

Dawn, 1 March 2005

No fresh evidence to prove N-leak: FO (Hasan Akhtar)

ISLAMABAD, Feb 28: Pakistan has not received any fresh evidence from any credible source about a leakage from its nuclear programme to require further investigation. Foreign Office spokesman Masood A. Khan said this at his weekly news briefing on Monday when his attention was drawn to an American newspaper report alleging transfer of nuclear technology/material in Dubai by some associates of Dr A.Q. Khan in 1987. The spokesman said that Pakistan had completed intensive investigations against Dr Khan covering the period of 1980 to 1990s and findings had been 'transparently' shared with the people of Pakistan, the concerned world powers and the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Dawn, 1 March 2005

Iranian minister invited to discuss pipeline project: Saarc energy ministers' conference

ISLAMABAD, Feb 28: Pakistan has invited Iranian Petroleum Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh to start tri-lateral negotiations on Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project on the sidelines of Saarc energy minister's conference next month. The two-day conference of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation will be held on March 17 and 18 in Islamabad to promote regional cooperation in the fields of oil and gas, Petroleum Minister Amanullah Khan Jadoon told newsmen.

Daily Times, 1 March 2005

Govt aiming for 8,500 MW of nuclear power by 2030 (Khalid Mustafa)

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has decided to explore new markets for the import of equipment and expertise in order to be able to generate 8,500 megawatts (MW) of nuclear power by 2030. The Planning Commission wants Pakistan to be able to generate 8,500 MW of nuclear power by 2030, and to achieve this target needs equipment and expertise from European countries such as France or Germany, a senior official said.

Dawn, 2 March 2005

Mines removal likely to delay bus service

ISLAMABAD, March 1: Removal of landmines on both sides of the Line of Control is one of the major problems that can delay the launch of the Muzaffarabad-Srinagar bus service. Informed sources told Dawn on Tuesday that senior military officers of India and Pakistan had established contact the other day and discussed early clearance of mines. The two sides would exchange information about the number of mines on each side of the border. They did not rule out the possibility of the UN assistance in the form of technical know-how and financial help to carry out the job.

The News, 2 March 2005

Musharraf orders release of 200 Indian prisoners (Mariana Baabar)

ISLAMABAD: President Gen Pervez Musharraf has ordered for the immediate release of 200 Indian citizens, who had crossed over into Pakistan without legal documents. The president ordered for the release of detainees, many of them were arrested from Balochistan as they tried to cross into Iran, during a meeting with a delegation of the Indian communist party leaders on Tuesday.

The News, 2 March 2005

FC post attacked with rockets, small arms near Quetta (Muhammad Ejaz Khan)

QUETTA: Unknown men fired two rockets and resorted to small arms fire on an check-post of the Frontier Constabulary in Kolpur, while a bomb blast shattered windowpanes in Quetta on Tuesday. The rockets fired in Dasht area of Kolpur landed near the check-post. Official sources said the armed men also opened indiscriminate fire on the check-post. The FC personnel retaliated, forcing the attackers to flee. No loss of life or property was reported.

The News, 2 March 2005

2 tribal militants, soldier injured in Waziristan clash (Sailab Mahsud)

TANK: Two tribal militants were injured and two others were captured after they shot at and wounded a soldier in a remote part of South Waziristan Tuesday afternoon. Tribal sources said the militants fired at a Pakistan Army soldier when he went to a stream to fetch water in Abdul Wadanay village near Karwan Manza. The troops deployed in the area immediately laid siege to the place from where firing was reported. They reportedly fired at the militants hiding there.

Dawn, 3 March 2005

Pakistan to free 900 Indian nationals

ISLAMABAD, March 2: Pakistan is likely to release more than 900 Indian fishermen and other citizens, held for illegal entry, in a goodwill gesture to boost the peace process, officials said Wednesday. President Pervez Musharraf has recommended that 800 Indian fishermen held in Pakistani jails for crossing into its waters should be freed after completing legal formalities, foreign ministry spokesman Jalil Abbas Jilani told AFP.

The News, 3 March 2005

Govt offers to review Karo Kari bill (Asim Yasin)

ISLAMABAD: After rejecting the bill to tighten laws against honour killing with the assistance of the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal on Tuesday, the government on Wednesday offered to reconsider the bill if it would be re-introduced in the lower House with amendments. The offer was made by Minister for Law, Justice and Human Rights Wasi Zafar while winding up the four-hour

long debate on points of order. During the debate on 'Karo-Kari', the Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians opposed the religious parties alliance on the issue.

Daily Times, 4 March 2005

Pakistan could've made bomb in 1988 (Khalid Hasan)

WASHINGTON: Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) Chairperson Benazir Bhutto, who arrived here on the weekend, said on Wednesday that Pakistan had the capability to produce a nuclear bomb in 1988, which is earlier than was previously known. Benazir told the Voice of America (VOA) in an interview that Pakistan had the ability to produce a bomb in 1988, when she became prime minister. She stressed that during her 1993 trip to North Korea to buy missile technology, she never offered to trade nuclear technology for missiles.

Dawn, 4 March 2005

Govt offers to buy tribesmen's arms: Market price to be paid - official

PESHAWAR, March 3: Pakistan on Thursday offered to buy heavy weapons at market price from tribesmen in a turbulent region on the Afghan border where troops are hunting for Al Qaeda militants, an official said. The government wanted to purchase anti-aircraft guns, missiles, mortars, rocket launchers, landmines, hand-grenades, light machineguns and AK-47 Kalashnikov assault rifles, local administrator Khan Bukhsh said. The tribal belt was flooded with thousands of heavy weapons worth millions of dollars during the 1979-89 Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

The News, 4 March 2005

Six 'RAW agents' arrested in Karachi

KARACHI: The Sindh police on Thursday claimed to have arrested six terrorists from the Baloch Colony police jurisdiction, which yielded arms and ammunition, explosives, and literature regarding guerrilla warfare and anti-state elements. The arrested terrorists had allegedly been operating in the province under the patronage of Indian Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) and were entrusted with targeting communication links and vital installations by blasting bridges on important roads, Wapda installations, and railway tracks to destabilise the country.

Dawn, 4 March 2005

Shujaat hints at 'surprise package': Balochistan issue, NFC award, concurrent list (Ahmed Hassan)

ISLAMABAD, March 3: The Wasim Sajjad Committee on Balochistan has recommended a complete revision of the concurrent list, announcement of the NFC award before budget, biannual meetings of the Council of Common Interests and distribution of federal resources on the basis of poverty, backwardness, unemployment and development level of provinces instead of the existing criterion of population. This was stated by the president and parliamentary leader of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League, Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, while participating in a debate on Balochistan in the National Assembly on Thursday.

Dawn, 5 March 2005

Wanted militant arrested in Quetta (Amanullah Kasi)

QUETTA, March 4: One of the most wanted leaders of the defunct Lashkar-i-Jhangvi Ramzam Mengal who is alleged to be involved in a number of terrorist incidents and killing of about 130 people has been arrested in Quetta. He carried a reward of Rs1 million on his head. City police chief Rafi Pervaiz Bhatti told newsmen that the suspect was behind the attacks on Imbargah and Muharram procession in Quetta in which more than 100 people were killed.

Dawn, 5 March 2005

Pakistan, US make progress on treaty: Bilateral investment (Ihtasham ul Haque)

ISLAMABAD, March 4: Pakistan and the United States have agreed in principle to seek arbitration in investment related disputes through any international forum in the proposed Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) likely to be signed in May. Informed sources told Dawn here on Friday that both the countries have given up their conditions to have multiple choices for dispute resolution at various world forums. Pakistan, the sources said, was most likely to accept arbitration in ICSID because of the involvement of the World Bank which in case of a final decision, becomes the implementing authority.

The News, 5 March 2005

Condoleezza Rice due on 17th (Hanif Khalid)

ISLAMABAD: US Secretary of State Ms Condoleezza Rice is embarking on a three-nation tour of Asia and on 17th March she is scheduled to fly from New Delhi to Islamabad, where extraordinary security arrangements have been ordered. Ms Rice in her meeting with President General Pervez Musharraf would discuss with the president Iran's nuclear programme, Pakistan's plan for the leak-proof protection and security of nuclear missiles and nuclear weapons, Pak-US cooperation in defence field, Pakistan's role against terrorism, steps against narcotics and the situation in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Dawn, 6 March 2005

Forms to be issued next week: Kashmir bus service (Qudssia Akhlaque)

ISLAMABAD, March 5: Initially the frequency of the Muzaffarabad-Srinagar bus service, scheduled to be launched on April 7, would be fortnightly, diplomatic sources told Dawn on Saturday. Pakistan will start issuing application forms for the travel permits from next week, officials said, adding that the forms would be available at the deputy commissioner's office in Muzaffarabad.

Dawn, 6 March 2005

Japan reviving official trade ties next week (Sabihuddin Ghausi)

KARACHI, March 5: Japan is reviving its official economic ties with Pakistan as a 30-member delegation visits Karachi and Islamabad from Monday. The economic ties are being revived with an expected inflow of \$170 million after seven years' suspension following Pakistan's nuclear explosion in 1998. The areas where Japanese assistance is being explored are infrastructure development, vitalization of Karachi development programme, acceleration of work on textile city initiated by Pakistan-Japan Business Council and JETRO jointly.

The News, 6 March 2005

Two foreigners killed in Waziristan

MIRALI: Two foreign militants were killed and 11 men, including two to four foreigners, were captured in a raid on a hideout in a border village in North Waziristan in early hours on Saturday. A Pakistan Army soldier sustained injuries in the operation. There was sketchy information about the identity of those killed and captured in the military operation that involved Pakistan Army and paramilitary Frontier Corps troops. Some reports suggested the two men who were killed in action were foreigners, apparently belonging to an African Arab country such as the Sudan.

