

Dawn, 1 May 2006

Pakistan to get 33pc more gas: India almost out of Iran pipeline project (Khaleeq Kiani)

ISLAMABAD, April 30: Pakistan and Iran on Sunday reached broad agreement on various financial and technical aspects of laying a Pakistan-specific bilateral gas pipeline with 33 per cent higher supplies to Islamabad, clearly indicating that India could not become part of it due to capacity constraints. They, however, said a second parallel pipeline would be required for a trilateral project if India decided to join it that would further improve economics of the trans-national pipeline to the benefit of the three countries...

Dawn, 1 May 2006

Baloch leaders put on ECL

QUETTA, April 30: The interior ministry has placed the names of a number of Baloch nationalist leaders, including Nawab Khair Bakhsh Mari, Sardar Ataullah Mengal on the exit control list. According to official sources, those barred from travelling abroad include Balochistan National Party chief Akhtar Mengal, BNP Senator Sanaullah Baloch and MNA Abdul Rauf Mengal, Senator Agha Shahid Bugti of the Jamhoori Watan Party, JWP leader Amanullah Kanrani, Dera Bugti District Nazim Mohammad Kazim Bugti, Kohlu District Nazim Ali Gul Mari and Mir Sher Ali Mazari, nephew of Nawab Akbar Bugti...

Dawn, 1 May 2006

ARD leaders set 'priorities'

LAHORE, April 30: The Alliance for Restoration of Democracy on Sunday decided to steer the country out of the prevailing crisis before preparing itself for the general election. "We have set priorities. In the first phase, we have to take the country out of the crisis, then we'll prepare for the election," the alliance's secretary-general Iqbal Zafar Jhagra said while answering a question after a meeting of the ARD...

Dawn, 1 May 2006

Expanding the cabinet-Anwer Mooraj

THE nation learned last week that there had been a cabinet reshuffle. This was supposed to have been the good news. One must, therefore, presume that the puppeteer who pulls the strings that make the marionettes dance must have had a jolly good motive for doing so and for relocating the information minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed. A theory did surface that the reason for the horizontal transfer was that the latter had, of late, started making statements that contradicted the utterances of the president. Apparently the reason was political...

The News, 1 May 2006

The abiding relationship -Nasim Zehra

Bilateral relations between Pakistan and China have been in focus lately on multiple levels; from the purchase of nuclear reactors to collaboration on energy exploration and joint production of F-17 fighter jets. High-level visits to discuss this collaboration have included the recent eighty-member delegation of the All China Federation of Industry and Commerce to participate in the Pakistan-China Energy Forum and President Pervez Musharraf's end February Beijing visit. Increasingly as the Pakistan-China relations branch into the trade, commerce, energy and infrastructure field, the truth about this relationship is very clear. . .

Daily Excelsior, 2 May 2006

MMA schedule for anti-govt drive

LAHORE, May 1: Leaders of the Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA) have approved a schedule for an anti-government movement that the alliance plans to launch later this week. The decision was taken at a summit meeting of the six-party alliance held here on Monday. "The alliance will be able to steer the campaign into a decisive phase within three months," MMA secretary-general Maulana Fazlur Rahman told reporters after the meeting. Workers' conventions will be held at all levels so that they could prepare to effectively launch the movement, according to Maulana Fazl...

Dawn, 2 May 2006

PM hints at gradual cut in defence expenses: Minimum deterrence to be retained at all costs (Ahmed Hassan)

ISLAMABAD, May 1: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said here on Monday that Pakistan neither had any aggressive designs against anyone nor its 160 million people were interested in the arms race, adding that its defence expenditures were gradually decreasing. Speaking and responding to queries by visiting delegates of the South Asia

Free Media Association (SAFMA) at the Prime Minister's House, the premier said Pakistan believed and pursued policy of minimum credible deterrence necessary for defence of its sovereignty. He said in our case social sector development expenditures were growing rapidly and we have passed a landmark fiscal responsibility law which guarantees increased spending on education, health and infrastructure sectors...

Dawn, 2 May 2006

Four subjects to go fully to provinces: PSDP size to be increased accordingly (Khaleeq Kiani)

ISLAMABAD, May 1: The federal government has decided to transfer four major responsibilities to the provinces and substantially increase the size of public sector development programme (PSDP) for next year to gain maximum public support in the election year, it is learnt. Informed sources told Dawn that the centre had decided to fully empower provincial governments to take full charge of health, education, agriculture and industry sectors through their own resources. Planning commission and finance ministry sources said these obligations originally belonged to the provinces under the constitution but were partially taken over by the centre in the past for political reasons...

Dawn, 2 May 2006

Blasts hit rail track, bridge

QUETTA, May 1: Saboteurs on Monday blew up a railway track linking Pakistan with Iran and a bridge between Kohlu and Kahan, officials said here. Six home-made bombs of high-intensity were planted at the Quetta-Zahidan section of a railway track, some 14 kilometres away from Noshki. "A 5-foot long portion of the track was destroyed when two bombs exploded in the wee hours," railway officials told Dawn. The other four bombs planted at the site were later defused by the concerned officials. Rail traffic between Quetta and Zahidan remained suspended following the incident. A passenger train could not leave Quetta for the Iranian border town of Zahidan on Monday and freight train services were also suspended...

Dawn, 2 May 2006

Editorial: Sorrows of the quake victims- S.M. Naseem

ACCORDING to a news report, more than 100 earthquake survivors clashed with the police recently in Mujohi, a village near Muzaffarabad, over new rules regarding compensation for quake-damaged homes, leaving a few people injured. Similar protests in several other quake-affected towns and cities were also held, and in Muzaffarabad, about 400 people staged a peaceful demonstration, denouncing the government and the earthquake rehabilitation and reconstruction agency Erra. The protesters said that they were demonstrating because the government had announced compensation only for those whose land had been registered in their names. The government has announced it will give Rs 75,000 to people whose homes were partially damaged in the quake, and Rs 175,000 to those whose homes were destroyed...

The News, 2 May 2006

From tragedy to an opportunity - Kamran Shariff

This is what the president reportedly said about the rebuilding of the areas devastated by the October earthquake: "It is doable as many of the great cities and regions in the world were resurrected to better standards after being laid to waste by plagues, great fires, natural disasters and the curse of war. But it requires the application of the virtues of mind and heart to do so." The tragedy in our case has been amplified by physical inaccessibility and relative social poverty of the devastated areas. The earthquake has, in other words, accentuated the man-made fault lines that have years of neglect and mal-governance as their causes...

Dawn, 3 May 2006

Three-nation military exercises begin

ISLAMABAD, May 2: Afghan, Pakistani and US troops began two days of joint military exercises on Tuesday aimed at better coordinating the hunt for Al Qaeda and Taliban militants, officials said. It was the first time units from Afghanistan's newly-formed army had been invited to participate in the exercises, which were to include a mock air assault.

Dawn, 3 May 2006

Candidate backed by nationalists wins: Khuzdar nazim poll

QUETTA, May 2: A candidate backed by nationalist groups has won the polls for the Khuzdar district nazim. The district naib nazim and convener of the Khuzdar district council, Mir Sher Dil Bizenjo, declared Mir Abdur Rahim Kurd as successful. He told Dawn on telephone from Khuzdar on Tuesday that the district council consisted of 50

members and 46 had cast their votes through secret ballot. Mir Kurd obtained 24 votes and Mir Shafiqur Rehman Mengal bagged 22 votes

Daily Times, 4 May 2006

Editorial: Failed state? What failed state?

