

Daily Times, 1 June 2007

13 killed at political agents Tank home

PESHAWAR: At least 13 people were killed and two others injured on Thursday when suspected Taliban militants attacked the house of Khyber Agency Political Agent Syed Ameeruddin Shah in Kot Jatta village, 15 kilometres west of Tank, police said. Tank police official Gul Mohammad told Daily Times that the militants attacked Shahs house with rockets, hand grenades and assault rifles at around 1am. He said the dead included Shahs brothers, Aurangzeb Shah and Hassamuddin, Pir Irshad, Pir Rafiq Shah, local prayer leader Hafiz Abdul Qadir, Amir Ahmad Mehsud, three Afridi guests and two servants at Shahs home. Official sources said that Shahs brother Pir Atiqur Rehman, who survived the attack, publishes weekly Zarb e Haq from Karachi..

Dawn, 1 June 2007

Five-member bench for petitions on seminar

ISLAMABAD, May 31: A five member special bench of the Supreme Court will commence from Monday hearing on a complaint filed by the government and a contempt of court petition on alleged derogatory remarks made against the government, the military and senior judges during a recent seminar held on the apex court premises. Headed by Justice Mohammad Nawaz Abbasi, the bench will comprise Justice Faqir Mohammad Khokhar, Justice Mian Shakirullah Jan, Justice Tassadduq Hussain Jilani and Justice Saiyed Saeed Ashhad. The special bench will sit at 1pm for four days consecutively after proceedings of a full court hearing the petition of Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry challenging the filing of a reference against him..

The Nation, 1 June 2007

Jamali launches Muttahida Muslim League

KARACHI - Pakistan Muslim League Functional League Head and Spiritual leader of Hurs on Thursday said that there was no sign of holding forthcoming general elections in the country. But present situation resembles with General Zia Regime and there was a possibility that judges may take oaths again similarly as they took oath in Zia regime, he added. He expressed these views, while talking to the reporters after meeting with former Prime Minister Zafarullah Khan Jamali who called him at Kingari House on Thursday. He said, I am hearing the noise of boots and that of left and right; present political situation resembles with the same political situation occurred in Zia regime, when Judges took oath again and there was a possibility judges took oath again. He disclosed that on May 12 he phoned MQM Chief Altaf Hussain and advised him not to hold MQM rally, but MQM chief ignored his advice..

Daily Times, 1 June 2007

Editorial: The army and the people

Speaking to officers at the Jhelum garrison Wednesday, President General Pervez Musharraf raised some very important questions about the relationship between the Pakistan army and the people of Pakistan. He said it was every Pakistanis responsibility to ensure that the sanctity and reverence of national institutions, such as the armed forces, is maintained. He claimed that there was no role of the military in governance and that the armed forces were in the barracks and claims to the contrary were unfortunate. He

also claimed that the media was free in the country despite some incidents where journalists were intimidated in Islamabad and Karachi and some cases of dubious disappearance and even homicide. General Musharraf's claim about media freedom is broadly correct. There is no doubt that the media is not shackled the same way as in Iran and elsewhere in the third world..

Dawn, 1 June 2007

Editorial: This Afghan liability

A PHOTOGRAPH in yesterday's Dawn shows a group of Pakistanis demonstrating against the illegal issuance of national identity cards to a large number of Afghan nationals. For this illegality, the demonstrators held the unscrupulous among the National Database and Registration Authority staff responsible. The anomaly pointed out by the Mohmand Agency protesters highlights just one aspect of the Afghan refugee phenomenon that has been with Pakistan now for nearly three decades; it has larger dimensions, some of them extremely painful for the host nation, especially the contribution the presence of Afghan refugees has made to lawlessness in this country and their share in the arms and drug trades..

Dawn, 2 June 2007

Military top brass backs Musharraf

ISLAMABAD, June 1: Amid growing opposition to his policies, especially his move to suspend Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhary, President Gen Pervez Musharraf received full support from the army at a conference of corps commanders here on Friday. The conference took serious note of the malicious campaign against institutions of the state, launched by vested interests and opportunists who are acting as obstructionist forces to serve their personal interests and agenda even at the cost of flouting the rule of law, a statement issued by the ISPR said on Friday. The statement warned that any attempt by a small minority to obstruct aspirations of a vast majority would only derail the nation from its path of progress and prosperity..

Daily Times, 2 June 2007

Hafsa students attempt to occupy PIMS hostel foiled

ISLAMABAD: The administration of the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences PIMS has suspended five Christian officials including Staff Nursing College Principal Stella Nazir and instructor Fazeela Piara after Muslim nursing students alleged that Christian students had desecrated verses of the holy Quran inscribed on a water cooler in the college. The PIMS administration has closed the nurses hostel for 15 days and deployed security guards and policemen to prevent any untoward incident. The Margalla police station has registered a case against unidentified persons under Section 295B of the Blasphemy Act on the complaint of PIMS Deputy Executive Director Dr Amjad.

The Nation, 2 June 2007

Editorial: Out of touch

THE way the government is reacting to the judicial crisis creates a perception of its being out of touch with reality. A sedition case has been registered against scores of protesting lawyers in Karachi. In Islamabad, attempts were made to disrupt the launch of a scholarly

book on the military's involvement in business. Information Minister Mohammad Ali Durrani has warned newspapers and private TV channels against crossing what he terms the legal limits. The government, it appears, is solely focused on suppressing the symptoms instead of dealing with the malady. It is obviously disturbed over the protestors calling for doffing the uniform. The opposition maintains that by openly identifying himself with the PML and MQM while retaining the office of the COAS, the President has made the army a target of criticism..

Dawn, 2 June 2007

Opinion: Musharraf: winning or losing? (M Waseem)

CURRENT events make interesting reading. President Musharraf has declared that uniform was too close to him to be shed away just like that. The MMA caravan, led by Qazi Hussain Ahmed, has been out on the road. Imran Khan's visit to Karachi has taken an unexpected turn towards his character assassination. The presidential reference in the Supreme Court has been described as the battle between Truth and Falsehood. Which is which? Is the party over? This is the question currently being asked through the length and breadth of Pakistan as well as in the relevant quarters abroad. Speculations about the prospects of President Musharraf to stay in power define the contemporary patterns of alignment and realignment out in the field..

Daily Times, 2 June 2007

Editorial: Descent into nihilism and anarchy

A hundred strong group of terrorists armed with rockets, hand grenades and automatic rifles, assaulted the house of a government official in the Tank district of the North Western Frontier Province NWFP on Thursday and killed 13 men, women and children in an act of Islamic execution. This is another incident inside the settled areas of the province pointing to the diminishing hold of the government and state on its territory. Tank used to be a part of the Dera Ismail Khan DI Khan district, but now exists as an independent district 40 miles from it and 200 miles from Peshawar, the capital of the province. The man whose house was attacked was the political agent of Khyber Agency, Syed Amiruddin Shah, who was not at home..His brothers were cruelly put to death, while one brother, Pir Atiqur Rehman, who lives in Karachi and whose controversial writings could have unleashed the attacks, was not present in the house..

Daily Times, 3 June 2007

Chief justice evokes people power

ABBOTTABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan Iftikhar Chaudhry told tens of thousands of supporters Saturday that the country's people back the struggle for the independence of the judiciary. Justice Chaudhry led a procession from Islamabad to Abbottabad, greeted by roadside protesters chanting Go Musharraf, go. The weight of the crowds periodically halted the motorcade. Witnesses estimated at least 50,000 to 60,000 people gathered along the road to Abbotabad. The CJP's supporters claimed the crowd surpassed 100,000. Official figures were not immediately available. The chief justice a crowd of lawyers and opposition activists in the hill resort that the legal community was not alone. The people of Pakistan are with you. In the eyes of the law all citizens are equals, he said to his supporters after the 100 kilometre journey.

Dawn, 3 June 2007

Channels barred from airing shows on CJ issue

ISLAMABAD, June 2: Enraged by media coverage of the ongoing judicial crisis, the government on Saturday stopped satellite TV channels from telecasting programmes, including live talk shows and discussions, on the issue of the presidential reference against Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry. The Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority sent a carefully drafted letter to the managements of the private TV channels to inform them of the decision to ban TV coverage of the events related to the chief justice. Interestingly, Pemra also issued a press release later in the afternoon regarding the award of licence to DawnNews TV in which it claimed that no ban had been imposed on live coverage of programmes.

Dawn, 3 June 2007

Mosques shouldn't become centre of mischief: Imam: Sharia enforcement by individuals rejected

ISLAMABAD, June 2: Imam of Kaaba Sheikh Abdul Rehman Al-Sudais has observed that mosques should not become a centre of mischief, violence and conflict, adding that the holy places should not be used for demonstrating power. He said he was surprised and shocked to hear about the Lal Masjid episode and hoped that its effects would not spill over to other parts of the country. Talking to newsmen at the Punjab House on Saturday, he said individuals had no right to enforce Sharia in any country, adding that an Islamic state had its own institutions and systems and nobody else had the right to do this.

Daily Times, 3 June 2007

Editorial: Musharraf's message from the GHQ

The Inter Services Public Relations ISPR department of the armed forces has told the media that the 101st meeting of the corps commanders has endorsed the pivotal role of General Pervez Musharraf as the president of Pakistan and chief of the army staff COAS in the ongoing reforms process in the country. The meeting is said to have discussed the current situation in the country with particular reference to the judicial crisis, the killings in Karachi and politicisation of legal matters pending with the Supreme Court and the Supreme Judicial Council. The meeting defined the movement against President Musharraf as a malicious campaign against state institutions aimed at maligning the institutions by vested interests and opportunists who were acting as obstructionist forces to serve their personal interests and agenda even at the cost of flouting the rule of law.

Frontier Post, 3 June 2007

Editorial: Chasing red herring

What has the administration gained from forbidding live media coverage of rallies and live talk shows, if not opening up yet another front of confrontation to add to its own adversities that it already is accumulating on its head in battalions with its own ineptitude and lackadaisicalness. No damaging dent could this restriction secure it to the television coverage of the dysfunctional Chief Justice's Saturday journey to Abbottabad for the bar function, as arguably was its intent. Almost all the television channels reported the event visually in their news bulletins exhaustively. Predictably, they all would cover his similar

next trips too in the same fashion.

Daily Times, 3 June 2007

Opinion: Dynamics of military's growing criticism (Dr HA Rizvi)

If the current civil military confrontation is to be defused, the top commanders should step back from the political domain and address the civilian concerns about their role in other non professional fields Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz has recently castigated activists of the ongoing protest movement for criticising the military. Pakistanis should not speak out against the military because it affects our defence, integrity and prestige. We strongly condemn it. On April 24 and 26, 2007, Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, president of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League PML said that any person using abusive language against the military should be gunned down. The official circles are making such statements to project themselves as the defenders of the military and depict their political adversaries as anti military..

The Nation, 4 June 2007

Statements against army tantamount to conspiracy

ISLAMABAD - Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz on Sunday said any statement against the armed forces would not be allowed or tolerated, as they are the real asset of nation. He said this while talking to the newsmen during a surprise visit to a utility store here at I:10 to check the prices of essential commodities. Prime Minister Aziz said that the statement against the armed forces was tantamount to conspiracy against Pakistan. Earlier, the Prime Minister also chaired a meeting of parliamentarians at the PM House comprising Minister for Information and Broadcasting Muhammad Ali Durrani, Chief Whip in the National Assembly Sardar Nasrullah Khan Dareshak and Minister of State for Finance Omar Ayub Khan..

Daily Times, 4 June 2007

Hafsa students seek action

ISLAMABAD: Thousands of burqa-clad students of Jamia Hafsa on Sunday staged a demonstration in front of Lal Masjid demanding that the government punish Christian students of the College of Nursing, Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences, for alleged desecration of the holy Quran. Addressing the protesters, Hamna Abdullah, the head of the students action committee of Jamia Hafsa, said that the government was not following the teachings of Islam and was promoting obscenity in the name of enlightened moderation. She accused the government of breaking its promise of reconstructing seven mosques in the capital that were demolished because they were built illegally on state land.

Dawn, 4 June 2007

Transmission of two TV channels blocked

LAHORE, June 3: Two TV channels went off air in different parts of the country on Sunday night. The switch-off in case of Geo TV, according to its website, was almost countrywide while Aaj TV blackout was in Lahore and Islamabad. The government has blocked the transmission of the Geo News TV channel across the country due to reasons best known to them, said the portal of the Jang Group of Newspapers. It said that calls

from viewers flooded Geo offices to know why the transmission had suddenly been suspended when Meray Mutabiq programme was on air. Aaj TV offices in Lahore were not aware which programme had offended the authorities..

The News, 4 June 2007

Opinion: Finally becoming a national leader (Kamal Siddiqi)

It has been an eventful week with statements being issued as never seen before. From the governments side, we have been warned against talking too much about the judicial crisis, the judiciary itself and the armed forces. In the midst of all this, a book on the militarys economic interests in the country has been released. By trying to stop the book from being launched and doing it in the most ham handed manner, the government has only ensured that it becomes a best seller. What we need to see is whether this book outsells another English language bestseller In the Line of Fire. Credit goes to the publisher for being brave enough to go ahead with it. In this as well, there are some who see a conspiracy. The media continues to fight battles..

Daily Times, 4 June 2007

EDITORIAL: Is President Musharrafs leverage in Afghanistan increasing?

President General Pervez Musharraf met an Afghan delegation in Islamabad and said that Pakistan and Afghanistan must work together to bring peace to the region and defeat terrorism and extremism. The Afghans he addressed were members of the Pakistan-Afghanistan jirga commission which is here to discuss the coming Joint Grand Jirga in August to remove misunderstandings between the two countries. The Afghan commission is headed by Pir Syed Ahmad Gilani, representative of a family that Pakistan didn't like too much during the 1979 Afghan war against the Soviet Union. President Musharraf has consented to address the next joint grand jirga in Kabul in August. He referred to the friendly meeting he had with his counterpart President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan in Ankara although a week before the Ankara meeting he had severely criticised the Afghan president..