The News, 6 March 2005

Alternative to Sukkur barrage likely: official (Waseem Shamsi)

SUKKUR: Deputy Chairman Planning Commission (PC) Akram Shaikh, without referring to Kalabagh dam by name, has said sufficient funds will be allocated in the next Five Year Plan for mega projects, including dams. Talking to newsmen at the Circuit House on Saturday, he said no allocation was made for Kalabagh dam in the current year's budget. "If experts, consultants and irrigation authorities recommend that the existing barrage has worn out, funds would be allocated for the construction of a new barrage, as it was the backbone of Sindh's agricultural economy," Akram said.

The News, 7 March 2005

Pakistan, Uzbekistan sign anti-terror pact

TASHKENT: Pakistan and Uzbekistan on Sunday agreed to intensify their cooperation in the fight against terrorism and vowed to enhance their bilateral trade and economic cooperation. President Pervez Musharraf and his Uzbek counterpart Islam Karimov told a news conference after two-hour talks that the two countries would work jointly to stamp out terrorism, affecting both the countries. The two leaders also signed a statement to this effect. Musharraf said, "Pakistan, in the past, and even now has some Uzbek terrorists in its area and I have assured the president that we will act against them." Musharraf said Pakistan would like to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and asked Karimov's support for Pakistani membership in this regional organisation.

Daily Times, 7 March 2005

Pakistan-Iran naval exercises

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Iran will carry out joint naval exercises to strengthen relations between the navies of the two countries. "This, apart from a good opportunity for personnel of two navies to benefit from each other's experiences, also provides an arena to improve naval procedures and doctrines," said a statement by the Pakistan Navy. The Iranian naval ships Iris Bandar Abbas and Iris Larak will hold joint exercises with the Pakistan Navy, it added.

Dawn, 7 March 2005

All options open: Benazir (Anwar Iqbal)

WASHINGTON, March 6: Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto has indicated that she may soften her opposition to President Pervez Musharraf's dual role in the government if the government also shows flexibility in its attitude towards the opposition. She said that from political prisoners to early elections, the government has shown no flexibility on any issue and "there has been no development to make us change our stance". Asked to describe her contacts with the government she said it was "an engagement, not an agreement". Asked at what level were the two sides talking to each other, Ms Bhutto said these were "limited and not frequent engagements".

Dawn, 7 March 2005

'MMA, ARD agree to launch joint struggle' (Habib Khan Ghorji)

KARACHI, March 6: Chief of Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal Qazi Hussain Ahmed said on Sunday that the MMA and the ARD had agreed to launch a joint struggle on a three-point agenda. Opposition to General Pervez Musharraf as both president and the army chief, establishing supremacy of parliament and getting the 1973 Constitution restored to its form as it was before October 12, 1999, are the three points on which the two alliances concur, he said.

Daily Times, 8 March 2005

Former East Pakistanis will get ID cards: PM (Tanvir Sher)

KARACHI: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said here on Monday National Identity Cards (NIC) would be issued to eligible Pakistanis who had migrated from former East Pakistan. "If it requires amendments to the constitution, the government will make them," he told journalists at Nine-Zero, headquarters of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), a dominant partner in Sindh's ruling coalition.

The News, 8 March 2005

Nawaz perturbed over PPP-Musharraf rapprochement (Mayed Ali)

LAHORE: PML-N Quaid Mian Nawaz Sharif is perturbed over the PPP's stealth mission of brokering a deal with President Pervez Musharraf at the expense of "political allies and the spirit of 1973 Constitution," it is learnt. In this regard, Nawaz' message was conveyed to PPP President Makhdoom Amin Fahim last week in Islamabad by a senior PML-N leader. Mian Nawaz Sharif asked his men here to remind the PPP leadership of the understanding between Benazir and himself in Jeddah.

The News, 9 March 2005

Musharraf, Akaev pledge to expand trade relations

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan on Tuesday signed a series of agreements to expand their bilateral ties. A joint statement on cooperation between the two countries was signed by President Musharraf and Kyrgyzstan President Askar Akayev. The two countries signed three agreements that include; an agreement to have a visa-free regime for the holders of diplomatic and official passports, agreement for cooperation between the Ministries of Education of two countries and an agreement for cooperation between Associated Press of Pakistan and its Kyrgyz counterpart the KABAR news agency.

The News, 9 March 2005

Pakistan sets terms for MFN status to India (Nadeem Malik)

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan wants India to remove restrictive trade policies, like non-tariff barriers, which inhibit export growth from Pakistan, to allow consideration of other issues, like the Most-Favoured Nation (MFN) status. "The government has identified sectors, with detailed explanations, where we feel level playing field does not exist for our exports to India," said Commerce Minister Humayun Akhtar Khan here on Tuesday. These issues were identified by the professional study groups constituted by the government, as part of the Joint Study Group between the two countries.

Dawn, 9 March 2005

'1.8m Afghans in NWFP and Fata' (Zulfiqar Ali)

PESHAWAR, March 8: About 1.8 million Afghans are living in the NWFP and adjacent Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata), the just concluded census of Afghans revealed here on Tuesday. The Population Census Organisation, which conducted the nationwide census in camps and urban areas, suggests that over 2.41 million Afghans are residing in Pakistan. The countrywide census of the Afghans was started on Feb 24 in collaboration with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees (CAR).

Daily Times, 9 March 2005

25 militants arrested: Two explosions rock Quetta

QUETTA: Assailants set off bombs near a gas well and a railway track in separate attacks in Balochistan, officials said on Tuesday. A homemade bomb went off near the gas well Monday night in Jhal Magsi, a tribal region about 600 kilometres southeast of Quetta. Another bomb exploded the same night near the railroad in Mach, a town about 40 kilometres south of Quetta. Meanwhile, Balochistan Inspector General of Police Chaudhry Mohammed Yaqoob said 25 local tribesmen were arrested in connection with attacks in the province over the past three days. Yaqoob said the men were members of Balochistan Liberation Army.

Daily Times, 10 March 2005

Only Kashmiris on Kashmir bus: AJK

MUZAFFARABAD: The Azad Kashmir Legislative Assembly on Wednesday unanimously opposed travel by Pakistani and Indian nationals on the Kashmir bus, agencies reported. The house demanded in a unanimous resolution that visits by citizens of Pakistan and India to either country should be over international borders. It said the bus-travel by these nationals could cause certain other complications, one of which could be the impression that the ceasefire line could change into a border. It demanded that no immigration office be set up in Azad Kashmir for Kashmiris coming from Indian held Kashmir.

The News, 10 March 2005

Government considering power import from CARs

ISLAMABAD: The government is considering import of 1,000 MW power from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to cope with the country's rising energy needs. The National Engineering Services Pakistan (Nespak) has been directed to carry out feasibility study on two separate prospects sooner. The government believes the import of 1,000 MW power at cheaper rates would provide the electricity to people of far-flung areas and to eliminate the load shedding in the country. A meeting chaired by Federal Minister Liaquat Jatoi at the Ministry of Water and Power decided to commission a similar study report for road linking between Pakistan and Tajikistan.

The News, 10 March 2005

Next Saarc summit likely in April

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has established diplomatic contacts with members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) and obtained a broad consensus for holding its 13th summit in the second week of next month. An announcement in this regard is expected shortly, once the dates are formally accepted by the member states. The summit would review the pace of progress on the decisions taken at the 12th Saarc summit held in Islamabad in 2004. The sources

said that the South Asia Free Trade Agreement's framework would also come under review.

Dawn, 10 March 2005

Baglihar: Pakistan focussing on technical violations (Anwar Iqbal)

WASHINGTON, March 9: Pakistan's response to India's queries about its stance on the Baglihar dam issue focuses on technical violations of the Indus Water Treaty, diplomatic sources told Dawn. They said the average annual flow of waters in the eastern rivers is estimated to be around 33 million acre feet (MAF) whereas it is 135 MAF in the western rivers. Pakistan says the dam's height, 144.5 meters of 474.8 feet, will interfere with the flow of water to Pakistan. The dam's bondage capacity, 37.722 million cubic meters of water, is twice the allowed bondage under the treaty.

Dawn, 10 March 2005

Embankment of dam in Kohlu hit by rocket

QUETTA, March 9: The Gawal dam in Kohlu area of Balochistan escaped a disaster when one of the rockets fired by some terrorists hit the dam's embankment but caused no major damage on Wednesday. A senior official of the Kohlu administration added that terrorists had fired five rockets early in the morning. Another rocket landed and exploded near the office of the District Coordination Officer Kohlu (DCO).

The News, 11 March 2005

Dr Khan supplied centrifuges to Iran

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Sheikh Rashid Ahmed on Thursday said Dr Qadeer Khan had provided centrifuge to Iran. "He had given centrifuge to Iran in his individual capacity and the government of Pakistan had nothing to do with this," he said in response to a question at a seminar on "Political reconciliation is the need of hour" organised by Mir Khalil-ur-Rehman Memorial Society here. The minister said this was duly acknowledged that Dr Khan was involved in proliferation at the individual level but added the government would not hand him over to any other country.

Daily Times, 11 March 2005

SAARC energy ministers' conference postponed at India's request (Khalid Mustafa)

ISLAMABAD: A senior Petroleum Ministry official told Daily Times progress on the proposed \$4 billion Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline has been delayed following the postponement of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation's (SAARC) energy ministers' conference. The conference was postponed on India's request because Indian Oil and Gas Minister Mani Shankar Aiyar would be unable to attend it as the Indian parliament's budget session was underway. The Iranian minister was also invited to the SAARC conference to discuss the gas pipeline to Pakistani and India.

Dawn, 11 March 2005

Baglihar: Pakistan has received no offer for experts' visit (Ahmad Fraz Khan)

LAHORE, March 10: Pakistan has not received any 'formal' offer from India in recent days to send technical experts to visit the Baglihar dam site in recent days, officials of the Ministry of Water and Power and the Pakistan Indus Commission said here on Thursday. Responding to a statement by Indian Minister for Water Priya Ranjhan Dasmunshi made on Wednesday at Kolkata that India had invited experts from Pakistan to visit the site, the officials said India had neither made any formal offer nor Pakistan had asked for it.