The American journal Foreign Policy has drawn up its annual list of what it calls "failed states" and has placed Pakistan ninth in the top 10 failed states. Just as Pakistan was claiming it had come out of its economic crisis and was about to begin its return to full-fledged democracy with another general election, it has plunged from 34th position last year to 9th this year. Pakistan was told after 1998 that it was a failed or failing state because it didn't have money to buy its imports for more than a few weeks. But after 9/11, it got out of a foreign policy bind that was dragging it down and is no longer an isolated state awaiting its doom. Needless to say, it is always insulting to hear that the state you are living in is doomed to "failure"

Daily Times, 4 May 2006

BNP strike camps set up across Balochistan

QUETTA: The Balochistan National Party (BNP) on Wednesday set up protest camps in all districts of the province to protest against the ongoing military operation and arrest of its party members. Akhtar Mengal, the head of the BNP, along with over 200 people held a hunger strike camp in front of the Quetta Press Club. The party's local leadership held camps at district headquarters. Talking to journalists, Mengal said that the ongoing military operation was meant to capture Balochistan's natural resources. He said that Balochistan, and not only the sardars, was the target of the operation

Daily Times, 4 May 2006

US wants direct access to AQ Khan

ISLAMABAD: The nation had trust and confidence in the operational preparedness, professional capability and dedication of the Pakistan Navy, President Pervez Musharraf said during his visit to the Naval Headquarters on Wednesday. He reiterated that no effort would be spared to enhance the defence capabilities of the Navy to safeguard the nation's frontiers

The News, 4 May 2006

Pakistan's strategic location can transform landscape of entire region: Shaukat

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz has said Pakistan provides the shortest land route to Uzbekistan and other Central Asian countries to the warm waters of the Arabian Sea and is ideally located to promote cooperation between South Asia and Central Asia that can transform the landscape of the entire region. "Pakistan values its relations with Uzbekistan and is keen to enhance its bilateral cooperation with it over a broad spectrum covering economic, diplomatic, defence, security and social sectors," the prime minister said this during his one on one meeting with President Islam Karimov who called on him at the Prime Minister House here on Wednesday

The News, 4 May 2006

New MMA charter soon to provide justice to people: Qazi

KARACHI: Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) president and chief of Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) Qazi Hussain Ahmed said on Wednesday that a new charter of the alliance would be announced soon, which would provide justice to the people at their doorstep. "Under this reformation, the country would head towards prosperity," he told a news conference at Idara-e-Noor-e-Haq. Qazi also said the MMA would launch a "decisive" movement against President Pervez Musharraf's "unconstitutional" government. The movement, he added, had already started with the consent of ARD leaders, but a final move would be announced soon

Dawn, 5 May 2006

Musharraf acts to defuse PML factional tensions

ISLAMABAD, May 4: President General Pervez Musharraf held intensive meetings in his chamber in Parliament House with leaders of various factions of the ruling PML and party president Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain and Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi. The president met Hamid Nasir Chattha, Ijazul Haq and Mian Manzoor Wattoo and discussed affairs of the PML and its preparedness for the 2007 elections, sources told Dawn. This is the second time during the current parliament's tenure that President Musharraf has held meetings with treasury legislators in his parliament chamber

Dawn, 5 May 2006

FC captain among 4 hurt

QUETTA, May 4: Security forces using helicopter gunships carried out a fresh operation in Dera Bugti district after four Frontier Corps personnel, including an officer, were seriously injured in an attack on their vehicle on Thursday. Sources said the FC personnel were patrolling the area when armed tribesmen attacked their vehicle with automatic weapons. "A captain and three FC soldiers received bullet injuries," officials confirmed and identified the officer as Capt Fasihur Rehman

Dawn, 5 May 2006

Two tribesmen wounded as soldiers open fire

MIRAMSHAH, May 4: Two tribesmen were wounded when paramilitary forces opened fire on a car near Semetary checkpoints in Miramshah, North Wazirsitan Agency, on Thursday. Sources said that the car heading towards South Waziristan Agency from Miramshah was carrying five people and it was stopped at the checkpoint at 2pm for checking. The soldiers ordered that they hand over their weapons

Daily Times, 6 May 2006

Dawa becoming popular

LAHORE: The United States banning Jamaatud Dawa (JD) and its subordinate organisation, Adara Khidmat-e-Khalq, has increased the latter's popularity in areas devastated by the October 8 earthquake, learnt Daily Times on Friday. Hundreds of residents demonstrated against the US in Garhi Habibullah and Balakot on Thursday and Friday. Mansehra residents are planning to stage a rally tomorrow (Sunday). JD, Al Rasheed Trust and Jamaat-e-Islami's Al Khidmat Group are still running tent villages and hospitals for locals in Balakot – where 90 percent of non-government organisations (NGOs) are wrapping up their camps after finishing their relief projects

Daily Times, 6 May 2006

MMA leaders want Sharia enforced in Pakistan

QUETTA: Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) leaders demanded on Friday that Sharia should be enforced in Pakistan. They also pledged support to Iranians and Palestinians in their war against the United States. Addressing a conference on enforcement of Sharia, opposition leader in the National Assembly Maulana Fazlur Rahman and MMA leader Liaqat Baloch criticised the government for its policies.

The News, 7 May 2006

PML to re-elect Musharraf

ISLAMABAD: The central executive committee (CEC) of the Pakistan Muslim League on Saturday announced to re-elect President Pervez Musharraf while reposing confidence in the leadership of party chief Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain. The CEC, which met here with Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain in the chair, also decided to hold consultations on the issue of the president's uniform. The CEC resolved to re-elect Musharraf from the current assemblies or after the next general elections. The meeting was also attended by Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and Chief Minister Punjab Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi, besides senior leaders of the party, including all heads of different factions of the League, which merged into the party including Hamid Nasir Chattha

The News, 7 May 2006

Pakistan not doing enough to root out terror: US official

KABUL: Pakistan is not doing enough to help root out Taliban and al-Qaeda leaders who have found safe haven in its lawless tribal region along the Afghan border, a senior US security official said on Saturday. Islamabad reacted strongly to the statement, as a Pakistan Army spokesman dismissed as "absurd" the statement by the US counterterrorism official. Most al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders are in Pakistan, and while the United States did not know where Osama bin Laden was hiding, he was probably on the Pakistan side of the border, said Henry Crumpton, State Department coordinator for counterterrorism. Crumpton lauded Pakistan for arresting "hundreds and hundreds" of al-Qaeda figures but said that it needed to do more. "Has Pakistan done enough? I think the answer is no. I have conveyed that to them, other US officials have conveyed that to them," he told reporters at the US Embassy in Kabul after talks with Afghan officials

Dawn, 7 May 2006

Seven Killed Quetta

QUETTA, May 6: Seven people, including a woman were killed and six others injured in different incidents in

Quetta, Mach and Usta Mohammad, on Saturday. According to police one person who was identified as Mohammad Naeem Kakar was killed and six others injured in a shoot out between two rival groups in district courts. "Both groups had old enmity and came to district courts to attend the hearing of a case pending before the court where they opened fire on each others killing one person on the spot," police said