The Nation, 4 June 2007

Editorial: Unquestionable truths

ADDRESSING the Abbottabad Bar Association on the subject of preservation of human rights on Saturday after trudging a 100 mile journey from Islamabad in about 14 hours as the crowd of people supporting the cause of the independence of judiciary kept growing on the way, Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry talked of certain truths, which are considered unquestionable prerequisites to a democratic dispensation in the world today. The fundamental rights of the people like security of life and property, equality of all in the eyes of law, freedom of expression and free movement were guaranteed under the Constitution and it is the basic responsibility of the courts, especially the superior judiciary, to protect them, he told about 25,000 lawyers and opposition workers, who had gathered together to listen to him. The Chief Justice of the Peshawar High Court and several other judges were also present on the occasion. To substantiate his points he referred to verses of the Holy Quran.

Dawn, 5 June 2007

Sweeping curbs on media: 'Amended ordinance empowers Pemra to seal premises, seize equipment' Protests by journalists, rights activists

ISLAMABAD, June 4: President Pervez Musharraf on Monday imposed fresh curbs on the electronic media in the second such move within three days, sparking protests from journalists, politicians and lawyers. The Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority Amendment Ordinance 2007, issued just two days before the commencement of a National Assembly session, empowers the Pemra to take action on its own against television channels which violated rules. The move virtually undoes some of the major provisions of a law passed by parliament three months ago after a two year debate and consultations with the stakeholders. The ordinance authorises the Pemra to confiscate the equipment of broadcasters and seal the premises without consulting a council of complaints.

Daily Times, 5 June 2007

President for strict ban on arms display

ISLAMABAD: President General Pervez Musharraf has directed the four provincial chief ministers and bosses of law enforcement agencies to fully enforce the ban on public display of weapons. The president also directed the NWFP government and authorities concerned to locate and block illegal FM radio stations in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas FATA. He gave these instructions while chairing the 10th meeting of the National Security Council here on Monday at the NSC Headquarters in the Cabinet Division building. Gen Musharraf also expressed concern over the recent surge in suicide attacks, extremism and militancy and an hindered movement of militants to settled areas..

The Nation, 5 June 2007

Action possible against mosque admn: President

ISLAMABAD President General Pervez Musharraf Monday said a precise shock action is possible against Lal Masjid administration in case it continue to become a problem while ensuring writ of the government. Ultimately, there can be a precise shock action, what the president said while responding to a question about Jamia Hafsa here at Fifth Altaf Gauhar Memorial Lecture organised by Altaf Gauhar Foundation at Prime Ministers Secretariat. Musharraf ruled out the possibility of his direct dialogue with the Lal Masjid administration saying as to why should we give importance to an individual at such level.

The News, 5 June 2007

Opinion: Respecting the military and the media (Dr Adil Najam)

It is both sad and dangerous when a society begins to loose respect for its military. It is sad because it implies the breakdown of the social contract between soldier and citizen. This contract is one amongst the many that are necessary for the cohesion of the nation state. When it works, it is based on bonds of common identity and mutual respect. This respect is necessary if it is to ultimately translate into the willingness of the former to lay down his life, when needed, for the latter. The breakdown of this primal social contract is dangerous because this is nearly always a sign that much else in society has already broken and a harbinger of more societal fissures to come. The clampdown of media freedoms by the state is also a sad and dangerous thing. And for much the same reasons.

Media freedom, after all, is a representation of and in some ways a custodian of citizen freedoms. contracts..

Dawn, 5 June 2007

Editorial: Kaaba imams advice

ARE the Lal Masjid clerics listening? On Saturday, the imam of Kaaba, Sheikh Abdul Rahman al Sudais, said some truths that should be taken note of not just by the fanatics running the bizarre Lal Masjid show but by all those waging private jihad on their own people. Even though he was talking in reference to the Lal Masjid stand off, the imams words of advice and caution apply to all those who have made a cruel joke of jihad and all noble Islamic concepts. Talking to newsmen at the Punjab House in Islamabad, Sheikh Sudais said that mosques should not become centres of mischief, violence and conflict. He added that individuals could not arrogate to themselves the right to enforce Sharia, because that was the responsibility of the state. Unfortunately, the kind of thinking the Lal Masjid epitomises has been with us for long, accentuated by the fallout of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Daily Times, 5 June 2007

Editorial: Gagging the media will hurt Musharraf

The government moved on Sunday to block the transmission of two TV channels in major cities of the country. But the Pakistan Media Regulatory Authority PEMRA said it had nothing to do with the action. However, the governments hand was shown by the prime minister, Mr Shaukat Aziz, in Islamabad who said that criticising the Pakistan army would not be allowed or tolerated since the army was the real asset of the nation. He added that statements against the army were tantamount to conspiracy against Pakistan. The prime minister also defended the action of Pemra which Pemra had denied by saying that Pemra had defined the law and proper code of conduct for the media. He kept praising the army, referring selectively to its service to the people, especially its rescue operations during the October 8 earthquake in Azad Kashmir..

Daily Times, 6 June 2007

Pakistanis will resist martial law: Ahsan

ISLAMABAD: The people of Pakistan will resist any move to impose martial law in the country again, Barrister Aitzaz Ahsan, lead counsel of Chief Justice of Pakistan CJP Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, said during the hearing of a constitutional petition by the CJP against the presidential reference against him. Ahsan made the remark when lawyer Abdul Mujeeb Pirzada requested the full court to restore CJP Chaudhry for an interim period to quell the present unrest in the country that may lead to the imposition of martial law again by General Pervez Musharraf..

Dawn, 6 June 2007

Clampdown on media challenged

ISLAMABAD, June 5: A new ordinance imposing sweeping curbs on the electronic media was challenged in the Supreme Court here on Tuesday and the petition requested the court to declare it against the fundamental rights guaranteed in the Constitution. Similar petitions challenging the ordinance were also filed in the Lahore

High Court and Sindh High Court. President Gen Pervez Musharraf on Monday promulgated the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority Amendment Ordinance 2007, empowering the authority to take action on its own against television channels, confiscate equipment of broadcasters and seal the premises without consulting a council of complaints.

Dawn, 6 June 2007

Third partys role rejected: Differences with Afghanistan

KABUL, June 5: Pakistan on Tuesday rejected the idea of third party mediation to resolve its differences with Afghanistan. We do not need an external umpire to tell us what to do, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz told a joint press conference with Afghan President Hamid Karzai. He said both the countries were sovereign and had the ability to resolve their problems themselves. An official told Dawn that Mr Karzai had floated the idea during his meeting with Mr Aziz. He had also called for giving representation to women in the joint jirga commission..

Indian Express, 6 June 2007

Opinion: Is print media next in line? (Murtaza Razvi)

Wednesday, June 06: As the axe falls on live talk shows and news analyses on TV, the mood in the street remains defiant. The army top brass has pledged support to Musharraf. But is that enough to insulate the general from the consequences of his unpopular moves, is the question in Pakistan. Local live broadcasts are dead, long live the foreign media is the buzz in Pakistan. With the gagging orders swiftly implemented against the electronic media through a presidential ordinance on Monday, out goes the only thing for which the Musharraf regime could be credited.. Whats next on the embattled generals agenda, the print media?

Daily Times, 6 June 2007

Editorial: Is govts conquest of the media in the public interest?

By curbing the electronic media through an ordinance on Monday, President General Pervez Musharraf has put an end to an era that he ushered in himself, that of free reporting and free discussion...No one in the world supports this backsliding on the part of President Musharraf. Within the ruling party, there is turmoil which has not been put down even by swearing the cabinet to silence, as reported by a vice president of the PML, Mr Kabir Wasti, in a TV interview which was shut down by PEMRA while swearing it had nothing to do with it. Also shut down was a discussion on the book Military Inc authored by Ayesha Siddiqa in which the army spokesman ironically defended his case rather well..

Dawn, 6 June 2007

Editorial: Law of the militants

THE real issues can be lost in the maelstrom of politics. Big names and their utterances naturally dominate the headlines but sometimes the smaller print is of greater import in terms of where the country is headed. Take, for instance, what is happening in Bara in Khyber Agency and in Darra Adamkhel in Frontier Region FR, Kohat, due south of the NWFP capital. In Bara, which nudges Peshawar, a woman and three men were executed

on Monday on charges of adultery by order of a committee, not a court of law. Vigilantes, acting on a tip-off, arrested the four and hauled them up before a jirga which decreed that they should be mowed down with kalashnikovs. The quartet was luckier than the two men and a woman who were stoned to within an inch of their lives on similar charges in Khyber Agency in March, and were finally put to death in a hail of gunfire..

Daily Times, 7 June 2007

Opposition says 1,200 supporters detained

ISLAMABAD: The authorities have detained more than 1,200 opposition party activists in a bid to thwart protests against the government, opposition party officials said on Wednesday. Our workers are being detained in all over Punjab, said Ahsan Iqbal, a leader of the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz. The party and its opposition allies plan a day of protests in Punjab on Thursday in support of suspended Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry and the media, which is facing increasing government curbs. Iqbal said more than 550 workers had been detained while the Pakistan Peoples Party PPP and the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) together reported 675 arrests. The government is acting like a mad elephant, said Nazir Dhoki, a PPP spokesman..

Dawn, 7 June 2007

Ramday asks why judges who quit become icons

ISLAMABAD, June 6: Justice Khalilur Rehman Ramday, heading a 13 member larger bench hearing identical petitions challenging a reference against Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry, on Wednesday asked a senior counsel to intervene and ponder why judges who quit the judiciary got warm acceptance by the people as well as the bar. You being an elderly figure and being our legal asset command a lot of respect and privileges from everyone. Therefore, you should think over about this aspect of the situation, Justice Ramday observed, addressing Advocate Sharifuddin Pirzada. Being a serious matter, this could not be left to mere arguments from both sides, the judge observed..

Daily Times, 7 June 2007

Baloch leader calls for two-day nationwide strike

QUETTA: Mahmood Khan Achakzai, president of the Pakistan Oppressed Nations Movement, on Wednesday called for all political parties, civil society, lawyers and journalists to come together to steer the country out of the worst crisis in its history by observing a complete two-day nationwide strike. Addressing a news conference here, Achakzai said Pakistan was going through the most critical period of its history due to the wrong policies of military rulers and the interference of intelligence agencies in internal and external affairs of state. To help Pakistan overcome the worst crisis in history, it was important for all political parties, journalists, lawyers and members of civil society to unite and come out onto the roads in protest, he said..

The Nation, 7 June 2007

Editorial: Crackdown in Punjab

WHILE the judicial crisis is nowhere near resolution, the media persons have also initiated protests against the government's wrong policies. This has understandably added

to the administration's already considerable woes. Instead of reacting coolly and seeking to resolve the outstanding issues through talks, Punjab administration clamped down on the opposition on Tuesday, arresting hundreds of political workers from all over the province. In cases the police nabbed the relatives of the activists who evaded arrests. This is likely to add to the prevailing anti government sentiment.

Daily Times, 7 June 2007

Editorial: Time to step back from the precipice

After promulgating a draconian anti-press law, the government has gone and registered cases against 200 journalists under Section 144 for protesting against it. The Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority Amendment Ordinance 2007 that gave PEMRA the authority to close down any TV channels without reference to a review mechanism has been challenged at the Supreme Court and the Sindh High Court under Article 19 of the Constitution, protecting freedom of expression. The action taken by the government is excessive and is similar to actions taken against freedom of expression in the past that did not bode well for the government and Pakistan..

Dawn, 7 June 2007

Opinion: The May 12 carnage and afterwards (RH Ghani)

KARACHI is not new to civil strife and violence. Decades ago, scores died in consecutive hours of shooting at Sohrab Goth while the law enforcement agencies were bystanders. Since then political activists have shed inter-party and intra-party blood in chronic conflict. No go areas have been forcibly established and forcibly demolished. Rangers became part of the city landscape. APCs trundled down streets unremarked. Sectarianism turned into mass murder. And yet the May 12 carnage in which less than 50 people died has Karachi and the rest of the country which hardly blanched at Karachi's previous wounds benumbed. Why?

Daily Times, 8 June 2007

PM halts enforcement of PEMRA Ordinance

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz on Thursday ordered an immediate halt to implementation of the recently amended Pakistan Electronic Media Regulation Authority PEMRA Ordinance and formed a six-member committee to review the amendments. The committee will consist of three members from media organisations - one each from the Pakistan Broadcasters Association PBA, All Pakistan Newspapers Society APNS and Council of Pakistani Newspaper Editors - and three government officials, from PEMRA and the information and law ministries. The amended PEMRA Ordinance gives the regulator new powers to seal the premises or confiscate the equipment of broadcasters and suspend their licences..

Dawn, 8 June 2007

EU, EC express concern over media curbs

ISLAMABAD, June 7: The European Union EU and the European Commission EC have expressed their concern over the present state of media freedom and rising cases of intimidation of journalists in Pakistan. In a statement here on Thursday, the heads of the missions of the EU and the EC in Islamabad said they were concerned over recent

setbacks with regard to media freedom in particular reports about blocked transmissions of licensed cable TV stations and about cases of intimidation of journalists. They said: These developments are of particular concern in view of the upcoming general elections..

The Nation, 8 June 2007

Editorial: The treasurys silence

The President is not too pleased with the members of the ruling coalition these days. He expressed his resentment at a lunch hosted by the Prime Minister on Wednesday. Present were over 150 treasury MNAs, Ministers and some Senators. The Presidents ire was directed towards the timid manner in which his political allies had responded to the present crisis. Out of what he called 1000s of allies, he said he could not see even ten coming out in his support. You should hold rallies, go to TV talk shows, hold press conferences, make hue and cry and defend the government, he said. Though usually construed to be more loyal than the king, it is natural for the ruling party legislators to be wary of defending the government at this particular point in time. .