The News, 11 March 2005

Skardu Dam under serious study (Naveed Ahmad)

ISLAMABAD: The recommendation of the Technical Committee on Water Resources have still not been finalised due to differences on certain issues, body head ANG Abbasi told The News on telephone. Terming media reports on the findings of the body as premature, he spoke positively about the ambitious Skardu-Katzara Dam (also known as Skardu dam). Responding to a question on the issue, Abbasi said, "with bitter political controversies over Kalabagh and other dams, this is seen as a unique and technically feasible multi-purpose reservoir. He said final decision in this regard would be made by the top authorities of the country.

Dawn, 11 March 2005

Heavy weapons in Fata banned: Tribesmen to sell arms to govt

PESHAWAR, March 10: The government has banned possession, sale and use of heavy and 'nuclear weapons of all types' in all the tribal regions, says a notification issued by the Governor's Secretariat (Fata). However, tribesmen in Wana on Thursday agreed to sell their weapons to the government at market price. The government, as part of the 'Weapons Policy for Fata', has already started what it calls the 'Weapons Buy Back Programme' to encourage tribesmen to sell their heavy weapons to the government.

Daily Times, 11 March 2005

6 killed in naval fuel tanker fire, 100 injured

KARACHI: In Pakistan Navy's worst disaster during peacetime operations, a fire on a naval fuel tanker killed at least six people and injured more than 100 on Thursday afternoon. Fifty-five of the injured are in critical condition. The dead were all naval personnel while the injured included civilians. According to ISPR, six people were killed aboard PNS Moawin – a fuel tanker – when a fire broke out while the tanker was undergoing maintenance work at the PN Dockyard. "The incident occurred at 3:00pm. An inquiry has been ordered into the incident and to assess the damage. However, initial investigation showed that the cause of the fire was human error," ISPR added.

Dawn, 12 March 2005

Aziz going to Oman on official visit

ISLAMABAD, March 11: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz will pay a two-day official visit to Oman from March 14 for talks focussing on further strengthening of relations between Oman and Pakistan. The prime minister will hold talks with Sultan Qaboos bin Said in Nizwa and a round of official talks with his Omani counterpart in Muscat. The two leaders will also discuss regional and international issues and the situation in Iraq and the Middle East. This will be Mr Aziz's first visit to this country.

Dawn, 12 March 2005

Pakistan offers help to Nepal in fight against rebels

KATHMANDU, March 11: Pakistan was ready to supply arms Nepal needs to fight Maoist rebels, it's envoy to Kathmandu said on Friday, a move that could upset India and Britain who have stopped military supplies to the Himalayan nation, after King Gyanendra sacked the government and declared a state of emergency on Feb 1. "We have offered possibilities of training. We are also ready to provide arms if that is required by Nepal," outgoing Pakistani ambassador Zamir Akram told state-run The Rising Nepal daily.

Dawn, 12 March 2005

Work on Mangla project criticized

ISLAMABAD, March 11: A group of Kashmiri people on Friday criticized the Pakistani government for carrying out work on Mangla Dam extension project and termed the decision a 'big mistake'. Speaking at a seminar organized by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), a spokesman for the Anti- Mangla Dam Extension Action Committee, Mohammad Arif Chaudhry, said the project had been launched on the basis of inaccurate feasibility reports. He was of the view that the Rs64 million project after its completion would result in heavy loss of property and livelihood.

Daily Times, 12 March 2005

Opp blames Leghari, former COAS, for N-transfer to Iran (Shahzad Raza)

ISLAMABAD: The opposition in the National Assembly (NA) walked out of Friday's proceedings when debate on Information Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed's statement about Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan was disallowed. They also blamed former president Farooq Leghari and the chief of army staff (COAS) at the time for transferring nuclear technology to Iran. Sheikh Rashid had said that AQ Khan alone sold centrifuges to Iran. Opposition members said the information minister's statement was a "threat to national security".

The News, 12 March 2005

Safdar asks tribesmen to evict foreign terrorists

PESHAWAR: Corps Commander Lt Gen Safdar Hussain has urged ulema and elders of North Waziristan Agency to evict foreign militants from their area to avoid use of force by the Army. He was talking to a 30-member representative jirga of ulema, mashaikh and maliks of the agency that called on him at the Corps Headquarters here on Friday, says a press release. The commander said the presence of foreign terrorists though small in number at isolated places needs to be taken seriously for ensuring peace and stability in the agency.

Dawn, 13 March 2005

Opposition seeks debate on centrifuge issue: Senate session (Amir Wasim)

ISLAMABAD, March 12: The opposition members in the Senate have submitted two adjournment motions seeking a parliamentary debate on the public admission made by Federal Minister for Information Sheikh Rashid Ahmed that Dr A.Q. Khan had transferred centrifuges to Iran. The first adjournment motion, signed by People's Party Parliamentarians (PPP) senators Farhatullah Babar, Dr Safdar Abbasi and Enver Baig, says the statement of the information minister had posed new and real dangers not only to Pakistan's nuclear programme, but also to its national security. Through the motion, the PPP senators raised questions regarding the disclosure made by the information minister that Pakistan had supported Iran in developing weapons of mass destruction.

Dawn, 13 March 2005

No US pressure on Iran gas pipeline issue, says Aziz

ISLAMABAD, March 12: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz on Saturday denied the United States has been putting pressure on Islamabad over a planned trilateral gas pipeline involving Pakistan, Iran and India. "There is no pressure on us," Mr Aziz told reporters when asked whether the United States, which has reportedly conveyed its concern to India over the project, had also raised the matter with Islamabad. US Ambassador to India David Mulford said in New Delhi that Washington had reservations about the energy deal, according to a report in the Indian Express newspaper. The US ambassador had raised the issue in a meeting with Indian Oil Minister Mani Shankar Aiyar, said the report, which comes amid mounting US concerns about Iran's nuclear weapons programme.

Daily Times, 13 March 2005

Rice won't push Musharraf on uniform

WASHINGTON: Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said late on Friday that she would not pressure President General Pervez Musharraf to give up his army post on a visit next week as Washington balances its push to spread democracy with its need to support anti-terrorism allies. Asked twice in a Reuters interview if she would urge Musharraf to abandon the top army post, which he has held on to despite a pledge to give it up, Rice said only that she would press for democratic progress.

Dawn, 13 March 2005

Kashmir entry forms to be issued from tomorrow (Qudssia Akhlaque)

ISLAMABAD, March 12: The designated authorities in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) will start issuing application forms for the Muzaffarabad-Srinagar bus service travel permits from Monday. The designated authority in Muzaffarabad, that is the deputy commissioner's office, will start issuing forms for the Muzaffarabad-Srinagar bus service from Monday, Foreign Office Spokesman Jalil Abbas Jilani told Dawn on Saturday. The spokesman said that for the convenience of people in other areas the forms would also be issued from all other offices of deputy commissioners in AJK.

The News, 14 March 2005

Centrifuge parts will not be handed over to IAEA: FO

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office on Sunday denied that the country was handing over any centrifuge parts to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in connection with its ongoing probe into Iran's nuclear programme. Earlier, there were reports from Vienna, which quoted some unnamed Western diplomats as saying that Pakistan would soon hand over used centrifuge components to the UN nuclear watchdog, for their analysis at the IAEA laboratory in Seibersdorf near Vienna in the hope of resolving a key mystery surrounding Tehran's atomic programme.

The Nation, 14 March 2005

Shahbaz, Benazir meet in London: Agree on struggle from ARD platform

LAHORE - PML (N) President Shahbaz Sharif and PPPP Chairperson Benazir Bhutto have decided to continue the struggle for the restoration of democracy in the country from the ARD's platform. Both leaders met at a ceremony held in connection with the marriage of the son of Wajid Shamsul Hassan with the daughter of Malik Rabbani Khar on Saturday in London, according to Benazir's spokesman Ch Munawwar Anjum. Jehangir Badr, Wajid Shamsul Hassan, Syed Ghous Ali Shah and Farrukh Shah also attended the half-an-hour-long meeting. The two leaders will once again meet during the next 48 hours.

The News, 14 March 2005

No surplus water for more dams: expert (Naveed Ahmad)

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has no surplus water for storing in mega dams like Kalabagh, Skardu or Bhasha as the country has been facing consistent shortfall since 1997-98. In 28 years from 1976-77 to 2004, surplus water was available in nine years only with two cycles when it was not available in four years continuously and the last cycle of continuous seven years, said an independent analyst Idrees Rajput. "The first and foremost requirement for a dam is surplus water availability for filling it and it is not a good cost-benefit analysis if a mega dam with an investment ranging from \$5 billion to \$20 billion is not filled every year," said the expert while delivering a keynote address at a conference on 'Financing Mega Dams' organised to mark the International Day of Action Against Dams and for Rivers, Water and Life.

The Nation, 14 March 2005

10 held in Waziristan operation

WANA, South Waziristan - The security forces Sunday arrested 10 suspected terrorists during an operation in a village near Pak-Afghan border in North Waziristan Agency. The personnel of Special Services Groups (SSG) carried out the operation also participated by several helicopters from Wana, South Waziristan Airbase. The authorities said that through a prior tip, the security forces cordoned off the village Mana in Gurbaz area of North Waziristan Agency near Pak-Afghan border. The security forces started the operation at around 5.00 a.m. and completed it in the afternoon. Military Spokesman Maj. Gen. Shaukat Sultan confirmed arrest of 10 suspected terrorists.

Dawn, 15 March 2005

No IAEA request received for N-parts, says FO (Qudssia Akhlaque)

ISLAMABAD, March 14: Pakistan has received no request from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for samples of centrifuges and if asked, the government will not accede to it. This was stated by foreign office spokesman Jalil Abbas Jilani in reply to a question at his weekly news briefing on Monday. "We have not been asked to hand over any centrifuges to IAEA nor will Pakistan do so," the spokesman declared, dismissing reports that Pakistan had agreed to provide some samples of centrifuges to the IAEA. He rejected another report suggesting that Pakistan had given some control of its nuclear assets to the Americans or some international agency.