The News, 8 May 2006

Sheraton Hotel suicide attack

KARACHI: Although three militants of the Harkat Jihad-e-Islami have been awarded the death penalty for planning Karachi's first-ever suicide bombing exactly four years ago on May 8, 2002, all intelligence and law-enforcement agencies have so far failed to arrest the mastermind behind the attack

The News, 8 May 2006

Landmine blasts kill three in Balochistan

QUETTA: Three people were killed and seven others wounded in three landmine blasts in Dera Bugti and Sibi on Sunday, officials said. Two people were killed and three others wounded when a passenger van hit a landmine in the Dera Bugti town. An official said on condition of anonymity that the van was carrying two "pro-government" tribesmen when it hit the landmine

The News, 8 May 2006

Pakistan can do more against terror: Afghan FM

KABUL: Pakistan could do more in the fight against terrorism, said foreign minister of Afghanistan on Sunday. The foreign minister, Rangeen Dadfar Spanta, said his country appreciated Pakistan's cooperation against Taliban and al-Qaeda. Spanta told reporters, "I think our brother country can do something more against terrorism but I'm very happy that we have had very strong cooperation against terrorism and for security and stability-building in Afghanistan." He continued: "We know the sources of terrorism are outside Afghanistan and have sustainable success in this region." Dutch Foreign Minister Bernard Bot also addressed the media briefing with Spanta. He said an exchange of intelligence about the cross-border movement of militants was vital

Dawn, 8 May 2006

Rs75 billion rail link planned for Gwadar

KARACHI, May 7: The government has approved a Rs75 billion plan to connect Gwadar port by rail to streamline cargo movement, says federal Minister for Railways Shaikh Rashid. Addressing a press conference here on Sunday, Shaikh Rashid said the government would invite private sector to participate in the mega project. Referring to the revival of the Karachi Circular Railway, he said that the system would be revived and the government also wanted to run circular trains in eight other major cities

Dawn, 8 May 2006

Pakistan facing drought threat: Situation bad in Sindh, Balochistan

ISLAMABAD, May 7: The Meteorological department has warned of a possible drought in the country with no signs of any significant rainfall over the next two months and water levels in Tarbela and Mangla reservoirs dropping to critical points. The drought, feared to hit Sindh and Balochistan first, will have a bad impact on efforts to achieve this year's cotton sowing target and affect livestock, horticulture and human lives throughout the country. Prospects of meeting the target of rice cultivation, which will start by the end of June, also seem dim, say officials in the Met department and agriculture ministry. "Moderate drought conditions have already developed in Balochistan which are likely to worsen in the coming months with the possibility of spreading to other parts of the country," Met Department director-general Dr Qamaruzzaman told Dawn

Daily Times, 9 May 2006

US airstrike injures 3 in Waziristan

ISLAMABAD: United States helicopter gun-ships wounded at least three Pakistani labourers in a missile strike against suspected Taliban fighters in South Waziristan on Monday, according to security officials. The three were brought to the border town of Angoor Adda from a nearby mountain where they had been mining for minerals, but another eight men were unaccounted for, said the officials, who requested anonymity. However, the US military later said that the air strike killed four suspected Taliban or Al Qaeda fighters. US ground troops later found the guerrillas dead and captured a fifth, Lt-Col Paul Fitzpatrick said at the US military base at Bagram outside Kabul

The News, 9 May 2006

Poll schedule after current term ends: Musharraf

ISLAMABAD: President Gen Pervez Musharraf on Monday said the schedule for the next general elections would be announced after the completion of the tenure of assemblies in November 2007. The president said this in a meeting with a delegation of public representatives of Pakistan Muslim League belonging to North Western Punjab, led by PML chieft Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, Secretary General PML Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed and Chief Minister Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi.

The News, 9 May 2006

Nishtar Park carnage Jamaat Ahle Sunnat threatens strike on 27th

KARACHI: In what might be seen as an antagonising move, the Jamaat Ahle Sunnat has threatened a countrywide strike on May 27 if the federal government failed to arrest the culprits of the Nishtar Park suicide attack till May 20. The decision was taken at a meeting of the Rahber Committee here on Monday with Mufti Muneeb-ur-Rahman in the chair. Twenty-one members of the committee's cabinet, including the Tanzeemat-e-Madaris, attended the meeting. Later, briefing the media, Mufti Muneeb said President Pervez Musharraf had promised the Rahber Committee members on April 16 that an impartial probe would be conducted into the incident, its findings would be announced and the culprits would be awarded the capital punishment, "but with deep sorrow we announce that all investigation committees constituted by the government and intelligence agencies have exploited the commitment made by the president."

The News, 9 May 2006

Editorial: Presidential election

It is not usual to begin an editorial with a fresh quote but this one is too apt to go unreported. "Now who is electing whom? They electing him -- isn't it vice versa?" responds a young journalist spontaneously as she hears of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League's plan to re-elect General Pervez Musharraf for another term. The League's Central Executive Committee meeting in Islamabad on Saturday formally pledged itself to the re-election -- of course without General Sahib having to slip into a civilian outfit. Other reports that appeared the next morning suggested that a group of party men was pressing for the re-election formality to be completed by the current assembly. In a country which respects the Constitution like the divine word, the theory is that if the current members of parliament were to be guilty of not doing the needful in their time, Pakistan, God forbid, could find itself in a constitutional limbo stretching into not a few minutes or hours but many days.

The News, 9 May 2006

Editorial: Is the US 'doing enough'?

The statement in March by Abdullah Abdullah, then foreign minister of Afghanistan, that Osama bin Laden, Mullah Mohammad Omar and Al Qaeda No 2 Ayman al-Zawahiri were all hiding in Pakistan was obviously baseless. The politician reputedly hostile to Pakistan didn't present any proof for the claim he made, just three days before President Hamid Karzai announced his removal to restore some of his government's credibility. However, it's all but confirmed now at least Mr Bin Laden is prowling "along the Pakistan-Afghan border somewhere," with the "higher probability" of his being on the Pakistani side. Proof or no proof, Henry Crumpton, President Bush's Ambassador in Charge of Counter-terrorism, is "very confident" of it, as he declared on Saturday...Let's grant that despite these numberless arrests, Pakistan is somehow lagging. Has the US done enough against terrorism through efforts to address the root causes of the menace? Or is it actually fuelling it, by such actions as its missile strike on the village in Bajaur Agency in January?

