

Dawn, 1 March 2007

### **No direct military strikes inside Pakistan, says US**

WASHINGTON, Feb 28: Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General Peter Pace have indicated that the US will not launch direct military strikes at suspected Al Qaeda targets inside Pakistans tribal region. The two officials told the Senate Appropriations Committee that the US sought no direct role in Pakistan's northern region where US officials had noticed a rise in Al Qaeda activity. The question of direct US military action inside the Pakistani territory was raised by Senator Byron Dorgan, a North Dakota Democrat, during a hearing on supplemental budget request for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The senator asked Ms Rice if the Bush administration had considered sending troops inside Pakistan for eliminating Al Qaeda leadership. It is rather dubious that the surge of American forces into the federally administered tribal areas of Pakistan, those tough mountains of places like North Waziristan, would have been a workable strategy, said Ms Rice. Gen Pace who, Ms Rice said, should also respond to this question, stated: Sir, one of the most difficult problems we face in this war is how do you attack an enemy inside of a country with which you're not at war'

The Nation, 1 March 2007

### **OIC envoys briefed on ME initiative**

ISLAMABAD The Foreign Office on Wednesday held a briefing for the ambassadors of OIC member states on President Pervez Musharraf's Peace Initiative on Middle East and in this regard the recently held consultative meeting of seven like-minded Muslim countries. Foreign Secretary Riaz Muhammad Khan briefed the ambassadors from OIC countries on Pakistan's efforts to defuse the mounting tension in Middle East with the help of other like-minded Muslim states including Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt and others, said an official source while talking to TheNation. Secretary Khan briefed them about the outcome of one day consultative meeting of like-minded states held here on Sunday, the source said. The Foreign Secretary said that Pakistan was in the process of consultations with like-minded states on joint action plan for the upcoming summit of Islamic countries in Makkah. According to source, Foreign Secretary Riaz Khan told the envoys that Pakistan wanted lasting settlement of Palestine, Lebanon and Iraq issue and that had been the focus of discussions during the consultative meeting of like-minded nations..

Dawn, 1 March 2007

### **Opinion: Moves on energy chessboard (SM Shah)**

THE much talked-about Iran-Pakistan-India IPI gas pipeline project has finally turned the corner. In February, Iran and Pakistan resolved the most difficult issue of pricing in Tehran, and soon, thereafter, India indicated its agreement also. This has opened the door to follow-up developments. Much of the credit for this breakthrough goes to Iran for attractively pricing the gas for the project. By reducing it by 30 per cent from its earlier price, Iran has sweetened the deal for both countries. For Pakistan, the project has added attraction. Apart from meeting its growing energy needs, Pakistan would also pick up from India about \$1.5 in transit fee for every million British thermal units transported through pipeline to that country. The seven-billion-dollar, 2,100-kilometre IPI pipeline would turn out to be the largest cross-border investment in this part of the world and an important milestone in building regional energy security for South Asia. But the moves

on the energy chessboard are also generating several cross currents and it would be a litmus test of our economic diplomacy to protect and implement this important project..

Daily Times, 1 March 2007

**Foreign terrorists, pack up and get out: Musharraf**

LARKANA: President Pervez Musharraf warned foreign terrorists hiding in Pakistans mountainous tribal areas to leave the country or face the consequences. Speaking at a large public gathering on Wednesday, he said, People come to Pakistan from outside they are living in our mountains and spreading terror not just in Pakistan, but the world over. He said that Pakistanis were living under the constant threat of terrorism, and although things were better in Sindh than the NWFP, the impact of terrorists presence in the country was being felt throughout Pakistan. These people are endangering Pakistans image and its security and should leave, or they will be dealt with, he said. Musharraf said that Islam was a religion of peace and there was not room for extremist and terrorist tendencies. We have to check such tendencies, or the country cannot progress or develop, the president said. He urged the people to help the government in it fight against extremists and terrorists by cooperating with law enforcement agencies..

The Nation, 1 March 2007

**Editorial: Challenges ahead**

MR Khurshid Kasuri has rightly pointed out that the entire world would suffer if Iran was attacked, and the consequences for Pakistan would be particularly grave. It would be virtually impossible for the government to remain neutral in such a situation, let alone side with Washington, in opposition to the popular sentiment. Pakistan is already facing the consequences of backing a similar US misadventure in Afghanistan and can hardly afford more. An attack on Iran would generate widespread unrest which the government would find difficult to contain. It could provoke militants to target foreign installations and personnel in Pakistan. Pakistan must in no case be seen as conniving with the aggression against its Islamic neighbour. Mr Kasuri says Islamabad is trying to resolve the standoff between Washington and Tehran through talks. While this is a commendable desire, what remains questionable is whether Pakistan enjoys the clout to deter a superpower bent on punishing Iran. The government has tried to persuade the US that peace accords rather than military action can pacify the tribal areas. It has also pleaded that it has done all it can to curb militancy. That it has failed to do so indicates it is hardly in a position to negotiate peace between Washington and Tehran..

Daily Times, 1 March 2007

**EDITORIAL: Mr Cheney gets to lie in the bed he has made**

The Taliban have tried and failed to kill US Vice President Dick Cheney via a suicide-bomber but succeeded in killing 20 persons, including one American. After Pakistan, Mr Cheney went from the Bagram airbase to meet the Afghan president, Hamid Karzai, in Kabul. He knows that things are not going well in Afghanistan. But he cannot possibly hold Pakistan responsible for the attack, directly or indirectly. The Taliban announced they had done the deed, unfazed by consequences. Indeed, as Mr Cheney flew off to Oman, the Taliban routinely launched another suicide bomber in Kandahar. They have the same kind of cavalier attitude towards Pakistan, whose president, General Pervez

Musharraf, they despise. While it is true that the Taliban cross the Durand Line to attack inside Afghanistan, it is also true that anywhere in Afghanistan where the road ends the territory of the Taliban begins. The International Security Assistance Force ISAF and NATO forces and the USAID personnel flanked by their NGOs have not been able to rebuild Afghanistan. The men who spearheaded President Bush's war against terrorism and oversaw the ISAF into Afghanistan under a UN Security Council resolution wanted to fight a war on the cheap and extract a cheap peace out of the people of Afghanistan..

Dawn, 2 March 2007

### **Mullah Omars deputy Obaidullah captured**

PESHAWAR, March 1: Pakistani security forces have captured Mullah Obaidullah Akhund, deputy to the elusive Taliban chief, Mullah Mohammad Omar, from Quetta, a federal government official has told Dawn. Mullah Obaidullah was arrested on Monday, the official said, requesting anonymity due to sensitivity of the matter. The Taliban leader carries a \$1 million reward and is the most senior Taliban figure captured since the ouster of the puritanical militia from power in November 2001. His arrest came the day US Vice-President Dick Cheney arrived in Islamabad on an announced visit to deliver what was widely believed to be a warning that the new Democratic Congress could cut aid unless Pakistan became more aggressive in hunting down Taliban and Al Qaeda operatives. The official, however, said the arrest of Mullah Obaidullah, who was defence minister in the ousted Taliban regime, had no link with Mr Chens visit and the action which led to his arrest had been planned in advance based on good intelligence. The official declined to give further information but said that two others, who were captured along with Mullah Obaidullah could be Amir Khan Haqqani, a Taliban commander in Zabul, and Abdul Bari, the former governor of Helmand province..

Daily Times, 2 March 2007

### **Govt asked to sign mine ban treaty**

ISLAMABAD, March 1: Politicians and members of the civil society have asked the government to scrap the plan to mine the Pakistan-Afghanistan border area and sign the Mine Ban Treaty as every year hundreds of innocent civilians fall prey to landmine blasts in tribal areas, Balochistan and Kashmir. In 2006 alone, different types of landmines had caused 403 casualties, as against 212 registered in the previous year. A majority of those falling victims to these silent killers are women and children, many of whom are now spending miserable lives without limbs. Leaders of the Peoples Party Parliamentarian, Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party and Awami National Party as well as strategic experts and civil society members have expressed concern over the rising number of landmine casualties in the conflict hit Balochistan province and tribal areas near the Pakistan-Afghanistan border..

The Nation, 2 March 2007

### **Editorial: Uniformed democracy**

AFTER repeatedly asking the electorate to reject extremists and vote for moderates in the next general elections to ensure continuity of the socio-economic reforms introduced by this government, General Musharraf has now claimed that genuine democracy has been established in the country by a uniformed serviceman. Addressing a public meeting near

Larkana on Wednesday after performing the groundbreaking ceremony of a bridge between two Sindh districts, he warned the foreign terrorists hiding in the tribal region, who he rightly asserted were posing a serious threat to the country, to leave or face the consequences. The President urged the people to support the government in its fight against the dual scourge of terrorism and extremism but his emphasis remained on the socio-economic uplift of the country in the past six years. He announced a number of other development schemes for Sindh that include construction of link roads, widening of highways and upgradation of a medical college and that he had stopped talking about the Kalabagh Dam because Sindh opposed the project..

Dawn, 2 March 2007

**Editorial: Musharraf's tough talk**

WILL President Pervez Musharraf live up to the warning he gave to foreign militants on Wednesday? It is a tough warning and the nation would want his words to be translated into action. Speaking at a public meeting near Larkana, the president had justifiably some harsh words to say about the foreign militants in our mountains and vowed to crush them unless they left Pakistan. The foreign militants he referred to belong to many nationalities and are a residue of the Islamic brigade consisting of foreign volunteers who had joined the Afghan resistance to Soviet occupation. They came to Pakistan with the full blessings and support of the US and the Ziaul Haq government. They were armed and funded by the CIA, Saudi Arabia and Egypt in their anti-communist jihad and enjoyed the western medias unqualified support. Operating in tandem with Pakistani and Afghan resistance groups, these foreign militants turned the tribal area into their base of operation with full support from elements in the Pakistan army. However, even after the Soviet withdrawal, these foreign militants not only stayed on in Pakistan, but took part in the bitter, factional war among the mujahideen in the post-Soviet era . a war that did more harm to Afghan society than did the Soviet occupation and the resistance.

Daily Times, 2 March 2007

**EDITORIAL: Jihad and the state of Pakistan**

President General Pervez Musharraf told a public gathering in Sindh on Wednesday that a call for jihad could only be given by the government and not by any individual. He then warned the extremists in the NWFP that they should leave the country or they would be thrown out by force. He said terrorism and extremism were a real threat to the country and Islam was against every sort of extremism. He then referred to the killing of a Punjab minister at the hands of an extremist in Gujranwala. Then he applied the epithet to foreigners as if to exonerate the Pakistanis: These people extremists and terrorists belong to some Arab countries and some are Uzbeks, who are carrying out their activities in the mountains of NWFP and other areas. They have jeopardised our national interests. Get out! Otherwise we will take strong action. General Musharraf accused past governments of issuing hollow slogans, implying that the politicians verbalised a lot but lacked the capacity to make good on their promises. From his own experience, however, he should in fact have shown understanding and sympathy for past governments. The major difference between his incapacity to govern and theirs is that they were being constantly constrained and undermined by the army's national security considerations..

Dawn, 2 March 2007

**Opinion: Aspects of re-election (Syed Sharfuddin)**

THE Constitution of Pakistan lays down three clear requirements for the office of president. The first is that he will be elected. The second requirement is that he should hold office for a term of five years. The third requirement is that he should not be eligible for re-election after remaining president for more than two consecutive terms. The first requirement the source of the current president's power, in the event of his non-election, derives from the democratic mandate he received from the people of Pakistan in the referendum of April 2002 in which he was the sole candidate. The president subsequently received a vote of confidence by the parliamentary electoral college through a special session of each House of parliament and each provincial assembly in January 2004. Neither of these actions could satisfy the election requirement stipulated in Article 41 of the Constitution until this article was given a soft landing by adding clauses 7, 8 and 9 through the Constitution Seventeenth Amendment act 2003. Thankfully, these clauses are valid only for the current term of the president's office..

Daily Times, 3 March 2007

**Blast in Multan kills 3 cops, injures 9 including ATC judge**

MULTAN: An anti-terrorist judge was wounded and three policemen were killed when a remote-controlled bomb attached to a bicycle exploded in Multan on Friday, said police. Judge Bashir Ahmed Bhatti, who often hears cases against Islamic militants suspected terrorists, was among nine people injured by the blast around 100 metres away from the court building at around 8:50am, said district police chief Munir Ahmed Chishti. AFP reported that 11 people were injured in the attack. AP quoted the city police chief as saying that Bhatti was travelling to his court when the bomb went off. The blast wrecked the front end of the car believed to be the judge's and left blood stains on the seats and the ground, said an AFP reporter from the scene of the attack. A police van was almost destroyed. A bomb of high intensity was planted on a bicycle in front of a basketball stadium near the court, and it exploded as the car of the special anti-terrorism court judge passed. It was a targeted attack said Chishti, ruling out the possibility of a suicide attack. Two police gunmen died on the spot, and another nine people were injured: the judge, six policemen and two bystanders, said Chishti. He declined to say who might have been behind the attack..

Dawn, 3 March 2007

**US senators call for direct strike inside Pakistan: Pressure tactics may trigger Musharraf's ouster: ambassador**

WASHINGTON, March 2: Members of the US Senate have urged the Bush administration to launch military strikes at alleged Al Qaeda targets inside Pakistan, prompting the Pakistani envoy in Washington to warn that such an attitude could bring down the present set-up in Islamabad. Senior Pentagon officials added fuel to the fire by claiming that their troops have already targeted Taliban and Al Qaeda sites inside Pakistan and that they have an agreement that allows them to do so. Senator Carl Levin, Democratic chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said the panel would press the Defence and State departments to consider taking military action against alleged Al Qaeda camps inside Pakistan if they learn that attacks inside Afghanistan have been

planned at these sites. Its a critically important point, and I think weve got to insist, on this issue, that we be given a clear answer, Mr Levin said. Lt-Gen Douglas Lute, chief operations officer for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, however, told the committee US soldiers could target terrorist sites inside Pakistan if theres an imminent threat..

The Nation, 3 March 2007

**Editorial: Mainstreaming insurgents**

GENERAL Musharraf has rightly asserted that no power can secede Balochistan from Pakistan while expressing his readiness to talk to the insurgents, provided they stop carrying out subversive activities. Addressing the concluding ceremony of an annual festival in Sibbi on Thursday, he asked the Baloch to support him in combating the elements trying to impede the process of development in this province by blowing up bridges and railroad networks. It was no surprise to hear from him that Balochistan remained neglected for long and only the present regime had focussed on its development by launching multi-million rupees projects in various sectors including health, education and communications to bring this province at par with the developed parts of the country. The President struck a rare conciliatory tone when he talked about accepting demands of the elements opposed to development, saying they too are our Pakistani brethren' but are misguided.. Obviously, this offer is not meant for those few fanning separatist sentiments and seeking independence of Balochistan..

Daily Times, 3 March 2007

**EDITORIAL: APC without Benazir Bhutto'**

The all parties conference APC is finally being held in London. But Ms Benazir Bhutto, the leader of the largest party in the grand opposition, the Pakistan Peoples Party PPP, will not grace the occasion. Instead, the PPP will send a high-level delegation to the APC being held on March 24-25. A spokesperson for the ruling coalition has insisted that it should be called a multi-party conference. The party also said that a total understanding sic! had been reached between the PPP and the PMLN over the APC and that Mr Nawaz Sharif was fully in agreement. Why isnt Ms Bhutto attending' The president of the party in Pakistan, Makhdoom Amin Fahim, replied from Dubai that Ms Bhutto wanted the APC to be held after the announcement of the presidential elections schedule, but the PMLN wanted to go ahead with their schedule; so the PPP agreed to attend the APC..

Dawn, 3 March 2007

**Editorial: Taliban leaders arrest**

THE arrest of Mullah Obaidullah Akhund, one of Mullah Omars deputies, is both a success and an indication of the gravity of the problem. The arrest shows that the security agencies are not sitting idle, and that terrorists and the brains behind them are still operating in the country. Among the top Al Qaeda and Taliban leaders arrested by Pakistan are Abu Faraj al-Libbi, Abu Zubaidah, Ramzi Bin al-Sibh, Ahmad Khalfan Ghaliani, Khalid Sheikh Mohammad and many others. In sharp contrast, the Afghan government has nothing to show by way of the arrest of top Taliban leaders. The emphasis on the other side has mostly been on fighting the insurgents and killing as many as possible without actually pacifying a given area. Pakistans task is far more complex. It has to fight terrorism not because the world expects it to do more. but because it is in

Pakistan's own peace and security interests. Since 9/11, Pakistan has suffered more at the hands of terrorists, foreign and Pakistani, than any other country.

The Nation, 3 March 2007

**Opinion: Can Pakistan break free' (Inayatullah)**

The caption suggests that Pakistan currently lacks freedom to act independently to choose its policies and to take decisions on its own with particular reference to external relations. That it is under the sway of the American diktat. This impression is based on the way General Musharraf surrendered to the loaded message from Colin Powell soon after Nine Eleven. That it was done under duress and without consultations is well known. That it was personally of tremendous benefit to Musharraf is also a fact. Before 9/11, the American president was averse to even meet him. Remember Clinton's reluctant visit to Islamabad. How he avoided to be photographed with the general and how he delivered a sermon on democracy on the TV addressing directly the people of Pakistan. Musharraf enthusiastically joined the American war against terrorism. Pakistan, once again became a front line state. Some of the services rendered by Pakistan in support of the American agenda may be mentioned: 80,000 soldiers deployed on the Afghanistan border, 1000 military posts set up, more than 700 Pakistani soldiers losing their lives in operations in the Pakistani tribal areas, capturing and handing over of more than 500 Al-Qaeda and Taliban supporters, to USA, killing of Pakistanis in Bajaur and Waziristan and letting Americans bomb targets in villages in the North-west.