Dawn, 15 March 2005

WB urged to appoint neutral experts: Baglihar issue

ISLAMABAD, March 14: The Special Committee of Parliament on Kashmir has urged the World Bank (WB) to appoint neutral experts soon to resolve the issue of Baglihar dam. The committee met here on Monday and discussed the matter in detail. It expressed concern over the delaying tactics adopted by India and advised the ministries of foreign affairs and water and power to have a pro-active approach to get the issue resolved within the treaty provisions at the earliest.

Daily Times, 15 March 2005

Taiwan part of China: Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan reiterated on Monday that it regarded Taiwan as part of China and hoped it would return to the motherland soon. "Pakistan adheres to the One China policy," said a Foreign Office spokesperson in response to Anti-Secession Law passed by The National People's Congress of China. In a press statement, the spokesperson said that

Pakistan had shared the international concern over reports of a referendum being organised by the Taiwanese authorities. staff report

The News, 15 March 2005

Opposition stages walkout on KBD issue

ISLAMABAD: The issue of construction of Kalabagh Dam led to a walkout from the National Assembly by the opposition, arguing that the president is not empowered to announce any dam opposed by the three provinces. The walkout was staged when the speaker did not allow the PPPP member Abdul Mujeeb Peerzada to raise the issue of President remarks on Kalabagh Dam on a point of order. However, the government defended the construction of Kalabagh dam saying that it is a must for the country. The opposition ended the walkout on the condition that their two members will speak on the issue.

The News, 15 March 2005

Democracy key to Pak-US ties: official (Nadeem Malik)

ISLAMABAD: A return to full democracy in Pakistan is central to long-term stability and a primary objective of the US' Pakistan policy, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Donald Camp said in his budget testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Detailing the US policy, as part of the Bush administrations budget 2006, which gives Pakistan \$698.3 million, Camp said the US democracy programmes and exchanges are assisting the development of accountable, responsive democratic institutions and practices, including effective legislatures and local councils that respond to citizens and that play a positive role in governance.

The News, 15 March 2005

Six 'RAW agents' arrested in Karachi

KARACHI: The Sindh police on Thursday claimed to have arrested six terrorists from the Baloch Colony police jurisdiction, which yielded arms and ammunition, explosives, and literature regarding guerrilla warfare and anti-state elements. The arrested terrorists had allegedly been operating in the province under the patronage of Indian Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) and were entrusted with targeting communication links and vital installations by blasting bridges on important roads, Wapda installations, and railway tracks to destabilise the country.

The News, 16 March 2005

Pakistan wants to join Nuclear Suppliers Group: FO

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan announced on Tuesday it wants to join a group of countries working to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The offer by Pakistan to join the 44-member Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) comes on the eve of a visit by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. "Pakistan is fully prepared to interact with the Nuclear Suppliers Group and to become a member so as to work together and promote nuclear non-proliferation," Foreign Office spokesman Jalil Abbas Jilani told The Associated Press.

The News, 16 March 2005

Osama trail lost last year: Musharraf

ISLAMABAD: It was a case of so near yet so far in the hunt for the world's most-wanted man. Pakistani forces hunting Osama bin Laden lost track of the al-Qaeda leader after coming close to discovering his whereabouts several months ago, President Pervez Musharraf told the BBC late on Monday. He said the intelligence agencies had indications 8 to 10 months ago about the whereabouts of Osama but then the trail went cold.

Dawn, 16 March 2005

No nuclear material transferred: Musharraf sees useful meeting in India

ISLAMABAD, March 15: President General Pervez Musharraf on Tuesday said investigations into Dr A.Q. Khan's activities had not revealed any transfer of nuclear material. "No, as far as we are concerned, nowhere in our investigation has it been revealed that nuclear material has been given over, other than some centrifuge parts, centrifuge designs," he told BBC's Asia Today programme. .

Dawn, 16 March 2005

Pakistan, Oman agree to boost ties

MUSCAT, March 15: Pakistan and Oman on Tuesday agreed on the need to enhance their bilateral relations in all fields after talks between Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and Sultan Qaboos bin Said. The talks also covered regional and international issues of mutual interest including the Middle East. After the meeting that was held at the Sultan's palace in Nizwa, Mr Aziz told reporters the meeting discussed regional issues and ways to bring Pakistan and Oman more closer.

Dawn, 16 March 2005

Opposition stages walkout in Balochistan assembly

QUETTA, March 15: The opposition in Balochistan assembly on Tuesday staged walkout when the speaker disallowed an adjournment motion on deployment of regular troops in Sui and an uncertain situation in Dera Bugti. Deputy speaker Mir Aslam Bhoonani, who chaired the proceedings after evening prayer, disposed of the adjournment motion tabled by opposition

leader Kachkol Baloch. The deputy speaker said the home minister had given assurance that no military operation would be conducted in Sui. He said, the opposition members had already expressed their views while speaking on admissibility of the motion. The motion was liable to be disposed of.

Dawn, 17 March 2005

Musharraf seeks US support for Kashmir process

ISLAMABAD, March 16: President General Pervez Musharraf on Wednesday urged the United States to support efforts aimed at resolving the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in keeping with the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. During a meeting with the visiting US Secretary of State Dr Condoleezza Rice, he underscored that normalization in the region would not be possible without the settlement of the core dispute between Pakistan and India. The confidence-building measures should be matched by tangible progress in the dialogue process, the president said.

Dawn, 17 March 2005

Islamabad accused of 'abandoning core issue'

New Delhi, March 16: Kashmir's resistance leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani accused Pakistan on Wednesday of letting down the cause of freedom by changing its attitude towards what Islamabad has been regarding as a core issue with India. Mr Geelani is an opponent of the proposed trans-LoC bus service due to begin its Srinagar-Muzaffarabad operations on April 7, a move he describes as a tamasha, or a spectacle, to distract from the political dispute of Jammu and Kashmir.

The News, 17 March 2005

'Prince Waleed appreciates government policies' (Tariq Butt)

ISLAMABAD: Saudi Ambassador Ali Awadh Assiri said on Wednesday that the just concluded visit of Saudi Prince Waleed bin Talal to Islamabad showed Pakistan had remarkable political stability and economic integrity. "The visit also demonstrated that Pakistan has great potential for investment, created by the policies of President Gen Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz," the ambassador said. The billionaire Prince Waleed stands on No 5 in the Forbe's Magazine's super-rich of the world.

The Nation, 17 March 2005

Terror war to dominate Pak-US talks (Umer Farooq)

ISLAMABAD - The terrorism related issues still dominate the Pak-US relations as US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice began her first visit to Islamabad on Wednesday. In two rounds of official talks the Pakistani officials and US Secretary of State are likely to review the latest developments in the war against terrorism and methods to further improve the cooperation in this field. Official statements from Washington, which set the tone of the visit, clearly identify terrorism as main focus of her meetings with Pakistani officials, along with educational, economic and democratic reforms. Since the year 2000 the issue of terrorism has taken precedence over every other issue in Pak-US relations.

Daily Times, 17 March 2005

Benazir will contest next elections: PPP spokesperson

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has rejected statements by federal ministers that an agreement has been reached between the government and the PPP and that party chairperson Benazir Bhutto would not be contesting the next elections. In a statement issued on Wednesday, a PPP spokesperson said the regime had announced a policy of reconciliation to establish contacts with opposition parties. The regime has also said that it would pursue enlightened policies.

The News, 18 March 2005

Transit trade agreements with CARs likely (Nadeem Malik)

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Commerce is considering entering into transit trade agreements with landlocked Central Asian Republics (CARs), with which no such arrangement exists. This was stated by Commerce Minister Humayun Akhtar Khan at the end of Envoys Conference in Almaty, Kazakhstan. He said such arrangement with these countries would provide an enhanced market access for Pakistani goods. In the conference, in-depth consultations were held to assess Pakistan's export potential in each of these countries.

Dawn, 18 March 2005

Fierce clashes in Dera Bugti: Conflicting reports about casualties (Saleem Shahid)

QUETTA, March 17: A number of people were killed and many others injured in fierce gun-battles between personnel of the Frontier Corps and Bugti tribesmen in Dera Bugti on Thursday. FC spokesman Colonel Rizwan Malik confirmed that five FC personnel had been killed and seven injured. There was no exact figure of casualties on the Bugti side because the communication between Dera Bugti and the rest of the country had been disrupted. Sources claiming to have been in touch with some Bugti leaders by satellite phone claimed that dozens of Bugti tribesmen had been killed and as many as 150 injured.

Dawn, 18 March 2005

Rice stresses need for free, fair polls in '07 (Qudssia Akhlaque)

ISLAMABAD, March 17: US Secretary of State Dr Condoleezza Rice on Thursday conveyed to her hosts Washington's concerns about democracy in Pakistan and underscored the need for fair and free elections in 2007. "We talked about

Pakistan's internal politics and the need for a democratic path ahead for Pakistan," Ms Rice told a joint news conference with her counterpart Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri following delegation-level talks at the foreign ministry. The Bush Administration, she underlined, looked forward to more democratic Pakistan in future.

Dawn, 18 March 2005

Three objections to Neelum dam

ISLAMABAD, March 17: Pakistan has raised three major objections against the Kishanganga storage and hydropower project being built by India on river Neelum in occupied Kashmir and sought an immediate special meeting of the Permanent Indus Commission (PIC) before seeking World Bank arbitration. Sources said Pakistan had raised objections over the design of the dam, diversion of Neelum river to Jhelum through a tunnel and its negative impact on Pakistan's water use. Pakistan's commissioner for the PIC, Syed Jamaat Ali Shah, briefed a meeting on Thursday about the project, violations by India of the Indus Waters Treaty and Pakistan's technical objections, besides his recent meetings with his Indian counterpart.