The News, 10 May 2006

Four-nation accord on power supply

ISLAMABAD: Two Central Asian republics (CARs) will transmit electricity to Pakistan through Pul-e-Khumri via Kabul, according to an agreement reached between Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan and Pakistan here on Tuesday. Federal Minister Liaquat Ali Jatoi, at a media briefing after the two-day conference on the import of electricity from Central Asia to Pakistan via Afghanistan, said substantial progress has been made on the project as all the stakeholders have agreed to transmit the electricity via Kabul to Pakistan. The minister said Pakistan has decided to get 4,000 MW electricity from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan

The News, 10 May 2006

Musharraf promises major structural reforms in Fata

RAWALPINDI: President Gen Pervez Musharraf on Tuesday vowed to bring about administrative, political and economic reforms in the tribal areas where the law and order problem would be dealt with by reviving tribal customs and traditions. Chairing a high-level meeting here at his Camp Office with Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz also attending, Musharraf pledged to introduce socio-economic development in the tribal areas where the law-enforcing agencies have carried out a number of cleansing operations in the recent past. Some of these operations backed by US forces ignited problems in many ways, though these were resolved through consultations at the tripartite commission meetings. The president said Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata) would be opened up for economic opportunities and curbing extremism and mainstreaming the region. He also reiterated the government's commitment to reforming and revitalising the administrative system

The News, 10 May 2006

Smuggled Iranian fuel flooding local markets

HUB: An estimated half a million litres of smuggled Iranian fuel is said to be finding its way into the country every day following a sharp rise in its demand in urban Sindh and southern Punjab. Once restricted to Balochistan's coastal belt, Iranian petrol and diesel are now widely available in the cities of Sindh and certain towns in the Punjab. "The reason for the surge in demand is simple: Iranian products are much more cheaper than the officially marketed fuel," said a dealer in Hub, located in Balochistan just outside Karachi.

The News, 10 May 2006

Pakistan's odds in Afghanistan (Imtiaz Gul)

Pakistan bashing seems to have become the favourite pastime of several Afghan leaders as well as the Afghan intelligentsia. Even during the conference, organised jointly by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the German Hans Seidel Foundation (HSF), Pakistan drew quite a bit of flak from people in high places. It began with General Abdul Rahim Wardak, the Minister for Defence. "Our enemy continues to receive recruits and resources from outside the country and retain the ability to disrupt daily life and inflict casualties especially on soft targets," Wardak said. "We know our country had been turned into the centre of international terrorism but the Afghan government and the people are determined not to allow it again," Wardak added without naming Pakistan

The News, 10 May 2006

FP 'storyline' doesn't square with reality (Nasim Zehra)

It would take a major stretch of imagination, sheer ignorance or prejudice to declare a state in the process of reforming itself, however problematically, as a failure. The Pakistani state is one that is extending its writ over new areas, reclaiming public space for civil society that it itself ceded to armed groups decades ago. It is better managing the economy, attracting foreign investment, and billions of dollars of remittances from overseas Pakistanis. Clearly the major problems remain; the most serious being the absence of a credible democratic system, high poverty levels and extremely poor social indicators. New and renewed challenges in the tribal areas and in Balochistan have emerged. The government has vacillated from a dialogue-led policy to a force-led policy, from a proactive one to a reactive one. Complicated problems of insurgency and militant activity require exceptional skill and patience. There are multiple other macro-level power and resource sharing issues involving the centre and the provinces. Also, the Pakistani state and the political class have been in power contests. The tasks are humongous and the approach may often be questionable, but the state's capacity to deal with many of these issues is rising. There are other improvements Pakistan can boast of. In relative terms, the judiciary and the police are functioning better than before. The independent press is a great national asset. Hence a country of 165 million people sitting as a pivotal point connecting three key regions South Asia, South West Asia and Central Asia and China, is moving towards becoming a functioning state, one better able to handle the affairs of the state

The News, 11 May 2006

Shaukat sees 6-8pc growth rate

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz says Pakistan's per capita income is likely to move up to \$800 by end-June, following enhanced economic activities in the country. Addressing the inaugural session of Pakistan Development Forum 2006 on the topic of "Drivers of Growth; Unleashing the Potential of the Private Sector" here, he said poverty has reduced from 32.1 per cent to 25.4 per cent, gross primary enrolment in education sector has jacked up to 86 per cent, immunisation of children has reached to 83 per cent and the water supply coverage has expanded to 39 per cent. "We will do all that we can to sustain our forward journey of progress and prosperity and occupy our true position in the comity of nations," he added. Shaukat said Pakistan is fast emerging a destination of choice for investors. Pakistan expects the highest ever foreign direct investment this year since independence, he

said and added that despite earthquake and oil shocks, "We anticipate growth within our target of six to eight per cent in the economy."

The News, 11 May 2006

Editorial: Mr Mukherjee's second thoughts

Mr Mukherjee said India desired to live in peace with Pakistan, because "we cannot change our neighbour." He must recognise at the same time that India cannot change the fact that it has to deal with President Musharraf, whose proposal for bilateral troops' reductions in Kashmir the minister is so emphatically rejecting. Mr Mukherjee cannot estrange the Pakistani government and still expect the success of the composite dialogue "we have initiated," as he said of India. The dialogue process will surely trip up, if not collapse, if Indian ministers made more of such statements.

Dawn, 11 May 2006

Tunisian held in Waziristan

ISLAMABAD, May 10: Security forces arrested three suspected militants, including a Tunisian believed to belong to the Al Qaeda terrorist organisation, in North Waziristan, a senior official said on Wednesday. There was no immediate official comment from the government or the military. The security official said the Tunisian, identified as Abdul Rehman Saifuddin, was caught along with an Afghan and a Pakistani on Tuesday. The Tunisian is believed to be a known Al Qaeda operative, he said.—Agencies

Dawn, 11 May 2006

Editorial: Unchanged defence spending

IT IS a positive trend that various committees of the National Assembly have been discussing the government's financial record every year on the eve of the annual budget. This allows the people's representatives to debate many of the policy matters which relate to the government's spending. On Tuesday the Public Accounts Committee was informed that retired officers and employees of the armed forces have been paid Rs 35.6 billion in pension so far in the current financial year. The committee was also informed that this amount was shown in the civilian budget. This raises many questions. Since 2000-01 when the military personnel's pensions were shifted to the civilian side of the budget, the big chunk that has been removed from the defence spending has not been reflected in our defence budget which has continued to rise over the years in spite of assurances that cuts would be made in it as a peace dividend. The second aspect that needs to be pointed out is the large size of the military pensions. The amount earmarked for this head has grown from Rs 28 billion in 2000-01 to Rs 43 billion this year. Given the fact that armed forces personnel retire at a relatively young age, they receive a pension for a longer period. This partly accounts for the big pension budget. But there may be other factors too that could reflect a shift in the pattern of defence administration. If the number of personnel being recruited is going up because the defence forces are growing in size — according to one source, their size has risen from 400,000 in 1977 to 700,000 today — the pension budget will also increase. Moreover, a top heavy force — with more promotions taking place to the higher echelons — would mean an increase in salaries and that would mean higher pensions. This is something the defence planners should look into. It also needs to be asked: should retired officers from the armed forces who are so liberally absorbed in the civil administration, be entitled to pensions while they are drawing salaries from the exchequer? One hopes that the defence forces have not followed the unhealthy pattern set by the civilian administration that has expanded indiscriminately leading to overlapping and duplication of functions contributing to inefficiency and ineptitude.