Dawn, 4 March 2007

**Baitullah pledges to abide by peace deal**

PESHAWAR, March 3: Militant commander Baitullah Mehsud has reiterated that he will abide by the peace deal he had struck with the government and offered it support to curb violence in South Waziristan. Mr Mehsud conveyed the goodwill gesture through a 21-member tribal peace jirga which met him at an undisclosed location in the restive tribal agency on Friday. Tribal area MNA Maulvi Mirajuddin Khan headed the jirga which met the militant commander on the directives of NWFP Governor Ali Mohammed Jan Aurakzai. Baitullah Mehsud was very positive. He not only condemned the recent terrorist acts in the country but also assured that he would honour the agreement with the government signed in Spin Kai Raghzai in 2005, the MNA told Dawn by phone on Saturday..

The Nation, 4 March 2007

**Baloch leaders oppose cantonments**

ISLAMABAD - Provincial autonomy and resources ownership are the solutions to Balochistan problems, as oppressive measures being carried out against Balochs would further aggravate situation in the province, said the Baloch nationalists here on Saturday. Strengthening Participatory Organization SPO and National Democratic Institute NDI jointly organised the roundtable dialogue on Federalism in Pakistan and the Conflict in Balochistan to provide a platform to the most oppressed federating unit to speak out their grievances and recommend durable solutions of their problems. Colonial treatment is being meted out to us, we have no voice in decision making, we are not in power, we are being treated as third class citizens, said Dr Abdul Hayee Baloch. He said

that National Finance Commission, price of natural gas and royalty on gas were the tools of exploitation in the hands of military establishment to keep the largest province, which is rich in natural resources, as the most backward one. He also opposed military cantonments in Balochistan and demanded of human resource development in the province..

Daily Times, 4 March 2007

**EDITORIAL: Pakistan versus US, Iran and Al Qaeda'**

A judge of an anti-terrorism court in Multan who was hearing the case of a sectarian killer was targeted Friday by a time-bomb. This comes in the wake of Jandullah attacks in the Iranian border city of Zahidan and a follow-up suicide-bombing of a sessions court in Quetta. When the judges are attacked, the message is simple: don't convict our men or you die! Since the middle of 2006 an overt merger of the sectarian jihadists with Al Qaeda has taken place with a spike in attacks in Pakistan and Iraq. Now the war has been taken inside Iran and it is nothing but an extension of the 20 year sectarian war that luckless Pakistan has contended with. It began with Saudi-leveraged Deobandis and hemmed in the Taliban while Al Qaeda teetered on the edge of decision. With Musa Al Zarqawis challenge to the Shia and Iran in Iraq, Al Qaeda decided to become a part of what the Deobandis were doing in Pakistan. Also, by doing so, Al Qaeda has decided to remove the ideological partition that existed between its jihad against the United States and the Sunni Arab rulers who wished to prevent Iran from becoming the dominant power in the region..

Daily Times, 4 March 2007

**Opinion: Counter-terrorism: the missing links (Dr. HA Rizvi)**

The missing links in Pakistans counter-terrorism policies are the absence of broad-based support for the government and its failure to engage in popular mobilisation on this issue. There has been no serious attempt to seek policy inputs from the political parties and societal groups that favour strong action against extremism and terrorism Pakistan faces a difficult situation internationally. In the United States, top civilian, military and intelligence officials are claiming that Pakistans tribal areas have become a sanctuary for Taliban and Al Qaeda activists engaged in violence against the allied troops in Afghanistan. And although they express themselves in more carefully chosen words, this perspective is shared by other Western states like Canada, Britain and the European Union. These statements reflect negatively on Pakistans counter-terrorism policy and threaten its cordial post-9/11 relations with Western countries, especially the US. It is therefore natural that Pakistani officials have reacted negatively to these statements.

Dawn, 5 March 2007

**Indian Ocean should be zone of peace: PM: Call for political settlement in Afghanistan**

KARACHI, March 4: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said on Sunday that the Indian Ocean should not become a theatre for strategic confrontation or a launching pad for domination over Asia, adding that it should become a zone of peace and cooperation. He was addressing the inaugural session of an international maritime conference entitled Maritime Threats and Opportunities in the 21st Century: A Global Perspective on the

Indian Ocean at the Bahria University. He said the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean was obvious and could not be denied. Also in Karachi, speaking at a meeting with members of the American Business Council on late Saturday night, the prime minister called for a political solution to the Afghanistan situation, rather than a military one. The military solution at the end of the day cannot help in deriving the needed results, he said. The prime minister said that a political approach had to be initiated along with the diplomatic one to resolve the issue. That's what we are trying to tell our friends around the world. Please understand the ground realities, please understand the local factor in Afghanistan. Mr Aziz said Pakistan was working very hard to fight against terrorism because Pakistan believed that extremism and terrorism were not good for the world..

The Nation, 5 March 2007

### **New operation in Waziristan unaffordable (Shaiq Hussain)**

ISLAMABAD - The North Waziristan Peace Agreement will remain intact and it will not be rescinded. Pakistan conveyed this response through diplomatic channels to United States, which has mounted pressure for a large-scale military offensive against militants in the tribal areas. Any new major operation in Waziristan will lead to serious repercussions for Pakistan and cause strong backlash, something that cannot be afforded and this has been plainly conveyed to the Bush administration, said a senior official here requesting anonymity. The US administration had been told that the peace agreement in North Waziristan and those entered into South Waziristan earlier needed time to succeed and those could not be rescinded. Pakistan has also cautioned the United States against any hot pursuit of militants on its territories. We have told them through diplomatic channels that we are capable of curbing militancy on this side of Afghan border, the official said..

Dawn, 5 March 2007

### **Act now or let US do it, Musharraf told**

WASHINGTON, March 4: US Vice-President Dick Cheney is reported to have delivered a tough message to Pakistan, saying Islamabad should act to destroy Al Qaeda hideouts in the tribal zone or let the Americans do the job, a senior member of the US Senate Intelligence Committee said on Sunday. Senator Dianne Feinstein, the number two Democrat on the committee, criticised measures so far taken by Pakistan, terming them half-hearted and urged Islamabad to do more. In an interview with Fox News on Sunday, Ms Feinstein, a California Democrat, said Mr Cheney had told President Gen Pervez Musharraf when he met him in Islamabad last week that the Pakistanis either have to let us go in or go in themselves when they have intelligence.

Daily Times, 5 March 2007

### **Pakistan frontline state in anti-drug war (Khalid Hasan)**

WASHINGTON: Pakistan remains on the frontline of the war against drugs as a major transit country for opiates and hashish from Afghanistan, according to the International Narcotics Control Strategy Report 2007, which was issued here by the State Department on March. Aiming to return to poppy-free status, Pakistan saw a 39 percent decrease in opium poppy cultivation in 2006 to about 1,908 hectares, of which 1,545 hectares were harvested. Pakistan maintains that there is no evidence that opiate laboratories are

currently operating on its territory. An operation conducted by the Anti-Narcotics Force ANF in June 2006 destroyed eight mobile drug labs near the Afghan border in Balochistan, the only labs in the country, according to the government. There are an estimated two to three million drug addicts in Pakistan, and although the governments efforts to develop a five-year Master Drug Control Plan in collaboration with the UN have slowed, a draft is expected to be available by spring this year. Strong US assistance in counter-narcotics and border security have strengthened the capacity of law enforcement agencies and improved their access to remote areas where some of the drug trafficking takes place..

Dawn, 5 March 2007

**Opinion: Not pushing Pakistan too far (Eric Margolis)**

AMERICAN Vice-President Dick Cheney's recent visit to South Asia was not what one could call a rousing success. Cheney, the real power behind the Bush administration, arrived at Bagram air base, formerly the nerve centre for the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Today, it plays the same role for the US occupation. A suicide bomber attacked the base's main gate, killing a number of soldiers and civilians and hugely embarrassing Cheney. Worse, the 60km secure highway between Bagram and Kabul has become so dangerous that Cheney could not travel by road through this region which is deemed highly secure by US and Nato forces to meet with the American-installed figurehead leader, Hamid Karzai, who is constantly surrounded by up to 200 US bodyguards. Anti-western forces are quickly gaining ground in Afghanistan. What Washington and its Nato allies keep claiming is an anti-terrorist operation against a handful of Al Qaeda fighters and the Taliban has, in fact, turned into fast-growing Afghan national resistance to foreign occupation.. Were it not for the US air forces might and ubiquitous presence, US, Canadian, and British troops would soon be driven from southern Afghanistan. The respected Senlis Council, which closely monitors Afghanistan, reports half that nation is now under Taliban control or influence.

Daily Times, 5 March 2007

**Opinion: Musharrafs tough choices (Z Hussain)**

The recent spate of religious violence and the increasing number of suicide attacks are a grim reminder that the sectarian terrorist network is not only intact, but has expanded. This raises a serious question about Gen. Musharraf's efforts to combat religious extremism. The US-Pakistan partnership that came into being on Sept. 12, 2001 was a shotgun marriage and remains an uneasy alliance. Vice President Dick Cheney's surprise visit to Pakistan earlier this week underscores Washington's frustration with President Pervez Musharraf's inability to contain the activities of al Qaeda and the Taliban in the Afghan border region. The tension is further heightened as the US Congress considers a bill making aid to Pakistan conditional on more effective action against these threats. The main question is whether this tightening of the noose will produce a positive result, or just make things even more difficult for Pakistan's beleaguered leader in an election year..

Daily Times, 6 March 2007

**Pakistan vacillates between victim and interloper**

WASHINGTON: Pakistans role vacillates between victim and interloper in an unquiet region of the world as its tribal areas return to centre stage in the global fight against terrorism, according to South Asia commentator Paula S Newburg. Writing in the journal of the Yale Centre for Study of Globalisation, Newburg says that this new focus on the Pukhtun borderlands highlights the difficult political terrain on which the countrys contentious foreign policy is built and the dangerous ground on which its hopes for recovering democracy may rise or fall. To the dismay of its friends and glee of its militant foes, the country that the US calls our partner in the war on terror is having a tough year. As Pakistan suffers through suicide bombings and sectarian discord, remaining on high terror alert, its ambitions remain surprisingly unclear. Pakistans difficulties in reconciling the demands of its anti terror allies with those of its own citizens raise critical questions about the viability of its regional ambitions and the durability of its ham-handed political system, she writes..

Dawn, 6 March 2007

### **US, Pakistan to take stock of their bitter-sweet ties**

WASHINGTON, March 5: The second session of the US Pakistan strategic dialogue will be held in Islamabad next week at a time when relations between the United States and one of its key allies in the war against terror seem to be deteriorating rapidly. Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns will lead the US delegation at the meeting which begins early next week. Foreign Secretary Riaz Mohammed Khan will lead the Pakistani team. Pakistans Ambassador Mahmud Durrani leaves for Islamabad shortly for consultations that will focus on the dialogue but will also cover recent developments in Washington, diplomatic sources told Dawn. He will also attend a conference of key Pakistani ambassadors. The first session of the strategic dialogue was held in April last year in Washington where both sides agreed to enhance their efforts to fight terrorism and pledged to increase bilateral trade..

Dawn, 6 March 2007

### **Editorial: Spread of Talibanisation**

ACTS of lawlessness being committed in what appear to be attempts at Talibanisation of certain tribal areas and those of the Frontier are an open challenge to the governments writ. In the town of Khar in Bajaur Agency barber outlets offering beard trims and music shops have been blown up by the "local" bands of the Taliban; in district Kohats semi-autonomous areas, women school and college teachers have come under increasing threat by similar groups. The Khasadar escorts provided by the government to accompany women teachers to and from their schools and colleges are practically unable to give them security, saying tribal loyalties prevent them from any engagement with the militants in case the teachers are attacked by the latter. Little by little, it seems, more and more territory is coming under the hold of extremists who are out with a mission to impose a Taliban-style rule in their respective areas..

Daily Times, 6 March 2007

### **Opinion: A stitch in time (Rasul Bakhsh Rais)**

The United States is once again sending us tough messages and implied threats, and pushing us to revoke the Waziristan peace accord. Fighting the terrorists and securing the

stability of Afghanistan and our border region is both our international obligation and in our national interest. But what are the best means to achieve these objectives? Our relations with the United States are passing through yet another phase of turbulence and uncertainty. With a rather predictable upsurge in Taliban operations in Afghanistan in recent months, Washington and some of its European allies have begun to question our intentions, ability, and resolve to stay on their side of the war on terror. The lack of appreciation of the price we have paid and may continue to pay and the pain that many citizens have suffered for following the American line on sensitive national security issues has rightly angered many Pakistanis, in the government as well as the opposition. What is happening inside Afghanistan and in the bordering areas of Pakistan is a blowback of the policies that we pursued in the second wave of the Cold War as an American ally and front-line state against the former Soviet Union..

Daily Times, 7 March 2007

### **Iran attack would hurt Pakistan**

ISLAMABAD: President General Pervez Musharraf said on Tuesday that an American attack on Iran would have serious consequences for the region as well as Pakistan, and called for a peaceful solution to the Iranian nuclear issue. Iran should not be made a target, the president told journalists after inaugurating a two-day conference on UN peacekeeping at the National Defence University. An attack on Iran would destabilise the entire region including Gulf countries, he added. If any attack against Iran is launched, we will have to face a lot of problems, he said, adding that Islamabad is making efforts to avoid such a development. Gen Musharraf said if Iran were attacked, it could trigger further sectarian problems in the Muslim world and a host of other issues. To a question, he said it was in the supreme national interest to protect Pakistan's sovereignty and solidarity. It is our foremost responsibility and we are always for peace and we avoid turmoil. To a question about the recent visit of US Vice President Dick Cheney, the president said they held a threadbare discussion on tactics during their meeting. He said there could be lapses in the tactical moves of the two partners in the war against terrorism, and these could always be corrected..

The Hindu, 7 March 2007

### **Opinion: Pakistans Middle East initiative (Nirupama Subramanian)**

Under extreme pressure from all sides, President Pervez Musharraf plays for even higher stakes. IT IS not every day that a leader besieged by multiple problems at home, and pressures and threats of all kinds from abroad suddenly decides that he is among the best suited and the most credible, to tackle one of the most complex problems of the world. Yet, this is precisely what President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan has set out to do. President Musharraf took Pakistan completely by surprise when in January he began talking about a new Middle East initiative with like-minded countries whose leaders enjoy credibility in the world. He suddenly flew to several Muslim capitals in the world, meeting Prime Ministers, Presidents, and kings. The initiative was born. Last weekend, Pakistan played host to the Foreign Ministers of six Muslim countries Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and a representative of the Organisation of Islamic Conference. They are supposed to have prepared the groundwork for another meeting within the OIC framework to be hosted by Saudi Arabia at Makkah, perhaps

later this month. Over two days, this seven plus one conference as it was called deliberated upon various crises in the West Asian region, from Palestine to Iraq, Iran, and Lebanon..

Daily Times, 7 March 2007

**EDITORIAL: Pakistan and the issue of hot pursuit**

The foreign office spokesperson, Tasnim Aslam, has just delivered a routine Pakistani warning to those who would invade Pakistans territory in hot pursuit. Ms Aslam was told that the Indian foreign minister, Pranab Mukherjee, had said that India would pursue militants into Pakistani territory. Understandably, her grim retort was that there should be no doubt in ones mind that any attempt to indulge in hot pursuit would receive a befitting response. Any aggression across our borders or the LoC would be effectively countered. Everyone should know that we have the capability and determination to effectively deal with such threats and defend our borders. Her warning was couched in general terms and not specifically aimed at the Indian foreign minister because she was not sure he had threatened hot pursuit or whether the threat of hot pursuit was only on Pakistans border with Afghanistan. She conceded that India had given Pakistan some information about Pakistani infiltrators who had committed acts of terrorism in India and that discussions on the matter were ongoing.

The Nation, 7 March 2007

**Editorial: And now Iran**

AS Iran becomes openly critical of Pakistan and calls upon it to carry out an appropriate programme to dismantle terrorist groups in the border areas our all three next-door neighbours have come to the same conclusion that we are promoting terrorist activity around our periphery and serving as agents of destabilisation. The blame for creating such an atmosphere of suspicion squarely rests with our misguided foreign policy that to all intents and purposes toes the US line. The seven Muslim Foreign Ministers conference recently held at Islamabad to discuss the rising tension in the Middle East, but without the participation of Iran that is under increasing threat of military action from the US and Israel must have reinforced its doubts about our intentions. One can understand Indias perverse provocation to level allegation against Pakistan of promoting terrorist activity in Held Kashmir. Illegally occupying the disputed state with oppressive means, it wants to give the world the impression that the armed struggle for freedom that the Kashmiris are waging is only sustained by trained recruits from Pakistan so that it could evade its settlement in accordance with the peoples wishes..