Dawn, 18 March 2005

\$127m debt rescheduled by Russia

ISLAMABAD, March 17: The Russian government has rescheduled its entire debt owed by Pakistan amounting to US\$127 million under the Paris Club arrangements. A formal agreement to this effect was signed between the two governments in Moscow on March 16. The agreement was signed as a result of two days' discussions in Moscow between Russian officials and a delegation of Pakistan officials headed by Shuja Shah, Secretary of Economic Affairs Division. The Pakistan delegation comprising representatives of ministry of commerce, finance division, State Bank of Pakistan and National Bank of Pakistan visited Moscow from March 14 to 16, according to a message faxed here from Moscow on Thursday.

Dawn, 18 March 2005

Pakistan's access to GSP Plus ruled out (Shadaba Islam)

BRUSSELS, March 17: European Union foreign ministers on Wednesday failed to agree on a new generalized system of preferences (GSP) for developing countries but diplomats said there was little prospect that Pakistan would be given access to the bloc's additional zero-duty import scheme, known as GSP Plus. EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson said he had heard no proposal from any EU minister for giving Pakistan "vulnerable" status, making it eligible for GSP Plus benefits. "I heard no such proposal today," Mr Mandelson told Dawn.

Daily Times, 19 March 2005

NSG team arriving next month to check Pakistan's nuclear exports

VIENNA: Experts representing the world's top nuclear exporters will visit Pakistan next month to assess whether controls are in place to prevent illicit exports of sensitive atomic technology, the group's chairman said. The team from the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), the 44-nation alliance that polices global exports of materials and equipment that can be used in atomic weapons, should arrive in early April, said the NSG's Swedish chairman, Richard Ekwall. Pakistan is at the centre of an investigation of a nuclear black market linked to the father of Pakistan's atom bomb programme, Abdul Qadeer Khan. Ekwall said the visit to Pakistan was part of the NSG's "outreach" programme to states that are not members but are important for the global export control regime.

The Frontier Post, 19 March 2005

Karzai to seek Pak support for SAARC membership

ISLAMABAD: Afghan President Hamid Karzai will be arriving here on March 22 on a two-day official visit, apparently for attending Pakistan Day celebrations. During his stay, the Afghan president would meet his host counterpart Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz for discussions on a wide range of issues including bilateral relations and other regional matters. Sources disclosed Rice requested the Pakistani leadership to allow India to use the country for transit in order to boost reconstruction efforts in the war-torn Afghanistan. It is learnt Karzai would also seek support from Pakistan for getting the membership of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

Daily Times, 19 March 2005

Pakistan itself exposed Khan network: US (Faiz Rehman)

WASHINGTON: The United States has reposed confidence in the Pakistani government, saying the US believed that the leadership was not involved in the AQ Khan network, and the network was brought to light by the Pakistanis. "We have a good understanding about how that network came about, how it operated and we certainly don't see any connection with the leadership of Pakistan," a State Department spokesman told reporters on Thursday. He said the Pakistanis were the first to expose the Khan network and the US had no idea of the full scope of its activities. "We had information or we had indications that there was proliferation activity," the spokesman said, adding, "we certainly didn't have an idea of the full scope or nature of this activity until the Pakistanis revealed what was going on."

The News, 19 March 2005

US advises Pakistan against Iran gas project (Naveed Ahmad)

ISLAMABAD: The United States top diplomat and former National Security Adviser, Dr Condoleezza Rice, has asked Pakistan to carefully move ahead in its ties with Iran, particularly on the issue of gas pipeline. Dr Rice, who left for Tokyo on the fourth stop of her six-nation tour early Friday morning, advised Pakistan not to go ahead with Iran on gas pipeline project. "Any move to strengthen Iran, by trade or otherwise, would frown the United States," sources quoted the American diplomat as telling her

Pakistani counterpart. The US 'advice' came after Information Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmad admitted that Dr AQ Khan sold centrifuges to Iran.

Dawn, 19 March 2005

Opposition team to visit Balochistan (Ahmed Hassan)

ISLAMABAD, March 18: The combined opposition in the National Assembly on Friday accepted a government offer to visit Dera Bugti under official arrangements to find out the exact death toll in Thursday's clashes and to see if a military operation was under way in the area. The president of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League and chairman of the parliamentary committee on Balochistan, Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, who had proposed such a mission on Thursday, said that only opposition legislators would be in the fact-finding team.

Daily Times, 20 March 2005

Shaheen II test-fired

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan carried out a successful test fire of its long-range surface-to-surface missile Shaheen II (Hatf VI) on Saturday. The missile system that incorporates an advanced two-stage solid motor technology can carry all types of conventional and nuclear warheads to a range of 2,000 kilometres. The test was carried out to verify some refined technical parameters. All parameters were validated. President Pervez Musharraf, who witnessed the test, congratulated the scientists and engineers, saying the nation was proud of its strategic organisations and forces that had gelled extremely well under the National Command Authority into an effective deterrence force in a span of five years. app

The News, 20 March 2005

Military takes over Sui installations (Muhammad Anis)

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao on Saturday said no military operation would be carried out in Dera Bugti and troops were being moved to take over and protect Sui installations. "We plan no military operation in Dera Bugti but the Army troops present in Sui area are being moved to protect Sui gas installations and the FC personnel present there have been relieved," Sherpao said while addressing a press conference here. He said the government would do whatever within its resources to protect the vital installations.

Dawn, 20 March 2005

25 killed in blast at Balochistan shrine

QUETTA, March 19: Twenty-five people were killed and many others injured on Saturday when a powerful bomb ripped through a crowd gathered at a shrine in the Balochistan town of Gandava, officials said. "I saw 25 bodies myself. People were crying and there were pools of blood," Mohammad Amin Umrani, the nazim of Naseerabad, told AFP by telephone. Scores of people were also injured in the blast, he said. Between 10,000 and 20,000 people had gathered for the annual Urs, said Syed Kami Shah, the brother of the shrine's custodian. Daily Times, 20 March 2005

Daily Times, 20 March 2005

Thousands flee Dera Bugti (Azizullah Khan and Shahzad Raza)

QUETTA/ISLAMABAD: Thousands of people started evacuating Dera Bugti on Saturday, fearing more battles between Bugti tribesmen and government forces, government officials said. Dera Bugti DCO Abdul Samad Lasi said that Akbar Bugti had asked people to evacuate the area. Lasi said at least 1,500 armed Bugti men have taken up positions in mountains outside the town and were waiting for an order to attack. He cited intelligence and security reports. Bugti denied the DCO's statement. It was Dera Bugti administration that had asked government employees, especially those belonging to the Punjab, to evacuate the area, he claimed.

Daily Times, 21 March 2005

N-cooperation with Iran: US not finished with Pakistan

KARACHI: The United States is exerting maximum pressure on Pakistan to provide a detailed and "authentic" list of its nuclear cooperation with Iran over the years, Asia Times Online (ATO) reported on Sunday. ATO said contacts in the highest echelons of Pakistan's strategic quarters had told it that during her recent visit to Islamabad, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice apprised Pakistan of the latest — and strong — US demands. Many in the Bush administration believe that Iran's nuclear energy programme is a smokescreen for developing nuclear weapons. Tehran has agreed with the European Union and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that it will temporarily suspend its uranium enrichment programme.

Dawn, 21 March 2005

Experts not to visit N-facilities (Anwar Iqbal)

WASHINGTON, March 20: A team of international nuclear experts scheduled to visit Pakistan early next month will not inspect facilities used for making weapons, diplomatic sources told Dawn. The Nuclear Suppliers Group, a 44-nation alliance that oversees global exports of materials and equipment, had announced earlier this week that it is sending a team of experts to Pakistan. The NSG represents the world's top nuclear exporters. Media reports quoted chairman of the group Richard Ekwall as saying that his team will assess whether controls are in place to prevent illicit exports of sensitive atomic technology from Pakistan. But diplomatic sources in Washington said the NSG is a regulatory organization which deals only with civilian nuclear facilities.

Daily Times, 21 March 2005

F-16s for cooperation against Iran?

LAHORE: Pakistan could have agreed to host US troops and intelligence assets near its border with Iran in preparation for a possible attack on Iran, including training US forces in Karachi, Asia Times Online reports. ATO said the real interest in Wednesday's meeting between President Musharraf and Condoleezza Rice centered on Iran. Before Rice's visit to India, Pakistan and Afghanistan, Washington was abuzz with talk that the US had convinced President Musharraf to lend support to US action against Iran for its alleged nuclear programme, ATO said. It reported that in return, the US seemed to be more receptive to Pakistan's long-term request for F-16 fighter aircraft.

The News, 21 March 2005

532 Indian fishermen set free

KARACHI, March 20: The Sindh government has ordered release of 532 Indian prisoners, four of them illegal entrants and the others fishermen. The freed Indians were on Sunday being taken to Lahore from where they would be escorted to Wahga border before being handed over to the Indian authorities on Monday. Home Secretary Brig (r) Ghulam Mohammad Mohtaram told PPI on Sunday that the fishermen had been arrested on different occasions by the Maritime Security Agency for violating Pakistan's territorial waters. He said that the other four Indians had been arrested and jailed for entering Pakistan illegally.

The News, 21 March 2005

Jhal Magsi shrine blast death toll hits 50

QUETTA: The death toll in shrine bombing in Fatehpur in Jhal Magsi district rose to 50, as the provincial government ordered for a probe into the incident on Sunday. So far, 41 deceased have been identified, while 32 out of some 40 injured were still in critical condition, hospital sources told The News by telephone from Gandawah. It has been learnt that the law-enforcement agencies are investigating the incident from various angles, including suicide bombing. Meanwhile, three-day mourning has been announced in the area.

The News, 22 March 2005

Islamabad backs Model B on UNSC expansion (Mariana Baabar)

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan says that its position on the proposed expansion of permanent members of the United Nations Security Council is very clear. "We feel that there should be no more centres of privilege. In fact the reforms of the United Nations should be done in a democratic and transparent manner with no deadlines. We support Model B of the two models contained in the UN report", said Jalil Abbas Jilani, the spokesman at the Foreign Office, during the weekly press briefing here Monday. He said there should be an expansion of non-permanent members of the UN Security Council in the non-permanent category and added there should be broad based consensus on these future UN reforms.