Dawn, 8 June 2007

Opinion: Pakistan at ASEM & G-8 (Shamshad Ahmad)

PAKISTAN is finally on board two important global dialogue processes, namely ASEM (Asia and Europe Meeting) and G8 ministerial meetings (not G-8 summit) but with what credentials. We have been trying for a berth on both these processes for years, and have now been accepted aboard perhaps only in the context of our new identity as the ground zero of terrorism and our crucial outreach in the context of the ongoing Afghan turmoil. Indias involvement with both processes, on the other hand, is with impeccable, globally acknowledged credentials and clout as a stabilising factor and as worlds largest democracy and a major emerging economic power.

Daily Times, 8 June 2007

Editorial: Musharraf and PML: stresses of cohabitation

President General Pervez Musharraf is greatly dissatisfied with the PMLQ that he has promoted and sheltered against all kinds of shocks. At a lunch on Wednesday attended by a 150 strong PML elite, he blasted members of the party in his characteristic unbuttoned fashion and accused them of leaving him in the lurch when he needed their support. All the stresses of an incompatible cohabitation came out during the meeting. He did not confine himself to the dereliction of the ruling party after the March 9 judicial crisis; he accused the party of not supporting him right after the big decision he took after 9/11 to put Pakistan on a new policy track..

The News, 8 June 2007

Editorial: One-man rule

The dangers of one-man rule are becoming increasingly evident with every passing day. The problem with such a dispensation is that the system of checks and balances, which is an inherent part of any free and fully functional democracy, is either absent or not able to operate in a manner that furthers the public good/interest. Further, even if parliament is there, it is usually ridden roughshod over or bypassed, as happened in the promulgation of a presidential ordinance early this week making several changes to the laws that

regulate the electronic media in the country the implementation of the new ordinance, however, has now been suspended pending a review by a government-media committee..

Daily Times, 9 June 2007

Good news soon, says Musharraf

ISLAMABAD: President General Pervez Musharraf said on Friday the people would soon hear good news regarding the current judicial and political crises and asked the ruling Pakistan Muslim League PML to concentrate on the forthcoming general elections. Musharraf said this to parliamentarians and federal ministers during separate meetings at his Parliament House chamber. The prevailing judicial and political crises in the country will be resolved in a few days and the parliamentarians and PML workers should concentrate on the forthcoming general elections, Musharraf said, adding, The ongoing drama will end itself very soon and there is nothing to worry about it. The president told the parliamentarians that the PML and its allies should forge unity and shun their petty political differences before the polls..

Dawn, 9 June 2007

Govt blocks media curbs debate

ISLAMABAD, June 8: The government used its numerical superiority in the National Assembly on Friday to block a debate on new media curbs, triggering an opposition protest walkout, although it said it did not mean to curtail press freedom. The opposition parties had sought the debate on the restrictions and higher penalties ordered for the private electronic media through a presidential ordinance and instructions issued by the Pakistan Electronic Media Regularity Authority Pemra as well as alleged harassment of journalists mainly for their coverage of events relating to the prevailing judicial crisis in the country. Some opposition members did use a short debate on the admissibility of the motion to denounce the government for what they called draconian restrictions aimed to block the truth from reaching the people before the ruling coalition got the motion rejected in a head count by 76 votes to 50 in the 342 member house..

The Nation, 9 June 2007

Editorial: Agencies role

THE three affidavits by the Chief of Staff to the President and heads of two security agencies filed before the SC bench hearing the CJs petition are likely to further complicate the judicial crisis. Some of the positions taken in the CJs affidavit have been challenged and serious charges levelled against him. While one of the counsel of Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry has dismissed them as a pack of lies, the CJ will have to answer them. For whatever its worth, the government has put before the court a complete chargesheet against the CJ. With the attention of millions of people riveted on the judicial crisis, many would anxiously wait for a reply from him. What would baffle many is the role of agencies in the affair. Interestingly, while the MI and IB have come all out in support of the presidential reference, the ISI has kept itself out of the dispute..

Dawn, 9 June 2007

Editorial: PML-Q under fire

IN quick succession, President Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz have

expressed their displeasure at the PML Q parliamentarians indifference to the present political turmoil and regretted that most of them had not considered it their duty to support the government in its hour of crisis. Addressing a meeting of the ruling coalitions parliamentary group on Wednesday, the president said that the PML Q men always left him in the lurch in moments of crisis, even though there were 1,000 of them. Whether it was the A. Q. Khan case, the death of Akbar Bugti or the current judicial crisis, I see the party nowhere. The country, he said, would be in deep trouble if the present system came to an end..

Indian Express, 9 June 2007

Opinion: They the people (Shekhar Gupta)

Of the many pages from my reporting years scrapbook, which I really treasure, several have a Pakistan connection. Two stand out, in a week of such significant political events there that even Musharraf has shed his bluster and is telling you how the end of his regime may be bad for you. The first was on my second visit to Pakistan, in the summer of 1986 when Benazir Bhutto returned from exile to a Pakistan firmly under Zias control. She had shown more courage than she has shown lately, in landing in Lahore and challenging the strongest Pakistani dictatorship ever, also fully supported by America, China and Saudi Arabia as their then stalwart ally in the first, but virtuous Afghan jihad against the Soviets. She showed courage, because she had no idea what kind of reception she would get, either from Zia or her own then moribund party..

Daily Times, 9 June 2007

Editorial: Do we really need military security?

In a seminar held in Islamabad by the Jamaat i Islamis Institute of Policy Studies on Thursday, important speakers, including a foreign secretary and an ex ISI chief, thought that the Muslim states should urgently evolve a collective security system. It was observed that in the region of the Gulf internal dissent had allowed external intervention to protect their security assets, which was undesirable. Complaints were registered also about the neo colonial phase in international affairs. The most desirable goal for the community of Muslim nations all over the world is unity of political and military policy. But when we find the Islamic world at sixes and sevens, we become impatient and speak harshly of the rulers in the Islamic world and put on them all the responsibility for the asymmetric relationships that exist because of history and geopolitics..

Dawn, 10 June 2007

Govt retreats on media law

ISLAMABAD, June 9: President Gen Pervez Musharraf on Saturday ordered the authorities to withdraw the controversial Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority Pemra Amendment Ordinance. The president gave the order after a meeting with a delegation of the Pakistan Broadcasters Association PBA. The order made no mention of the prohibition on live coverage of the engagements of the chief justice and on talk shows dealing with the presidential reference. The president assured the delegation that the government was a votary of media freedom. Licences to private TV channels have been given by my government.

The Nation, 10 June 2007

Editorial: Election year's budget

ELECTORAL cycles can be discerned from within fiscal spending patterns throughout the world's democracies. A bit of tough love earlier on in the tenure and a larger measure of relief towards the end; for purposes of political expediency, if nothing else. Riddled with a history of truncated tenures for democratic regimes, we don't have much of a data set to glean this generalisation from. No democratically elected government has drafted a budget in an election year; they don't stay around long enough. The only exception being Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's 1977 budget. The democratic credentials of this government are dubious. We have a rubber stamp parliament and even if it were empowered, the electoral process that it came from was far from ideal. Still, for what it is worth, this government is completing its tenure and the incumbents are going to be contesting the upcoming election.

Daily Times, 10 June 2007

Opinion: Not an imaginary crisis (Dr HA Rizvi)

The government is working on a mistaken assumption that the ongoing protest is rootless and the media is keeping it alive by disproportionate projection. As a matter of fact, the protest movement enjoys widespread support in all provinces. President General Pervez Musharraf's response to the ongoing protests is typical of an authoritarian military ruler who is led to believe that the country never had anyone as good as him and that the whole nation is indebted to his leadership and policies. Ayub Khan and Zia-ul Haq in Pakistan, and several other military rulers elsewhere have faced this dilemma when confronting widespread protest. They were unable to understand the reasons behind the agitation. These rulers and their associates often question the legitimacy of protest by describing it as baseless and an attempt by a self-serving minority to misguide the people..

Daily Times, 10 June 2007

Opinion: Democracy and Pakistan (Benazir Bhutto)

The regime argues that Pakistani politicians are corrupt and incompetent. The Pakistani public doesn't think so. They view the politically motivated corruption charges as an attempt to divert attention from the institutionalised corruption of the military. For the first time in Pakistan's history, the number of religious based parties is rising, and suicide bombings are becoming a common occurrence of daily life. Extremists have expanded their presence beyond the tribal areas into more settled areas like Islamabad, Karachi and Tank. More militias, hiding under the guise of madrassas Islamic religious schools, have been established since 9/11. Now, armed vigilantes are kidnapping police officials at gunpoint in the heart of the country's capital, barely a mile from the country's Supreme Court and Parliament buildings..

Daily Times, 11 June 2007

Fresh reference against chief justice ready

ISLAMABAD: The government has prepared a new reference against Chief Justice of Pakistan Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, Law Minister Wasi Zafar said on Sunday. A new reference is ready against the chief justice and it will be filed at an appropriate time if needed, the minister said in a statement. The new reference has been prepared on the basis

of the CJPs activities since the filing of the previous reference against him on March 9, and three affidavits submitted by government officials in the Supreme Court. Various lawyers are being consulted on the new reference, Mr Zafar said..

The News, 11 June 2007

Opinion: Deal or no deal (WS Hasan)

The wider perception is that a deal is in the offing much of it of course is disinformation generated by the regime. PPP does not close doors on dialogue. Such dialogue has taken place several times since 1999 but not resulted in any agreement. PPP is not interested in a deal but in a transition to democracy. An understanding only on cases could have taken place several times since 1999. PPPs leadership sacrificed and suffered for national interest of restoring democracy. Now the situation has changed. Our options have increased manifold while the regimes have minimised. Two years ago no western country was willing to listen to anything against General Musharraf. Now the international media is writing that he will have to win over Ms Benazir Bhutto for political support since she is the only federal leader that has the continuing charisma to rally the Pakistani people around and ignite in them their lost spirit for survival..

The Nation, 11 June 2007

Editorial: How free is media?

WHILE one would welcome the withdrawal of PEMRA Amendment Ordinance, one cannot help questioning the rationale of its promulgation in the first instance. The fact probably is that it was designed as a subtle move to tame both the print and electronic media by creating the fear that they have to deal extra cautiously with issues the government regarded as sensitive to avoid ruffling its feathers. Even as it has been withdrawn that spectre remains looming on the horizon and the government's boast of having made the media the most free in the countrys history has been badly exposed. Otherwise, the broadcasters could have been asked to frame a code of ethics without its imposition..

Indian Express, 11 June 2007

Nawaz Sharif on the Record: Vajpayee thought I had stabbed him in the back..

..How does the picture look to you back home in Pakistan? Thats very disturbing. Pakistan, unfortunately, is not in good hands. Its not in good shape. Musharraf is mishandling Pakistan. And one by one, he is hitting at the very roots of the country. For example, he subverted the Constitution, abrogated the Constitution, and staged a coup against my government, which was a democratically elected government with two thirds majority. It was the first time in the history of Pakistan that any single party got a two thirds vote in the Parliament..

Daily Times, 11 June 2007

EDITORIAL: Why has the budget been unanimously rejected?

In routine Pakistani d. j vu, the opposition boycotted the budget session of the National Assembly on Saturday and treated the PML government to bitter vituperations on the electronic media outside the parliament. Panning to the people at large, the TV channels found the man in the street distressed and angry. And on business channels equipped with

acceptable professional expertise for the first time, the captains of industry and commerce could only defend the budget at the risk of becoming unpopular. How unfortunate. The budget is the biggest ever at nearly two trillion rupees; the development outlay is equally the biggest ever at half a trillion. Salaries of state employees and pensions of retired employees have been raised for the first time at a percentage that beats the declared inflation figures. The economy has grown at over 7 percent of the GDP and is pegged at the same growth in 2007-08.

Daily Times, 12 June 2007

Hearing on merits of CJs petition begins

ISLAMABAD, June 11: The Supreme Court on Monday deferred its ruling on the maintainability of a petition filed by Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry against the presidential reference he faces, but commenced regular hearings on his plea. Justice Khalilur Rehman Ramday, who heads the 13 member larger bench seized with the politically volatile case, announced that the question of maintainability of the petition, together with its merits, would be decided later and other identical petitions would be judged in the light of the outcome of the CJs case. Outside the courtroom, lawyers construed the decision of initiating regular hearings on the merits of the CJs case as accepting the maintainability of Justice Chaudhry's petition which also questions composition of the Supreme Judicial Council and its competence to inquire into his conduct..

Daily Times, 12 June 2007

US reaching a 'decision point' on Pakistan

WASHINGTON: The Bush administration is reaching a decision point on Pakistan as to whether it will continue to support Gen Musharraf or pull the rug from under his feet, according to a commentary published in the Wall Street Journal on Monday. Max Brot, senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, writes that Pakistan may be reaching a crisis point. The choice is made more difficult in the case of Pakistan because, unlike the Philippines or South Korea, it possesses nuclear weapons. Our ultimate nightmare is for those weapons to fall into the hands of Osama Bin Ladens allies. But that is extremely unlikely. The MMA won only 12 percent of the seats in the legislative assembly in 2002, even though Musharraf hindered more secular parties from competing. The PPP and the PML N have their own shortcomings including corruption and a history of dealings with Islamic radicals..

Dawn, 12 June 2007

Opposition invited to work out rules for fair polls

ISLAMABAD, June 11: Pakistan Muslim League president Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain has reiterated governments offer to the opposition to negotiate an arrangement for holding free and fair elections and for setting up an interim government of national consensus. He was talking to newsmen during a meeting with a media delegation from Sindh at his residence on Monday. PML Secretary General Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed was also present. The PML chief regretted that the opposition had refused to give three names for the new Chief Election Commissioner and instead asked for changes in election commission rules which required a constitutional amendment. He said the

opposition should join hands with the government to set rules for free, fair and transparent elections..