Dawn, 7 March 2007

**Opinion: What to do in Afghanistan' (NA Shaikh)**

THE news that Mullah Obaidullah Akhund, a top Taliban leader, was arrested in Quetta and flown to Islamabad for interrogation by a joint Pak US intelligence team is being seen in cynical American and Afghan quarters as the usual Pakistani gambit of offering up a major intelligence success either on the eve or the end of the visit of an important American official. While there has been a discernible pattern of this nature in the past there are strong indications that in the present instance Obaidullahs detention had been planned some time ago and the trap was sprung on him and his four or five colleagues in

Quetta only when it became clear that a further delay would not lead to further information about his other cohorts. Instead, this information is now being sought in the interrogation to which he is being subjected. The capture of Obaidullah is an important milestone in the battle against the Taliban. Press reports suggest that he was extremely close to Mullah Omar and spoke for him when he directed Taliban operations in Afghanistan. His arrest apparently led to many Taliban commanders in South Afghanistan switching off their satellite phones and possibly changing their hideouts thus disrupting the operations they were planning..

Dawn, 7 March 2007

### **17 die as foreign militants clash with tribesmen**

TANK, March 6: Fierce clashes erupted between local tribesmen and foreign militants in Azam Warsak area of the South Waziristan Agency on Tuesday, leaving 17 people dead, sources said. Officials in Peshawar told Dawn that 12 Uzbeks, three tribesmen, including a brother of a tribal elder and two Afghan nationals, were among the dead. They said that sporadic firing was continuing in the remote area, about 25 kilometres west of Wana, the administrative headquarters of the South Waziristan Agency. The sources quoting local people said that the clashes started when some people opened fire on a pro-government elder Malik Saadullah Darikhel near Azam Warsak bazaar, killing his two cousins and a passerby..

Dawn, 8 March 2007

### **Proposed US law to create hurdle for Iran gas pipeline**

WASHINGTON, March 7: A proposed US law, aimed at punishing oil companies that deal with Iran, will make it even more difficult to construct the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline. The chairman of the US House Foreign Affairs Committee said on Tuesday he was introducing legislation that would strengthen the Iran Sanctions Act and would require the Bush administration to sanction any company with deals worth more than \$20 million with Iran. If passed, the bill would prevent international investors from financing the pipeline and could also lead to punitive action against Pakistan and India if they go ahead with the proposed, multi billion dollar project for bringing Iranian gas to South Asia. The Bush administration has used its authority to waive implementation of the sanctions act for 20 years, allowing Americas European allies to invest in the Iranian oil industry. The proposed law would force the administration to sanction those European firms that do business with Tehran. While the US has imposed various sanctions against US companies doing business with Iran since the 1979 Iranian revolution, the 1996 Iran Libya Sanctions Act was the first attempt to penalize foreign companies..

The Nation, 8 March 2007

### **Ceasefire announced in Waziristan**

WANA - Local Peace Committee in Azam Warsik area announced a ceasefire with miscreant groups following the appeal of Jirga of North Waziristan. In Tuesdays battle between the two groups 19 people were killed and as many injured. The death toll has risen to 19, from 15 yesterday. The dead include 12 Uzbek militants and three local supporters, three members of local peace committee and one Afghan shopkeeper, a security official said. Meanwhile in Azam Warsak, miscreants set on fire three houses of

local tribesmen besides kidnapping six persons. It is pertinent to note that a committee led by Maulana Muhammad Alam from North Waziristan reached South Waziristan and started peace negotiations between the two groups. Later, Peace Committees head Commander Nazir announced the ceasefire..

Daily Times, 8 March 2007

**EDITORIAL: Iran must not be attacked**

Not for the first time, President General Pervez Musharraf said on Tuesday that an American attack on Iran will have serious consequences for the region as well as Pakistan. He called for a peaceful solution to the Iranian nuclear issue. He repeated that Iran should not be made a target as that would destabilise the entire Gulf region and Pakistan would face problems, including sectarian ones. General Musharraf also decried reports that during a recent visit to Islamabad, the US vice president, Dick Cheney, had upbraided and threatened him for not doing enough to prevent Taliban attacks into Afghanistan from Pakistani territory. He insisted that Pakistan was not taking dictation from anyone: Dick Cheney did not give Pakistan any threats. We are not sitting like scapegoats. But dialogue is held if there is any matter. His statements are aimed at quelling rumours that the US is not only stepping up pressure on Pakistan for not doing more to scuttle the Taliban but also urging Pakistan to bring pressure to bear on Iran to conform to US requirements as the UN Security Council gets ready to announce its next slew of sanctions against it..

The Nation, 8 March 2007

**Editorial: Mounting concern**

THERE is little doubt that Pakistan or, for that matter, other countries in the region should be particularly concerned about the dangerous escalation of tension between the US and Iran; for in case the Bush administration decides to bomb Iran's nuclear facilities, it is idle to expect any surrounding country to remain unscathed. The ensuing economic jolt and social upheaval, for instance, might prove too forbidding for some of them to handle. General Musharraf, while talking to reporters at the National Defence College after inaugurating a two-day international conference on UN peacekeeping on Tuesday, expressed the entire nation's sentiment by saying, Iran should not be made a target. However, his remark that Pakistan and the US have total and complete unanimity of views on the security situation in the region calls for urgent clarification lest it should be construed to mean that Islamabad endorses the US aggressive stance towards Iran..

Dawn, 8 March 2007

**Editorial: Fighting in S Waziristan**

PEACE had not been fully restored in the Wana area when these lines were being written, but the battle lines that were drawn and the death of at least 19 people give an idea of the kind of complex and volatile situation that exists in South Waziristan. There is more to it than the simplistic solution of combating terrorism by doing more. To begin with, there are foreign militants; there are the local Taliban, and then there are powerful elders maliks who carry weight with their people and whose word is often the law. Then there are innocent tribal people caught in the crossfire. Their loyalty is first to their tribes, with ethnic, tribal and religious loyalties running parallel without necessarily inviting a

conflict of conscience or interest, unless one is forced on them. Being religious also does not mean that they necessarily support the Taliban or their foreign comrades. In a situation like this, neutrality for a malik is hazardous, for he may be viewed with suspicion by all sides, more so if he is playing a mediatory role..

Dawn, 8 March 2007

### **India denies allegations of aiding insurgency**

NEW DELHI, March 7: India on Wednesday denied allegations by Pakistani officials that New Delhi was involved in a tribal insurgency in the province of Balochistan. India has nothing to do with developments in Balochistan, Indias foreign ministry spokesman Navtej Sarna said in response to Pakistans charges. The South Asian rival nations on Wednesday concluded their first session of an anti-terrorism mechanism in Islamabad to fight terrorist violence. On Tuesday, a senior Pakistani government official said that Islamabad handed over to India a dossier on terrorist acts sponsored by Indian agencies in Pakistan, particularly in Balochistan as the panel met. The gas rich Balochistan has been in the grip of a two year insurgency launched by ethnic Baloch rebels who want more political rights and a greater share of profits from the regions natural resources..

Dawn, 9 March 2007

### **Musharraf acts to allay Iranian concern**

ISLAMABAD, March 8: President Gen Pervez Musharraf telephoned Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on Wednesday night and exchanged views with him on important issues, with specific emphasis on his Middle East peace initiative, to allay Irans concerns about it. The telephone call to his Iranian counterpart appears to have been prompted by reservations expressed by Iran about a meeting of foreign ministers of seven Muslim countries and the OIC secretary-general in Islamabad on Feb 25. Last week, the Iranian president had said at a press conference in Riyadh that all countries in the Gulf region viewed as a matter of concern the meeting of foreign ministers held in Islamabad. Later, the Iranian foreign ministry also noted there were certain ambiguities and questions about it. A statement issued by the Foreign Office on Thursday said that the president informed his Iranian counterpart about the recent meeting of Muslim foreign ministers in Islamabad and his efforts for resolving the problems and reduction of tensions in the Middle East and promoting understanding and harmony in the Islamic world..

Dawn, 9 March 2007

### **Democrats threaten to block delivery of F-16 fighter jets: Legislation termed counter-productive**

WASHINGTON, March 8: Democratic lawmakers, who now control both chambers of the US Congress, have threatened to withhold the delivery of F16 fighter jets to Pakistan, despite a strong warning from the Bush administration that such a move could hurt bilateral relations and the war on terror. In the Senate, three Democrats Senators John Kerry, Christopher Dodd and Joe Biden put the threat in the form of a nonbinding resolution. The resolution was intended to put Congress on record as making clear that military assistance to Pakistan will be assessed in the context of efforts in cracking down on the Taliban and Al Qaeda. It implied that follow-up legislation would be introduced if

Pakistan does not heed that warning. We must never forget the importance of going after the terrorists before they strike, Senator Kerry said. The proposal by leading members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee would not go as far as a measure approved by the House of Representatives, which proposes linking all US assistance to Pakistan to its performance in the war on terror..

The Nation, 9 March 2007

**Musharraf staying come what may**

ISLAMABAD Notwithstanding the confusion created by conflicting statements coming from ruling party leaders about the postponement of general elections, the Constitution is clear on one point, or at least so it seems. It allows an extension under emergency situation in the life of the National Assembly up to one year through simple majority in parliament, which the ruling coalition does enjoy. But the election of the President and the National and provincial assemblies would have to be held in time, irrespective of the emergency. The President, however, can prolong his own rule by dissolving the National Assembly, which is not what the advocates of the postponement visualize. The original Constitution envisioned an electoral college comprising the Senate and the National Assembly to which Gen. Zia added all four provincial assemblies as well. If the assembly does not exist, the incumbent president would continue to hold the office till a new assembly is elected and in turn chooses a new president in consort with other elements of the electoral college..

The Nation, 9 March 2007

**Opinion: How much enough is enough' (Dr. AH Khayal)**

An American critic has accused Pakistan of not having done enough to tackle the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, he has not disclosed as to what he precisely means by "enough". Does not mean that Pakistan ought to have blasted all the Talibans to extinction and flung the carcasses into the White House for the American presidents recreation' One simply wonders! So far Pakistans war against terrorism has cost the country immense Physical and financial losses. Numerous attacks have been made by the terrorists on the Pakistani President. Numerous civilian and military persons have been killed by the terrorists through suicide bombings. Numerous governmental and commercial buildings have been destroyed by the terrorists through suicide bombings. Numerous governmental and commercial buildings have been destroyed by the terrorists. Numerous railway tracks, gas pipelines and electricity grids have been blown up by the terrorists. All this destruction is the terrorists answer to Pakistans active co operation with America in Americas war against terrorism. But for the critic all this has not been enough. And since he has not liked to make public his idea of enough, one can only make guesses about it..

Frontier Post, 9 March 2007

**Editorial: Cleaning up electoral rolls**

The PPP Punjab chief has claimed that the new electoral rolls do not contain names of millions of eligible voters and has asked for remedial action from the Election Commission. We cannot say if this complaint has politics to it or carries truth to it. Nevertheless, the party is a persistent vocal complainant on this score. Yet the election

authority has never spoken out. So it is hard to say what is what. But this quietude of the election authority is nonetheless unsettling, although one doesn't necessarily have to smell a rat in it. The commission has well-defined and fairly well publicised procedures for enrolment of eligible voters and also for rectification of electoral rolls. And if in spite of that, the rolls remain flawed, that has no lesser to do with the public's own apathy generally and lack of full awareness among the predominantly illiterate electorate in the countryside particularly. That is where comes in the vital role of the political parties in the preparation of accurate electoral rolls. Being themselves key stakeholders, it is in their own larger interest to ensure that no eligible voter is missed out from the rolls and no ghost voter pops in. So they can lend a big helping hand to the election authority in this enterprise by persuading the voters to check the draft rolls if their names appear on the list and to challenge any wrong entry as provided by the electoral law..

Daily Times, 9 March 2007

**EDITORIAL: Will India and Pakistan exchange spy information?**

The two day Pakistan India Joint Anti-Terrorist Mechanism meeting has ended with both sides promising to share information to facilitate investigation into terrorist activity. They have presumably agreed on a mechanism that enables them to exchange secret information every three months. But let's face it. The Foreign Service officials who sat through the meeting must have been struck by the irony of the occasion. The Indians took out a portrait of the killer of 69 passengers of the Samjhota Express and exchanged it with the Pakistani side, clearly implying that the killer had been sent by someone from Pakistan. Islamabad was keen on a joint effort to solve the Samjhota tragedy but probably did not anticipate that it would be thus required to find the killer on the Pakistani side. However, at the risk of marring the atmospherics, Pakistan brought forth proof of Indian spy activity in Balochistan, which India has already denied and is not likely to act on whatever proof it has been handed..

Daily Times, 10 March 2007

**SJC suspends CJP after president files reference, fixes March 13 for hearing;**

ISLAMABAD: President General Pervez Musharraf on Thursday filed a reference of misconduct against Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, prompting the Supreme Judicial Council SJC to suspend him from his post as chief justice of the Supreme Court pending adjudication of the reference. Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry is unable to perform his functions as chief justice as a reference has been filed against him under Article 209 of the Constitution. President General Pervez Musharraf, while exercising his powers under Article 180 of the Constitution, is pleased to appoint the most senior judge available, Justice Javed Iqbal, to act as acting chief justice of Pakistan, reads a presidential notification. The SJC met in an emergency session soon after the acting chief justice was sworn in and issued notice to Justice Iftikhar to appear at 1:30pm on March 13 to defend himself..

Dawn, 10 March 2007

**NA body warns US on sanctions law: Threat of non cooperation in war on terror**

ISLAMABAD, March 9: The National Assembly's Standing Committee on Defence on Friday threatened that Pakistan could end cooperation with the US in the war on terrorism

if the US Congress passed any law or resolution imposing sanctions on Pakistan, sources told Dawn. The committee, which met under its chairman Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain at the Parliament House here, took serious notice of reports that three Democrats senators had submitted a resolution in the Congress threatening to withhold the delivery of F16 fighter jets to Pakistan and linking military assistance to Islamabad to efforts being made by the country in cracking down the Taliban and Al Qaeda. The committee members, both from treasury and the opposition benches, also agreed that the issue of Pakistan's support to the US in the war on terrorism must be discussed at a joint sitting of parliament. Opposition members who attended the meeting told Dawn that the committee had passed a unanimous resolution condemning the US move to put restrictions on Pakistan..

The Nation, 10 March 2007

**Editorial: US pressures**

AFTER repeated demands from members of the Bush Administration and US and NATO commanders that Islamabad do more to help Washington in its War on Terror, new pressures were added on Thursday by Democrats who control both Houses of US Congress. The House has already proposed that all US assistance to Pakistan be linked to its performance in the War on Terror, and on Thursday three leading Democratic Senators submitted a resolution proposing that all military sales to Pakistan be linked with certain objectives related to counter-terrorism and democratic reforms. While the resolutions stress was on stopping the militants from using Pakistani soil for activities inside Afghanistan and a greater Pakistani commitment to the War on Terror, the issue of democratic reforms was apparently added to increase the pressure. This explains why there was little elucidation of the point in the resolution. The Democrats also failed to highlight the issue of democracy when raising the matter the same day in a House subcommittee. Notwithstanding that Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher opposed the move, it suits the Bush administration to use this threat to put further pressure on Pakistan, and the democracy demand may be just a stick to beat Islamabad with, to force it into decisions against Pakistan's national interest, like restarting military operations in the tribal areas..

Daily Times, 10 March 2007

**EDITORIAL: American milestones for Pakistan**

The US Senate has now done its bit too to put Pakistan under pressure. But this was to be expected after the negative testimony of many American officials before various US Congress committees. In a non-binding resolution, the Senate says Pakistan must do more than it is doing in the fight against the Taliban and Al Qaeda or run the risk of possibly losing US assistance, including military supplies. The Senate Democrats passed Senate Resolution 99 on Wednesday night, following a similar but tougher resolution earlier passed by the House of Representatives HR 1 intended to pressure Pakistan to improve on its present effort against terrorism in general and the Taliban, who are taking a heavy toll of American lives in Afghanistan, in particular. But if the intention was to block the Bush administration's plan to sell F16 aircraft to Pakistan, the Senate resolution has not gone far enough to do that. It simply puts Congress on record as making clear that military assistance to Pakistan will be assessed in the context of efforts in cracking down on the Taliban and Al Qaeda. The tautology was pointed: the House bill already requires

the president to certify that Pakistan is doing its maximum to deal with the Taliban and the Al Qaeda before further financial aid is released to it..

Frontier Post, 10 March 2007

**Editorial: Cat-and-mouse game starts**

In Washington, a cat and mouse game against Pakistan has evidently begun. And if the ruling hierarchy doesn't see into it right now, not it alone but the entire nation will rue it later on. The Bush administration may be defending Pakistan's track record in the so-called war on terror. But the Democratic-dominated Congress is on the offensive, working frantically to deride its role. Earlier, the party had manipulated its majority in the House of Representatives, the lower house of the Congress, to steamroller an enactment tagging economic and military assistance to this country on to presidential certification that it is earnestly going after the al Qaeda and Taliban remnants on its territory. Now, a clutch of Democratic senators has moved a nonbinding resolution to withhold the delivery of F16s it has ordered if found wanting in this campaign. And this can latterly become even binding, given the way the domestic politics are playing out in America. With an eye on the next presidential contest, the Democrats are calling for early withdrawal of the US troops from Iraq, where the war is becoming increasingly unpopular among the American people..