The News, 22 March 2005

'Pakistan second largest recipient of IAEA assistance'

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has always been involved in various activities of the IAEA and has worked for the utilisation of nuclear energy for peaceful applications, said member (Power), Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission, Javed Iqleem. "We are the second largest recipient of technical assistance from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), he said while inaugurating IAEA Regional Meeting on "Impact of the New IAEA Regulations on Safety Management of Present and Future Power Plants, Especially Severe Accidents," organized by PAEC in collaboration with IAEA here on Monday. Member (Power) PAEC said the IAEA missions have been very helpful in establishing a sustainable, strong and viable nuclear safety regime and PAEC has welcomed international experts from IAEA, World Association of Nuclear Operators (WANO) and Candu Owners Group (COG) for the benefits of KANUPP and CHASNUPP in their efforts to operate the plants safely.

Dawn, 22 March 2005

589 Indian prisoners cross Wagah today

LAHORE, March 21: Pakistan on Tuesday is scheduled to hand over 589 prisoners to India via Wagah border crossing. The Punjab government said on Monday that the prisoners were being returned as part of the latest goodwill gestures to fortify the ongoing peace process. Mainly fishermen, who had been caught on charges of entering illegally into Pakistani waters in Arabian Sea, the Indian prisoners had been in Pakistani jails for years. Of the total, 532 have been brought from Sindh jails, and the rest from Balochistan. A Punjab prison official said some of such prisoners might be coming to Pakistan from other side of the border on Tuesday (today) or in a couple of days.

Daily Times, 22 March 2005

'Khan network offered secrets to build nukes'

LAHORE: Nuclear investigators from the United States and other nations now believe that the black market network run by Pakistani scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan was selling not only technology for enriching nuclear fuel and blueprints for nuclear weapons, but also some of the darkest of the bomb makers' arts: the hard-to-master engineering secrets needed to fabricate nuclear warheads, reported New York Times. The paper said that the suspicion of nuclear investigators were initially raised by the discovery of step-by-step instructions, some of which appear to have come from China and Pakistan, among the documents recovered last year from Libya. More recently, investigators have found that the Khan network had offered similar materials to Iran.

Daily Times, 22 March 2005

Govt will ensure security of national installations: PM (Irfan Ghauri)

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said on Monday that forces would remain in Sui and other areas of Balochistan to ensure the safety of national installations. Talking to reporters at his chamber in Parliament House, Aziz said FC men had the duty to defend and retaliate if attacked. He said the government wanted an amicable solution to the Balochistan issue. "It also wants to resolve the real causes that lead to unrest in the area," he said. The prime minister said Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain was in contact with Nawab Akbar Bugti, which was a "healthy sign". He said members of Balochistan committee would be briefed about Sui by the provincial government and FC authorities.

The News, 23 March 2005

Ex-diplomats to play role in CBMs (Mariana Baabar)

ISLAMABAD: Former diplomats will play their role in confidence-building measures (CBM) between Pakistan and India, when they meet the Association of Indian diplomats and ambassadors in New Delhi on April 4-7. Ambassador Khalid Mehmud, President of the Association of Retired Ambassadors, will be heading a 10-member team, which includes Khalid Salim, Tariq Fatimi, Secretary-General Sultan Hyat, Abul Wahab, Mohiuddin Ahmed and Mushtaq Mehar. Hamid Ansari heads the Association of Indian diplomats and ambassadors. "This is really a good idea as all our working lives we were involved in framing and executing policies for our respective governments. These meetings with our Pakistani counterparts will give further impetus to the continuing CBMs, which are taking place in different areas", SK Lambah, India's point man on Pakistan told The News recently in New Delhi.

The News, 23 March 2005

Interaction with WB on Baglihar issue (Muhammad Saleh Zaafir)

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan will send a technical delegation to Washington to interact with the World Bank high-ups for dispelling the misgivings created by the Indian response to Pakistan's petition against construction of Baglihar Dam. Diplomatic sources told 'The News' here on Tuesday that the World Bank is favourably disposed to the Pakistani petition but it would appoint the neutral experts after gathering the requisite information. The bank sought explanations from both the sides and Pakistan responded immediately but India submitted her response in two instalments. The bank informed Pakistan about the counter objections/explanation offered by India.

Daily Times, 23 March 2005

No insurance cover for Kashmir bus

LAHORE: Unlike the Delhi-Lahore bus, the passengers on board the historic Uri-Muzaffarabad bus will be travelling at their own risk because the Jammu and Kashmir State Road Transport Corporation (JKSRTC) buses do not have insurance. Indian Minister of State for Transport Raman Bhalla confirmed the Uri-Muzaffarabad bus would roll without any insurance cover. "At present we don't have insurance for any of our vehicles," he added. JKSRTC managing director S Mehta said, "We are in touch with some insurance companies but so far none of them have come forward. However, we have kept funds to cover eventualities." The Delhi-Lahore buses, which have a safer route, are insured completely.

Dawn, 23 March 2005

Musharraf, Karzai reiterate pledge to root out terror: Accord to boost economic, trade ties

ISLAMABAD, March 22: Pakistan and Afghanistan resolved on Tuesday to forge a broad-based relationship with a thrust on invigorating trade and economic ties and expressed the common commitment to step up their coordination in the fight against terror. President Gen Pervez Musharraf and his Afghan counterpart Hamid Karzai told the media after formal talks that they remained firmly committed to rooting out terrorism for sustainable development, peace and stability in the region. He declared that Pakistan had been successful in its fight against terrorism, having destroyed the sanctuaries and communication links of terrorists who had taken refuge in the country's tribal region bordering Afghanistan.

Dawn, 23 March 2005

US ignored Pakistan's quest for nukes: report

WASHINGTON, March 22: The United States and other Western powers allowed Pakistan to develop nuclear weapons because they needed Islamabad's support to fight Soviet forces in Afghanistan, says a think-tank report distributed in Washington on Tuesday. The United States and the erstwhile West Germany had prior knowledge of Pakistan's clandestine efforts to buy nuclear material but decided to ignore them, says the Observer Research Foundation, which is affiliated with Washington's Brookings Institution. The report claims that even the present US Vice President Dick Cheney, who was Secretary of Defence during the Afghan war, had blocked an in-house report on Pakistan's proliferation activities to help sale of F-16 aircraft to Islamabad.

The News, 24 March 2005

Musharraf urges India to discuss Kashmir

ISLAMABAD: President Pervez Musharraf on Wednesday said Pakistan cannot be oblivious to its defence and security and its armed forces are ever vigilant for the defence of the motherland, while also urging the nation to combat internal threats of extremism and terrorism through concerted efforts. Addressing a grand Pakistan Day parade, marking the 65th anniversary of the landmark Pakistan Resolution, the president underlined the importance of both the confidence building measures and Pakistan-India dialogue process moving forward in tandem. "If the real disputes are not resolved, the confidence building measures (CBMs) will also lose their impact," he said.

The News, 24 March 2005

Islamabad, Kabul vow to push gas pipeline

ISLAMABAD: Afghan and Pakistani leaders on Wednesday agreed to do more to push forward a long-delayed natural gas pipeline that will run through gas-rich Turkmenistan to Pakistan and possibly India, an official said. The 1,680-kilometre Afghan-Turkmen pipeline project has been on hold since the 1990s, when Afghanistan's Taliban came into power. Officials from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan have held meetings in recent months to discuss how to proceed with the plan. On Wednesday, Afghan President Hamid Karzai and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz agreed to concentrate on the \$3.5 billion pipeline because it would benefit the whole region, an official said on condition of anonymity.

The News, 24 March 2005

Five Taliban killed near Pak border

KABUL: US-led forces killed five militants in south-eastern Afghanistan after coming under rocket and small arms fire, the US military said on Wednesday. The militants had attacked a base in Khost province and checkpoints on the nearby border with Pakistan on Tuesday night. "Coalition troops returned fire with 155 mm artillery rounds at enemy positions. Coalition aircraft killed five insurgents," the US military said. The US military did not say who the attackers were but a Taliban spokesman said Taliban fighters had fired 20 rockets at US positions near Khost airport. Ten Afghan government soldiers were killed and 15 wounded in the attack, the Taliban spokesman, Abdul Latif Hakimi told the Afghan Islamic Press news agency, but the US said there had been no casualties on the coalition's side.

The News, 24 March 2005

Pakistan, China adopt identical position on UN reforms

BEIJING: Pakistan and China have adopted an identical position on the proposed UN's reforms, making the world body more democratic and representative. "We believe that this issue should be dealt with in a gradual manner under the consensus reached by various parties," sources in Beijing said. Talking to APP, the sources said the two countries have been holding regular consultation on the issue, so that the world body is made more effective to serve the interest of the developing countries and meet the new challenges. When asked to comment on China's position on the reforms, spokesman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry Liu Jianchao said China appreciates efforts made by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan for promoting multilateralism and democratisation of international relations.

Dawn, 24 March 2005

Aziz, Karzai discuss steps to boost trade: Five pacts, one protocol signed

ISLAMABAD, March 23: Afghan President Hamid Karzai and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz on Wednesday held talks on bilateral matters, regional situation, and cooperation in war on terror and measures to boost trade between the two countries. Earlier, soon after his arrival on Tuesday, the visiting Afghan president held a comprehensive round of talks with President General Pervez Musharraf. Before arriving at the prime minister's house, Mr Karzai witnessed Pakistan Day parade as chief guest. Both the countries signed five agreements and a protocol to enhance cooperation in the areas of culture, media, tourism and launching a bus service between the two countries.

Dawn, 24 March 2005

External debt goes up to \$34.8bn (Khaleeq Kiani)

ISLAMABAD, March 23: Pakistan's total external debt has increased by \$1.52 billion to \$34.828 billion in the first half of the current fiscal year, from \$33.307 billion on June 30, 2004. The Ministry of Finance released here on Wednesday mid-year review of Pakistan's economy, that suggested the total debt and liabilities have also increased to \$36.704 billion in the first six months of the current fiscal year, up by \$1.45 billion from \$35.258 billion of last year. The finance ministry said the public and publicly guaranteed debt has also increased to \$31.415 billion, up by \$1.54 billion from \$29.876 billion on June 30, 2004. "Although the stock of external debt and liabilities have gone up, the burden of debt as percentage of the GDP or percentage of foreign exchange earnings continues to exhibit a declining trend," said the ministry.