The Nation, 11 May 2006

JF-17 Thunders into the sky

CHENGDU (APP) - The fourth prototype of JF-17 Thunder aircraft, equipped with exclusive avionics and weapons qualification systems, jointly manufactured by Pakistan and China completed its maiden test operational flight here Wednesday, proving its creditability to meet the needs of both the countries. The 11 minutes flight at 1,500 meters height with 500 kilometers speed per hour. It took off from People's Liberation Air force base, Chengdu and landed back on the same runway, reporting perfect performance

The News, 12 May 2006

Six cops killed in Quetta blasts

QUETTA: At least six police constables were killed and 14 others injured when five powerful bombs went off in rapid succession in a firing range of the Police Training College here on Thursday morning. The banned Baloch

Liberation Army (BLA) claimed responsibility for the blasts. Inspector-General Police Balochistan Chaudhary Muhammad Yaqoob confirmed to The News that unknown terrorists had planted the booby traps at the footsteps of the Koh-e-Murdar near the Police Training College. When the police constables arrived at the firing squad as part of their refresher course, one of them accidentally touched a wire attached to the bombs, which exploded one after another, killing six constables instantly.

The News, 12 May 2006

Higher education budget to rise by 50 per cent

ISLAMABAD: A top-level meeting chaired by President Gen Pervez Musharraf on Thursday decided to raise allocations for higher education and expedite establishment of nine world-class engineering universities in the country. There would be 50 per cent increase in allocations for education in the budget from next financial year

The News, 12 May 2006

Technical talks on IPI pipeline on 22nd

ISLAMABAD: Iran, Pakistan and India will hold technical parleys on May 22-24 at joint working group level on the proposed \$7.01 billion IPI gas pipeline project. Pakistan and Iran will also hold Iran-Pakistan (IP) gas pipeline bilaterally. Petroleum and Natural Resources Secretary Ahmad Waqar told this during his presentation on oil and gas sector - Status and Strategy, on the second day of the Pakistan Development Forum. "We are at an advance stage of striking a deal with Iran on the project; the three countries have made progress on pricing of gas, structure of pipeline and feasibility of the project.

Dawn, 13 May 2006

Durrani new ambassador to US

ISLAMABAD, May 12: The foreign office on Friday announced the appointment of Maj-Gen (retd) Mahmud Ali Durrani as Pakistan's new ambassador to the United States. Gen Durrani, who served as defence and military attaché in Washington from 1977 to 1982, will proceed to Washington next month to replace the incumbent Gen (retd) Jehangir Karamat

Dawn, 13 May 2006

Diamer-Bhasha project to get Rs12bn

ISLAMABAD, May 12: The government has decided to allocate about Rs12 billion for Diamer-Basha dam in the next year's development programme to complete infrastructure required for the construction of dam. A senior government official said on Friday that the allocated amount would be utilised for the preliminary construction works, including a bridge and a road besides residential buildings

Dawn, 13 May 2006

Four Fata senators quit house committees

ISLAMABAD, May 12: Four pro-government senators from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata) on Friday resigned from Senate committees in protest against what they termed the government's indifference to their grievances. However, Senate Chairman Muhammad Mian Soomro, when contacted, expressed his ignorance about the development and said that things would take their course as and when they came to his notice. While addressing a press conference on last Tuesday, Chairman of the Senate committee on states, frontier regions and Northern Areas Hameedullah Jan Afridi, Chairman of the Senate committee on water and power Abdul Malik Qadri and senate committees members Abdul Rashid and Abdul Raziq had threatened to withdraw their support from the government if it continued ignoring them in policy matters and failed to induct one of them in the federal cabinet

Dawn, 13 May 2006

Bodies of six US attack victims found

WANA, May 12: Six more bodies were found in the Khwaja Khizar mountains in the South Waziristan Agency on Friday, taking death toll in an attack on Angoor Adda to 10, officials said. US planes intruded in Pakistani territory on May 8 and fired at least three missiles on Khwaja Khizar mountain near Angoor Adda when miners were excavating chromite. The local tribes recovered four bodies from the site, while six bodies were found on Friday. Three workers were wounded

Dawn, 14 May 2006

Aziz calls for sharing of Muslim resources

NUSA DUA, (Indonesia) May 13: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz on Saturday called for ensuring greater unity within the Muslim world by sharing resources and collectively responding to global challenges. "We must recognise that it will be only through sharing our best practices and resources, and collectively responding to global challenges that we can help each other to help ourselves. We must build interdependencies and complementarities to create a win-win for all. No matter how wealthy and powerful be any nation amongst us, individually it will always be at a disadvantage. Our strength lies in unity and collective action," he said while addressing the 5th D-8 summit. The prime minister analysed the challenges that prevented the Ummah from achieving its true potential and shared his vision with D-8 leaders to overcome those challenges to attain peace, progress and prosperity of their people

Dawn, 14 May 2006

Osama whereabouts unknown, says FO

ISLAMABAD, May 13: Foreign Office Spokesperson Tasnim Aslam said on Saturday that no body had any information about the whereabouts of Osama bin Laden and it was also not known whether he was alive or dead. If Afghan authorities had any information, they should share them with the government of Pakistan, the spokesperson told a private television channel. She denied the statement of Afghan foreign minister in which he had said that Osama was in Pakistan

Dawn, 14 May 2006

Tribal jirga will end Waziristan chaos: governor

PESHAWAR, May 13: Governor Khalilur Rehman has said a tribal jirga has been constituted for political and negotiated settlement of problems of Waziristan. The jirga comprises leading elders from all the seven tribal agencies and the Frontier Regions. The governor was speaking at a ceremony held here on Saturday to distribute compensation cheques to heirs of tribesmen and officials killed and wounded in operations in South Waziristan Agency in 2004.

The News, 15 May 2006

Benazir, Nawaz vow to stage comeback

LONDON: Former premiers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif pledged on Sunday to return for 2007 general elections, and signed a Charter of Democracy aimed at bringing military under civilian command. The two leaders met in London for the second time in two weeks. PPP leader Amin Fahim, Raja Pervez Asharf and PML-N's Shahbaz Sharif and Zafar Iqbal Jhagra were also present during the meeting. The Charter will stop the military from overthrowing an elected civilian government and revive the 1973 Constitution. It allows installation of a neutral caretaker government to hold free and fair general elections due next year. The two leaders agreed to return to country before elections, which, they said, would not be acceptable under Gen Musharraf. "We want to go back. We are very keen to go back and it is our candid and considered view that the elections cannot be held in a fair and free manner unless and until the two main leaders go back to the country and participate in the election campaign," Nawaz told Reuters television

The News, 15 May 2006

Militants kill Tehsildar inside FC Fort

TANK: A Tehsildar in South Waziristan was assassinated by militants in a daring attack inside the heavily fortified Frontier Corps Fort in Jandoola during the night of Saturday and Sunday. The militants also waylaid vehicles, carrying food supplies for Pakistan Army and paramilitary Frontier Corps (FC) troops on the Jandoola-Wana road and looted eatables and 105 goats. The incident took place near Karamkot about 15 kms east of Wana

The News, 15 May 2006

Siachin and the Indian khaki (Nasim Zehra)

At the moment the Indian armed forces are objecting on four grounds. One is that the Indian leadership is planning to make the Indian army give up a strategic gain since Siachin. There is some thinking within the army and among "India's strategic establishment" that in vacating Siachin, India will be favouring Pakistan and, therefore, it will be ill-advised. The assumption in most comments by India's defence personnel is that Pakistan will try and recapture Siachin. Clearly, the track record of both sides of the LOC has been one of "hit and claim"; whenever possible; whether Kargil (first India occupied it during the 1971 war and then Pakistan in 1999) or Chor Batla. The second argument is that Siachin should be linked to the Kashmir solution and that India must demand a quid pro quo on Kashmir. Quoting a retired diplomat, the Asian Age reported that "If we give on Siachin, which is what this now

amounts to, then we should be able to dictate some terms on Kashmir." The third position the Indian defence establishment takes is that vacating Siachin would not be a prudent move. In case Pakistan occupies Siachin it would not be easy for India to regain control of it. They argue that the topographical advantages all accrue to Pakistan making access many times more difficult for India. According to Indian army sources quoted in the Indian press, it would take India 6 days to get to a point where it would take Pakistan only 4 days. The fourth is that a complete withdrawal would not be possible and that the Indian air force must retain its base in Siachin. To ensure that at least a beginning is made in conflict resolution between the two countries, in their third year of dialogue, the Indian prime minister needs to take the army along. The details of the deal have almost been worked out as the foreign secretaries of the two countries have discreetly worked on it behind the scene. Now the onus of managing the khaki rests with the Indian prime minister, for a change.