Dawn, 10 March 2007

**Editorial: MMAs misplaced priorities**

THERE is nothing wrong if the Frontier assembly passes the Prevention of Discrimination on Basis of Hijab Bill. Just as it is unfair to discriminate against women who choose not to wear the hijab or cover their faces, it is equally wrong to forbid women from wearing them. News that the latter was happening in the province prompted six MMA female assembly members to move the above bill which they hope will be passed soon. Unfortunately, this is just one more example of the MMAs misplaced priorities, especially in a province where access to basic amenities remains limited. Perhaps the move is not so surprising given that the MMA has repeatedly proved that it is not willing to deal with issues like healthcare, for what else explains its decision some years ago disallowing women from being examined by male doctors? It does not seem to be interested in reducing the number of women who die during childbirth as they are denied access to proper healthcare..

Daily Times, 11 March 2007

**Lawyers reject, protest CJP's trial**

LAHORE/ISLAMABAD/ KARACHI: Lawyers across the country boycotted court proceedings on Saturday in protest at Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry's suspension, and rejected that Chaudhry should be tried by the Supreme Judicial Council. The Supreme Court Bar Association SCBA announced that it would besiege the venue where the proceedings of a reference against Chaudhry would take place. Chaudhry was suspended on Friday for misuse of authority, and President General Pervez Musharraf filed the reference against him. Lawyers in Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar and Quetta did not attend court proceedings, and representatives of bar associations said that protests would continue on Monday. Lawyers in Islamabad went to court yesterday, but said they would

boycott proceedings on Monday and Tuesday, when the Supreme Judicial Council will begin hearing the presidential reference against Chaudhry..

The Nation, 11 March 2007

**Editorial: The APC agenda**

THAT the ARD leadership took pretty long to formally approve the agenda for the APC scheduled for March-24-25 in London, points to the difficulties the mainstream opposition alliance has been facing in resolving differences between its two major components. The PPP initially objected to this conference on the plea that Mian Nawaz Sharif had convened it without taking Ms Benazir Bhutto into confidence, and also expressed its reservations about the MMA's participation in the APC at a joint meeting of its Central Executive Committee and Federal Council some time ago. One thing is clear that the PML N does not want to make Ms Bhutto's non-participation an issue since she has agreed to send a delegation of senior party leaders to attend the London Conference. It suits Mian Nawaz. However, it is the bipartisan agreement on a seven-point agenda that signifies the importance of the ARD's Islamabad meeting. What indicates a shift in the PPP's earlier stance was its endorsement of the PML N's demand that the next general election should be conducted by a government of national consensus with General Musharraf having no role in that setup. .

Daily Times, 11 March 2007

**Opinion: Credible elections and governance (Dr. HA Rizvi)**

The postponement of the National Assembly elections is not a viable option. There is no guarantee that the government would be able to tackle the current problems in the next 12 months and then face the electorate with a better performance record. The longer it avoids facing the electorate, the more difficult it will be to cope with election pressures. Fair and free elections are an important feature of a democratic political system. Elections provide an opportunity to the people to elect their rulers, change the government and endorse or reject policy options through peaceful means. In Pakistan, elections have not generally performed these functions. Invariably our governments and rulers do not change through elections, nor have the military rulers ever lost an election. Similarly, General Pervez Musharraf is not expected to lose the next presidential election and his political associates are confident about their victory in the parliamentary elections..

Dawn, 11 March 2007

**Opinion: Gathering storm on the western frontier (M Shah)**

AMERICAN intrusions into Pakistan from Afghanistan, which until now have been occasional, are about to become frequent territorial violations. These inroads, be they in the form of targeted missile/air strikes or enter-operate-leave incursions are a rapidly approaching reality. What this entails for Pakistan is worth some thoughts. All signals emanating from American centres of influence indicate a perception that Pakistan lacks the will or capability or both to prevent militants based inside its territorial jurisdiction from aiding the Taliban in their attacks against US/Afghan troops in Afghanistan. The US and the Karzai government are failing in their stated mission and American domestic and international opinion requires a scapegoat to justify this protracted conflict. The most

conveniently available scapegoat is Pakistan..

Daily Times, 12 March 2007

**US frustrated with Musharraf, but fears losing him**

WASHINGTON: The frustration of doing business with president, Gen , is matched only by the fear of living life without him, says an analytical piece in the New York Times. The spectre of Islamic radicals overthrowing Gen Musharraf has also limited the Bush administration's policy options, taking off the table any ideas about American military strikes against a resurgent Al Qaeda, which has camps in Pakistani tribal areas, writes Mark Mazzetti. According to him, the question of how to handle Musharraf is critical at a time when intelligence officials widely agree that the Taliban are expanding their reach in Pakistan, gradually spreading from remote areas into more settled regions of the country. The fear within Washington that Islamic extremism has become a dominant force in Pakistan has been stoked in part by Gen Musharraf himself..

The Tribune, 12 March 2007

**Opinion: The Talibanisation of Waziristan (Laura King)**

PESHAWAR, Pakistan For weeks, there had been whispers that Akhtar Usmani, a young teacher at a Muslim religious school, was speaking out against the growing presence of Islamic militants in his home in the tribal area of Waziristan. Then one day last week, the schoolteachers corpse, with the head severed from the torso, was found in a bloody sack dumped beside a desolate road. A note on his mutilated body called him a spy for America. Such grisly reprisal killings have become a recurring feature of life in Waziristan, a rugged border zone that is in the global spotlight over U.S. intelligence claims that elements of al-Qaida are regrouping there. A little noted corollary of the areas notoriety as a militant haven is the suffering of civilians who live and work there, according to human rights groups, political analysts and Pakistani law enforcement officials..

The Nation, 12 March 2007

**Justice Iftikhar wants open trial**

ISLAMABAD - Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry Sunday demanded an open trial of charges levelled against him in the presidential reference, as he stayed under house arrest for a consecutive third day. Chief Justice said this to Tehrik-I-Istiqlal Chief Air Marshal Retd Asghar Khan who managed to meet him at his residence this evening after a struggle of 48 hours. Earlier, during the day, a PMLN delegation led by Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan failed to meet the Chief Justice as the security personnel did not allow them to enter the CJs residence. Following Asghar Khans meeting, four judges of the Supreme Court namely Justice Muhammad Nawaz Abbasi, Justice Syed Jamshaid Ali, Justice Raja Fiaz Ahmed and Justice Nasirulmulk were also allowed to meet the Chief Justice. At the same time, the government sources claimed that the justices tried to find a way out of the crisis but it was learnt that the suspended chief justice was not ready to change his principled stand.

Daily Times, 12 March 2007

**EDITORIAL: Price of clinging to power**

President General Pervez Musharraf recently explained to a Canada-based South Asia analyst why he wanted to stay in office for another five years. Simple, as he would say, to roll back religious extremism, ensure political stability and sustain economic growth. He wanted to see those who supported moderation win at the federal and provincial levels, and his key concern, he insisted, was preventing the Talibanisation of his country, especially the Pushtun areas along the Afghan border. General Musharraf repeated his dream of converting Pakistan into an energy and trade corridor and denied vehemently that elements from within the army were sympathetic to the Taliban and Talibanisation. The analyst reached this conclusion: In his eighth year of rule, Musharraf remains very much secure in his position; no domestic political force has been able to oust him from power. The above interview was reported a day ago, at a time when many in Pakistan were anguishing about General Musharraf's latest action of sacking the Chief Justice of Pakistan in a ruthless, even brutal, manner..

Dawn, 12 March 2007

**Opinion: Public perceptions of judicial crisis (Dr. Tariq Rahman)**

ON March 9, the chief justice of Pakistan, Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry, was charged with misconduct and misuse of authority by President Musharraf and a reference was sent to the Supreme Judicial Council for a decision. Justice Javed Iqbal was sworn in as the acting chief justice presumably because Justice Bhagwandas, the senior-most judge after the chief justice, was out of the country. All these actions were justified under Article 209 of the Constitution. However, members of the bar, opposition leaders and many commentators, speaking a few hours after the event, condemned the action on several grounds. Moreover, the public has its own perceptions of what promises to become a landmark event, similar to the Maulvi Tamizuddin Khan case which laid the foundations for the erosion of democracy in Pakistan..

Dawn, 13 March 2007

**Nationwide protest by lawyers; 40 hurt in Lahore baton charge**

ISLAMABAD/LAHORE, March 12: As the nation waited with bated breath for the Supreme Judicial Council SJC to proceed against Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry, lawyers anger against the action burst out across the country on Monday. Police stood ready in major cities to act against angry lawyers and succeeded in keeping the protests under control in all cities, except in Lahore, where they baton charged lawyers breaking through police barricades, causing injuries to 40 and arresting about 25. Included among the injured were PPP Senator Advocate Sardar Latif Khan Khosa, Advocate Mehreen Raja MNA and SCBA Secretary Zulfikar Bokhari. Lawyers in Karachi, Quetta, Peshawar, Muzaffarabad and other cities and towns also boycotted courts to protest the government action of making the chief justice non-functional without waiting for the SJC decision on the reference filed against him..

Daily Time, 13 March 2007

**EDITORIAL: Irrelevant jirgas from uncontrolled territories**

An Afghan delegation arrived in Islamabad on Sunday to discuss the holding of Afghan-Pakistan jirgas traditional tribal council to tackle the trouble along the rugged borders of the two countries. Pakistan and Afghanistan agreed last year to convene bilateral jirgas to

frankly discuss their borderland situation. The idea suddenly appealed, but then lost its lustre just as quickly as anti jirga developments took place inside the North Waziristan agency in Pakistan. The 12 member Afghan delegation will thrash out what type of jirgas are needed for such an exchange. As the two sides talked of jirgas the United States decided to send 3,500 more troops to Afghanistan to increase the number of American troops to 27,000. The situation on the ground changed after the Pakistan army reached an agreement with the Taliban of North Waziristan last year. That agreement indirectly superseded the authority of the residual jirga. Therefore the institution of the jirga is hardly active in the region because Pakistan is no longer able to protect it..

The Nation, 13 March 2007

**Opinion: Assault on judiciary (RMS Azam)**

The reference filed by General Pervez Musharraf against the Chief Justice of Pakistan, Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, and his suspension of the Chief Justice of Pakistan CJP adds to the many instances of attacks on the judiciary by the executive branch of government in Pakistan, which, more often than not, has been dominated by military rulers. It is a direct and frontal assault on the independence of the judiciary intended to ridicule the judiciary, to undermine its constitutional authority and to prevent it from freely exercising its power of judicial review of executive actions. Ever since Pervez Musharraf came into power through an unconstitutional military takeover on 12 October 1999, he has consistently acted in violation of constitutional norms and undermined Pakistans civilian institutions. This latest move against the CJP is intended to browbeat the judiciary so that it cannot challenge executive authority or hold the government accountable for its misdeeds. .

Dawn, 13 March 2007

**JF-17s welcomed at Kamra**

ATTOCK, March 12: It was a historic day for Pakistan when two FJ-17 Thunder fighter aircraft arrived from China at the Pakistan Aeronautical Complex in Kamra on Monday. An arrival ceremony for the two aircraft, jointly manufactured by Pakistani and Chinese engineers, was held with a great joy. The Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Tanvir Mahmood Ahmed, was chief guest on the occasion. Senior officers of the Pakistan Air Force and members of the Chinese delegation attended the ceremony. The air chief inspected JF-17 Thunder aircraft and met with pilots, engineers and technicians. He appreciated their hard work and devotion for translating a dream into reality..

Dawn, 13 March 2007

**Editorial: Uncertainty and confusion**

SINCE Frids drama surrounding the non-functional Chief Justice, Mr Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhrs status as a free citizen remains unclear. The government has chosen to keep his status unclear and does not seem to realise the enormous harm being done to its image by its gaucherie. Even though the police have sealed off his home, Interior Minister Aftab Sherpao and State Minister for Information Tariq Azim have said that no restrictions have been placed on Justice Chaudhry and that anybody can meet him. However, a Muslim League delegation was denied entry to his house. He may not be under house arrest as such, but for all practical purposes his freedom has been

curtailed. Worse still, his telephone and cable TV have been cut, and the delivery of newspapers stopped. It is not clear what purpose these steps are intended for. If the idea behind his vague status as a free citizen is to deny the media access to him, this has failed, for the media has been reporting on the aftermath of Fridays dramatic development. The result is greater confusion.

Daily Times, 14 March 2007

**Opinion: Can Pakistan challenge Baglihar verdict' (I Hussain)**

Whereas the textual interpretation allows India to construct a submerged spillway on the ground that it is consistent with sound and economical design, the object and purpose forbids it to do so because it provides it with the means to interfere with the free flow of waters. Despite claiming great victory in the Baglihar dam case, Pakistan's minister for water and power was unhappy about the neutral expert's finding on the spillway issue. He let it be known that his country reserved the right to take up the spillway issue anytime at an appropriate forum. He also indicated that his government was studying various technical and legal issues pertaining to the matter. There are also unconfirmed reports that the Pakistan government is contemplating challenging the verdict on the spillway issue. Given the fact that an arbitral award is final and binding, one wonders how Pakistan will challenge the findings of the neutral expert. Is it possible for Pakistan to do so'

Dawn, 14 March 2007

**Justice Iftikhar seeks reconstituted SJC: 'CJ roughed up 'Overwhelming support by lawyers 'PBC strike today**

ISLAMABAD, March 13: In a day of high drama on the streets of the federal capital, the suspended Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry, tried to march up to the Supreme Court along with his wife and children, seeking justice amidst an orchestrated official campaign that accuses him of misconduct and misuse of authority. Having been roughed up and prevented from marching on, Justice Chaudhry was briefly confined to the nearby Balochistan House. Later, after some persuasion he was driven amidst tight security to the apex court to defend himself. Scores of lawyers present there ignored the police cordon to greet him by showering flower petals and raising anti-government slogans. After an initial attempt by security officials failed to prevent a rousing reception for the suspended chief justice, better sense prevailed among police which, instead of using the traditional high handed methods, stepped back to allow the lawyers and some opposition politicians to take Justice Chaudhry inside the court house in the form of a procession..

Dawn, 15 March 2007

**Acting CJ takes suo motu notice: Manhandling of Justice Iftikhar**

ISLAMABAD, March 14: The Supreme Court on Wednesday took suo motu notice of the police manhandling of the suspended Chief Justice, Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry. On Tuesday, Justice Chaudhry was roughed up by police for refusing to ride an official car and attempting to march towards the Supreme Court to attend the proceedings of the Supreme Judicial Council SJC against him. His wife and daughters were also reportedly manhandled by policemen. I have taken suo motu notice of the

incident and directed a full-fledged inquiry to see how police could mistreat him, said Acting Chief Justice Javed Iqbal, adding that it was his decision to take suo motu notice of the incident. He was talking to reporters after a ceremony held to administer oath to Justice ret'd Hamid Ali Mirza, whose tenure as ad hoc judge of the Supreme Court has been extended for six months from Wednesday..

Daily Times, 15 March 2007

**EDITORIAL: Why shouldn't Pakistan fence the Durand Line'**

Afghanistan has protested Pakistan's attempt to fence its border with Afghanistan. The basis of the protest is Kabul's position that the unmarked frontier is disputed. The complaint was made to the visiting US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, Richard Boucher, who lamely responded that efforts to control the movement of militants across the rugged border should be agreed by all sides. The Afghan intelligence agency, not always to be relied upon as it is often swayed by emotion rather than reason, says that Pakistan has started fencing the border in an area opposite to Barmal in the eastern Paktika province. This might well be true because President General Pervez Musharraf said in February that Pakistan would fence 35 kilometres of its northwestern border to restrict the movement of Taliban militants. The fencing relates to only 35 km and not to the whole 2,500 km that is described as the Durand Line. The Kabul government has stressed its political position before the practicalities of blocking suicide-bombers and terrorists from going into Afghanistan..

The Nation, 15 March 2007

**Pak, Afghan jirgas agree to fight terror**

ISLAMABAD Pakistan and Afghanistan Jirga Commissions agreed on Wednesday to work jointly for the promotion of peace and elimination of terrorism on the basis of mutual respect for each others sovereignty and territorial integrity. Both the Commissions in a joint meeting concluded here on Wednesday decided that they would build further on their initial interaction and hold their next meeting between April 8 to April 11, this year. The Afghan Jirga Commission was led by Pir Sayed Ahmed Gilani while Aftab Ahmed Sherpao, Chairman of the Jirga Commission and Interior Minister, headed the Pakistani delegation. In a joint statement, the two Commissions said that they had decided to continue with their efforts to wipe off terrorism and work to eliminate the menace. The talks were held in two sessions, said the statement.

Daily Times, 15 March 2007

**Opinion: Justice derailed (Moeen Cheema)**

The public confidence in the judiciary, the last standing institution, has been guillotined. The crisis of confidence is such that no one expects the CJP to win even though an overwhelming majority believes that the charges are misplaced and politically motivated. The biggest loser in the long term, however, is likely to be the Army. The unceremonious suspension of the Chief Justice of Pakistan on March 9 has led to much unrest. The government is trying to control the damage but the legal community, the opposition political parties as well as civil society are up in arms. To be legalistic, the government now refers to the chief justice as non-functional. But in reality, he has been suspended from office even before an inquiry into the alleged misconduct began. President Pervez

Musharraf has also referred his case to the Supreme Judicial Council. The chief justice has been detained in his residence and his movements restricted. He was not allowed to meet with a number of lawyers, journalists, politicians and brother justices who showed up at his doorstep over the last three four days..