The Nation, 12 June 2007

Pak, Iran, India pipeline pact likely by July

New Delhi - India, Iran and Pakistan are likely to sign an agreement for a 7.4 billion dollar gas pipeline by July amid differences over pricing and objections by the United States, a top official said Monday. India and Pakistan will have a meeting shortly to sort out issues on transportation tariff and transit fee, Petroleum Secretary M S Srinivasan was quoted as saying by the Press Trust of India. The official said an agreement will be signed after the meeting with Pakistan officials in late June or early July. The 2,600 kilometre pipeline from Irans giant South Pars gas field will initially carry around 60 million standard cubic metres per day of gas..

Daily Times, 12 June 2007

Editorial: New references: piling folly upon folly

After getting burned by the first reference filed against the chief justice of Pakistan on March 9, the government is now readying itself to file more references against the same chief justice and four more senior judges of the Supreme Court. The new references against Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry will relate to his activities since March 9, on which a large segment of Pakistans population has already expressed its opinion. The new references are actually a threat because the exact words of the federal law minister, Mr Wasi Zafar, include the phrase to be filed at an appropriate time, if needed. How else can one interpret this message from the law minister but as an attempt to keep the indicted chief justice under pressure and scare off the judges now hearing the case against the reference at the Supreme Court

Dawn, 12 June 2007

Opinion: Being uncomfortable with free media (KJ Khan)

PAKISTAN has come a long way since the days of General Zia when newspapers were subject to extensive censorship. Entire pages of newspapers went blank owing to censorship. Since then, no government has attempted to censor the press, not at least the way General Zia did. That, however, does not mean that the press has had complete and unrestrained freedom to publish whatever was deemed appropriate. All governments, without exception, have been uncomfortable with a free press. At times efforts have been made by governments, both elected or otherwise, to overawe or bribe journalists in order to restrain them from printing news items considered damaging by the government. It is a tribute to our journalists that they have resisted all such attempts. Thus, the freedom of press that we enjoy now is hard-earned and not bestowed by any government..

Daily Times, 13 June 2007

Musharraf pledged to shed uniform: US

WASHINGTON: The US State Department says General Pervez Musharraf has pledged to take off his uniform if he is to continue in political life and the US takes him at his word. Answering a question on Monday, spokesman Sean McCormack said, Youve mentioned the uniform issue. I know that he has pledged to make that choice and to if he

continues in political life, to put aside the uniform. And we take him at his word at that and we would expect him to follow through on his commitments. Asked if the US would condition its aid to Pakistan on democratic reform, the spokesman answered, The elections should be free, fair and transparent. They should meet international standards. Those are things, I think, that everybody can support. But in terms of the US government assistance to the Pakistani government, it is done with because it is in our national interest to do so..

Dawn, 13 June 2007

Ramday questions sending of judge on forced leave

ISLAMABAD, June 12: Justice Khalilur Rehman Ramday, heading a 13-member larger bench of the Supreme Court hearing petitions challenging a presidential reference against Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry, on Tuesday hinted at devising a law by interpreting carefully the judges compulsory leave order under which superior court judges could be sent on forced leave. Where is the security of tenure of a judge if he is to be sent home just on a two liner notification by misusing Presidential Order 27 of 1970, Justice Ramday observed. At the same time, Justice Ramday observed the court also had to keep in mind a situation where there was a genuine reason to purge a judge from the judiciary and proceedings on a reference against the judge were going on for months..

The News, 13 June 2007

Editorial: Round one to CJ

While the Supreme Court on Monday deferred its ruling on the maintainability of a petition filed by Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry against the presidential reference he faces, it nonetheless commenced regular hearings on his plea. Justice Khalilur Rehman Ramday, who heads the 13 member larger bench that is hearing the case, said that the question of maintainability of the petition, together with its merits, would be decided later and other similar petitions judged in light of the outcome of the chief justices case. However, for all intents and purposes, the fact that the Supreme Court already began regular hearings on the chief justices constitutional petition questioning the composition of the Supreme Judicial Council and its competence to probe his conduct is a moral victory of sorts for the chief justice.

The Hindu, 13 June 2007

Editorial: Musharraf's retreat

President Pervez Musharraf's decision to withdraw a draconian ordinance to regulate television broadcasts must be credited to a spirited fightback by Pakistans media community and civil society. The ordinance, which gave the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority sweeping powers to seize equipment, seal premises, and revoke the operating licence of private television channels, was outrageous. The beleaguered Pakistan leader wanted to black out coverage of anti government protests that began three months ago with his action to remove Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhary. He seemed to believe that the rapid spread of the agitation was the work of the news media, especially television. The countrys private television news channels have kept the nation riveted with live coverage of the protests, especially of Mr. Chaudharys marathon road journeys

that have turned into a show of people power against military rule.

Daily Times, 13 June 2007

Editorial: Old and new anchors for General Musharraf

On the eve of the latest visit to Islamabad of the US Assistant Secretary of State, Richard Boucher, the Foreign Office in Islamabad has tried to discredit rumours that a goodbye message from Washington is on the way. Pakistani reporters usually attribute American dissatisfaction with President General Pervez Musharraf to his failure to crush the Taliban and Al Qaeda style terrorism in Pakistan, but news from Washington now seems to contain a different slant. Despite the rebuttal from Islamabad, the State Department cannot altogether ignore a letter sent to it by members of the Democratic and Republican parties, including the heads of foreign affairs-related committees in Congress and Senate, regarding Pakistan's judicial crisis. Instead of focusing on the Taliban and Al Qaeda themes, the letter asks the Bush administration to intervene for the sake of democracy in Pakistan.

The Nation, 13 June 2007

Editorial: Pressure building up

SINCE the judicial crisis erupted in the country on March 9, President Musharraf's style of governance has come under greater scrutiny of the US and international media and political circles. The general thrust of comments has been call for the restoration of a full-fledged democratic system and concern at the spiral of civil unrest and harshly suppressed protest, to quote the words used by Members of the Republican and Democratic parties in Congress and Senate in a letter addressed to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. The Bush administration, it would appear, also see the situation from the same perspective, though continuing to appreciate Pakistan's efforts under the President to fight extremism and terrorism, the centrepiece of its present foreign policy.

Dawn, 14 June 2007

US pressuring Musharraf to hold fair polls: Boucher

ISLAMABAD, June 13: Visiting US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher on Wednesday met a cross section of the Pakistani politicians and assured them that the US was pressing Gen Pervez Musharraf to hold free and fair elections in the country, sources told Dawn. Talking to a gathering at a reception hosted for the leaders of mainstream political parties at the residence of acting US Ambassador Peter Bodde here, Mr Boucher said he had met the chief election commissioner earlier in the day and would examine the fresh voters list prepared by the Election Commission of Pakistan on Thursday. According to the sources, Mr Boucher said the US believed that a free and vibrant media was a prerequisite for free and fair elections in Pakistan..

Daily Times, 14 June 2007

Musharraf should call APC: Mushahid

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League PML Secretary General Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed on Wednesday outlined a three point agenda to strengthen democracy in the country, while urging the opposition to cooperate with the government in this regard ahead of the general elections. Speaking during the ongoing Senate debate on the 2007-8

national budget, Mushahid proposed: the convening by General Pervez Musharraf of an All Parties Conference to discuss the forthcoming polls; the establishment of an independent Election Commission; and agreed consensus with opposition parties regarding the grules of engagement to ensure free and fair elections..

Dawn, 14 June 2007

Council records presented to Supreme Court

ISLAMABAD, June 13: The Supreme Judicial Council on Wednesday surrendered its records relating to the presidential reference against Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry to the Supreme Court after the court overruled the government lawyers plea that the record was protected. Justice Khalilur Rehman Ramday, who heads the 13 member larger bench of the court hearing the chief justices challenge to the reference, told lawyer Ahmad Raza Qasuri that nothing is protected from the Supreme Court. The records were presented to the bench by SJC's secretary when Barrister Aitzaz Ahsan, fighting the case of the chief justice, informed that at the back of the paper bearing the councils March 10 summons, Justice Chaudhry had written a note about his detention inside his official residence and sought the help of brother judges..

The Nation, 14 June 2007

Opinion: Will judiciary seize the moment? (A Ahmad)

At no time in the countrys history was judiciary presented such an opportunity to regain its prestige that it has lost over decades by decisions that favoured usurpers and by generally siding with a predatory ruling elite. The verdicts that legitimised military rulers not only derailed democracy but also led to the reduction of the courts' own authority. Both civil and military rulers subsequently took actions to further turn the judiciary into a handmaiden. Civilian rulers packed courts, appointed confidants to key positions and sidelined independent judges. Two military rulers required judges to take fresh oath under PCO to get rid of those considered meddlesome or unreliable. Those in power wanted docile courts to be able to give free play to their authoritarian tendencies. The nexus between the obliging judges and rulers allowed the later to violate the constitution and break laws with impunity.

Daily Times, 14 June 2007

Editorial: In the whirlpool of opposition politics

The former prime minister and PMLN chief, Nawaz Sharif, has joined hands with Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Imran Khan to bring the Muttahida Qaumi Movement MQM leader Altaf Hussain back to Pakistan and compel him to face the criminal cases pending against him for terrorism. The MQM has responded by filing a reference against Mr Khan in the National Assembly Secretariat asking for his ouster from parliament under the piety Articles 62 and 63 of the Constitution, which bar a person who has committed adultery from being a member of parliament. The speaker of the National Assembly will send the reference to the Election Commission within a month, which is then bound to give its verdict expeditiously. The situation is bristling with ironies..

Daily Times, 14 June 2007

Benazir vows to return to Pakistan

LARKANA: From dawn to dusk, the barefoot pilgrims come. At the tomb of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the former prime minister hanged nearly three decades ago by a military dictator, they clasp their hands, scatter flower petals and offer prayers. Bhutto's daughter Benazir has never seen the elaborate mausoleum that rises 130 feet, like a mirage in heat-shimmered fields of wheat stubble, but she calls it the birthplace of her determination to lead her people, in tribute to her father's memory. And she vows she will do so again, whatever the cost, according to a report in the Los Angeles Times. With Pakistan racked by political turmoil, Bhutto, herself a former prime minister, says she is making plans to return from exile in London and Dubai to her homeland and lead her party in elections planned for this fall and next year..

Daily Times, 15 June 2007

Dual offices, formation of interim govt: Time for Musharraf to take bold decisions: SM Zafar

ISLAMABAD: Senator SM Zafar of the ruling PML said on Thursday it was time for President General Pervez Musharraf to take bold decisions on important national issues like house arrest of Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan, the president's dual offices, formation of a consensus interim government, an impartial election commission and an independent human rights commission. Participating in the budget debate in the Senate, Zafar said that it was time the government created room and facilitated Dr Khan. He suggested that PML President Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain use his influence for this purpose. He stressed the need for continuity of policies with credibility. Continuity and credibility go side by side, but for this purpose President Musharraf has to take some popular but bitter decisions within the ambit of the Constitution, he said, adding that President Musharraf should choose the right path on keeping two offices under the Constitution..

Dawn, 15 June 2007

Institutional reaction from SC urged: Attempt to remove CJ

ISLAMABAD, June 14: The counsel for Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry on Thursday asked the Supreme Court to frustrate attempts to remove the chief justice from his post through an institutional reaction, like the armed forces did in 1999 when the Nawaz Sharif government tried to remove the chief of army staff. There should be a similar institutional reaction from here, Barrister Aitzaz Ahsan said, adding that he would like to quote from President Gen Pervez Musharraf's book, In the Line of Fire, where he stated how the institution reacted when the government of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif tried to replace the army chief. But the reaction by this institution should be legal, observed Justice Khalilur Rehman Ramday who heads a 13 member larger bench seized with a challenge by the chief justice against the presidential reference, composition of the Supreme Judicial Council and its competence to look into the chief justices conduct.

Daily Times, 15 June 2007

Pak-Iranian-Afghan anti-drug Action Plan unveiled

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan said on Thursday that they had agreed to implement a joint Action Plan to strengthen national, bilateral and trilateral border management and security in a bid to curb drug trafficking and transnational crimes. In a joint statement issued after the end of a two day trilateral meeting on Border Management

Cooperation in Drug Control, held in Vienna from June 12-13, the three sides identified Afghanistan's border regions between Pakistan and Iran as being under attack from criminal groups smuggling Precursor Chemicals into Afghanistan as well as trafficking drugs out of the country. This creates regional instability and poses a serious health risk. This transnational threat requires a cooperative solution, the statement said..

The Nation, 15 June 2007

Editorial: The turning of the tide

THE US has sensed that the tide is turning against Musharraf. It has sequentially added to the force on Musharraf by gradually piling on the pressure. Condoleezza Rice's statement, the letter by Joe Biden, Tom Lantos, and Ileana Ros Lehtinen, Richard Boucher's third visit to Pakistan this year, and now John Negroponte's arrival have strategically emphasized US interests in the region. The US has finally begun to realize that Musharraf's ouster will not lead to an Islamist takeover that would damage its efforts on the terrorism front. Rob Richer, former deputy head of CIA operations, has recently said that the factors that indicate an Islamist rise to power are not existent in Pakistan. In the light of this, the US is supporting free and fair elections in Pakistan to an unprecedented extent.

The News, 15 June 2007

Opinion: Self-defeating policies (Dr M Bano)

General Musharraf's growing unease at home is clearly being noticed internationally. What is, however, still not clear is the future strategy that the US has in place for Pakistan. The visiting US assistant secretary of state for South and Central Asian Affairs, Richard Boucher was slightly more cautious in issuing eulogising statements in support of General Musharraf, an exercise in which all visiting US dignitaries have excelled in the past with no inhibitions. And in a meeting with politicians has reassured them that the issue of freedom of media, free and fair elections and uniform has been taken up with General Musharraf. Yet it is also true that just last week President Bush made his statement of support for General Musharraf by claiming that democracy is more established in Pakistan than in some other countries.