Dawn, 15 May 2006

Loya jirga discusses Pakhtoons' problems

KARACHI, May 14: A Pakhtoon "Loya Jirga", convened by the Awami National Party, Sindh chapter, on Sunday at the Bacha Khan Markaz, has formed an action committee comprising elders of 61 organizations to strive for resolving problems being faced by the Pakhtoons in Sindh and Karachi in particular. After the jirga, deliberations of which were spread over eight hours, Shahi Syed, President of the ANP Sindh, read out the nine demands before journalists

Dawn, 15 May 2006

Thousands attend Cheema's funeral

GUJRANWALA, May 13: Amer Cheema, a young engineer who was found dead under mysterious circumstances in a German prison, was laid to rest on Saturday at his native Saroki village in Wazirabad amid thousands weeping. According to reports, an uncountable number of people attended the funeral procession and prayer which was led by Prof Nazir Ahmad Cheema, the deceased's father. The body reached Lahore from Germany and was later brought to Gujranwala Cantonment by the chief minister's helicopter. From there it was taken by an ambulance to Saroki where the funeral prayer was offered.

The News, 16 May 2006

Pakistan to buy four frigates from Greece

ATHENS: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and his Greek counterpart Kostas Karamanlis discussed Kashmir and Cyprus issues in their historical perspectives and updated each other on the latest development as well as measures being taken to resolve these conflicts here on Monday. Both the leaders agreed that the role of the United Nations in resolving regional conflicts like those of Kashmir and Cyprus must be bolstered. However, they viewed that the parties concerned must make efforts to find a peaceful and lasting solution. They also shared information regarding confidence-building measures being taken by Pakistan and Greece

The News, 16 May 2006

Pak-China talks on FTA today

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and China are all set to start today (Tuesday) the most crucial third round for striking a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with a hope to develop 90 per cent consensus on the framework agreement for free trade, The News has learnt. "The third round of talks, to be held here, will last for three days from May 16 to 18. A 17-member technical experts' team from China headed by Zhu Hong, deputy director-general of the Ministry of Commerce has arrived here on Monday night to hold parleys for developing consensus on framework of Free Trade Agreement." Pakistan's technical team headed by Shahid Bashir, joint secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, will take part in the talks. An official of the ministry said Pakistan and China are currently in trade under PTA and Early Harvest Programme. The current trade volumes between the two countries stand at \$2.4 billion. Trade figures of November 2005 show Pakistan exports to China remain at \$700 million while imports from China stand at \$1.7 billion showing the trade balance is in favour of China

The News, 16 May 2006

Editorial: Questions about the charter

The military will come under the control of civilians if the Charter of Democracy signed by Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif is realised. Thereafter the armed forces will no longer be able to overthrow elected governments. And the 1973 Constitution will be restored. Which 1973 Constitution, though? Good luck to the two leaders in these objectives, because these are a national demand. But restoration of the Constitution is where the charter signed in

London on Sunday must leave many people bemused. The Constitution was a can of worms even on October 12, 1999, when Gen Pervez Musharraf overthrew the government of Nawaz Sharif. The views of the two parties which have now come together on a common anti-Musharraf platform were diametrically opposed on the numerous amendments of Gen Zia-ul-Haq, Mr Nawaz Sharif's mentor, which had already left the Constitution in tatters. Nor was the document immaculate on July 5, 1977, when Gen Zia deposed Ms Bhutto's father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, having undergone a number of controversial amendments since its promulgation. So, this talk of restoration would appear to be as serious as Mr Sharif's reported remark that the charter was the most important document after the Constitution itself

The News, 17 May 2006

Musharraf shrugs off Charter of Democracy

RAWALPINDI: President Pervez Musharraf has said that the so-called Charter of Democracy signed by the two former prime ministers - Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto - in London contains nothing for the welfare of the Pakistani masses. Talking to the ruling Pakistan Muslim League (PML) parliamentarians and Nazims from central Punjab here on Tuesday, the president said the two former prime ministers have nothing to do for the well-being of the people of Pakistan and they were only interested in their own lust for power

The News, 17 May 2006

Alternative energy projects to be launched in Balochistan

QUETTA: Minister for Water and Power Liaquat Ali Jatoi on Tuesday assured the government would improve the power supply system in Balochistan to resolve the problems of load-shedding and power fluctuation in the province. Addressing a meeting, co-chaired by him and Chief Minister Balochistan Jam Muhammad Yousuf here on Tuesday, the minister said that different projects worth Rs 1 billion were being launched to provide electricity to 700 villages, besides improving the power supply system and enhancing the capacity of the grid stations in the province

The Nation, 17 May 2006

Nine militants among 12 killed in NWA action

PESHAWAR - At least 12 persons including nine miscreants (three foreign nationals) and two security personnel were killed while two others injured in two separate incidents of violence in North Waziristan Agency, official said Tuesday. The security forces also used gunship helicopters in the retaliatory operation against the attacking militants

The News, 18 May 2006

Assemblies mandated to re-elect me: Musharraf

ISLAMABAD: President General Pervez Musharraf has asserted that constitutionally the existing parliament is privileged to elect him for a second term. "There is no ambiguity in the Constitution in this context. But the people debating the issue of president's election through the existing assemblies are unaware of the Constitution," Musharraf told a private television network in an interview late on Wednesday. The president made it clear that the "existing assemblies instead of new assemblies will elect the president for a second term". He added that at least one month, or maximum two months, before the end of the president's tenure, which expires on November 15, 2007, elections would be held for his second term

Dawn, 19 May 2006

Mari, two sons sentenced to 20-year term

QUETTA, May 18: An anti-terrorism court on Thursday sentenced veteran nationalist leader Nawab Khair Bakhsh Mari and his two sons to 20 years' imprisonment each for non-appearance in four cases under the Explosive and Arms Act. The jail term for non-appearance in a case under the act is five years. Judge Najibullah Ghilji jailed Nawab Mari, MPA Nawabzada Balaach Marri and former provincial minister Nawabzada Hairbiyar Mari for five years in each of the cases

The News, 19 May 2006

70 Bugti's men surrender

SUI: A total of 70 Fararis on Thursday made a voluntary surrender before DCO Dera Bugti, Abdul Samad Lasi at his office. A simple ceremony, which was also attended by several elders of Kalpar, Masoori and Raheja tribes, was held at the DCO Office in Sui, and each of the 70 Fararis laid down their weapons before the DCO. DCO Dera

Bugti Abdul Samad Lasi, speaking on the occasion, said this is a historic occasion as these people have disassociated themselves from the anti-state policies of Nawab Muhammad Akbar Bugti.