The Nation, 15 March 2007

**Editorial: Ties on the slide**

THE second postponement of the strategic dialogue between the US and Pakistan provides further proof of strains in their bilateral relations, whose signs have been visible for some time. First put off last November under the pretext of US Under Secretary of State Nicholas Burns engagements elsewhere, the talks that were due to take place this week have again been shelved on the same ground. The rationale of postponement is not far to seek. Washingtons overtures of friendship to Islamabad had been prompted by its solitary concern to make its War on Terror a success, in which its help was undoubtedly considered of key relevance. But as the feeling that Pakistan is not performing its counter-terrorism role adequately is increasingly taking hold in the minds of US policymakers, the incentive that some of its genuine needs should be met to keep it on board has gone missing..

Kashmir Times, 15 March 2007

**Opinion: Sacking of the chief judge (MB Naqvi)**

The countrys President called the countrys Chief Justice to his palace for an explanation and the latter returned under escort and was confined to his residence incommunicado. What went on between the two is not be known. The President will make a reference to the Supreme Judicial Council and to investigate the alleged CJs misconduct. In what did this misconduct lay has not been divulged, though planted stories tell the tale. The President does not like disorderly or disobedient persons; he has not made the formal inaugural speech of a new Parliament for three years running because he finds the deputies of the parliament disorderly. They shout; hoot, and refuse to listen to the august person in silence. On the other side was Iftikhar Chaudhry whose record is one of judicial activism. He did tread on many sensitive toes. He was given to taking suo motto notice of various happenings. Some of his judgements embarrassed the government. He was the person who ensured Mukhtaran Mai case was taken up, heard and in some way decided. Later she was enabled to travel abroad against the wishes of Gen. Musharraf who said she would defame Pakistan abroad and sully countrys image..

Daily Times, 16 March 2007

**Aitzaz to submit 4 pleas to SJC today**

LAHORE: Chaudhry Aitzaz Ahsan, the counsel for the suspended Chief Justice of Pakistan, Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry, will move four applications before the Supreme Judicial Council today, beginning with requesting the SJC to adjourn the proceedings until he can meet with his client freely. On March 13 a large police contingent prevented me from meeting with the chief justice. I informed the law and information ministers but to no avail. I am going to move an application asking for adjournment until the Council can ensure that I can meet with the CJ without any obstruction, Mr Ahsan told Daily Times. The second application deals with requesting the SJC to adopt a fair procedure

according to its own precedent. In this, Mr Ahsan shall refer to the 1971 reference against Justices Sh. Shaukat Ali and Fazle Ghani, the latter the father of current Attorney-General of Pakistan, Makhdoom Ali Khan. While Justice Ghani resigned and was not proceeded against, Justice Ali chose to contest and was tried by the SJC with then-CJP Hamoodur Rehman in the chair. The case culminated in the Councils advice to the president against Justice Ali after a 10-month-long trial. We want a fair trial according to that precedent..

Dawn, 16 March 2007

**Musharraf says he will accept SJC verdict**

GUJRANWALA, March 15: President Pervez Musharraf has said that the government will accept the verdict of the Supreme Judicial Council SJC on the reference against Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry. Speaking at a public meeting at Jinnah Stadium here on Thursday, he said that once the decision was announced, he would address the nation on television to take it into confidence. Gen Musharraf said had faith that the SJC would do justice in the purely constitutional and judicial matter. But whatever it decides will be acceptable to me, he said, adding that he could not speak more on the reference since it was a sub judice matter. He said he would expose the protesters hollowness after the SJC decision..

The Nation, 16 March 2007

**Editorial: US aid restrictions**

DESPITE attempts by the Bush administration to oppose Congressional moves to link military aid with stronger anti-terrorism efforts by Islamabad, the US Senate has passed a bill which ties aid with two conditionalities instead of one. It requires demonstrable progress on counterterrorism and democratic reforms. That it comes in tandem with a similar resolution by the House of Representatives indicates which way the wind is likely to blow in days to come. The government has obviously failed to persuade Washington that its multi-pronged policy to rein in al-Qaeda and Taliban is in the best interests of both Pakistan and the US. Washington continues to maintain that Islamabad has failed to destroy what it calls safe havens for terrorists in the tribal areas. On Tuesday Defence Secretary Robert Gates and Joint chiefs Chairman Gen Peter Pace maintained that Al-Qaeda and Taliban elements continue to cross into Afghanistan from Pakistans side. A report appearing on Wednesday indicates that Washington has started foot-dragging on strategic dialogue with Pakistan and that the second round of talks has again been postponed at Washingtons initiative. It would have been easier for a democratic government answerable to its voters to convince the US that it could not take measures resented by the people..

Kashmir Times, 16 March 2007

**Editorial: Musharraf hits a hornets nest**

Little could a de facto dictator, like President Musharraf, imagine the nationwide adverse reaction that the summary ouster of Chief Justice Iftikar Muhammad Chaudhary would spark off. The lawyers were the first to take to the streets, in all the major cities, from Lahore to Karachi and Quetta. They even faced a brutal baton charge when they tried to lay a siege on the Baluchistan House at Islamabad, where the ousted Chief Justice was to

face the presidents hand-picked Supreme Judicial Council comprising three Supreme Court judges and two Chief Justices of provincial High Courts on Tuesday. They have announced a week-long boycott of the Courts of Law across Pakistan, while the leaders of all the opposition parties in Pakistan met at Islamabad on Tuesday to chalked out their future course of action. The aforesaid meeting was attended by Maulana Fazlur Rehman of the MAA, Raja Zafrul Huq of the PML N and the famous cricket star, Imran Khan of the Tehrik-e-Insaf..

The Nation, 16 March 2007

**Opinion: Injustice with the CJP (Dr Ijaz Ahsan)**

The suspension of the Chief Justice of Pakistan is one more example of the executives excesses on the judiciary. There can be no two opinions about the fact that the manner in which the reference against the CJ has been handled by the government cannot be condemned too strongly. Under Article 209, the president cannot summon the chief justice or suspend him; he can only send a reference against the latter to the Supreme Judicial Council. Nor does the Constitution envisage the Chief Justice being held incommunicado. Government spokespersons have said the CJ is free to meet anyone he chooses. However, when representatives of the bar or the media wish to meet him, they are returned from his door by the police. In the latest move, the acting chief justice has summoned the police chief for their role in the whole affair. But one cannot imagine their having acted without orders from above..

Daily Times, 16 March 2007

**Polls will be held in 2007: Musharraf**

GUJRANWALA: President General Pervez Musharraf said on Thursday that general elections would be held by the end of this year and urged people to vote for his supporters. True democracy has been established in the country. The local bodies and Senate have successfully completed their tenures, while the elections of national and provincial assemblies will be held by the end of this year, Gen Musharraf said in an address to a big public meeting here. He said that elements involved in negative politics did not want the democratic system to take root in Pakistan. He also urged voters to reject extremism and terrorism, which were eating us up like termites internally and affecting our image externally. He referred to the recent killing of a provincial minister, Zill-e-Huma, in Gujranwala by a fanatic in the name of Islam. This is a scar on the name of religion, as Islam does not preach such things, he stressed..

Dawn, 17 March 2007

**Police storm office of TV channel: Musharraf apologises for raid**

ISLAMABAD, March 16: About two dozen personnel of the Punjab Police on Friday attacked and ransacked the offices of a private TV channel some 30 minutes before the conclusion of the Supreme Judicial Council proceedings against Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry, apparently in an effort to stop the channel from airing live pictures of police action against protesting lawyers and activists of various political parties. The police action against Geo TV came minutes after the channel telecast footage of running battle between the police and protesters, captured from its cameras on the rooftop of the office building situated about 500 metres from the Supreme Court building

where the protesters were trying to reach to welcome the non-functional chief justice. A strong reaction from journalists, politicians, lawyers and traders against the attack on the TV channel prompted President Pervez Musharraf to come live on TV and apologise for the incident. President Musharraf said the incident was regrettable and promised swift action against people responsible for it..

Daily Times, 17 March 2007

**Clashes mark the day as Iftikhar Chaudhry appears before SJC**

ISLAMABAD/LAHORE: Riot police fired rubber bullets and tear gas at protesters and arrested dozens of people in Islamabad and Lahore as they tried to contain protests over the sacking of suspended CJP Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry who appeared before the Supreme Judicial Council SJC on Friday. A large number of people managed to reach the SC despite blockades on all roads leading to the venue of the CJPs hearing. Police arrested MMA parliamentarians Qazi Hussain Ahmad and Hafiz Hussain Ahmed after they offered Friday prayers in front of the Parliament Lodges. Maulana Fazlur Rehman, leader of the opposition in the National Assembly, did not participate in the protest. Activists of the PPP, the PML-N, the ANP and the PTI also reached the SC in separate processions. The protesting lawyers, however, kept themselves at a distance from political activists who were shouting slogans in favour of their party leaders. Meanwhile, more than 50 people were injured while at least 700 were arrested from various parts of Islamabad and Rawalpindi..

Indian Express, 17 March 2007

**Opinion: All hemmed in (Rajeev Shukla)**

In a sudden turn of events, pressure is mounting on Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf from all sides. The fire has been fuelled by the sacking of Pakistan's Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry by Musharraf, which has not only brought all anti-Musharraf forces together for the first time ever, but also provided a renewed thrust to their dissidence. When a public agitation gets the backing of powerful, but non-political people, its repercussions are unfailingly grave. Today, the vast majority of Pakistan's opinion mobilisers, intellectuals and activists have come out openly in defiance of Musharraf. On the political side, all parties have shelved their differences and put up a united front. Nawaz Sharif is holding talks with Benazir Bhutto. Imran Khan, an icon for the nation's youth, is functioning as the coordinator who is all set to take command of a joint political fight. Pakistan's fundamentalist forces are already beyond the control of the administration; they are hand in glove with the al-Qaeda and Taliban..

The Nation, 17 March 2007

**Editorial: US-Pak ties**

THE visit of US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher to Islamabad has not rekindled the hope that his country's strained ties with Pakistan are on the mend. There is no change in the differing perceptions on measures needed to fight the so-called War on Terror. Washington continues to call for military moves, while Islamabad has learnt the hard way that a comprehensive, and primarily political, approach alone is the answer. Foreign Secretary Riaz Muhammad Khan told Mr Boucher on Thursday, about Pakistan's strategy covering the political, administrative, developmental and military dimensions. At

least two aspects of Mr Bouchers disclosure, at a news conference later at the US Embassy, that Washington had allocated \$750 million for the development of tribal areas raise doubts about its sincerity in seeing the Reconstruction Opportunity Zones as an essential component of the anti-terrorist operation. For one thing, it is one year since President Bush told the world after meeting President Musharraf at Islamabad that the US would help build ROZs and the goods produced there would have unrestricted, duty-free access to its market..

Daily Times, 17 March 2007

**Opinion: Why Musharraf stays (Pervez Hoodboy)**

Musharraf is not taking chances. He knows that the real threat to his power comes from within his constituency, the military. As a result, he has become obsessed with micromanaging everything from troop movements and special events to postings and promotions. Recent threats by the Bush administration to cut off billions of dollars in aid to Pakistan have sparked panic in government circles. Likewise, according to the Pakistani ambassador in Washington, military strikes by the United States aimed at Al Qaeda and Taliban havens inside Pakistans tribal areas would destabilise Pakistan and possibly could bring General Pervez Musharraf down. But how worried should the Pakistani authorities really be in the face of growing US pressure to root out Islamic militants' Occasional frustrations notwithstanding, it is, in fact, unlikely that the US will turn against a faithful and dependent ally, especially one whose leader enjoys cordial personal relations with Bush. Nor, due to a lack of organised opposition, will public anger at Musharrafs pro-US policy destabilise his regime. Indeed, the wily general-president does not merely survive crisis after crisis, but has thrived in power..

Dawn, 17 March 2007

**Editorial: Threat to basic freedoms**

GOING by the governments behaviour, what the nation should worry about is not so much the outcome of the non-functional chief justice's case as the fate of civil society. Some of the developments appear to be portents of a darker scenario with a possible flashback to Ziaul Haqs days. The media stands in danger of becoming the regimes whipping boy: a popular talk show on a TV channel has been forced to discontinue, yesterday the channel's offices and those of The News in Islamabad were ransacked by the police, and two TV channels were made to go off air on Tuesday because they showed scenes of a police baton charge on protesting lawyers in Lahore. The protests were later allowed to be aired but without the objectionable footage. The shot showed a bleeding lawyer being removed from the scene for medical treatment. The Lahore High Court has also issued notices to the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority to explain its position with regard to two TV channels which a petitioner alleges were bringing the army and the judiciary into disrepute while covering the chief justices case..

Dawn, 18 March 2007

**Iftikhar sent on forced leave, says govt: Bhagwandas to take oath as ACJ on return**  
ISLAMABAD, March 17: The government on Saturday changed its position on the issue concerning Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry, with Federal Minister for Law Mohammad Wasi Zafar saying that President Pervez Musharraf had sent Justice Iftikhar

on forced leave after filing a reference against him with the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) on charges of misconduct and misuse of power. The honourable chief justice was sent on leave under Section 2 of the Judges Compulsory Leave Order 1970, validated in 1975 under the Validation of Laws Act 1975, said the law minister in a statement issued here. When contacted, Munir A. Malik, counsel for Justice Chaudhry and president of the Supreme Court Bar Association, said they had never been informed by the government or the SJC that Justice Chaudhry had been sent on forced leave. He criticised the government for continuously changing its position on the issue of the suspension of the chief justice..

The Nation, 18 March 2007

### **Rocket attacks, bomb blasts in Balochistan**

QUETTA - Eight rockets were fired on paramilitary forces and bombs exploded in different areas of Balochistan on Saturday, but no damage was reported except two power transformers. According to details, a rocket was fired in Cantonment area of Quetta. Five rockets were launched on a camp of Frontier Corps in Kohlu. A bomb planted near the government buildings exploded with heavy bang in Sibi, but did not cause any damage. Another bomb exploded outside the office of DCO in Dera Bugti. town while some unknown persons also did indiscriminate firing on the office but no damage was reported. In the meanwhile, Beeberg Baloch, the spokesman for Baloch Liberation Army claimed that Baloch fighters attacked an army convoy in Tratani area on Saturday and killed six soldiers and injured many others.

Daily Times, 18 March 2007

### **Opinion: Military dominance and civilian autonomy (Dr HA Rizvi)**

An important implication of the unity of command and centralisation is that civilian institutions are not allowed to function autonomously. All civilian institutions and processes have to function within the framework set out by the presidency and may not do anything that conflicts with the governments overall political agenda. The suspension of the chief justice of the Supreme Court by the president is an unfortunate development in Pakistans troubled political history. The hostile reaction of the legal circles, media, political parties and societal groups shows that the presidential action has further strained relations between government and civil society. This is an ill-advised action that has given both opposition and society a cause which cuts across the political and ideological divide. If the government does not take some remedial steps to defuse the situation, it may have to rely heavily on the state's regulative and coercive apparatus to keep the political initiative in its hands..

Dawn, 18 March 2007

### **Editorial: The tyranny of jirgas**

IT is a pity that concerted efforts by human rights activists and some enlightened judgments by the courts notwithstanding, the abhorrent custom of jirgas giving away minor girls in marriage to adult males continues unchecked. The Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child has reported the decision of some tribal elders to hand over four young girls in marriage to the aggrieved party as compensation to settle a feud. We support Sparc in its call to the Sindh chief justice to take suo motu notice of the

case. The jirga was declared illegal by the Sukkur bench of the Sindh High Court in 2004. If the institution has still not been eliminated, it is time serious note was taken of the jirgas that are held and the people who participate in them should be held accountable for breach of law..

Daily Times, 18 March 2007

**EDITORIAL: Good and bad advice**

President General Pervez Musharraf has always held himself out as a transitional figure who would like to exit after putting the country and the state back on track. He has accomplished much in the last seven years. But now is the time to prevent it from being rolled back through mass agitation and religious radicalisation of the country's political environment. If the mass disquiet changes into a mass uprising, he will have much bigger battles on his hands. Indeed, the country might face a rollback of his legacy, which neither the non-clerical politician nor the world would like too much. It is said that many of his good projects have not been successful because he has succumbed to bad advice from a coterie of unwise hangers-on. Today, looking at the growing public unrest over the firing of the chief justice of Pakistan, we can only say that his advisers have let him down once again, but this time the letdown could be fatal if he doesn't quickly make amends..

Daily Times, 19 March 2007

**Action against CJP on PHC judges letter: Musharraf**

ISLAMABAD: Action against Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry was taken on the application of a Peshawar High Court PHC judge, sources quoted President Pervez Musharraf as telling a meeting of the Pakistan Muslim League and its allies at Prime Ministers House on Sunday. President Musharraf said the PHC judge had written him a letter on March 5, threatening that he would resign if action was not taken against Mr Chaudhry. The PHC judge's letter contains solid evidence against Mr Chaudhry, and Naeem Bukharis charge sheet has nothing to do with the presidential reference, the president said. He, however, said that allegations against Mr Chaudhry would not be made public because the matter was pending with the Supreme Judicial Council. He expressed deep concern at the manhandling of Mr Chaudhry by police. He assured the meeting that the judicial crisis would end with the return of Justice Rana Bhagwandas..

Dawn, 19 March 2007

**London MPC postponed**

LONDON, March 18 : The multi-party conference scheduled to be held here on March 24-25 has been postponed, confirmed former chief minister of Punjab and PML-N president Shahbaz Sharif while talking to Dawn here on Sunday. A new date for holding the conference convened by former prime minister Nawaz Sharif from the ARD platform will be announced later after consulting leaders of the parties who have consented to attend, party sources said. Meanwhile, Mr Shahbaz Sharif called upon his party workers to be ready for the immediate struggle that lies ahead on March 21 and follow the party leadership guidelines for a peaceful protest that would ensure that another nail is put in the coffin of dictatorship on that day..

