted from neighbouring Afghanistan.

The News, 28 June 2006

Jirga vows to restore peace in Waziristan

PESHAWAR: A grand tribal Jirga of North Waziristan on Tuesday resolved to restore peace and extend all possible help to the government but reiterated the demand to take local tribesmen into confidence before launching any operation or taking any action against suspected terrorists. The Jirga was held at the governor's cottage in Miranshah, headquarters of the agency, which was attended by all leading tribal elders, Maliks, clerics, elected representatives, newly appointed Political Agent Dr Fakhr-E-Alam Irfan and other officials of the administration

The News, 28 June 2006

MMA proposes three 'Islamic names' for NWFP

PESHAWAR: The Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) has proposed three names -- Dar-ul-Islam, Bab-ul-Islam and Islam Var -- to bring an end to the decades old dispute on renaming of Frontier province. The MMA legislators will support any one of these names when the matter will come up in the House, which is likely to happen during the current session. The former two of the proposed names are Arabic words that stand for 'House of Islam' and 'Gate

of Islam' while the third has been taken from Pashto language, having the meaning of the 'Door of Islam'.

The News, 28 June 2006

OPINION: Europeans: more equal than others? (Shireen M Mazari)

Let me state my position on capital punishment at the outset: I am unequivocally opposed to it on a number of counts. First, it does not act as a deterrent to murder and so far there is no data to show that the number of murders has been reduced as a result of the prevalence of the death penalty -- or that there are fewer murders committed in countries that have the death penalty than in those that do not. Second, from the developed to developing states, justice is never perfect and there is always human error. For instance, there have been cases even in the "developed" US where innocent people have been meted out capital punishment -- so life imprisonment is a more just option. Three, there is a moral issue involved regarding the whole notion of taking a life: if murder is wrong then on what grounds can one sanctify the taking of life by the state? This is of course not as straightforward as it may sound given the notion of war and so on, but it does reflect the moral dilemma linked to capital punishment

Dawn, 28 June 2006

Pakistan good strategic partner, Rice tells Kasuri

ISLAMABAD, June 27: The government has decided to deploy 10,000 more troops along the Afghan border which will take the total number of troops there to 90,000. This was announced by Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri at a joint press conference with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who arrived here on Tuesday for consultations on bilateral and security issues

Dawn, 28 June 2006

Defence ties with US discussed

RAWALPINDI, June 27: Pakistan and the United States of America reiterated their desire to further strengthen defence relationship so as to cope with the emerging challenges in mutually beneficial ways. This was discussed during a meeting between Ryan Henry, Principal Deputy for the US Under Secretary of Defence for Policy, and Pakistan's Secretary Defence, Lt Gen (ret'd) Tariq Waseem Ghazi here on Tuesday

The News, 29 June 2006

Why bureaucrats love to serve in Punjab

ISLAMABAD: Better working environment and added perks are a great attraction in Lahore for senior members of the civilian bureaucracy, who resist their transfers to Islamabad because they consider it a hotbed of politics. Background interviews with some senior bureaucrats serving in Lahore and Islamabad reveal that the actual reason for reluctance of Lahore-based federal officials to serve in Islamabad even in BS-21 and BS-22, is the vulnerability of top bureaucrats in the federal capital's environment

The News, 29 June 2006

Isolated incidents not to derail peace process: Orakzai

HANGU: Showing optimism and resolve to restore peace and discourage extremism, NWFP Governor Lt-Gen (ret'd) Ali Muhammad Jan Orakzai on Wednesday said that mutual consultations and role of elders was key in finding solution to the ongoing unrest and uncertain situation in both the settled as well as tribal areas

The News, 29 June 2006

Rice didn't raise polls with Musharraf

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Senator Tariq Azeem on Wednesday denied US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, in her meeting a day earlier with President General Pervez Musharraf mentioned, let alone called for him to hold free, fair elections — as reported in a section of the media

The News, 29 June 2006

EDITORIAL: Rice's advice

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was in clear breach of protocol during her brief visit to Pakistan. On her way for talks with President Musharraf, she told a press conference that President Pervez Musharraf should hold "democratic, free and fair elections". If the message couldn't have been conveyed to the president directly, for some reason, Ambassador Ryan C Crocker would have been a more appropriate messenger than the reporters to whom she was speaking. It's a stale message, in any case. President Bush has himself said the same thing on a number of occasions, as have a variety of American officials, including one of Ms Rice's subordinates, Richard A Boucher,

who visited Islamabad in April

The Nation, 29 June 2006

EDITORIAL: More troops for Waziristan

THE sole visible outcome of Secretary Condoleezza Rice's 90-minute meeting with General Musharraf is the agreement by Pakistan to send 10,000 additional troops to the Afghan border, raising the number to 90,000, which is close on a fifth of its total strength. Dr Rice frankly told the newsmen later that her discussions with the President revolved around Pakistan-US counter-terrorism cooperation and bilateral relations

The Nation, 29 June 2006

OPINION: Governance and the Supreme Court (Inayatullah)

Good that the Planning Commission has declined to approve the National Assembly speaker's proposal for a palatial house for himself at a cost of more than 80 million rupees. Well he desists now from pursuing the matter or persists to chase his dreams? The speaker holds an honourable position and is expected to conduct himself in an exemplary manner. What to make of the news that the speaker has gone out of the way to "kill" two questions pertaining to the purchase of a Mercedes car, landrovers and other vehicles as well as the details of the huge expenditures incurred on foreign trips of parliamentary delegations. Is it fair or appropriate for him to refuse to respond to questions from MNAs merely because these relate to his office and his person? Does this enhance his standing and stature and of the National Assembly?

Dawn, 30 June 2006

50 prisoners freed in Miramshah

MIRAMSHAH, June 29: Political authorities of North Waziristan released another batch of 50 prisoners from Miramshah jail on Thursday, an official said. Miramshah Assistant Political Agent Iqbal Khattak told Dawn that the administration had set free 50 tribesmen and restored their privileges. He said the tribesmen had been arrested under the collective and territorial responsibility clauses of the Frontier Crimes Regulations. He said the government would release more prisoners to reciprocate the one-month ceasefire announced by militants in the agency.

Dawn, 30 June 2006

Pakistan cuts number of F-16s to be purchased

WASHINGTON, June 29: Pakistan intends to buy 36 F-16 fighter jets from the US and not 75 as originally planned, diplomatic sources told Dawn. The decision has been conveyed to the US government which officially notified the Congress on Wednesday of its intention to sell F-16s to Pakistan. Once the notification is issued, the Congress has 30 days to reject the offer but if it fails to do so, the deal will be considered endorsed

Dawn, 30 June 2006

Editorial: Tackling the parallel judiciary

BY directing the police to arrest those found to be involved in organising a now infamous jirga in district Jacobabad, the Supreme Court has sent a clear message to the feudal and tribal power brokers who are encouraging the growth of a parallel judicial system in the country. Freezing the jirga, which ordered that five minor girls be handed over to the 'aggrieved' party as compensation for a murder, judges of the apex court declared that no one had the right to violate the law by organising jirgas and endorsing the "unIslamic" customs of vani and swara marriages. Earlier, an April 2004 ruling by the Sindh High Court had imposed a province-wide ban on jirga trials. In November 2000, a Peshawar High Court ruling deemed swara to be tyrannical, immoral and contrary to Islamic law. In spite of these rulings by the higher judiciary, village councils or panchayats have continued handing out edicts sanctifying horrific acts of cruelty, particularly against women.