Daily Times, 15 June 2007

Editorial: Belated sop to the opposition

In a not too concealed fashion, the government has decided to make a tactical retreat on the political front to mop up the debris of the mistakes made by President General Pervez Musharraf on March 9, when he fired the chief justice of Pakistan, and the mistakes he continued to make after that date in order to minimise the damage of his act. The secretary general of the Pakistan Muslim League, Senator Mushahid Hussain, has now proposed an All Parties Conference APC by the president to sort out the issues agitated by the combined opposition in parliament. Mr Hussain, speaking during the budget session at the Senate, has put forward a three point agenda..

Dawn, 16 June 2007

US Pakistan accord on new round of strategic talks

ISLAMABAD, June 15: US Deputy Secretary of State John D. Negroponte arrived here

on Friday and held a 45 minute meeting with Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri at which an understanding was reached for early convening of the much-delayed second round of the Pakistan US strategic dialogue. A formal announcement about the understanding would be made shortly, sources told Dawn. The visiting US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher was present at the meeting held at the Foreign Office on Friday afternoon. The foreign minister and the US deputy secretary of state both reiterated their commitment to decisively carry forward the Pakistan US strategic dialogue.

Dawn, 16 June 2007

Commonwealth reminds Musharraf of deadline on uniform

ISLAMABAD, June 15: President Gen Pervez Musharraf has again been politely reminded by the Commonwealth about the 2007 deadline set by it for the separation of the two offices he is currently holding. The reminder came from the Foreign Minister of Malta, Dr Michael Frendo, on Thursday when he called on the president here. Malta is currently the chair of the 53-member Commonwealth which has been voicing its concern over the president's dual role. Although the Maltese foreign ministers visit to Pakistan was projected in the bilateral context by the Foreign Office as evident by its statement, on top of the agenda was to convey the Commonwealth's concern and stance on the issue.

Daily Times, 16 June 2007

Editorial: Stirrings of discontent in the PML

The dissident PML senator, Mr S M Zafar, has spoken out in the Senate during the budget session following an earlier maverick speech by the ruling partys secretary general, Senator Mushahid Hussain. The burden of the message is more forthright than the one given by Mr Hussain. Mr Zafar wants President General Musharraf to separate his two offices, establish an impartial Election Commission and set up a consensus interim government before elections..

Dawn, 16 June 2007

Editorial: Mosques on encroached land

THE chairman of the Council of Islamic Ideology has reiterated the CIIs opinion that mosques built on encroached land were considered illegal in Islam and prayers offered there were not acceptable under the shariah. This was also stated earlier, though not exactly in the same words, by the Imami Kaaba, who visited Islamabad a fortnight ago. Hence how can the management of a mosque justify the illegal occupation of land that does not belong to it What is intriguing is that with such clear cut injunctions on the matter, the government has been hesitant to act firmly vis vis the clerics of Lal Masjid and Jamia Hafsa in Islamabad who have resorted to blackmail to defend their encroachment Lal Masjid was allotted 250 square yards but now spreads over an area of 7,850 square yards. Although they have no religious or moral sanction for encroachment, 82 mosques in the federal capital have managed to resist moves to get them to vacate their occupation.

Dawn, 17 June 2007

Musharraf agent for positive change: US

WASHINGTON, June 16: President Gen Pervez Musharraf is an agent for positive

change in Pakistan but if there are issues with Islamabad, the US will not hesitate to speak out about them in a respectful manner, says the US State Department. The department's endorsement for Gen Musharraf's leadership preceded an important meeting between the president and two senior US diplomats Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte and Assistant Secretary Richard Boucher in Islamabad. We believe that President Musharraf is an agent for positive change, not only in the region, but for Pakistan, spokesman Sean McCormack told a regular briefing in Washington.

The News, 17 June 2007

Thousands turn out as CJ heads towards Faisalabad

CHINIOT: Nearly 60,000 people showered rose petals over a procession led by Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry on Saturday. Flag waving crowds flocked to welcome Justice Chaudhry in several towns as his motorcade made the 290 kilometre trek from Islamabad to the central industrial city of Faisalabad. Chanting Go Musharraf, go, the lawyers, opposition party faithful and ordinary residents rallied to express their solidarity with the independent-minded judge, who was ousted by Musharraf on March 9. Justice Chaudhry's ouster has sparked the biggest opposition movement in the country since military ruler Musharraf seized power in a bloodless coup in 1999. The chief justice is the one man carrying the struggle against Musharraf..

Dawn, 17 June 2007

Editorial: Tackling extremism

FRIDAY'S disclosure by the Sindh government that the man who blew himself up at the Sunni Tehrik's religious gathering in Karachi's Nishtar Park in April last year killing 57 and injuring scores belonged to a banned extremist group leaves one with cold feet. It is also a reminder that simply banning extremist groups and organisations will not make them disappear or their activities stop. Police probe into the suicide bombing reveals that the group behind the dastardly act had planned the crime sitting hundreds of miles away in a Frontier town before executing it in Karachi. The motive given out by arrested accomplices involved in the massacre was sectarian intolerance. The killer belonged to a sub sect of the puritan variety akin to one practised by the Taliban, which does not allow for any interpretation of religion at variance with its own..

Daily Times, 17 June 2007

Opinion: Towards a solution of the present crisis (Dr HA Rizvi)

The government should commit to holding parliamentary and provincial elections first, and to allowing the two exiled former prime ministers to return and lead their respective political parties. A political crisis is an extremely volatile and uncertain situation that threatens to disrupt the routine patterns of governance and management in a political system. If the situation does not quickly return to normal, the existing political arrangements and rulers often become dysfunctional, setting the stage for major leadership and institutional changes. Political crises are endemic in countries like Pakistan, which have a poor track record of constitutionalism, political and cultural pluralism and political participation.

Daily times, 17 June 2007

EDITORIAL: Importance of free and fair elections

The latest message from the United States, conveyed through the US Assistant Secretary of State, Richard Boucher, is that the holding of free and transparent elections in Pakistan is a bigger issue than President Musharraf's uniform. Mr Boucher also said that President General Pervez Musharraf had assured his government that the issue of his two offices would be settled in accordance with the Constitution. President Musharraf had also assured the US that the forthcoming elections in Pakistan would be held in a free and transparent manner. A second message came direct from the White House when the US National Security Council spokeswoman, Kate Starr, said on Thursday that the people of Pakistan have a longstanding respect for democracy..

Daily Times, 18 June 2007

Separation of powers between organs of state a must: No rule of law, no progress, says CJP

FAISALABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry has said that a society can progress only if it ensures the supremacy of the Constitution, which guarantees the rights of every citizen and defines roles for organs of the state. Addressing the Faisalabad Bar Association on Sunday, the chief justice said that the separation of the judiciary from the executive was vital and only a free judiciary could provide real justice. He quoted a saying of Hazrat Ali, the fourth caliph of Islam, that a society can survive with kufr infidelity, but not injustice. Every citizen must follow the Constitution. A society can progress only if it has supremacy of the Constitution, peace and rule of law, he said..

Dawn, 18 June 2007

Musharraf termed Altaf terrorist: Imran

ISLAMABAD, June 17: Pakistan Tehrik i Insaf chairman Imran Khan has said that the number of witnesses coming forward against Muttahida Qaumi Movement chief Altaf Hussain is increasing and the evidence will be enough to prove the violent nature of the party. Mr Khan said at a press conference here on Sunday that President Pervez Musharraf had briefed the top leadership of Pakistan Muslim League N, including Shahbaz Sharif and Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan, in 1999, terming Mr Hussain the biggest terrorist in Pakistan. Gen Musharraf had told them that Altaf Hussain was receiving funds from India for terrorist activities, the PTI leader revealed, adding that all the political parties were aware of the MQMs deeds. But now the president is protecting Altaf Hussain for the sake of power, which clearly indicates that Gen Musharraf holds himself first and not Pakistan..

Dawn, 18 June 2007

Editorial: Meeting Baloch grievances

TEN months after Nawab Akbar Bugtis death in the military operation in Bhambore hills, the militancy in Balochistan shows no signs of abating. The Governors warning and the round-up of suspects on Friday are just two indications of the kind of situation prevailing in Balochistan. Evidently, after a brief period of demoralisation following Mr Bugtis death, the militants have regained confidence and are showing renewed vigour. Speaking to newsmen on Friday, Chief Minister Mir Jam Mohammad Yousuf warned of a

crackdown on elements behind Thursdays night attack.

Indian Express, 18 June 2007

Interview: Musharrafs not a general for I sacked him, and not a president for he subverted constitution to become one

Nawaz Sharif He Pakistan President Gen Pervez Musharraf) was charging you with hijacking? He turned me into a hijacker. Look, from a prime minister I became a hijacker, all of a sudden! This was an afterthought. And it took almost 30 days for Mr Musharraf to fabricate this false case against me. People like Syed Shariffudin Pirzada helped him fabricate this case. Isnt this a shame! For people like Musharraf to turn their own prime minister into a hijacker! And we became the laughing stock of other nations! I think its a great tragedy!

Daily Times, 18 June 2007

EDITORIAL: Constitutional darkness at noon

Mr Wasim Sajjad, leader of the upper house, told the Senate Friday that the electoral college for the presidential election would be incomplete if any provincial assembly were dissolved although the Constitution mentions the National Assembly in the presidential election. Coming from an important legal expert of the party who headed the Senate sub-committee on constitutional changes to accommodate the rising demands of provincial autonomy in 2006, this opinion is weighty. Why did Mr Sajjad articulate his view at this juncture? It was clearly an effort to remove the confusion on the requirements of the electoral college for the re-election of the president.

Dawn, 19 June 2007

US concerned about crisis: Rice

WASHINGTON, June 18: US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said on Monday that Washington was concerned about the political crisis in Pakistan and underlined the need for free and fair elections. Well, of course, weve been concerned about the situation in Pakistan. And any time there is violence, were concerned about it, she told reporters before talks with her Pakistan counterpart, Khurshid Kasuri, at her office. She was asked about the violence and US interests in the region amid the crisis arising from the action against of the chief justice. We have a very intensive engagement with the Pakistani officials at this important time, Dr Rice said..

The Nation, 19 June 2007

BB, Nawaz in power sharing deal

Benazir Bhutto claims to have secured a verbal agreement from her principal rival for the prime ministership of Pakistan to a power sharing arrangement that would see her have first crack at running the country for five years. In an interview with the Financial Times, Mrs Bhutto said that she and Nawaz Sharif, the exiled leader of the Pakistan Muslim League N, had struck the bargain so that they could present a common front in their battle to reassert civilian control over the army. Any such arrangement would go far beyond the published terms of the Charter of Democracy a 36 point common programme to save the motherland from the clutches of military dictatorship that Mrs Bhutto, who heads the Pakistan Peoples party, and Mr Sharif signed in May 2006.

Dawn, 19 June 2007

Opinion: Changing role of the media (M Waseem)

FIRST, it was the bench, then the bar and now the media. The insecurity of the Musharraf government has pushed it in the direction of throttling the freedom of expression. By one stroke, it has destroyed what it incessantly claimed to be its source of pride in the form of a free media. The viewing public is several times more in number than the readers of the print media. While newspapers require a literate public, television does not need that. The Pemra Amendment Ordinance of June 4, 2007, could have the effect of blindfolding millions of viewers accustomed to witnessing dialogues in the form of talk shows.

Daily Times, 19 June 2007

Editorial: Whither BB-Nawaz equation?

In an interview published Monday in a London based daily newspaper, Ms Benazir Bhutto has claimed that she had reached a verbal agreement with Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz chief Nawaz Sharif, according to which she would have the first choice of running the country. She is supposed to have said: Mr Nawaz Sharif and I agree. Mr Nawaz says, You should be the prime minister for the first five-year term, and after that he wants to run the next five-year term. She also added: So I hope that we can move forward. That's a verbal discussion between us, but that is what he has said to me. The news about the interview is hardly credible but it reflects upon the ongoing equation between the two mainstream parties on the eve of the 2007 general elections..

Daily Times, 19 June 2007

Opinion: Democracy and American interests (RB Rais)

The Americans and their local allies in our societies look more at the outcome of democracy than at its process. They are not comfortable with groups, individuals and social movements that may produce uncertainty. There is a common perception in Pakistan and many other Muslim countries that the United States is not interested in promoting genuine democracy through free and fair elections on the basis of popular sovereignty. This perception obviously conflicts with what the American leaders tell their people about foreign policy in our regions; so much so that the average American might find it absurd, and even accuse us of being anti American.

The Nation, 20 June 2007

Missiles hit NWA madrassa: 32 killed

PESHAWAR As many as 32 people were killed when allied forces in Afghanistan bombed a seminary in bordering area of North Waziristan Agency on Tuesday. A seminary in village Salarai in Maami Rogha area in Data Khel Tehsil of North Waziristan Agency was attacked by the US led allied forces killing 32 people on the spot and seriously injuring 10 others. The village is situated 25 kilometres away from Miranshah, headquarters of North Waziristan Agency. There are different reports about the attack. Some said seminary was hit by three guided missiles between 10.00 am to 11.00 am in different intervals and the missiles were fired from the border area of Paktiya province of Afghanistan. The officials in Miranshah have confirmed the attack but were reluctant to say about the casualties.

Daily Times, 20 June 2007

Washington meeting agrees on restoration of democratic rule in Pakistan

WASHINGTON: Speakers at a meeting on Pakistan at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace on Monday were agreed that the present movement is no longer about the restoration of the chief justice but restoration of civilian rule and the army's return to barracks. The meeting with the theme 'The crisis in Pakistan: the end of the Musharraf era' heard from Lahore barrister and constitutional expert Dr Farooq Hasan, Prof Hasan Askari Rizvi of Johns Hopkins University and Murtaza Solangi of the Voice of America. It was moderated by Frederic Grare, Carnegie's South Asia expert. Dr Farooq Hasan said the target of the ongoing movement in Pakistan is military rule and Gen Pervez Musharraf, who triggered the present crisis by removing the chief justice. He recalled that this is not the first time a chief justice has been dismissed..