Dawn, 19 March 2007

**Opinion: Contempt for institutions**

WHAT is it with us in the Muslim world? What explains our indifference to, or, worse, casual contempt for institutions that are held in deference by the rest of the world? Just look at how the Chief Justice of Pakistans Supreme Court is being treated. Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry has been made non-functional and confined to his residence. His crime? He has been accused of 'misusing authority'. Accused by whom? By a little known lawyer who has accused the top judge of using his official position to get his son a police job. The action against Justice Chaudhry may have come as a shock to the uninitiated like me who are not inured to the daily shock-and-awe of Pakistani politics. However, as far as the people of Pakistan are concerned, this is not something new. In fact, they have seen worse over the past six decades in their eventful history. Would such a thing be possible in a mature democracy, say, like the United States? Coming from India, I know for sure that such highhandedness on the part of the executive is unthinkable in the world's largest democracy..

Indian Express, 19 March 2007

**Editorial: In his labyrinth**

If perchance Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf is taken aback at the spontaneity of protests against the removal of the chief justice of the Supreme Court, he need only look at the anxiety emanating from his charmed circle about the election year ahead. The current parliament will soon be up for re election as will the president himself. There is reported to be concern among his supporters over the composition of the next parliament. There is also the added worry about legally retaining his position as army chief. It is against this background that the chief justice's suspension came. That is, with Musharrafs offensive against the head of the judiciary coming at a time when the immediate future is believed to bear possible legal challenges to his continuance in his many offices, the obvious inference had to be that he is trying to straighten the judiciary to toe his line. With the police following-up action against a private TV channel duly regretted by Musharraf with heavy handed action this weekend against lawyers at the Lahore high court, it is clear Musharraf has failed to read the moment. It is no longer just about the chief justice..

Daily Times, 19 March 2007

**EDITORIAL: Bhutto and Musharraf should think long and hard**

The PPP chairperson Benazir Bhutto said in New York yesterday that the Taliban must be defeated in Pakistan this year, otherwise the country risked falling under the sway of extremists as much as Afghanistan did before 9/11. Her next observation was equally telling: The Taliban have actually established a mini-state in the tribal areas of Pakistan. My fear is that if these forces are not stopped in 2007, they are going to try to take on the state of Pakistan itself. Ms Bhutto could have taken the easy course of simply denouncing President General Pervez Musharraf to an American audience that is increasingly becoming keen to hear such words, but she did not. She focused instead on the real threat that General Musharraf has failed to confront adequately. She has thus indicated that she grasps the big picture and is not seduced by the foreshortened current perspective..

Daily Times, 19 March 2007

**Opinion: Unintended consequences' (SM Hussain)**

If we can figure out who it is that gave the police the orders to ransack the TV offices, we will know who is responsible for creating this entire situation. The initial suspension of the CJP was bad enough but its aftermath takes the cake. Socrates is reported to have said that what I know is like a grain of sand under my feet and what I do not know is like the ocean in front of me'. Bertrand Russell paraphrased that by saying that I know only one thing, that I know nothing. As far as the escalating political crisis in Pakistan is concerned, I must admit that my position is best described by what Russell said. Indeed I know nothing of substance. Fortunately, I have nobody in any position of power or authority in the Islamic Republic that might wish to confide in me and tell me anything of consequence. That indeed makes my life a lot easier. Whatever analysis I might wish to make is therefore not tainted by any self-serving opinions of the category of people that are known as the movers and shakers. However, I can connect the dots and there are many dots in this situation that need to be connected. The first dot is the obvious question: why, and why now'

Daily Times, 20 March 2007

**Elections on time, no emergency, says Musharraf**

ISLAMABAD: President Pervez Musharraf in an interview shown on Monday promised to hold elections on time and denied that he would impose a state of emergency amid a row over the suspension of the chief justice of Pakistan CJP, Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry. Elections will be held on time, this is my assurance to the nation, Gen Musharraf told Geo television in an interview, excerpts of which were broadcast late on Monday. Emergency... There is no such situation and I will never use the army at all. This is not their job. They are doing their training and they will continue this, Gen Musharraf said. There is no emergency situation and emergency will not be declared. Gen Musharraf defended the removal of the chief justice but admitted there had been problems in the way it had been handled, such as not keeping the public better informed. Decisions have been taken under constitutional, legal norms, correct and timely, he said. The problem occurred in its tactical handling at the ground level. Problem area number one political forces jumped in. Look at the flags there were flags on the chief justices car. They politicised the issue..

Dawn, 20 March 2007

**LHC judge resigns in protest: Several judicial officials quit**

LAHORE/KARACHI, March 19: A Lahore High Court judge and two judicial officers of Sindh went public with their protest resignations while four more civil judges are reported to have tendered resignations to their respective district and sessions judges. In a resignation letter sent to President Pervez Musharraf and read out by his wife on telephone, Justice Jawad S. Khwaja of the Lahore High Court, said: I have waited a few days before addressing you in the hope that something will be done to remedy the harm done to the judicial organ of the state. It seems I have waited in vain. Supreme Court Bar Association President Muneer A. Malik told reporters that Justice Khwaja resigned over police excesses, including teargas shelling in the LHC building and baton-charge on lawyers. In Karachi, senior civil judge Ashrafyar Khan of District East told reporters that

he was leaving because of the present situation in the country with respect to the judiciary..

The Nation, 20 March 2007

**OIC supports Pak initiatives**

ISLAMABAD - The Organisation of Islamic Conference OIC wants a peaceful settlement to Kashmir dispute and it fully supports the initiatives taken by President Pervez Musharraf in this regard. This was stated by OIC Secretary General's special representative and head of the fact-finding mission on Kashmir, Izzat Kamel Mufti, while addressing a press conference here at Foreign Office at the end of his weeklong visit. State Minister for Information Tariq Azeem was also present on the occasion. The OIC fully supports the bold initiatives taken by President Musharraf to move forward towards an amicable solution to Kashmir issue and restoration of the right of Kashmiris' self-determination, said the OIC representative. He said that Kashmir was a matter of deep concern for OIC and Muslim Ummah, adding that the OIC was committed to the just settlement of Kashmir dispute in accordance with the wishes of Kashmiris..

Daily Times, 20 March 2007

**EDITORIAL: No end to crisis in sight as yet**

A judge of the Lahore High Court, Jawad Khwaja, has resigned in protest at the way in which the institution of the judiciary has been undermined by the events of the last ten days. Four civil judges in Sindh have announced the same decision. If there are more such protests, the crisis will deepen. This brings the total tally to ten. Meanwhile, President General Pervez Musharraf is supposed to have told a meeting of the ruling PMLQ that action against Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry was taken on the application of a Peshawar High Court judge who had 'backed his allegations with solid proof. But, said the president, the allegations against Justice Chaudhry will not be made public because the matter is pending with the SJC. He said he regretted that the honourable judge had been manhandled by the police. He also made it known that the SJC would be reformulated after the second senior-most judge, Justice Rana Bhagwandas, is inducted as the next acting chief justice, after which the problem would be resolved and all the trouble would finally be over..

Dawn, 20 March 2007

**Opinion: Factors behind the judicial crisis (Zamir Ghumro)**

ALTHOUGH the Constitution envisages the judiciary as an organ of the state that is separate from the executive and the legislature, successive rulers in Pakistan have considered it as an arm of the government one that can always be expected to extend blanket legitimacy to unconstitutional and illegal steps taken by the government. The current crisis is the result of the present governments continuous effort to browbeat it and to make it subservient to its interests, even if this means the use of force. After being continuously undermined by several governments, the judiciary under Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry had taken a number of brave steps to restore the confidence of the people in this august institution. The present regime, instead of seeing the wisdom of these measures and establishing the rule of law, embarked upon a course of confrontation which portends ill for the government and the country. The manner in which the chief

justice was removed has incurred the wrath of not only the legal fraternity, as evident in their violent protests, but also of the public. This has raised serious questions about the true intentions of the government..

Daily Times, 21 March 2007

#### **40 killed in Waziristan clashes**

PESHAWAR: More than 40 people were killed and several wounded in clashes between local and foreign militants on Tuesday in the Azam Warsak and Kaloosha areas, west of Wana in South Waziristan, said officials in the tribal region bordering Afghanistan. Army Spokesman Major General Waheed Arshad could not give an exact figure for the death toll, saying, The death toll has reached over 40 ‘ this is what I have at the moment. A tribal source said the militants were still fighting. The authorities said the clashes began at around 3am, and the majority of the dead were foreigners, mainly Uzbeks. Locals said that among the dead were four children who were caught in the crossfire. AFP reported that 27 children had also been injured. They said that injured people had been shifted to Wana for treatment..

Dawn, 21 March 2007

#### **Judicial Council defers hearing to April 3**

ISLAMABAD, March 20: The Supreme Judicial Council has deferred to April 3 its meeting scheduled for Wednesday to take up the presidential reference against suspended Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry, citing the expected arrival of Justice Rana Bhagwandas, the senior-most judge of the Supreme Court. The Supreme Judicial Council has adjourned the hearing of application filed by Mr Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry in the reference against him to April 3, 2007, in view of the expected arrival of Mr Justice Rana Bhagwandas, enabling him to participate in the proceedings of the council, said an official statement issued by the Supreme Court on Tuesday night. An earlier statement by the SJC had not cited any reason for the adjournment of the hearing..

Dawn, 21 March 2007

#### **Gwadar Port inaugurated: Plan for second port in Balochistan at Sonmiani**

QUETTA, March 20: President Gen Pervez Musharraf officially opened, along with Chinese Minister of Communications Li Shenglin, the country’s third port at Gwadar on Tuesday and promised a fourth port to be built at Sonmiani in the Lasbela district. Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, President Musharraf said that Gwadar would be a gateway for trade with Central Asia. China has provided 80 per cent of Gwadar Port’s \$248 million initial development costs. This port would prove to be trade corridor for Central Asian states, China and the Gulf as 60 per cent trade of oil and gas is done through this route, the president said. Referring to other development projects in Balochistan, he said the under-construction 950-km Gwadar-Turbat-Khuzdar and Ratodero highway projects would be completed in two and a half years..

Indian Express, 21 March 2007

#### **Opinion: Democracy, Musharraf style (P Philipose)**

It is spring time in Lahore. Bright green shoots emerge from its majestic trees. To many in India, Lahore remains special. There’s a Punjabi expression, Lahore lag gaye Lahore

has happened. It translates as something very fortunate happening suddenly. Lahore's residents are proud of their city and never miss an opportunity to quote Faiz's mellifluous praise of it. So when one finds oneself smelling tear gas in the air and watching ambulances siren their way down the Mall Road leading to the Lahore High Court, one can interpret it as the despair of a people under siege or as evidence of an inchoate desire for change. This is an account of four days spent in Lahore. I was there to attend a regional consultation, organised by South Asians for Human Rights SAHR, an organisation chaired by I.K. Gujral. Of course for the Indians the biggest hurdle was to procure visas. I was among the lucky few who made it: 110 visas were requested by Indians for this consultation, only 38 were granted..

Daily Times, 21 March 2007

**EDITORIAL: US should give security, take loyalty!**

..In the three beleaguered Pushtun provinces in the south and southeast, the people openly say they would join the Taliban because their security is uncertain. Because of lack of law and order, the people are no longer able to pursue any employment and are hard put to save their families from starvation. What they earn now is half of what they would be paid by the Taliban if they joined the jihad against the allies. After six years, it is not the allies that give them security but the Taliban. Although Pakistan is blamed for sheltering the Taliban, the truth is that the Pakistani state is losing its ability to provide security to its citizens in an increasingly large part of its territory. It cannot therefore expect the people living there to be loyal to it. It no longer matters whom they give their loyalty to. It matters even less if they want to live under democracy, if their lives are in danger..

The Nation, 21 March 2007

**Editorial: Presidents interview**

IT was good to hear General Musharraf say that polls would be held on time and emergency would not be imposed. In an interview to a private television channel he also defended the removal of Chief Justice Chaudhry but conceded that the ensuing judicial crisis had been mishandled by him because he had not promptly taken the nation into confidence over all relevant legal and constitutional issues. The President once again explained that he had not summoned the Chief Justice, but the March 9 meeting took place on the latter's request which was also joined by the PM. It however appeared to be an attempt to oversimplify the situation when General Musharraf said he and the PM first went to offer Friday prayers and later left for Karachi and Lahore respectively while the Chief Justice was studying the charges against him. For whatever reasons, the interviewer did not ask why the Presidency and the Law Ministry issued press releases claiming that the President had summoned the Chief Justice..

Daily Times, 22 March 2007

**Lawyers and Opp continue protests**

QUETTA/ISLAMABAD/LAHORE: Lawyers and opposition supporters staged rallies in support of the suspended chief justice, Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, on Wednesday, with violence reported in Quetta, where police used teargas to disperse protestors. Some 5,000 lawyers staged a march in Lahore, while lawyers and opposition parties protested separately in front of the Supreme Court building in Islamabad. Hundreds of lawyers

gathered at the District Courts compound in Quetta and marched through Liaqat Bazaar, Kandahari Road and Prince Road, shouting slogans in support of the chief justice. However, clashes between the police and lawyers erupted near the Officer Club when the lawyers insisted on marching in front of Governors House. The police baton-charged the protestors and fired tear gas shells at them, injuring three lawyers. Some of the protesting lawyers also burnt their black coats..

Dawn, 22 March 2007

### **US govt expects Musharraf to quit army post**

WASHINGTON, March 21: The United States has said that it expects President Gen Pervez Musharraf to give up the army chiefs post by the end of this year, indicating a major change in the US policy. State Department spokesman Sean McCormack told a briefing here that the US expected the current judicial crisis to be resolved within the confines of Pakistani law and in a transparent manner that satisfied the people of the country. He has made certain commitments in this regard and we think its important that he follow through on those commitments, said Mr McCormack when asked if it was the US government view that Gen Musharraf should leave the army post by the end of 2007 as scheduled..

The Nation, 22 March 2007

### **Editorial: Managing the crisis**

THE assurance by Acting Chief Justice Javed Iqbal that no authority in Pakistan could dare harm the Supreme Court, is welcome. One also appreciates the appointment of a Peshawar High Court judge to conduct a judicial inquiry into the mishandling of Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Choudhry. While the Acting Chief Justice advised the lawyers to keep in view the interests of justice and litigants while protesting, he said the heavens would not have fallen if the lawyers had been allowed to hold a convention on the Lahore High Court premises. Justice Iqbal expressed shock at the treatment meted out by police to protestors in Lahore, noting that incidents of the sort were unheard of even in countries like Ethiopia and Uganda. He promised action against the culprits starting from the top. The way the administration handled protests in Islamabad and Lahore on Wednesday, with minor incidents of use of force, indicated the strictures have produced the desired effect, at least for now. It remains to be seen if they have had any significant impact on the mindset of the administration..

Daily Times, 22 March 2007

### **EDITORIAL: Is the anti-Al Qaeda policy working'**

In clashes that are said to have taken place between the Uzbek foreigners and the tribal men of South Waziristan, around 40 people were killed on Tuesday, the dead 33 being mostly foreigners. The clashes took place after local tribesmen and foreign militants began to disagree over the law and order situation. Both blamed each other for the increasing crime rate and deaths in the area. The tribesmen were said to be pro-government. Heavy rocket and mortar fire was exchanged for two days, taking toll of some children too who came in the crossfire. Mullah Nazir, backing President Pervez Musharraf's policy of getting the foreigners out of the Tribal Areas, ordered the Uzbek militia of warlord Tahir Yuldashev to disarm. After that the battle started. There were

rumours that the clash took place after an Arab belonging to Al Qaeda was killed by the Uzbeks..

Daily Times, 23 March 2007

### **Ceasefire brokered in Waziristan**

PESHAWAR: A Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazlur Rehman-dominated tribal jirga on Thursday brokered a temporary ceasefire between foreign militants and Wazir tribes in South Waziristan, who have been fighting since Monday. Both sides have agreed to the jirga demand for a ceasefire, said Niaz Muhammad Qureshi, JUI-F information secretary for South Waziristan. We are glad that the two sides conceded to the tribal elders and clerics' plea for silencing their guns in order to solve their issues through peaceful means, he added. Interior Minister Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao said that the toll in four days of fighting likely crossed 135 on Thursday. The dead include some 100 foreigners, 25 fighters of local tribes. Senior militant leaders like Baitullah Mehsud, Sirajuddin Haqqani, son of senior Taliban commander Jalaluddin Haqqani, and an unnamed Taliban commander from across the Afghan border reached undisclosed locations in South Waziristan to take part in the ceasefire negotiations..

Dawn, 23 March 2007

### **I am innocent, want open trial: Justice Iftikhar**

ISLAMABAD, March 22: Against the backdrop of a raging debate in the country on his fate, Pakistans suspended chief justice, Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry, said on Thursday he was entirely innocent and, therefore, called for an open trial by the Supreme Judicial Council. He also forcefully defended his decision to accept the invitation of the legal fraternity to address them in the coming days, stating that taking bar associations into confidence about the prevailing constitutional issues is the duty of every chief justice. In an exclusive interview with Dawn the first given to any Pakistani or international news organisation since the presidential action on March 9 Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry remained extremely cautious about the choice of issues, and even words, ostensibly to avoid having any impact on his case. Matching the serenity of the Judges Colony in Islamabad, the chief justice, sent on forced leave, was sitting in the salon of his official residence..