The Nation, 25 March 2005

Pakistan ready for Siachen pullout: Kasuri (Faizul Haque)

New Delhi - Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri has said that the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus was one of the most important confidence building measures between Pakistan and India and that Pakistan was ready to pull out of Siachen if the

two governments came to terms on a pullout. "I think it is the second most important CBM since we started talking. It is important because once Kashmiris start meeting and exchanging stories, they will start thinking about a possible solution to the Kashmir issue," said Kasuri in an interview to India's private television channel NDTV Thursday. There are indications that Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Congress President Sonia Gandhi would flag off the inaugural Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus on April 7.

Dawn, 25 March 2005

Centrifuge parts may be sent to IAEA: President

ISLAMABAD, March 24: President Pervez Musharraf on Thursday said Pakistan was considering to send parts of nuclear centrifuges to Vienna for inspection. "To end the issue once and for all we want to send nuclear centrifuges to Vienna for inspection and the matter is under consideration," said President Musharraf in an interview to newly-launched Aaj TV channel. President Musharraf dilated on the strategy for allaying International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) suspicions that nuclear centrifuges had allegedly been transferred to some countries, including Iran, from Pakistan.

Daily Times, 25 March 2005

Chinese PM visiting Pakistan and India next month

BEIJING: Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao will pay official visits to India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka from April 5 to 12, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said on Thursday. "South Asian countries and China have long maintained friendly, neighbourly relations," ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao said. "We are all developing countries and in the safeguarding of world peace and the promotion of development, we share broad consensus." "We believe these visits will promote friendly and cooperative relations between China and the four Asian countries," Liu said.

Daily Times, 25 March 2005

Cabinet restores religion column (Shahzad Raza and Zulfiqar Ghuman)

ISLAMABAD: Serious differences surfaced among cabinet members over the restoration of the religion column in the new passport during Thursday's meeting. However, the cabinet – chaired by Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz – approved the recommendation of a cabinet committee to restore the religion column in the new passport. Later, the cabinet's decision caused a stir in the National Assembly (NA), as the Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) slammed the government for going back on its word. They said the government had showed weakness and had bowed before reactionary forces.

Dawn, 26 March 2005

Islamabad gets IAEA request for N-parts (Qudssia Akhlaque)

ISLAMABAD, March 25: Pakistan said on Friday it had received a formal request from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for providing samples of nuclear centrifuges. The confirmation came from Foreign Office spokesman Jalil Abbas Jilani when he was contacted by Dawn for comments on President Pervez Musharraf's disclosure on Thursday in an interview with a private TV channel that Pakistan was considering dispatching parts of centrifuges to Vienna for scrutiny. "The president's statement is in the context of a request received from the IAEA (made sometime back) that some components of a discarded old centrifuge may be sent to the agency in Vienna for analysis need in connection with the agency's investigation into the contamination issue with regard to Iran," Mr Jilani maintained.

The Nation, 26 March 2005

Siachen troops not to be withdrawn unilaterally: FM

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan on Friday asked for bilateral troops' withdrawal from Siachen, saying it would not pull out its troops unilaterally from the world's highest battlefield. Talking here to newsmen at Foreign Service Academy, Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri said Pakistan stood by the agreement with India on troops' withdrawal from Siachen. However, he made it clear there could not be a unilateral withdrawal of forces from the area. He said any unilateral act was an indication of weakness, as such steps never led to peace. Kasuri said peace could only be achieved when both sides have a desire for it and they practically demonstrated their will in this regard.

Dawn, 26 March 2005

Pakistan lauds US move

ISLAMABAD, March 25: Pakistan on Friday welcomed a decision by the United States to sell it F-16 fighter jets, saying it demonstrated Islamabad's close ties with Washington. The sale comes a week after US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice discussed the issue with both Pakistan and India. "I confirm that the US government has agreed to sell F-16s to Pakistan. It will be the latest version of the aircraft," Pakistani Information Minister Sheikh Rashid told AFP. "We welcome this good gesture and it shows good friendship between Pakistan and the United States," he said. Announcing the decision in Washington, a senior US official said: "Existing military assistance will be supplemented by moving forward on the sale of F-16s to Pakistan and we're notifying that to Congress today."

Daily Times, 26 March 2005

Sino-Pak friendship immune to global changes: China

BEIJING: Chinese President Hu Jintao said on Friday that nothing would affect the decades old Sino-Pak friendship despite

changes in global and regional scenarios. He said this to Pakistani Ambassador to China Salman Bashir, who presented him the 'Letters of Credence' at the Great Hall of the People. President Hu Jintao said the two countries had omni-dimensional co-operation in various fields of mutual interest. He said that he was grateful to Pakistan for its support on the issue of Taiwan, adding that Pakistan was the first country to support the Anti-secession Law, the National People's Congress passed this month. He also thanked Pakistan for its support to China on Tibet and human rights.

Dawn, 26 March 2005

Musharraf supports maximum autonomy for provinces

ISLAMABAD, March 25: President Gen Pervez Musharraf has said he favours maximum autonomy for provinces and a greater share for them in the National Finance Commission award. All this should happen for peace and harmony, the president said while responding to questions emailed to him on his website (presidentofpakistan.gov.pk) in a wide-ranging interaction with anchor-persons of Pakistani TV channels on Friday. In reply to a question about Balochistan, the president said the province was now getting more than its share. "It is getting more allocations (13 per cent) under the PSDP as compared to Punjab (nine per cent)," he said.

Dawn, 27 March 2005

F-16 sale not linked to Iran-US row: FM

LAHORE, March 26: The proposed sale of F-16 fighter jets to Pakistan has no links with the US-Iran standoff on Tehran's nuclear programme nor the deal has anything to do with the issue, Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri said here on Saturday. Addressing a news conference, he said Pakistan would get the latest version of the planes (F-16 C/D), and their number would be decided according to the requirements of the defence forces. He said the US had set no limit on the number of planes Pakistan could buy.

The Nation, 27 March 2005

India invites Pak to settle dam issue (Dilshad Azeem)

ISLAMABAD - Besides sending more water statistics, India has formally invited Pakistan to resolve Baglihar Dam issue bilaterally since Islamabad moved the World Bank for appointment of a neutral expert, The Nation has learnt reliably. The Indian government made the fresh contact through Permanent Commission on Indus Waters, the only body that exists between both sides since 1960 Water Treaty, the sources in Ministry of Water and Power maintained. At the same time, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz's Advisor Sharifuddin Pirzada and Law Ministry have almost finalized the case to contest before the neutral expert or International Court of Justice.

Dawn, 27 March 2005

US report on N-parts import denied

ISLAMABAD, March 26: Islamabad on Saturday refuted a Los Angeles Times report regarding the involvement of the Pakistan government in the "clandestine purchases" of US high technology components for use in nuclear weapons programme. Foreign Office spokesman Jalil Abbas Jilani, when contacted for his comments, termed the report as "baseless and speculative." "These are highly speculative and baseless stories," Mr Jilani said, adding there was nothing new in the report.

Daily Times, 27 March 2005

'Pakistan will maintain minimum deterrence'

RISALPUR: Praising the US decision to sell F-16 fighter aircraft to Pakistan, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said on Saturday that Pakistan believed in peaceful coexistence with its neighbours and had no aggressive designs against any anyone. "Pakistan does not harbour any aggressive designs against any country and will continue to maintain minimum level of deterrence, needed to defend our homeland," he said in his address at the passing out parade of PAF cadets. He said the US decision was a "red-letter day" for the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) and was "good" and "very important" as the government believed that its armed forces should have credible equipment.

The Nation, 27 March 2005

No military operation in Balochistan: Sherpao

LAHORE - Federal Interior Minister Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao Saturday said there would be no military operation in Balochistan and the issue would be resolved amicably through dialogue. He said the parliamentary committee on Balochistan was going to announce a package for the province very soon, which would help resolve the conflict. Some amendments will have to be made in the Constitution in the light of committee's recommendations that would be presented in the National Assembly for approval, he added. Sherpao said the reconciliatory committee would visit Balochistan again to meet the Baloch leaders.

The Nation, 28 March 2005

Pakistan to get latest F-16s version (Farrukh Khan Pitafi)

Lahore - Pakistan is to get the C and D models of the F-16s from the block 50 or 52, which are the latest ones. This was disclosed by the Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Kaleem Sadaat while talking to the newsmen after the prize distribution

ceremony of the CAS Veteran Golf Championship here Sunday. Answering a query whether the new F-16s will be nuclear capable or not, he said that the nuclear capability has never been a problem as Pakistan already has the aircraft that can deliver nuclear weapons. When asked whether the planes would include the Beyond Visual Range (BVR) missile technology, he said since the decision was in its evolving stage, the details of the weaponry, the avionics accompanying the planes or their number could not be determined.

Dawn, 28 March 2005

PAEC to upgrade nuclear facilities, labs (Ihtasham ul Haque)

ISLAMABAD, March 27: The Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) has decided to set up new laboratories and facilities to meet the requirements of sustainability and self-reliance. Informed sources told Dawn that the commission had sought government's permission to upgrade and expand the Pakistan Institute of Nuclear Science and Technology (Pinstech) at a cost of Rs2.5 billion during the current year in order to meet new challenges. The PAEC says that soon since the nuclear tests by Pakistan on May 28, 1998, and the attack on World Trade Centre in New York on Sept 11, 2001, Pinstech has been facing "very serious threats/problems of embargo by foreign companies towards the supply of high-precision scientific and technical equipment and material".