The News, 20 June 2007

Opinion: Massive negotiations (MB Naqvi)

Last week three senior US emissaries descended upon Islamabad and conducted fairly intensive negotiations with senior Pakistani interlocutors. The subject of the discussion so far disclosed is deepening of long term strategic relationship, Afghanistan and the regional situation. Pakistan's foreign minister, heading an official delegation, is now in Washington negotiating specifics with their American counterparts. The emphasis remains on extending and deepening the strategic partnership. Local perceptions are concerned mainly about Pakistan's internal problems. Why so? The Americans had prepared for these visits over a period. The importance of these negotiations and of the issues involved goes without saying..

Daily Times, 20 June 2007

Editorial: Defending Musharraf is a tough job

After the spiralling public disaffection with the government stemming from the 9 March 2007 decision by President General Pervez Musharraf to unceremoniously fire the chief justice of Pakistan, the state's damage control department has come under pressure. Heads were expected to roll trying to sweeten the presidential error and suit it to the popular palate; and they have. The affable federal information minister, Muhammad Ali Durrani, has been moved to make way for a more presentable minister of state for information, Senator Tariq Azeem. It is said that the first choice for replacement had fallen on the secretary general of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League, Mr Mushahid Hussain Sayed, but it was deflected by the party president Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain who apparently needed him more in the party headquarters on the eve of the next general election.

Daily Times, 20 June 2007

Opinion: What drives the Hafsa and judicial crises? (Ijaz Hussain)

Many believe that the outcome of the judicial crisis is bound to be a victory for the democratic forces. This may be true in the short term, but not in the medium or long term, as long as the structural causes of the failure of democracy are not addressed. The Jamia Hafsa standoff and the judicial crisis have alternated in occupying centre stage for quite some time now. Some observers feel that these two issues will decide the future character

of the Pakistani state. What factors influence the two issues and how will they affect their outcome? The first factor that deserves attention is the genesis of the two crises. Our investigation reveals that identical considerations guide both of them..

Daily Times, 21 June 2007

Waziristan attack will increase militant violence: HRCP

LAHORE: The alleged attack by the allied forces in Afghanistan on a madrassah in North Waziristan that killed 22 people had not been fully investigated to find identities of the dead nor the reason behind the incident, said a report issued by Human Rights Commission of Pakistans HRCP secretary general Iqbal Haider on Wednesday. It said that Inter Services Public Relations statement that it was an explosion and not a missile attack was hardly credible in the light of eyewitness accounts. Similar lies have been told before, the statement read, following attacks in Bajaur, Balochistan and elsewhere..

Dawn, 21 June 2007

MQM wants autonomy bill tabled in NA

ISLAMABAD, June 20: The Muttahida Qaumi Movement MQM has asked the government to introduce a bill on provincial autonomy submitted by the party to the National Assembly last month, during the current session of the lower house after passage of the federal budget. The ball is now in the court of President Gen Pervez Musharraf who had announced that the nation would get good news before the elections on the issue of provincial autonomy, said MQMs parliamentary leader in the National Assembly Dr Farooq Sattar at a press conference here on Wednesday. Minister for Communications Shamim Siddiqui, Minister for Housing Safwanullah, MNAs Syed Haider Abbas Rizvi, Kunwar Khalid Yunus, Abid Ali Umang, Iqbal Mohammad Ali, Abdul Qadir Khanzada and Dev Das were present on the occasion..

Daily Times, 21 June 2007

References against Imran sent to CEC

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Speaker Chauhdry Amir Hussain on Wednesday sent two disqualification references against MNA Imran Khan to the chief election commissioner CEC for further action. The MQM and Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr Sher Afgan Niazi filed these references against the Pakistan Tehrik e Insaaf chairman. I evaluated the references prima facie. In my view the references were valid, the speaker said. I applied my mind to these references honestly and with responsibility and made the decision after thoroughly thinking on these references. The speaker was bound to forward the reference within 30 days, while he did so in eight. The CEC is to summon both parties to testify and complete proceeding on the references within 30 days..

Dawn, 21 June 2007

Editorial: It is Waziristan again

VIOLENCE has become a way of life in North Waziristan where people are being killed practically every day. But Tuesday's incident at Datakhel in which 22 people were killed in a blast in a cluster of compounds was a major event considering the large number of casualties one source puts the death figure at 32. What is more disturbing is the ambiguity that surrounds the happenings in the tribal areas which are now determining not just the

course of the war on terror but the entire future of Pakistan. Take Tuesday's blast. There are at least three versions of what actually caused it. According to the residents, missiles from across the border had hit a madrasah in the area that led to the death of a number of people. The Pakistan army spokesman insists that the blast was accidental and occurred when some militants were making explosives..

Daily Times, 21 June 2007

Editorial: Disorder, not disunity, is the problem

A US drone is supposed to have killed 20 people in North Waziristan on Tuesday, but the Inter Services Public Relations ISPR representative says the people killed were victims of a blast caused by someone putting together an explosive near the targeted seminary. From across the border the NATO forces say they have not fired any shells into the Pakistani territory. Of course, the official version is difficult to believe because of the past record. It was probably another Al Qaeda effort that did not succeed and others had to pay the price of this failure with their lives. But there is also the war against the Taliban going on in the region. The NATO ISAF forces are locked in a desperate struggle with the Taliban operating out of Pakistan..

The Nation, 21 June 2007

Editorial: Killings in Dattakhel

It is all too common for the visits of important American functionaries to coincide with incidents of killings of terrorists in Pakistan's tribal areas. This time too the recent visit of two important State Department officials and the Centcom Chief has been followed by the blast in a village in Dattakhel area of North Waziristan that led to the death of 32 including students of a seminary. A number of residents maintained that three missiles were fired from the Afghan side of the border while others including unnamed intelligence officials claimed that a US pilotless drone carried out the attack. This has been denied by the NATO-led coalition spokesman Col David Accetta who asserted that nothing was fired from his side. ISPR Spokesman Maj Gen Waheed Arshad has denied that Pakistan or coalition forces carried out the attack.

Dawn, 22 June 2007

Reference filed against Aziz: Steel mills sale, stock market crash

ISLAMABAD, June 21: The opposition in the National Assembly on Thursday hit back strongly at the government with a disqualification charge-sheet, or reference, against Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, which overshadowed final stages of the last budget session of the present lower house. While the prime minister seemed shying away from an immediate personal response to the opposition move that accused him of wrongdoing in a 2005 stock market crash and the scrapped sale of the Pakistan Steel Mills last year, a section of the ruling party came out with words and gestures against tit-for-tat references, which are likely to add to the worries of a beleaguered government in an already tense political atmosphere..

Daily Times, 22 June 2007

US-Pakistan alliance not a marriage of convenience, says Boucher (Khalid Hasan)

WASHINGTON: Richard Boucher, assistant secretary of state for South and Central

Asia, told a gathering of Pakistani Americans here on Wednesday that for the United States, Pakistan is more than the war on terrorism and that the US Pakistan alliance is not a marriage of convenience. Speaking at the annual conference of the Pakistani-American Congress, Boucher, who just returned from Pakistan where he met government and opposition leaders, said the US wants open and transparent elections in Pakistan with a level playing field, which will offer choices for the people of Pakistan. As for the judicial issue involving the chief justice, it should be resolved through the judicial process. That's where it is going to be decided, he added, but I am not going to guess the timetable, it could take years or months..

Daily Excelsior, 22 June 2007

Opinion: Pakistan: A Failing State? (D Suba Chandran)

The Foreign Policy magazine published from the US and the Fund for Peace has just made public the 2007 Failed States Index. Among the top twenty five countries in this index, six belong to South Asia and its immediate neighborhood. Afghanistan ranks eighth and Pakistan twelfth, while Burma and Bangladesh fourteenth and sixteenth respectively. Nepal and Sri Lanka are ranked twenty first and twenty fifth respectively. 177 countries have been included in this index, in which the Australia, US, Canada and the most in Europe appear in the last twenty five, meaning they are far away being bracketed as failing or failed States. India ranks 110, while Maldives 66 and Bhutan 47. Ranking is based on twelve parameters social, economic and political, in which each country's risk was measured in a scale of one to ten.

Daily Times, 22 June 2007

Opinion: Whats in the camera? (Ejaz Haider)

..General Pervez Musharraf used to boast, not entirely wrongly, that the media were freer under his military/quasi military dispensation than they had been under the so called democratic governments. Also correct was his claim that the TV channels sprouted during his reign; even Pakistan Television, owned by the government, opened up to the point where political talk shows gave almost equal space to the opposition. Did he really believe in the freedom of the media? Perhaps not. But it was a sophisticated policy that evinced a savvy understanding of how the media can be manipulated by freeing rather than repressing them. Musharraf mastered the art of winning the debate against the opposition and used the policy of information glasnost to his full advantage. He enjoyed the leverage it gave him. The penny dropped with the chief-justice episode.

Daily Times, 22 June 2007

Editorial: Codified constitutional hypocrisy

The reference filed by the Muttahida Qaumi Movement against the leader of Tehreek-i-Insaf and MNA, Imran Khan, has been forwarded by the Speaker of the National Assembly to the Chief Election Commissioner CEC who now has 90 days in which to decide whether Mr Khan can remain a member of the National Assembly under Articles 62 and 63 of the Constitution. Knowing what the Constitutional provisions of piety contain, Mr Khan had responded earlier to the MQMs threat of the reference by saying that no one in parliament and government would be able to come up to the criterion of Islamic piety established by the Constitution. In a tit for tat move, the opposition has fired

its own references against President Pervez Musharraf, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and a federal minister currently caught up in a murder case. Given the wording of the constitutional piety clauses, the only difference would now be in the time the Speaker takes to forward them to the CEC..

The Nation, 22 June 2007

Editorial: Assemblies dissolution

IN a country where vital decision making at the highest level lacks transparency, rumours tend to gain currency. Earlier some of the opposition politicians had claimed the present assemblies were going to be dissolved in June to pave way for the President to be re-elected from the new legislatures. Now former PM Mir Zafaraullah Jamali has confirmed there was a likelihood of this taking place in the first ten days of July. Talking to a private TV channel minister of state Ishaque Khakwani has said he had advised the President in March to hold fresh elections. Minister for Railways Sh. Rashid has confirmed that important decisions are going to be taken in July and has not ruled out the President getting himself re-elected from the next assemblies..

Dawn, 23 June 2007

Talibanisation imperils security, NSC warned: Immediate action urged

PESHAWAR, June 22: Describing Talibanisation as a potential threat to national security, a high level presentation made to President Pervez Musharraf is reported to have called for an immediate action before it is too late. Time is of essence. We must act before it is too late, is how it was summed up at the National Security Council meeting early this month. The NSC that met on June 4 with President Musharraf in the chair held exhaustive discussions on Talibanisation in Fata and the NWFP. NWFP Chief Minister Akram Khan Durrani, who until very recently, has been in total denial of the creeping Talibanisation in the MMA-ruled NWFP, was also in attendance and, according to one source, was in total agreement with the assessment made at the NSC meeting. He was equally concerned, the source, who was privy to the discussions at the NSC, said of the chief minister..

Indian Express, 23 June 2007

Pak building new n reactor: Watchdog

ISLAMABAD, June 22: Satellite images show Pakistan is building a new nuclear reactor that can produce weapons-grade plutonium, a US watchdog group has said. A picture taken on June 3 shows work progressing rapidly on the reactor at the Khushab nuclear site, 160 kms south west of Islamabad, the Institute of Science for International Security ISIS said on Thursday. ISIS said it had earlier reported the resumption of construction of the second plutonium separation facility at Chashma, on January 18. The development of the reactor and other nuclear related activities imply Pakistan has decided to increase significantly its production of plutonium for nuclear weapons, the Washington based institute said in a report. Pakistan Foreign Ministry spokesperson Tasnim Aslam said it shouldnt be a surprise that Pakistan is working on its nuclear programme but declined to discuss it in detail.

The Nation, 23 June 2007

Assemblies to complete tenure: PM

ISLAMABAD Denouncing impressions of assemblies early dissolution, Prime Minister Shaukat Friday made it clear in the National Assembly that it would complete its tenure and the ruling coalition would contest next elections as an alliance. Apprehensions were raised during the budget session about the assemblies term, therefore, I want to take this House into confidence that they would complete the tenure, he said immediately after the passage of the budget 2007 to 2008. I must say to those floating such rumours and making baseless forecasts that they should not be detrimental to the democracy, he added while announcing that Pakistan Muslim League PML, the PML Functional, PPP Sherpao, MQM, and the independent coalition partners would together go to the next polls after the completion of the outgoing term..

Dawn, 23 June 2007

Editorial: Politics of references

WE seem to be living through an era of references. It began with the March 9 episode which has changed the countrys political landscape. Then there was a reference initiated by the MQM against Mr Imran Khan which has since been filed with the Speaker of the National Assembly. It focuses on the PTI chiefs personal life and was provoked by the cricketer turned politicians crusade in London against MQM chief Altaf Hussain following the May 12 carnage in Karachi. Then Parliamentary Affairs Minister Sher Afgan Niazi, too, has filed his own reference against the PTI chief on the same ground. On Thursday, the opposition in the National Assembly filed a reference against Mr Shaukat Aziz seeking the prime ministers disqualification on two counts his alleged role in the 2005 stock market crash and last years privatisation of Pakistan Steel, a move that was later rescinded. After the two page reference, signed by 31 MNAs, had been filed with the Speaker, the opposition said it intended to move more such references against government leaders to start a process of accountability of their own.

Daily Times, 23 June 2007

Editorial: Early or late elections?