Indian Express, 23 March 2007

### **Opinion: A judicious defence (J Chhokar)**

The article by Pratap Bhanu Mehta 'With due respect, Lordships, March 12 and several letters to the editor, convey the message that the judiciary should remain on a pedestal with the proverbial blindfold in place. The widespread clamour that followed the observation on corruption by a Supreme Court judge is a classic case of shooting the messenger. I have not come across a single comment saying that, yes, there is indeed widespread corruption and we need to do something about it. Instead, everyone seems keen to ensure that the Supreme Court does not express strong views; as if by not talking about it, corruption will go away. Mehta is right when he refers to the justice's observation on the corrupt as the jurisprudence of exasperation, but his last sentence Courts are doing things because they can, not because they are right, legal or just is not completely correct. Yes, the courts are doing things not only because they can but equally

because the other two pillars of state who should be doing things they are not doing..

Dawn, 23 March 2007

### **Bhagwandas appointed ACJ**

KARACHI, March 22: Justice Rana Bhagwandas was on Thursday appointed the Acting Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. A notification issued by the federal law ministry said: In exercise of the powers conferred by Article 180 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the President is pleased to appoint Mr Justice Rana Bhagwandas, the most-senior judge of the Supreme Court, to act as the Chief Justice of Pakistan with effect from the date he resumes his office. Justice Bhagwandas will be sworn in at the Supreme Court registry here at 10:30am on Saturday by the next senior judge, Justice Javed Iqbal, the incumbent ACJ, who is due to reach Karachi from Quetta..

Daily Times, 23 March 2007

### **EDITORIAL: Chirac, Bush and Musharraf: overstaying their welcome'**

..The other president in trouble is President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan who chose to be ideologically incoherent just like Mr Chirac and has ended up, after seven years in power, being constitutionally incoherent too. That was not how it started. President Musharraf kicked off very upbeat and in step with the aspirations of a nation tired of war and economic downturn under elected governments. He was also a relatively liberal ruler and promised to bring solace to a civil society increasingly bullied by extremists empowered by the state earlier. But the dualism was manifest quite early in his governance. He declared himself a moderate who was determined to bring the country back to its normal state. But in the same breath he ruled out any cooperation with the liberal mainstream political parties to give himself a leg-up in an environment that was beginning to challenge his legitimacy. General Musharraf's efforts to relieve the hunted minorities were undermined by persisting duality. He wanted to please everyone..

The Nation, 23 March 2007

### **Opinion: Who is in charge' (Wajahat Latif)**

For all those who say the choice in Pakistan is between democracy and stability, the instability caused by the absence of democracy must now be evident. The events following a reference against the Chief Justice of Pakistan throw up the main issue: the absence of democracy and the rule of law. Befittingly, the lawyers are highlighting it. Tragically, they have had to bleed to do so. By coming out in the streets, facing the coercive forces, baton charge and tear gas, they are demonstrating that all is not lost. Supported by remarkable media reporting, political parties, citizens and civil society, the lawyers are showing the way. Last Friday was the second appearance of CJ Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry before the SJC. In spite of tight security cordons around Constitution Avenue in Islamabad where the Supreme Court is located, lawyers and other pressure groups managed to come close, clashing with the police for several hours. The police used lathi charge, tear gas and rubber bullets; and brickbats thrown at them by the angry demonstrators. Thousands of Islamabad police and Punjab police could be seen everywhere..

Daily Times, 24 March 2007

### **Pakistanis must resist extremism spreading in society**

ISLAMABAD: The judicial crisis will be resolved in accordance with the law and the Constitution and the legal fraternity should not make the matter a political and law and order issue, President General Pervez Musharraf said on Friday. Addressing the Pakistan Day parade at Jinnah Stadium, Musharraf said the lawyers should let the legal process run its course. Don't make it a political issue. It is a legal issue, and it will be resolved only through legal and constitutional means, he said. Musharraf said that every Pakistani had to stand up to the extremism and terrorism spreading through society. He said that extremism and terrorism was a serious internal threat and the nation must fight this scourge to turn Pakistan into a moderate, developed and strong country, as envisioned by its founders..

The Nation, 24 March 2007

### **Troops called out in South Waziristan**

PESHAWAR Amidst efforts for reconciliation between the warring local tribesmen and foreigners, the government Friday deployed military and paramilitary troops in parts of South Waziristan Agency. The troops have been called out on the demand of local tribesmen, an official of the political administration informed the media. However, he did not give any detail in this regard. South Waziristan Agency has been witnessing clashes between the local tribesmen and foreigners including Uzbeks since the last five days, which have so far claimed around 135 lives from both sides. According to locals, they had witnessed extraordinary movement of the military and paramilitary troops to west of Wana up to the Pak-Afghan border. The main road in this part of South Waziristan is in control of foreign militants since the last five days. However, they said, the militants were now losing control over the road as they had vacated a number of positions..

Kashmir Times, 24 March 2007

### **Opinion: The judicial crisis in Pakistan: Beginning of an end' (Suba Chandran)**

Gen Musharraf is witnessing a new crisis during the last two weeks. Unfortunately, like many other in the past, the new one, this time vis a vis the judiciary of Pakistan, is also of his own making. The sacking of Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court is snow balling into a major crisis. As of today, Gen Musharraf is holding the fort; but will he be able to continue? Will this crisis, as a section inside Pakistan has predicted be the beginning of his end? In the first place, why was Iftikhar Chaudhry sacked? Reasons are not hard to fathom. Two crucial elections are to be held during this year - the general election for the Parliament and the legislative assemblies of the four provinces; and that of the President. Though the political alignment today is far from clear as of now, it is certainly not in favour of the military and General Musharraf. Nor is the election of President a foregone conclusion, if Gen Musharraf has to play by the rules. Clearly both the elections call for massive manipulation and under ground deals with political parties, besides bending of the rules and if necessary even the Constitution..

Daily Times, 24 March 2007

### **EDITORIAL: Handle pipeline politics cautiously**

Another snag has cropped up in the Iran Pakistan India IPI project, which must be handled carefully. India has threatened to pull out of the \$7 billion dollar gas pipeline

project if Islamabad does not bring down the transit fees it wants to charge for allowing the pipeline to pass through its territory to India. The pipeline is going to be 1,036-km long inside Pakistan and the task of looking after it will be Islamabad's. It will pass through areas that will have to be tamed at great developmental expense and careful political bargaining with local stakeholders. Normally, the middle or transit country has the upper hand in negotiations, but this power of leverage depends on how badly the consumer country wants the gas. If Pakistan wants the Iranian gas more than, or as much as, India does, then Pakistan doesn't have much leverage. But if India needs the gas for energy more than Pakistan and can't get it from anywhere else, then Pakistan can talk tough. From the start, however, India has postured as if it does not need the pipeline, and there was a reason for that..

Dawn, 24 March 2007

### **Pakistan Day observed**

ISLAMABAD, March 23: The nation observed 67th Pakistan Day with traditional zeal and fervour and a renewed pledge to make the country a strong, progressive and prosperous Islamic welfare state. The day dawned with a 31-gun salute in the federal capital and 21-gun salutes in provincial capitals. Special prayers were offered in all mosques of the country for the solidarity and well-being of the country. It was a public holiday. Newspapers published special supplements featuring articles highlighting the importance of the day. Television channels aired special programmes to commemorate the day in a befitting manner. National dailies printed rare photographs of the historic event and the Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah and other leaders of the Pakistan Movement. Similarly, electronic media, both state- and private-owned, telecast programmes and talk shows, wherein well-known workers of the Pakistan Movement were invited to throw light on the significance of the day. Seminars and other colourful functions were organized at various places to pay homage to the Quaid and great poet and philosopher Allama Iqbal..

Daily Times, 24 March 2007

### **Opinion: The beginning of the end' (Shaukat Qadir)**

There is a tangible cause to which even the people have begun to rally; the uncombined opposition has taken up the cause, though in their own separate interests; people in the corridors of power have begun to distance themselves from the predicament created by the removal of the CJ and crowds seem to be increasing on a daily basis. Sometimes leaders make errors of judgment that signal their own termination; is it possible that General Musharraf has made such an error? Last week I pointed out that he has placed himself in a no-win situation and, having done so, this week I conjecture whether he might well have initiated the beginning of the end of his era. The present situation contains all the germs of such an outcome: there is a tangible cause to which even the people have begun to rally, including our rather small and spineless civil society; the uncombined opposition has taken up the cause, though in their own separate interests; people in the corridors of power have begun to distance themselves from the predicament created by the removal of the CJ and, despite the crackdown by the police personnel, crowds seem to be increasing on a daily basis..

Dawn, 25 March 2007

**SC to take up missing persons case**

ISLAMABAD, March 24: A new bench of the Supreme Court headed by Justice Javed Iqbal will take up for hearing the case of missing persons on Monday in the absence of Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry. Other members of the bench are Justice Abdul Hameed Dogar and Justice Mian Shakirullah Jan. The new bench was set up by new Acting Chief Justice, Mr Justice Rana Bhagwandas, after taking oath in Karachi on Saturday. The hearing date of missing persons case will be honoured by the new bench. The bench will take up petitions of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan HRCP, Ms Amina Masood Janjua, Saqlain Mehdi, Aisha, Abdul Ghaffar, Amtul Hafiz, Fatima, Mohammad Ikram Alvi, Arif Abbasi and Syed Babar. In all, 11 human right cases, all pertaining to disappeared persons, will be taken up by the bench on Monday..

Daily Times, 25 March 2007

**Bhagwandas takes oath as acting chief justice: Nation to hear good news: ACJ**

KARACHI: Pakistans second senior most judge, Justice Rana Bhagwandas, was sworn in as acting chief justice on Saturday, and told reporters that the nation will soon hear good news, AP reported. He did not elaborate. He also pledged to decide the presidential reference against the suspended chief justice, Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, on merit. The presidential reference shall be decided strictly according to the law and the Constitution, with our conscience and without any fear or favour, affection or relevance, said Justice Bhagwandas during a brief chat with reporters after he took oath at the Supreme Court Registry office here. Justice Bhagwandas said he would look into the suspended CJPs arguments against the composition of the Supreme Judicial Council. Then the council will take a decision, he said. Let the SJC decide about the presidential reference. The lawyers community should wait for the verdict of the council. He said the SJC would decide later about other references pending against other judges..

Daily Times, 25 March 2007

**Opinion: The dynamics of current protest (Dr HA Rizvi)**

No matter what is the outcome of the current protest, the government does not have support in the streets. The politically active circles have lost patience for the centralised and authoritarian rule by the Musharraf government and its efforts to overwhelm all the sectors of the state and the society. The political crisis caused by the suspension of the Chief Justice of Pakistan continues unabated. For the first time President General Pervez Musharraf is facing a strong protest which has the potential to turn into a nationwide agitation against his government. The most conspicuous feature of the protest is that the legal community is in the forefront. Lawyers view the presidential action as a violation of the constitution, and an assault on the independence of the judiciary and the autonomy of the legal profession. The lawyer community has traditionally shown deep concern for constitutionalism, rule of law, civil and political rights, democracy and independence of judiciary. They have been opposed to the policies of all military regimes and agitated against Ayub Khan and Ziaul Haq..

The Nation, 25 March 2007

**No one can politicise judicial issues: Musharraf**

ISLAMABAD - President Pervez Musharraf, who also held a one to one meeting with Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz on current crisis Saturday said that no one would be allowed to politicise judicial matters in the the wake of filing of reference against Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry. The government is committed to settle the matters judicial issues in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution, the President said while addressing a gathering of leading businessmen at a lunch hosted by Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz here. The president and the prime minister held an important one to one meeting shortly after the lunch and brought under discussion the judicial crisis and the situation after oath taking of the senior most judge of the Supreme Court Rana Bhagwandas as Acting Chief Justice. The president, while addressing the gathering, said that the government is strong and stable and will ensure continuity and consistency of policies so that the process of economic development moves ahead in a seamless and smooth manner..

Daily Times, 26 March 2007

### **Hundreds held as ARD protests today**

ISLAMABAD/RAWALPINDI/ LAHORE: Hundreds of opposition activists have been detained ahead of a countrywide protest today called by the Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy ARD against the suspension of the chief justice of Pakistan. The ARD has planned rallies at the divisional level across the country, with the major rally to be held at the District Courts Chowk in Rawalpindi. The decision to organise the protest was made by former prime ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif the heads of the two major parties in the ARD, the Pakistan Peoples Party and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz at a meeting in London last week. Police arrested over 150 activists of the PML N, PPP, Muttahida Majlis e Amal and Tehrik e Insaaf in Rawalpindi on Sunday, sources said. Opposition workers were also detained in Lahore and other cities. PPP Secretary General Raja Pervez Ashraf condemned the arrests, and also accused the Rawalpindi district administration of double standards, in regard to its preparations for a public rally to be addressed by President Gen Pervez Musharraf on Tuesday..

Dawn, 26 March 2007

### **Govt to abide by SJC judgment, says Musharraf**

ISLAMABAD, March 25: Faced with the toughest challenge to his seven year rule posed by an unprecedented movement of lawyers, President Pervez Musharraf addressed a meeting of lawmakers and ministers belonging to the ruling party and its coalition partners at the Prime Ministers House on Sunday night. The president had addressed a similar meeting convened on the previous Sunday March 18 to evolve a strategy to deal with the lawyers' movement. According to a government handout, President Musharraf told participants of the meeting that they should not allow what he called vested interests to get any political mileage out of purely a constitutional matter. On Saturday, President Musharraf, along with Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, had addressed a lunch meeting of top businessmen at the PM House, and explained his governments point of view on the judicial crisis and requested the business community not to pay heed to strike calls of the opposition..

The Nation, 26 March 2007

**Editorial: A good gesture**

IT was reassuring to hear Mr Justice Rana Bhagwandas say that he will proceed with the presidential reference against Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry without any fear or favour, or affection or ill will and that it will be for the Supreme Judicial Council to decide whether to conduct an open inquiry or hold the proceedings in camera. Talking to journalists after being sworn in as Acting Chief Justice of Pakistan in Karachi on Saturday, he said the nation should have complete faith in the SJC's ability to conduct its proceedings fairly and impartially. The outgoing ACJ, Mr Justice Javed Iqbal, however insisted that the in camera proceedings were mandated by Rule 13 of the SJC Procedure of Inquiry formulated in September 2005, and the purpose was to safeguard the dignity of the judiciary and ensure that inquiry against a superior court judge were not scandalised. Meanwhile, Chief Justice Chaudhry was quoted as expressing his full faith in Justice Bhagwandas, saying that he was among those members of the superior judiciary who could not be influenced by extraneous pressure. That he feels encouraged with the appointment of the new Acting Chief Justice is evident from his observation that in the changed scenario the Supreme Judicial Council would be reconstituted..

Daily Times, 26 March 2007

**Opinion: Chaos and our politics (Ayesha Sddiqa)**

There is a clear pattern in the deterministic system of Pakistans politics. In this situation, all one can do is wait for another cycle of chaos and to see who will be the future president of the country. The favourite sport is time is predicting General Pervez Musharraf's future. Some believe that his days are numbered; others think he will continue, though considerably weakened. What is obvious, however, is that he has lost the moral legitimacy to rule. People, excluding sycophants, are yearning for a change. But the question is: will the change, if it comes, end the cycle of chaos? What do I mean by chaos? The theory of chaos, which has grown into a science, is about the study of random behaviour occurring in a deterministic system. To use the analogy of a ship at sea, it can be struck by a storm, which will disturb its balance, and the ship will begin to sway, perhaps, violently. However, during this chaos or swaying of the ship a predictable pattern will emerge which will continue until it is struck by another chaos. The science of chaos is about studying the patterns of order within a seemingly unpredictable motion..

Dawn, 26 March 2007

**Opinion: Iran: an estranged friend (Javid Husain)**

THE statement by President Ahmadinejad of Iran in early March on the eve of his visit to Saudi Arabia expressing concern over the meeting of the foreign ministers of Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, hosted by Pakistan on February 25, came as a shock to those observers in Pakistan who were aware of the importance of Pakistan-Iran friendship for the security and economic well being of the two countries. The Iranian president remarked that he had lots of questions' and apprehensions about the meeting, which called for explicit answers. That the situation had come to such a pass that the head of state of a friendly country, which had stood by Pakistan in its difficult times, complained publicly about its foreign policy initiative spoke volumes about the current state of Pakistan Iran relations. The foreign ministers meeting in Islamabad was the result of the trips undertaken by President Musharraf to the capitals of a number of

Muslim countries in January and February this year..

Dawn, 27 March 2007

**Peaceful protest rallies held: Lawyers want opposition MPs to resign; call for withdrawal of reference**

LAHORE, March 26: Political parties of all shades of opinion and lawyers associations held demonstrations across the country on Monday to ratchet up pressure on the government to withdraw the March 9 presidential reference and reinstate Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry as the Chief Justice of Pakistan. The protesters were, by and large, peaceful as the police were under instructions to keep their distance. The demonstrators shouted slogans against President Pervez Musharraf. Among the major parties which organised the demonstrations were the Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy, the Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal, the Tehrik-i-Insaf and the Awami National Party. Some of the rallies were organised jointly by these parties while in some places, they brought out processions on their own. Lawyers representatives praised the political parties for supporting Justice Chaudhry. They called upon opposition legislators to resign their seats in emulation of judges and judicial officers. At some demonstrations, the opposition parties also called for the establishment of an interim government to hold free and fair elections. Supporters of the PPP and the PML N chanted slogans in favour of their leaders.