Dawn, 28 March 2005

Saarc summit not likely this year (Qudssia Akhlaque)

ISLAMABAD, March 27: The twice-postponed 13th Saarc summit is unlikely to be held in near future because of scheduling problems, Dawn has learnt through diplomatic sources. The summit was initially scheduled for Jan 9-11 but later rescheduled for Feb 6-7, 2005. Early this month, Pakistan had proposed dates of April 11-17 for the summit, including days for the preparatory meetings leading up to the event. However, this schedule has been ruled out with President Pervez Musharraf's planned visit to India on April 16. Chances for the summit to be held later are also slim as the Indian parliament would be in session.

Daily Times, 28 March 2005

75 fishermen detained

KARACHI: Pakistan's coast guard seized two Indian fishing trawlers with crew members from India, the Philippines, China and Thailand in Pakistani waters and seized the ships' cargo of 70 tons of tuna, officials said on Sunday. The fishermen were arrested late Saturday more than 100 kilometres southeast of Karachi, Pakistan's main sea port in the Arabian Sea, said Lt Mohammed Ali, a spokesman for the Maritime Security Agency, which made the arrests. The two ships had an international crew — 38 Filipinos, 15 Chinese, six Thais and 15 Indians — MSA Capt. Mohsin Mirza said at a news briefing. He said the tuna seized from the ships would be auctioned. The trawlers are owned by Sri Sea, a company based in the Indian city of Visaka Patnam in Andhra Pradesh state, Mirza said.

Dawn, 29 March 2005

'Major accords to be signed with China' (Hasan Akhtar)

ISLAMABAD, March 28: Pakistan and China will sign a number of important agreements during Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao's state visit to Islamabad from April 5 to 7. The agreements will take their economic and political relations to 'a new height'. At his weekly press briefing on Monday, Foreign Office spokesman Jalil Abbas Jilani talked about the Chinese premier's visit which, he said, would enhance the 'strategic comprehensive partnership' between the two countries. Besides other engagements, Mr Jiabao will make a key-note address at the fourth ministerial meeting of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) comprising 26 countries. Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz will open the meeting here on April 5.

Dawn, 29 March 2005

F-16s will add to 'offensive punch': Musharraf hails navy war-game

KARACHI, March 28: President General Pervez Musharraf said on Monday that P-3C Orion planes, F-22P frigates and F-16 fighter aircraft would add to the offensive punch of Pakistan's defence. "These state-of-the-art platforms would augment our defence capabilities and play a pivotal role in any future scenario," he remarked. The president was speaking at a briefing session on Pakistan Navy's Shamsheer-i-Bahr-II war-game at the PNS Jauhar. He appreciated close coordination among the three services during the exercises and said that the lessons learnt from them would be of practical value and go a long way in validating Pakistan Navy's operational plans and doctrines.

Daily Times, 29 March 2005

No rolling back N-programme: Kasuri*

KARACHI: Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri reiterated Pakistan's stand on Monday that it would not rollback its nuclear programme claiming that the country's nuclear assets were fully protected under a "perfect" and "multi-layered" control system. Kasuri said the Indian government had endangered the peace talks between the two countries by constructing the Baglihar dam in violation of the Indus Water Treaty. He also said that Pakistan was supporting US policies in Iraq and Afghanistan "for the betterment of national interests." Kasuri was delivering a lecture on "Pakistan's foreign policy -strategies for a new world" at the Institute of Business Administration (IBA).

Daily Times, 29 March 2005

FIA teams will visit ME to arrest human traffickers (Shahzad Malik)

ISLAMABAD: Three teams of the Federal Investigation Agency's (FIA) anti-human trafficking unit will be sent to the Middle

East to arrest Pakistanis involved in human smuggling. "The teams will be sent to Middle Eastern countries, particularly Oman, from where more than 30,000 Pakistanis have been deported. The total number of Pakistanis who have been deported from the Middle East is 50,000," sources told Daily Times on Monday. The decision of sending FIA officials to the Middle East was taken at a meeting chaired by Interior Secretary Syed Kamal Shah, they added. The meeting also decided that Interior Minister Aftab Khan Sherpao would correspond with concerned authorities in Middle Eastern countries before the teams' departure, sources said.

Dawn, 30 march 2005

'Out-of-date pieces being sent to IAEA' (Shamim ur Rahman)

KARACHI, March 29: Pakistan may hand over parts of used centrifuges to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) at the 'express request' of Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency for matching the contamination level with Iran's centrifuges which are in IAEA's custody, said Foreign Minister Khurshid Mahmood Kasuri at a news conference here on Tuesday. About dispatching centrifuges parts to Vienna for inspection, Mr Kasuri said that "transfer of some out-of-date pieces of centrifuges which today have no relevance whatsoever to Pakistan's currently highly-developed nuclear programme is under consideration. They would be dispatched under the custody of Pakistani scientists and would be brought back to Pakistan, he said.

Daily Times, 30 march 2005

Any solution sans Kashmiris unacceptable (Afzal Bajwa)

ISLAMABAD - Speakers of the Hameed Nizami memorial seminar including the Chair Sardar Sikandar Hayat Khan, AJK Prime Minister, have maintained that any solution to the Kashmir issue against the aspirations of Kashmiris "would neither be acceptable nor durable." "We have welcomed the Muzaffarabad-Srinagar bus service only considering it as our right of free movement under the UN resolutions which was suspended back in 1956," said the AJK Prime Minister while delivering his presidential address to the seminar organized by The Nation and Nawa-i-Waqt in memory of late Hameed Nizami, the founder of the Group and member of the Pakistan Movement, here Tuesday.

Daily Times, 30 march 2005

F-16s will not harm Indo-Pak peace process'

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan is committed to a peace process with India and the acquisition of F-16 fighters from the United States will not harm the Indo-Pak dialogue, said Federal Information Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmad. Talking to reporters after inaugurating an education exhibition on Tuesday, Sheikh Rashid said the US would sell F-16 aircrafts to help meet Pakistan's defence and military requirements. He said Pakistan had contacted the US to acquire the planes, adding that President General Pervez Musharraf's close relations with his American counterpart had proved decisive. "The F-16 decision is a big victory and the credit goes to Musharraf. It will neither disturb the power balance nor generate an arms race in South Asia," he said.

The Nation, 30 march 2005

Military urged not to interfere in politics (Iftikhar Ali)

NEW YORK - In a tough new report released Monday, the United States called on the Pakistani military to refrain from interference in domestic politics and to open the way for the establishment of fully functioning democracy in the country. Although the State Department report, "Supporting Human Rights and Democracy", said that Pakistan's human rights "remained poor", it gave full marks to President Pervez Musharraf-led government for "some improvements in several areas", including opening the landscape for political debate."

Daily Times, 30 march 2005

More troops reach South Waziristan

WANA: Fresh army reinforcement reached South Waziristan's regional headquarters on Tuesday triggering fears of a military operation. Eyewitnesses told Daily Times that dozens of army vehicles carrying troops and ammunition were seen moving towards the main military base of Zarinoor near Wana. "I have counted dozens of army trucks carrying soldiers and ammunition and also jeeps heading towards Zarinoor base," Wana residents fear that with snow-melting a new military operation might be launched as the 'presence of militants' showed.

Frontier Post, 31 March 2005

Russia turns down Pakistan's request for UNSC slot

ISLAMABAD: Russia has turned down Pakistan's request seeking support of former Soviet Union against the enlargement of UN Security Council in permanent category. Sources said President Pervez Musharraf's special envoy and former foreign secretary Riaz Khokhar met Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Saltanov in Moscow the other day and conveyed President Musharraf's special message to Russian President Vladimir Putin on the issue. However, the Russian official told the President's envoy that his country took a principled position on UNSC reforms and believed India "deserve" a permanent seat in the top decision making council of the world body, the sources added.

Dawn, 31 March 2005

F-16: US team due next month

ISLAMABAD, March 30: US ambassador Ryan C. Crocker on Wednesday said a technical team would arrive here next month to discuss specifics related to the sale of F-16s to Pakistan. Mr Crocker was talking to newsmen soon after launching the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)-funded Poverty Alleviation Programme. The USDA has given a \$25 million grant to the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund for the project. Mr Crocker did not mention the exact date of arrival of the US technical team and said that it would be here next month to finalize the sale of F-16 jets. He said the \$3 billion assistance announced by President George Bush in the summer of 2003 for Pakistan was getting under way this year. Under the programme Pakistan would get \$600 million annual tranche equally divided between military and economic.

The News, 31 March 2005

26 countries to attend top Asian dialogue (Muhammad Saleh Zaafir)

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad will host a large number of foreign dignitaries in the first week of next month when Chinese prime minister and Thai deputy prime minister along with foreign ministers of 17 countries will be here to participate in the Asian Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), a forum of 26 countries from East to West Asia. All the seven large and medium-sized hotels of Islamabad and Rawalpindi have been vacated for the guests and Islamabad will be a closed city for any other casual visitor during the days of the ACD. Sources told The News that 17 member countries have confirmed participation at the foreign minister level while other countries will be represented by their other ministers.

The News, 31 March 2005

Govt denies any threat to nuclear assets (Mariana Baabar)

ISLAMABAD: The government says that there would neither be any impact on Pakistan's nuclear know-how nor any threat to its nuclear assets, if it shared the "contamination" of its centrifuges with the IAEA. The International Atomic Energy Agency has around five to six laboratories and it is not known where Pakistanis accompanying these centrifuges will be heading to, after reaching Vienna. The government insists that the Pakistanis would have their eyes on these central processing units but this would not stop the nuclear watchdog from gathering as much information as they want from these units.

The News, 31 March 2005

Pakistan side calm as unrest on the rise across Durand Line (Behroz Khan)

PESHAWAR: Attacks on the military installations in the tribal belt bordering Afghanistan have considerably receded but unrest in the southern and eastern Afghan provinces is on the increase. Military sources and tribesmen said the push against militants by Pakistani forces in South and North Waziristan agencies, killing of a number of suspected terrorists and bringing back the majority of tribesmen to the government camp hold the key to restoration of peace on the Pakistani side of the border. But shifting of these fighters across the Durand Line has added to woes of the Afghan government and the US forces present at certain places along the porous border between the two countries.