The News, 20 May 2006

Mind your own business, Islamabad tells Kabul

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Friday angrily rejected allegations by Afghan President Hamid Karzai it was letting Taliban militants infiltrate Afghanistan to carry out attacks. Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri, Information Minister Muhammad Ali Durrani and Foreign Office spokeswoman Tasnim Aslam blasted Kabul's continuing vitriol and said it had become routine for the Afghan leadership to blame Islamabad for ills at home

Dawn, 20 May 2006

Tribal chief killed in Waziristan

MIRAMSHAH, May 19: Militants on Friday shot dead a pro-government but influential tribal elders Totti Gul, in the restive North Waziristan Agency (NWA). The victim was a leading Malik of Darpakhel Dawar tribe. Some unidentified militants dragged him out of his car and sprayed him with bullets, a local administration official said

The News, 21 May 2006

China to strengthen strategic partnership with Pakistan: Hu

BEIJING: Chinese President Hu Jintao on Saturday reassured that his country would continue to work with Pakistan, strengthening their strategic partnership for a better future of their people. In a message to President Pervez Musharraf on the occasion of 55th anniversary of the establishment of Sino-Pak diplomatic relations, President Hu said China was willing to work together with Pakistan, enrich the connotation of mutually beneficial cooperation and jointly build up a better future for the Sino-Pak strategic partnership in the new century

Dawn, 21 May 2006

Defence to get Rs273bn

ISLAMABAD, May 20: The government is likely to allocate Rs273 billion for defence budget in 2006-07 to help the armed forces to begin their \$9 billion military procurement programme over the next five-year period. Reliable sources told Dawn on Saturday that defence authorities have sought an additional Rs50 billion in next year's budget, following 27 per cent increase in India's defence budget. The defence budget for the current financial year was fixed at Rs223.5 billion, 3 per cent of the GDP, now being considered as "inadequate" for 2006-07, keeping in view increasing defence requirements of all three services.

Dawn, 21 May 2006

Four die in Waziristan clashes

MIRAMSHAH, May 20: Two paramilitary soldiers were killed and another was wounded in a grenade attack whereas an attacker and a civilian were shot dead in subsequent action in Mirali bazaar in the North Waziristan Agency on Saturday, sources said. An official said that the incident took place at a check-post where the occupant of a car refused to offer himself for body search and lobbed a grenade in the direction of the soldiers

Daily Times, 22 May 2006

NWFP governor resigns

PESHAWAR: NWFP Governor Khalilur Rehman has reportedly submitted his resignation to the president, a move government officials said they had been expecting for a while. Sahibzada Imtiaz, advisor to the prime minister on Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) affairs, is expected to replace Rehman

The Nation, 22 May 2006

'Taliban in Pak directing violence'

KABUL (AFP) – The Afghan foreign minister said Sunday that the leaders of the Taliban and "other international terrorist groups" are directing attacks inside Afghanistan from bases in neighbouring Pakistan. Rangeen Dadfar Spanta's comments follow similar statements last week by President Hamid Karzai and come amid some of the heaviest Taliban-linked fighting in Afghanistan in years

The Nation, 23 May 2006

Orakzai appointed new Governor

ISLAMABAD (Online) Former Corps Commander Peshawar Lieutenant General (retd) Ali Muhammad Jan

Orakzai has been appointed as the new Governor of the NWFP. Credible sources in the federal government told the agency that Commander Khalilur Rehman would leave the charge in a day or two after resigning formally on Monday adding he will assume new responsibilities in the federal capital as consultant in the PM Secretariat. Lt Gen (r) Jan Orakzai is told to have a profoundly respectable track record, as during his tenure as Corps Commander Peshawar the situation in the tribal areas remained peaceful and stable in addition to that a number of development projects were initiated in the presently strife-hit tribal area and that is the reason cited for his novel appointment

The Nation, 23 May 2006

MQM develops differences with Sindh CM

KARACHI - Sindh Minister for Excise and Taxation Syed Sardar Ahmed said on Monday that it is true that MQM has developed differences with Chief Minister Dr Ghulam Arbab Rahim and was engaged in dialogue with him (Arbab) and other coalition partners to sort out their 'differences'. "We have some differences with our partners in the provincial coalition, because we did not attend the provincial assembly's session today (Monday)," the minister told newsmen here. Sindh Assembly member and fellow partyman Mohammad Hussain was sitting beside him at the news conference

Dawn, 23 May 2006

Orakzai named NWFP governor: Amir to oversee federal plans

ISLAMABAD, May 22: The federal government on Monday decided to appoint former corps commander of Peshawar, Lt-Gen (ret'd) Ali Muhammad Jan Orakzai, as governor of the NWFP, Minister of State for Information Tariq Azim told Dawn. A notification to this effect would be issued on Tuesday, he said. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz has assigned coordination and monitoring of the planning and implementation of all federal projects and activities in the NWFP to Political Affairs Minister

Dawn, 23 May 2006

Militants reject compensation

TANK, May 22: Suspected militants have warned families of those killed in military operations in Tank and South Waziristan Agency against accepting any compensation from the government. The warning was issued through a pamphlet distributed among people on Monday and attributed to Mujahideen South Waziristan Mehsud tribal area. "The army used to describe Mujahideen as terrorists. But now, in a bid to win over sympathies of tribesmen, the government is describing them as martyrs," said the pamphlet distributed in Tank, Frontier Region Jandola, Spinkai Raghzai and Barond in South Waziristan

Dawn, 23 May 2006

Frigate deal with China finalized

BEIJING, May 22: Expressing complete satisfaction over Pakistan's frigates deal with China, Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Mohammad Afzal Tahir said, it also envisaged transfer of technology for indigenous production of modern surface fleet to meet new challenges in the defence sector. The deal has been finalised and the keel for construction of the F-22P frigates will be laid at the Hudong-Zhonghua Shipyard in Shanghai this year. The first frigate will be delivered to Pakistan in 2008 and the other three by 2013 along with transfer of technology

Daily Times, 24 May 2006

Pakistan, China considering oil pipeline from Gwadar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and China are considering a feasibility study for an oil pipeline from Gwadar port to Western China to transport China's oil imports from the Gulf, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said on Tuesday. The Gwadar and Karachi ports offer the shortest access to the Arabian Sea for Western China, as well as Central Asia, Aziz said at a seminar on 55 years of Pakistan-China relations, organised by the Institute of Strategic Studies. An oil pipeline from Gwadar to Western China would greatly reduce the time and distance for oil transport from the Gulf to China, he said. A major oil refinery at Gwadar would further facilitate China's oil imports.

Dawn, 24 May 2006

Bus services to China in June

ISLAMABAD, May 23: Pakistan and China have agreed to start bus services on two routes across their borders from June 15, says Communication Minister Shamim Siddiqui. A protocol to this effect was signed at the conclusion of technical-level talks on Tuesday. According to the minister, one route will be Kashgar-Khunjerab-Sust-Gilgit and the other Tashurgan-Khunjerab-Sust. The fare for the first route will be \$40 and \$25 for the other.