Dawn, 27 March 2007

**Editorial: In desperate search of democracy**

IGNORING the doing more part of the four American senators letter to President Pervez Musharraf, one can see a lot of truth in what the members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee have said about the political situation in Pakistan and their concerns about the future. They have particularly referred to the current pressures on the media and the detention, mistreatment and harassment of journalists and political figures, and remarked that the general election in 2002 had created widespread international scepticism because of the involvement of security and intelligence agencies in the electoral exercise. Calling the coming days as crucial for Pakistans democratic development and the relations between the two countries, the senators have said their country has enormous stakes in Pakistan and warned that, if the current situation is not handed properly, their relationship could be imperilled. The points raised by the senators stand on their own, irrespective of what negative or positive impact they can have on US-Pakistan relations.

Daily Times, 27 March 2007

**Opinion: The unmediated media (RB Rais)**

In the coming years Pakistans media, both print and electronic, is likely to grow in number, influence and power, and contribute greatly to the quality of dialogue on issues that confront our state and society. The governments that have controlled information and debate in the past will not be able to do the same in the future. Freedom of expression is one of the most refreshing and robust aspects of Pakistani society; it stands out spectacularly in the otherwise depressing elitist political scenario. No fair person can remain unimpressed by the degree of self critique, sometimes bordering on cynicism, that we have, and the frank and open manner in which commentators in the press and

participants in popular television talk shows express themselves..

Daily Times, 28 March 2007

### **Missing people with jihadis**

RAWALPINDI: President Gen Pervez Musharraf denied on Tuesday that his government was behind the disappearances of hundreds of citizens and said that they were in the custody of jihadi groups. The families of the missing say they have been secretly detained by Pakistani security agencies, but the president said that they had probably been brainwashed into joining militant groups. The government is not involved. We don't indulge in such activities, Gen Musharraf said in a speech to a gathering in Liaquat Bagh. These people may have gone on their own ... to Kashmir, Afghanistan or Iraq. I don't know, he said. The judiciary is also taking notice of this issue. Gen Musharraf said jihadi groups were brainwashing young men and training them to be suicide bombers, which was against Islam..

Dawn, 28 March 2007

### **AJK judge resigns in protest**

MUZAFFARABAD, March 27: A civil judge in the Azad Jammu and Kashmir has tendered resignation in protest against the treatment meted out to non-functional Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry, marking the first ever resignation over the issue in a territory which has a separate judicial system. Raja Faisal Majeed Khan, who was based in Forward Kahuta Bagh district told reporters here on Tuesday that he had sent his resignation to the High Court for the freedom, independence and dignity of judiciary. The non-functional chief justice of Pakistan is a role model for judges, lawyers and law students and the treatment meted out to him is regrettable, he said.

The Nation, 28 March 2007

### **Joint rally of Baloch organisations held**

QUETTA - A joint protest rally of the Baloch Student Organization, Balochistan National Movement, Marri tribesmen and Marri students was held here on Tuesday on the eve of 59th year of annexation of Baloch State of Kalat into Pakistan. The joint protest demonstration was in front of Quetta Press Club and the protesters raised anti-government slogans against the ongoing military operation in Balochistan and in favour of Baloch rights. The speakers on the occasion recalled the memories of the annexation of Kalat state to Pakistan in 1948 and said that forced annexation would continue to remind the excesses of Islamabad against Baloch population.

Kashmir Times, 28 March 2007

### **Opinion: How dare you' (Kuldip Nayar)**

I picked up the thread on the suspension of Pakistan Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammed Chaudhry at Lahore from the day when lawyers from all over the country had assembled to take a procession from the high court to the Punjab assembly, a distance of one kilometer. There was a protest against the onslaught on the judiciary. But the government's response was a display of authority. Hundreds of policemen practically took over the high court building and the places around. The traffic on roads in the vicinity was stopped. Lawyers were baton charged and tear gassed so as to confine them

to the premises of the high court. Many lawyers were hurt, some badly, and numerous of them had their black coat torn. It was mayhem and several lawyers wound up in hospital. Pakistans Supreme Court was so horrified that it took suo moto notice of lawyers manhandling. The legal fraternity all over the country wore black badges. When top police brass at Islamabad had been arraigned before the court for mishandling Justice Chaudhary, the use of brutal force by their counterparts at Lahore looked as if the police had been told to go after the lawyers. Some media hands were also thrashed.

Dawn, 28 March 2007

**Editorial: Protesting peacefully**

THE nation heaved a sigh of relief when the day of protest called by the opposition parties on Monday passed off peacefully. Although the slogans raised by the demonstrators and the demands made by them notably the call for the presidents resignation and the reinstatement of the Chief Justice must have been provocative for the government, it must be given credit for handling the situation with a measure of cool-headedness and discretion. That is how it must be. Quite uncharacteristically, the rallies were not obstructed by the police obviously under orders from the high-ups and the demonstrators were allowed to proceed as they had planned. Accordingly, there were no clashes or unruly scenes. The scenario on Monday was quite unlike the nasty scenes that were witnessed during the lawyers' protest rallies in the past fortnight or so..

Daily Times, 28 March 2007

**EDITORIAL: Anatomy of anti-Musharraf agitation**

The Alliance for Restoration of Democracy tried to make a grand show of strength on Monday. But if the expectation was that it would be an Armageddon after which the government would start quaking with fear and ask for terms from the PPP and the PMLN, this did not happen. One major reason: the PPP and the JUI are playing footsie with the government and are in no mood to rock the boat unduly. Nonetheless, the parties came out fairly in the major cities of the country and had a degree of popular sentiment with them. Did they aim at getting the people at large to join them and create the impression of a popular upsurge? One is constrained to say that this was not the objective of the parties. To begin with, there was an obvious 'reservation' from the PPP that the ARD should put up the show without the clerics of the MMA. But if the reaction from the clergy was lukewarm, this can be attributed to its expectation that the PPP was aiming to put up the big show in which the clergy would be dwarfed by the much larger party. Of course, there is no doubt that the PPP dominated in the cities where its support is strong..

Dawn, 29 March 2007

**Militants wreak havoc in Tank: Army called in to enforce govts writ**

TANK, March 28: Army was called in to establish the writ of the government in Tank on Wednesday after fierce overnight clashes between paramilitary forces and militants. The eight-hour showdown between the forces and militants left a paramilitary soldier and another man dead and two others wounded, an official said. But residents said the blood stains and bodies seen on the roads and streets indicated that many casualties had occurred..

Daily Times, 29 March 2007

**Pakistan, India to soon finalise IPI gas pipeline**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and India will soon finalise the Iran-Pakistan-India IPI gas pipeline project, said Ahmed Waqar, federal secretary of petroleum and natural resources, while talking to Daily Times on Wednesday at the concluding session of a two-day conference of Society of Engineers SPE and Pakistan Association of Petroleum Geo-Scientists. Rejecting the reports on differences between the two countries over the gas transportation tariff and transit fee Waqar said, We have not received any such information officially..

The Nation, 29 March 2007

**Bhagwandas appointment challenged**

ISLAMABAD- Appointment of Rana Bhagwandas as acting chief justice of Pakistan has been challenged in Supreme Court. Shahid Orakzai, the petitioner has moved the SC against the appointment of Rana Bhagwandas as acting chief justice of Pakistan through a constitutional petition. The petition said no non Muslim judge is authorised to administer oath to the president of Pakistan nor the constitution assigns constitutional obligations to the non Muslim judge in place of Muslim judge. The petition said that the said judge after his appointment had claimed in a media statement that constitution does not debar any non Muslim from becoming chief justice of Pakistan despite the fact that he is not authorised to interpret the constitution outside the court..

Dawn, 29 March 2007

**Editorial: Forced disappearances**

PRESIDENT Musharraf may have a point when he says that people often go missing when, without the knowledge of their families, they join the ranks of extremist organisations so that they can be trained for suicide missions and other anti-state activities. This may be true of some disappearances but not all. Surely the countrys all-powerful intelligence agencies too cannot be absolved of all blame for a situation where involuntary disappearances have been growing by the day. The number, according to some sources, could be far higher than the 400 or so cases documented by human rights groups since many families, worried for the safety of their missing ones, choose not to report their cases. Moreover, their numbers include not only those picked up on suspicion of having links with religious groups, but many others thought to be inciting anti-state feelings in Sindh and restive Balochistan. Indeed, as pointed out by Asma Jahangir, chairperson of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, the majority of the 141 missing persons on a list submitted by the HRCP to the Supreme Court are secular Baloch and Sindhi nationalists including poets and writers..

Daily Times, 29 March 2007

**EDITORIAL: Who took the disappeared people'**

President General Pervez Musharraf has once again denied that his government is behind the disappearance of hundreds of citizens. He said they could be in the custody of jihadi groups and spoke about the rising tide of extremism in the country, implying that the people who had disappeared have probably gone to wage jihad on their own or under the influence of extremist jihadi organisations. General Musharraf insists that the government

is not involved and that these people may have gone on their own...to Kashmir, Afghanistan or Iraq. But most families protesting the disappearance of their relatives insist that they were picked up by state agencies or the police.

Dawn, 29 March 2007

**Madressah force on the offensive in Islamabad: Move to impose Talibanisation; three women kidnapped**

ISLAMABAD, March 28: Signs of Talibanisation appeared quite evident on Wednesday in the heart of the federal capital when hard-line religious leaders and hundreds of men and women activists from the local madressahs challenged the writ of the government for the second time by trying to force their brand of Islamic justice in Islamabad. They first took hostage three women from a house near their stronghold of Lal Masjid for allegedly running a brothel and later forcibly detained two security personnel in protest against detention of their four supporters, two of them women teachers of Madressah Hafsa..

Daily Times, 30 March 2007

**Tribesmen, Uzbeks restart fighting**

WANA: Tribesmen fought fresh battles with foreign militants on Thursday, leaving one tribesman dead and shattering a week-old ceasefire in South Waziristan. Security officials said Uzbek and Chechen insurgents traded heavy weapons fire overnight on Wednesday with local tribesmen. Fighting has started again between local tribesmen and foreigners and they are using heavy weapons and small arms in the Azam Warsak and Kalusha areas, a local government source said. One pro-government tribesman was killed and three were injured, they said. A local tribal commander said that fighting would continue until all foreign militants were expelled from South Waziristan.

Dawn, 30 March 2007

**ARD meeting ends without decision**

ISLAMABAD, March 29: A meeting of the Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy A here on Thursday ended without taking any decision owing to differences between two main components the Peoples Party Parliamentarians and the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz over the agenda, sources at the two parties told Dawn. According to the PPP leaders, the meeting of the heads of alliances component parties had been convened to discuss the reorganisation of the ARD at the provincial and district levels, while the PML N leaders claimed that they were told that the meeting had been called to discuss the prevailing political situation in the country, with particular reference to the ongoing judicial crisis.

The Nation, 30 March 2007

**Suicide hit on army centre kills 2 soldiers**

ISLAMABAD - A suicide bomber approached troops working near an army driver training centre near Kharian and blew himself up Thursday, killing two soldiers and wounding eight others. The attacker struck on the outskirts of the garrison town, chief military spokesman Major General Waheed Arshad said. The blast came amid a wave of unrest as troops also enforcing a curfew in a Tank. It was a suicide bombing, Arshad said. The soldiers were sitting near their vehicle outside the garrison area doing some

work and the bomber came and blew himself up. Another security official said that one soldier was killed and seven were wounded. All were army men the official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

Daily Times, 30 March 2007

**Opinion: The US-Pakistan tango (M Khan and K Bokhari)**

Washington must realise that Pakistan is not just an agent to whom foreign policy tasks can be outsourced. It has its own national interests, its domestic political imperatives and geopolitical concerns. Yes, it must be pressured to do more, but without jeopardising its domestic stability or long-term utility to the United States. 'Are US-Pakistan relations undergoing a significant transformation?' There are clear indications that Washington is dissatisfied with the status quo and is seeking to ratchet up additional pressure to make Pakistan more compliant and responsive to America's security interests. It is also possible that US-Pakistan relations will become the battleground where Democrats settle political scores with the Bush administration. Since 2001, when Pakistan abandoned its support for the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and began cooperating with the United States, US-Pakistan relations have centred singularly on US demands. Pakistan's role has been to comply.

The Tribune, 30 March 2007

**Opinion: People want to bury the hatchet (K Nayar)**

SINCE last year some of us, including Justice Rajinder Sachar, have been arranging a function at Shadman Colony in Lahore, where Bhagat Singh and his two comrades, Sukhdev and Rajguru, were hanged on March 23, 1931. Since this is also the day when people in Pakistan celebrate the birth of Pakistan the resolution for the creation of a separate state was passed on March 23, 1940 we either advance the date of the function or postpone it. The last time we held it on March 24. This time we scheduled it for March 19. The celebration is a floral tribute to those who were executed by the British. The authorities in Lahore remained distant last year. Very few people joined locally, primarily because we had made no prior announcement.

Dawn, 30 March 2007

**Opinion: Changing American stance' (T Mirza)**

THE move against the Chief Justice and the action taken against his supporters have led to a strange reaction in the United States, considered our ally. Its official spokesmen have said they hope that Gen Pervez Musharraf will handle the crisis well and elections will be held freely and democratically. The comments and reactions from American legislators, newspapers and discussion groups have been much more open and critical, questioning the general's right to continue as president in his military uniform and asking for honest elections. Last week, some legislators even said that leaders in exile should be permitted to take part in the general elections this year or early next year. Relations between the US and Pakistan have not always been sound and friendly. This country was kept on the American side initially by Washington because of America's opposition to the Soviet Union, China and other communist countries. This was something in which Pakistan's military rulers took full part because they wanted American military aid and weapons besides economic help.

Dawn, 31 March 2007

**Fierce clashes in S. Waziristan: 45 foreigners among 54 killed: Sherpao**

WANA, March 30: Clashes between militant groups in South Waziristan Agency claimed at least 14 lives, two children among them, on Friday amid reports that troops had pounded positions of foreign combatants with artillery in Shin Warsak area. Two soldiers of the Special Operations Group of the Frontier Corps were also reported to have been killed and four others wounded. AFP news agency quoted Interior Minister Aftab Sherpao as saying that 54 people had been killed on Friday and two on Thursday. The dead included 45 foreigners, he said. Officials of Inter-Services Public relations in Peshawar were not available for comments. Official sources said a mortar shell hit the home of one Qimat Khan Sarkikhel in Ghwakha area, killing the two children. Security officials said army fired artillery from the brigade headquarters in Zari Noor Colony and pounded hilltops in Shin Warsak area..

Daily Times, 31 March 2007

**US position on Musharraf unchanged**

WASHINGTON: The Bush administration continues to express support for President Pervez Musharraf's government and its policies, as was once again evident at the regular State Department briefing on Thursday. Asked how concerned the US was about Musharraf's increasing isolation and the rise of extremism across the country and the fact that 'his position will be significantly weakened, State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said, Well, President Musharraf has instituted a number of reforms in Pakistan in reaction to the threat from violent extremism and that is a direct threat not only to Musharraf but also to friends and neighbours of Pakistan. And in those efforts we certainly do support him. He has made certain commitments with respect to the presidential elections that are going to be coming up at the end of the year, but certainly we would hope that he abides by those commitments. Pakistan is on a different pathway than it was in August of 2001..

Dawn, 31 March 2007

**Opinion: Where is democracy? (Tariq Fatemi)**

ON the eve of his departure, the outgoing US ambassador to Pakistan, Ryan C. Crocker, gave to the government a gift far more valuable than anything that it could have asked for. He was reported to have told the press in Islamabad that in his view Pakistan is a democratic country. This powerful endorsement from the American ambassador must have come as a tremendous boost to the government that has been under virtual siege for over three weeks. This is primarily because all Pakistani rulers have looked up to Washington for sustenance and support. Military regimes, in particular, have sought legitimacy from Washington, usually by offering their services in the cause of US interests. The US ambassador is an accomplished diplomat who has risen to the highest rank in his country's professional service. I also have great respect for his efforts to enhance US-Pakistan relations. Crocker's statement is, however, most unfortunate. Its timing, in particular, is deeply regrettable, coming as it did at a time when Pakistanis have been demonstrating remarkable resolve and courage in expressing their views on an issue of supreme interest to them..

Daily Times, 31 March 2007

**PPP elections conducted in 290 constituencies**

LAHORE: The Pakistan People's Party PPP held its party elections in 290 provincial assembly constituencies of Punjab on Friday. The elections were conducted peacefully and a 70 percent turnout was recorded. PPP chief election commissioner Senator Sajjad Bukhari said the election commission was satisfied with the elections' results. He said all party workers had been given the opportunity to work for the PPs benefit through these elections. Bukhari said the overall turnout in the Punjab was 70 percent. In some constituencies, he added, it was 100 percent. Participation in the elections showed that the workers are waiting for an initiative to develop the party's future. He said the ongoing elections were transparent and fair. He said that the election commission would announce elections in the remaining constituencies in a few days. PPP election commission office sources said that out of a total of 297 provincial assembly constituencies in Punjab, only seven constituencies elections were postponed. They said several party workers had defeated elected members of the district and provincial governments in these elections.