The meeting on Thursday between President General Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz has been reported amid speculations that they may have discussed an early general election to resolve the matter of President Musharrafs continuation in power. Some reports suggest that Mr Aziz could be considering advising the president to dissolve the assemblies after the budget session of parliament, thus binding themselves to the constitutional obligation to hold the next general election within 90 days. The president is supposed to have pledged that he would consult the PML leadership on all options to extricate himself from the current bind on the subject of his re election, repeating the assurance that all his decisions would be made in accordance with the Constitution, whether on his uniform or general elections..

The Nation, 23 June 2007

Opinion: Desperate times, desperate moves (Raof Hasan)

Nothing seems to be working for General Musharraf since that fateful day when he tried to administer marching orders to Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry. By saying no to the General, sitting before the beaming cameras in full military regalia, the now

suspended Chief Justice provoked the unleashing of a sequence of ill advised and ill timed moves that have only added to further compounding the crisis for the government..

Dawn, 24 June 2007

11 killed in attack from Afghanistan: Nato says 60 insurgents dead

MIRAMSHAH, June 23: A barrage of artillery and missiles fired from Afghanistan hit residential compounds and a hotel in Mangrotai area of the North Waziristan tribal region on Friday night, killing 11 people and wounding 10 others, eyewitnesses and officials said. The dead included two children and a woman. In another incident, three paramilitary personnel were killed and two others injured in a roadside blast near Mirali town of the troubled region on Saturday, officials said. The Associated Press quoted a statement of the Nato and US led forces as saying that 60 insurgents were killed near the border with Pakistan in what was described as the insurgents crossing the region. Militants attacked Afghan and alliance troops late Friday in Barmal district of the Paktika province. Nato forces returned fire, killing about 60 fighters, the statement said..

Daily Times, 24 June 2007

Lal Masjid frees hostages

ISLAMABAD: Lal Masjid on Saturday evening freed nine hostages, including six Chinese nationals, after hours of talks with Islamabad's district administration. Students of Jamia Hafsa and Jamia Fareedia, two madrassas affiliated with the mosque, kidnapped five Chinese women, one Chinese man and three Pakistanis from a massage parlour in F 8/3 on Friday night and detained them at Lal Masjid for around 16 hours until Saturday evening. Lal Masjid's deputy chief cleric Maulana Abdul Rashid Ghazi announced the release of the hostages at a news conference at the mosque. The release was made away from the media's glare. He said the hostages were freed in view of the friendly ties between Pakistan and China, and the government's assurance that such combined massage centres would be closed down.

The News, 24 June 2007

Editorial: A dangerous development

It would seem that things regarding the Lal Masjid Jamia Hafsa issue are getting out of hand as a new, much bigger challenge was thrown up to the state by the hoodlums of this so-called citadel of morality in the capital city when they raided a massage centre in the posh F 8/3 sector abducting nine Chinese nationals three women along with three Pakistanis. This really is an alarming development as this is the first time that the students of Lal Masjid have acted against foreigners, and that too citizens of a friendly neighbour, by kidnapping them and accusing them of participating in un-Islamic activities. With the government dilly-dallying on the issue and refraining from taking any strong action against the brazenness with which the Lal Masjid brigades have been terrorising ordinary citizens, it is apparent that they have been emboldened to expand the net of their terrifying activities and now also target foreigners.

Daily Times, 24 June 2007

EDITORIAL: Bending the knee to Talibanisation

In another drama of the absurd, the National Security Council NSC, presided over by

President General Pervez Musharraf on 4 June 2007 and attended by all the chief ministers, has cudgelled its brains over Talibanisation as a potential threat to national security following a presentation made to it that called for immediate action before it is too late. Wonder of wonders, even the NWFP chief minister Akram Khan Durrani was in total agreement with the assessment made at the meeting. Obviously, no action was taken. Meanwhile, Mr Durrani continues to tell the people of Pakistan that the terrorism under Talibanisation is actually done by the federal government through its intelligence agencies. The 15 page presentation at the NSC revealed that the Taliban had regrouped and reorganised and were now in a position to seriously threaten the countrys security..

Dawn, 24 June 2007

Editorial: The Taliban wave

WHILE the Taliban wave continues to gather strength, the presentation made to the National Security Council's June 4 meeting, with President Pervez Musharraf present, is scary. The 15 page report warns that the Taliban have reorganised and regrouped, that their influence has spilled over from Fata into the settled districts, and that the law enforcement agencies morale is low. The deal with the militants in North Waziristan is holding, though the peace is fragile; in South Waziristan the expulsion of the Uzbeks has only marginally improved the situation, and one militant commander is harbouring terrorists, including foreigners. It is disturbing to note, as the presentation to the NSC pointed out, that the geographical range of non Fata areas affected by the Taliban militancy ranges from D I Khan in the south, through the Peshawar, Mardan and Charsadda districts in the centre to Dir, Swat and Malakand in the north.

Daily Times, 24 June 2007

Opinion: Musharraf's uniform: A legal perspective (Chaudhary Fawad Hussain)

President General Pervez Musharraf, as well as some cabinet ministers, has time and again asserted that he, as president, can remain in uniform only until 31st December 2007. But I am confused regarding these statements as I am unable to find any legal provision which bars the president from continuing in uniform even after 31st Dec, 2007. In any case, a study of provisions relating to the presidents election leads to the conclusion that the process of presidential election would be a confusing constitutional battle that Pakistan might have to undergo. The office of the President of Pakistan is certainly a political office, since ironically President Pervez Musharraf is also a Chief of Army Staff, which according to Article 214 read with 3rd Schedule is essentially a non political office. But to analyse the current constitutional and legal dilemma we have to briefly look at recent political history.

Daily Times, 25 June 2007

Assemblies tenure can be extended

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League President Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain says the government has various options if the MMA decides to dissolve the NWFP Assembly after the oppositions all parties conference, one of them being to extend the assemblies tenure for a year. In an interview with CNBC Pakistan on Sunday, he said the government could also dissolve the National Assembly. We have options either to dissolve the NA and hold fresh elections or elect President Musharraf from the present

assembly, he said.

Dawn, 25 June 2007

ARD, MMA not to boycott polls

LAHORE, June 24: Although parties in the Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy ARD and the Muttahida Majlis i Amal MMA do not want to see Gen Pervez Musharraf at the helm at the time of elections, they will not boycott the polls even if their demand remains unmet, leaders of both the coalitions say. The matter will be discussed at the multi party conference to be held in London on July 7 to 8 and the participants are likely to float various proposals to thwart Gen Musharrafs plan to get re elected from the present assemblies or to retain his military uniform. Leaders of six opposition parties are meeting in Islamabad on Monday to discuss steps to make the London conference more productive.

The Nation, 25 June 2007

Inside Jamia Hafsa (Iman Hasan)

Islamabad Jamia Hafsa, run by wife of Maulana Abdul Aziz, Imam of Lal Masjid, has been existing right in the centre of the capital since 1999 but was never that controversial until the veiled female students, while challenging writ of the government, usurped the adjoining childrens library on January 21, 2007; as a protest against demolition of few of the mosques by the government. Jamia Hafsa is affiliated with Lal Masjid, whose Imam, Maulana Abdul Aziz was appointed by the government when his father Maulana Abdullah was assassinated on October 17, 1998. The students of Jamia Hafsa; who are largely from NWFP, Kashmir and Murree follow their Ameer, Maulana Abdul Aziz and revere his every statement. .

Dawn, 25 June 2007

Editorial: Tracing the disappeared

WHILE it is good to note that the current political crisis in the country has not been allowed to overshadow the case of the missing people, the government must be censured for not making greater efforts to find those who have disappeared. Hundreds are believed to be in the custody of intelligence agencies. Some organisations, like the Jeay Sindh Qaumi Mahaz, claim that the actual figure runs into the thousands. Unmoved by calls to trace the missing people, the government has been reluctant to provide relevant information to the court or to follow judicial summons to send its representatives to appear before the Supreme Court, where the case of 254 missing people is being heard.

The Nation, 25 June 2007

Editorial: In search of justice

THE peripatetic search of Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry for establishing the rule of law in the country continues to get an enthusiastic response from all sections of society lawyers, politicians, businessmen, educationists, students, workers and the people at large, sending an unambiguous signal to the government that they were dissatisfied with its performance, against the quasi-democracy that prevailed in Pakistan today and wanted an immediate restoration of full fledged democracy. It took the CJ 12 hours to traverse the journey from Lahore to Okara that would normally take two hours

or so to complete and several hours more to get to Sahiwal, thanks to the rousing receptions he received on the way, Pakpattan, Pattoki, Chunian and Kasur..

Daily Times, 25 June 2007

Editorial: Covering Vs Projecting extremism

While awarding licences to five new TV channels and landing rights to six others at the headquarters of Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority PEMRA, the minister for information and broadcasting, Senator Muhammad Ali Durrani, said on Saturday: We want to formulate a joint strategy in collaboration with the media to avoid projection of elements which are causing extremism and bringing a bad name to the country. Mr Durrani said he wanted the media organisations to formulate a code of conduct so that the projection of certain elements could be checked, who want to exploit the masses to attain their vested interests. Then he referred to the clerics of Lal Masjid and their illegal act of abduction of some persons. His conclusion was that formulation of a special media code would definitely discourage such incidents in future..

Daily Times, 26 June 2007

President vows to fight extremism

ISLAMABAD: President General Pervez Musharraf on Monday reiterated his governments commitment to the fight against international terrorism and extremism and vowed that the writ of the state would be ensured at all times. Chairing a meeting here at Aiwan e Sadr, the president expressed satisfaction at the strategy and steps taken to counter terrorism and extremism. The meeting reviewed and approved political and administrative measures to effectively root out militancy and extremism in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas FATA and parts of NWFP.

Daily Times, 26 June 2007

Opinion: State of failure (RB Rais)

Failing states hurt the poor, marginalised and lower sections of society because they are left to the mercy of non state actors of varying strength and influence. Our ruling classes have not paid sustained attention to the crisis of the fading state because they benefit more from its absence There has been persistent debate about the declining capacities of the Pakistani state for the past nineteen years, since the end of our third military regime. All functional, effective and robust states must perform some primary functions, which include providing rule of law, access to justice, social peace and individual security, individual rights and liberties. This list is not exhaustive. Modern states invest in the development of infrastructure, provide basic social services and regulate the economic life of society to ensure equity and fair competition in the market place.

The Nation, 26 June 2007

Committee to finalise code for TV channels

ISLAMABAD Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Muhammad Ali Durrani Monday said the government is implementing all the media-related projects with true commitment and dedication. The allocation of Rs 5.94 billion for the media promotion is reflective of governments commitment to the media development projects. All such projects would benefit the media persons, he said while addressing the joint

meeting of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and the executive committee of Pakistan Broadcasters Association PBA. The meeting was held to formulate a code of conduct for the electronic media..

Dawn, 26 June 2007

Opinion: Seizing the moment before it is late (Masud Mufti)

SOME voices the loudest being that of Qazi Hussain Ahmad from different quarters are asserting that no military dictator will be acceptable after General Musharraf's exit. We all want it, but can we ensure it? Is our civil society organised enough to break its own anti revolutionary steel skeleton? Are we even willing to mobilise ourselves beyond wishful thinking or transitory effervescence? Can our traditional wait for miracles ever yield to some practical measures? This is not the first time that an individual Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry has generated huge waves of emotionally charged crowds across the country. It has happened once before. In 1968, another ex chief, Air Marshal Asghar Khan, similarly crawled at near zero speed amidst oceans of ecstatic crowds.

The Nation, 26 June 2007

Editorial: Not playing politics

THERE is no disputing Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chudhry's assertion that peace and security are vital for the growth of any country and only those societies can claim to be civilised where people enjoy their legal rights. And when he highlights the importance of public interest litigation, people trust him because they saw him provide relief to aggrieved persons and justice to those who were not aware of their rights guaranteed by the Constitution. The CJ must have given offence to the government by taking suo moto cognizance of massive irregularities in the sale of state enterprises, cancelling privatization deal of Pakistan Steel Mills, initiating hearing into the mass disappearances and reining in the police administration for its failure to combat galloping crime. Addressing a reception organised by the High Court Bar Association, Multan, on Sunday, he said gone were the days when the poor could not approach the courts because of the fear of influential people..

Dawn, 27 June 2007

PPP and PML-N challenge voters lists in SC

LAHORE/ISLAMABAD, June 26: The Pakistan Peoples Party and the Pakistan Muslim League N have filed separate petitions in the Supreme Court challenging the draft electoral rolls prepared by the Election Commission of Pakistan, both alleging irregularities in the process of registration. Pakistan Peoples Party chairperson Benazir Bhutto moved the Supreme Court on Tuesday requesting the court to direct the Chief Election Commissioner to update the computerised electoral rolls by including names of all eligible voters as required under Article 51 (2) of the Constitution.

Daily Times, 27 June 2007

Tribal MPs boycott jirga addressed by Musharraf

PESHAWAR: Tribal parliamentarians boycotted a grand tribal jirga that President Gen Pervez Musharraf addressed at Governors House here on Tuesday, in protest at the government ignoring their input on the tribal areas, a senator said. We have boycotted the

jirga because our opinion is not sought while devising a policy on peace and development in the tribal areas, Senator Hameedullah Khan told Daily Times. Ten MNAs and eight senators did not turn up at the jirga, which a senior aide to Governor Ali Jan Orakzai said was attended by 400 tribal elders. Only MNA GG Jamal, a federal minister, attended the jirga, the senator added. Gen Musharraf urged tribal elders to shoulder the responsibility of evicting foreign extremists who have outlived their welcome.

Dawn, 27 June 2007

18 boats with 264 fishermen missing: Navy rescues several vessels

KARACHI, June 26: Several fishing vessels, which ventured out into the sea before a cyclone warning had been issued by the Met Office, were rescued on Tuesday. However, an official of the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum PFF said 18 fishing boats manned by 264 people were still unaccounted for. The boats had set out on different days before the cyclone alert. PFF President Mohammad Ali Shah said that radio sets were the only source of information for fishermen, but while fishing in creeks they tended to ignore warnings with most of them thinking that cyclones posed no great threat to them. Answering a question about the 18 boats described by the PFF as missing, Pakistan Navy spokesman Lt Cdr Salman said they had no information about small fishing vessels because they had carried out a rescue operation at high seas on information provided by the Karachi Port Trust KPT..

Dawn, 27 June 2007

Editorial: Fighting militancy

THAT a new plan should be prepared for combating militancy in Fata and the NWFPs settled districts means that the strategy so far followed has failed to work. Some 80,000 troops are already in place to combat religious militancy, and the government is now thinking of a surge, besides planning to give the security personnel modern equipment, including unmanned reconnaissance planes. The idea is to make focussed operations against militant commanders on a fast-track basis. If this is the aim of the new fast track strategy, what has then been the aim of the policy followed all these years? The tactics so far have been a mix of force and deals. While relying entirely on force is not going to help in an area which has traditionally resisted authority, the deals are not without an inherent contradiction.

Daily Times, 27 June 2007

Editorial: Something is cooking, for sure

In a National Security Council NSC meeting chaired earlier in the month by President General Pervez Musharraf, a pledge was once again made that the writ of the state would not be rolled back. The president made a strange statement: the writ of the government would be maintained at all costs. He should have said, The writ of the state is gone and we will now make all efforts to get it back. It is because the writ is gone that the state is less and less visible, and its plans of action are less and less implemented. People are shifting their allegiances to the warlords who have ousted the state from a large part of the states territory. The government can engage in an unconvincing pantomime that it is actually alive by issuing self righteous statements about the offence committed by the NATO forces of bombarding Pakistani territory. One may ask: what territory?

The Nation, 27 June 2007

Editorial: Denial of justice

AS the Defence and Interior Secretaries appeared on Monday before a two member Supreme Court Bench hearing the cases of mass disappearances they were directed to file written replies explaining why its June 6 orders calling for access of a legal counsel to one of the missing persons had been flouted. The Bench also questioned his conviction by a military court, observing that any prosecution under the army law should meet principles of natural justice as enshrined in different judgements given by the apex court. The Supreme Court had already been hearing cases of missing persons when Mr Munir mysteriously disappeared 10 months ago, was summarily tried and convicted for espionage by a military court. That raises doubts about the prosecution's claim of a fair trial.

Dawn, 28 June 2007

Punish criminals, China asks Sherpao: Kidnapping in Islamabad

BEIJING, June 27: China called on Pakistan to step up its protection of Chinese workers in the South Asian country, state press reported on Wednesday, following the brief kidnapping of seven Chinese people in Islamabad. One male and six female Chinese, as well as two Pakistanis, were kidnapped from the acupuncture clinic where they worked in the early hours of Saturday by students from a seminary, before being released later in the day. The seminary students alleged that the clinic was being used as a brothel. China's Public Security Minister Zhou Yongkang on Tuesday called on Pakistan to take further measures to ensure the security of Chinese workers and property, according to the Xinhua report..

The Nation, 28 June 2007

Rangers surround Lal Masjid

ISLAMABAD Tension seemed mounting in the Lal Masjid/ Jamia Hafsa environs, as the government Wednesday deployed heavy contingent of rangers, apparently, to take part in a planned crackdown on the religio extremist tenants of this occupied land. The deployment of rangers, shortly after abduction of nine persons from a Chinese Massage Centre in F 8 and reports of possible suicide attacks, suggest as if the government has finally decided to put a full stop on the day to day interference into the affairs of state by the defiant Ghazi brothers.

Daily Times, 28 June 2007

SC wont consider counter affidavits

ISLAMABAD: Justice Khalilur Rehman Ramday of the Supreme Court observed on Wednesday that the crisis over the suspension of the chief justice of Pakistan CJP had caused great damage to the country. This is not a case but a crisis. This has caused huge damage, said Justice Ramday, who heads a 13 member full court bench that has been hearing the CJP's petition challenging the presidential reference against him since May 15. Barrister Aitzaz Ahsan, the lead counsel for the CJP who has been arguing his case for 11 working days, concluded his arguments on Wednesday, asserting that the CJP was ready to testify in court and, if restored, would ignore all grievances and strengthen the

judiciary.

Daily Times, 28 June 2007

Opinion: Convergence or acknowledgement? (Dr HK Nizamani)

It is interest divergence that causes friction between Washington and Islamabad. Interest convergence may not be a realistic goal at present. Trust would automatically follow if the two countries acknowledge each other's interests and set realistic expectations. Top Bush administration officials have been frequenting Islamabad lately with mixed messages for General Pervez Musharraf and his opponents, who are sold on the idea that the route to Islamabad is via Washington. In an atmosphere characterised as showing a trust deficit in US Pakistan relations, Col R David O Smith, who has served in Islamabad as US military attache and is an old hand on Islamabad Washington defence ties, writing in Strategic Insights issue of June 2007, has floated a provocative suggestion to overhaul Pakistan US relations.

The News, 28 June 2007

Opinion: Whats really at stake (Huma Yusuf)

Salman Rushdie is probably having a good giggle right about now. A master of word play and linguistic acrobatics, hes probably getting a kick out of the grandiose alliteration that his controversial knighthood lends to his name. Sir Salman has an appropriately sibilant, sinister ring to it, more befitting a cartoon villain in a Disney animation or a character in a novel than a political and literary figure. Moreover, as a world class troublemaker, Rushdie is probably tickled pink at the international furore and diplomatic rows his accolade has sparked. The fact that his recognition has primarily irked Iran and Pakistan the two nations he loves to hate is simply icing on his cake. If Pakistanis were clever, they would know that the best way to punish the attention hungry Rushdie for his literary and spiritual transgressions would be to ignore him and his achievements. By allowing the speakers of our provincial assemblies, ministers and trade associations to call for his assassination, weve made Rushdies knighthood all the more exciting for him.

Dawn, 28 June 2007

Editorial: Questionable voters lists

MONTHS before the event, the legitimacy of the next elections is already being questioned by the opposition parties. These early doubts concerning the legality of the electoral process may be unfortunate but are by no means surprising. Claims of pre poll rigging have been flying thick and fast ever since the new voters lists were unveiled by the Election Commission, with the Pakistan Peoples Party which won the popular vote in 2002 in the forefront of those crying foul. Also upset by what appear to be glaring inconsistencies in the draft electoral rolls is the Pakistan Muslim League faction headed by Mr Nawaz Sharif. The religio political alliance operating under the umbrella of the Muttahida Majlis e Amal has also expressed doubts about the veracity of the new lists a concern also echoed by the All Pakistan Minorities Alliance which claims that 20 per cent of non Muslim voters have been excluded. The fears voiced by opposition parties of all shades of opinion, as well as independent groups, are far from unfounded..

Dawn, 29 June 2007

Govt likely to seek reference hearing by full court: counsel

ISLAMABAD, June 28: The federal government on Thursday placed the entire material relating to the reference against Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry before the Supreme Court and assured the bench that it would not object if the full court adjudged the reference. I am under instructions from the highest level to place the material before the Supreme Court, Advocate Malik Mohammad Qayyum, representing the federal government, told the 13 member larger bench hearing the chief justice's petition challenging the presidential reference filed against him. Concluding his arguments on Wednesday, Barrister Aitzaz Ahsan, the lead counsel for the chief justice, had said the Supreme Court had three options before it: to decide that no reference could be filed against the chief justice under Article 209 of the Constitution..

Dawn, 29 June 2007

Rains affect relief work: 400,000 displaced in Balochistan Mirani Dam safe Power, gas supplies disrupted ,No traffic on highways

QUETTA, June 28: As heavy to moderate rains continued to lash different parts of Balochistan on Thursday, nine people died in Harnai and Turbat. The rainfall hindered a massive rescue and relief operation launched by the army and the Frontier Corps in worst-affected areas. Provincial Home Secretary Tariq Ayub said that over 400,000 people had been displaced by this weeks cyclone and flash floods. Troops were carrying out rescue and relief work in the affected areas and helicopters were moving the marooned people to safe places.

Daily Times, 29 June 2007

NA may be dissolved if Opp quits assemblies

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Muslim League PML leadership has advised President General Pervez Musharraf to dissolve the National Assembly if the opposition parties decide to resign from the assemblies to block his re election from the present parliament. We have proposed dissolution of the NA in case the opposition's all parties conference APC in London decides to resign from the assemblies, sources in the PML told Daily Times. Legal opinion is being sought to take a final decision which is expected soon after the London APC. The APC is to be held in London on July 7 and 8. In view of the presidents reelection between September 15 and October 15, the NA has to be dissolved before July 14 to meet the procedural requirements, the sources said. However, the decision can be taken earlier..

Indian Express, 29 June 2007

Opinion: Problem child Pakistan (D Jaishankar)

Washingtonians like to deny it, but glamour and celebrity have an inordinate sway over policies and perceptions in the United States. Pakistans stock has been declining for many months now in the US capital, but two recent events involving celebrities have done far more damage to Pakistans public image than any Congressional motion or presidential speech could have. Firstly, Angelina Jolie has thrown her star power behind A Mighty Heart, the film adaptation of a book by Daniel Pearls widow, recounting the Wall Street Journal reporters 2002 kidnapping and execution in Karachi. Jolies turn as Mariane Pearl has single handedly boosted the profile of a film that would otherwise have languished on

the periphery of popular consciousness, if not in abject obscurity.

Daily Times, 29 June 2007

Editorial: Lal Masjids damage to Pak China relations

The federal interior minister, Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao, during his visit to Beijing, got an earful from the Chinese minister of public security, Zhou Yongkang Zhou, who asked Pakistan for the umpteenth time to protect Chinese nationals working in Pakistan. The reference was to the assault and kidnapping of Chinese citizens in Islamabad by the Lal Masjid vigilantes. The Chinese minister called the Lal Masjid mob terrorists who targeted the Chinese, and asked Pakistan to punish the criminals. Mr Sherpao, who must have regretted being in Beijing, lamely rejoined that Pakistan would take more rigorous action to safeguard the security of Chinese people and organisations in Pakistan..

Dawn, 29 June 2007

Opinion: Threat of Talibanisation (Javid Husain)

THE National Security Council in its meeting held on June 4 was reportedly briefed on the menace of creeping Talibanisation which, according to the high level presentation made on the occasion, could pose a serious threat to national security. It was pointed out that the foreign occupation of Afghanistan, Pakistans alliance with the US in the war on terror, long festering disputes in the Muslim world and a growing feeling among the Muslims that they were under attack from the West had contributed to growing militancy in the region. While referring to the growing extremism and militancy in Fata and the adjoining settled districts, the presentation called for immediate action to eliminate this phenomenon before it was too late..

Daily Times, 30 June 2007

Musharraf ready to raid Lal Masjid but...

ISLAMABAD: President Musharraf said on Friday that the potential loss of human lives was preventing him from taking any action against the Lal Masjid, while adding that suicide bombers from Jaish-e-Mohammad were also hiding in the mosque. We are afraid of the baton wielding madrassas who will stand by Lal Masjid if we launch action, he said, while addressing the concluding ceremony of the National Media Workshop organised by the National Defence University. He said the female students of the Lal Masjids adjoining madrassa were prepared for suicide attacks and up to 500 children were being used as human shields to stop the government from contemplating any operation..

The Hindu, 30 June 2007

Announcements next week: Musharraf (Nirupama Subramanian)

Islamabad: President Pervez Musharraf said on Friday he would make important announcements after a meeting of the National Security Council next week. Talking at the National Defence University here, President Musharraf said he had convened a meeting of the NSC and would address the nation to take the people into confidence on important decisions relating to national issues. According to the official Associated Press of Pakistan, he gave no dates. The NSC is chaired by the President, and includes the Prime Minister, chairman of the Senate, Speaker of the National Assembly, leader of the

Opposition, the four chief ministers, the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, and the three service chiefs.

Dawn, 30 June 2007

Eight districts remain cut off: Balochistans SOS to centre

QUETTA, June 29: The Balochistan government on Friday asked the federal government to send more army soldiers and helicopters for rescue operations in areas devastated by the cyclone and floods. Provincial Home Secretary Tariq Ayub told newsmen here: We have requested the federal government to send more army troops and helicopters for relief and rescue operation in the affected districts. He also confirmed that the provincial government had sought the army's help in Turbat for helping the administration in relief work. Four battalions of the army would be reaching Turbat by Saturday. The death toll, by unofficial counts, had gone up to 80, sources said. However, the administration put the toll at 20.

Daily Times, 30 June 2007

Pakistan, NATO coordinating tribal strikes: report

WASHINGTON: There is a covert understanding between the Pakistan government and NATO forces in Afghanistan regarding direct US military action in the tribal areas, according to a commentary published here. Hassan Abbas writes in *Terrorism Focus*, a publication of the Jamestown Foundation, that the Pakistan government officially forbids foreign troops from conducting military operations on its soil, but in reality many US missile attacks are coordinated with Islamabad in advance. At times, it appears that the US acts without informing Pakistan, but the Pakistan government always claims otherwise in order to protect its domestic credibility, he states. The exposure of this relationship could not have occurred at a worse time for President Pervez Musharraf, faced as he is with the toughest challenge of his presidency. Two aerial attacks last week in the Waziristan region illustrated the complexities involved in fighting the Taliban insurgency.

Daily Times, 30 June 2007

Opinion: Step back from the brink (Abbas Rashid)

The US can continue to support Pakistan's military establishment without accepting its exclusive political authority. And it can empower civilian leadership without jeopardising the military's core interests. But what does the military regard as its core interests? Here is a paradox: Pakistan is one of the fastest growing economies in the region, with a rate of growth of around 6% over the last few years. President Musharraf and his team have made that point often enough in response to increasing dissent and calls for democratic governance. On the other hand, Pakistan is widely perceived as a fragile state with fundamentals like the education and health of its people near the bottom of the international table and key institutions such as the police and the judiciary weakened by decades of military intervention and rule.