The News, 25 May 2006

Shujaat backs Arbab in row with Muttahida+

ISLAMABAD: In an ongoing confrontation between Sindh Chief Minister Dr Arbab Ghulam Rahim and the Muttahida Qaumi Movement, the central leadership of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League (PML) has extended full support to the former giving him a free hand to settle the issues in the province. "Dr Arbab Ghulam Rahim is the president of the PML Sindh and chief minister of Sindh and the federal government fully backs him to settle the provincial issues with the Muttahida," said PML chief Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain while talking to reporters after a meeting with the Sindh chief minister at the Punjab House here on Wednesday

The News, 25 May 2006

Cabinet okays purchase of \$1bn AWACS

ISLAMABAD: The federal cabinet on Wednesday approved a proposal of purchasing \$1 billion-plus airborne surveillance system - Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) - for Pakistan Air Force (PAF). It is said that Sweden's Saab will supply this system, as the Ericsson Microwave System will have one-third of the total deal. The cabinet approved the proposal with Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz in the chair, as representatives of Defence Production informed the meeting that Pakistan lacked in reliable early warning system of surveillance of its air space. The cabinet was also informed that in order to safeguard the air defence of Pakistan it was deemed necessary to have the latest AWACS for the PAF fitted with state-of-the-art technology

The News, 25 May 2006

Afghan lawmaker among six arrested in Quetta

QUETTA: The law-enforcement agencies have arrested six Afghan nationals, including three government officials, for entering the country without valid travel documents, in a raid conducted in the Zar Karez area of the Loralai district on Wednesday, said official sources on Wednesday

Dawn, 25 May 2006

Al Qaeda 'strategist' handed over to US

ISLAMABAD, May 24: A leading Al Qaeda member, who had a \$5 million bounty on his head and is wanted in Spain for possible links to the 2004 bombings, has been handed over to US agents, Pakistani intelligence officers said on Wednesday. Ideologue and strategist Mustafa Setmariam Nasar, also known as Abu Musab al-Suri, a Syrian holding a Spanish passport, was handed over to US agents at least two months ago after being caught in Pakistan last year, they said

The News, 26 May 2006

Stakeholders tide over Sindh breach

ISLAMABAD: Mediation by a top presidential aide has brightened the chances of a breakthrough in a row between the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) and Sindh Chief Minister Arbab Ghulam Rahim amid reports of a few hiccups. "The row is almost over and both the chief minister and the MQM will continue to work as allies in the provincial set-up and there are no chances of their breaking apart," claimed a government official privy to the developments, adding: "The row over authority will be amicably settled in the light of the power-sharing formula inked between the ruling PML and MQM in the post 2002 election scene

The News, 26 May 2006

Pakistani convicted of plotting to bomb New York subway

NEW YORK: A Pakistani man was convicted on Wednesday of planning to blow up a New York subway station ahead of the Republican National Convention held before the 2004 presidential election. Shahawar Matin Siraj, 24, could face life in prison for conspiring to plant explosives at the 34th Street subway station near Madison Square Garden, where the political gathering took place, according to the Justice Department

Dawn, 26 May 2006

Over 1,000 Al Qaeda suspects held in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, May 25: Security agencies arrested more than 1,000 Al Qaeda suspects between January 2002 and May 2006, according to a study conducted by the Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies (PIPS). Of the arrested men, 70 belonged to Algeria, 86 from Saudi Arabia, 20 from Morocco, 22 from the United Arab Emirates, 11 from Libya, seven from Kuwait, 20 from Egypt, 28 from Indonesia, 18 from Malaysia and 36 others from West Asian

countries. Eighteen of those arrested belonged to western countries: Five from the United States, two from Australia and 11 from the United Kingdom. They also included an unknown number of French and German citizens

Dawn, 26 May 2006

Accord with Iran on border trade: Gas price formula being worked out: Aziz

ISLAMABAD, May 25: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said on Thursday that Pakistan and Iran had agreed to open border markets to promote bilateral and regional trade. Addressing a joint news conference with Iran's First Vice-President Parviz Davoudi following a one-to-one meeting and delegation-level talks, he said the two countries were working to find an equitable formula to determine a reasonable price of the Iranian gas to be piped to Pakistan

The News, 27 May 2006

Sindh political crisis: PM asks Arbab to take coalition partners along

ISLAMABAD/KARACHI: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz on Friday advised the Sindh chief minister to take all the coalition partners along to work closely for ensuring effective governance in the province to transfer benefits of development to the common man. The Sindh chief minister, Dr Arbab Ghulam Rahim, along with some of his cabinet members, called on the prime minister to apprise him of the ongoing confrontation between him and the Muttahida Qaumi Movement. In the last three days, the Sindh chief minister has held a series of meetings with PML chief Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain and Tariq Aziz, secretary National Security Council and close aide to President Pervez Musharraf. The PML chief fully backed and empowered Arbab to resolve the row with the estranged coalition partner in the Sindh government. Friday's meeting with Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz was aimed at seeking his support in the confrontation. On Friday, the chief minister held another round of talks with Tariq Aziz

The News, 27 May 2006

AQ Khan probe be reopened: US lawmakers

WASHINGTON: US lawmakers on Thursday called for the reopening of a probe into a nuclear smuggling network led by Pakistani scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan, or AQ Khan, amid concerns he could have supplied Iran with nuclear weapon designs. Pakistan said earlier this month that the probe into the AQ Khan matter was closed and that he would remain off limits to foreign investigations despite requests by the United States and the global nuclear watchdog agency IAEA to interview him. While President George W Bush's administration has said that Pakistan had taken all actions necessary to unravel the network and to uncover all of its secrets, lawmakers are unconvinced

The News, 27 May 2006

Guessing game goes on Osama in Kumrat valley?

PESHAWAR: People in Upper Dir are concerned that their district could become the next battleground in the hunt for the elusive Osama bin Laden following a report by an American television channel that the al-Qaeda chief had climbed down the mountains to reach the Kumrat valley in the Dir-Kohistan area. The strange, unsubstantiated report was heard with disbelief in Upper Dir. Maj-Gen Shaukat Sultan, military spokesman and director-general of the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), has already rejected the report as baseless. However, the intriguing part of the American Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) News is that it quoted unnamed Pakistani intelligence officials as the source of its report. It is unbelievable that Pakistani intelligence officials, or any other government functionary, would provide this piece of information to a US television channel and, in the process, admit that Osama is hiding in Pakistan. That would be contrary to Pakistan government's position that the al-Qaeda chief was not present in Pakistani territory

The News, 27 May 2006

MMA threatens protest against FBI, CIA network

LAHORE: The MMA has warned the government against setting up US intelligence network in northern areas and threatened to launch countrywide protest movement against if the FBI and CIA offices and equipment were not removed within twenty days. The MMA leader Maulana Abdul Akbar Chital MNA issued this threat in a press conference at JI Lahore office Friday. The JI Public Relations Director Safdar Chaudhry was also present

The News, 27 May 2006

Militants blow up health centre near Mir Ali

MIRANSHAH: Suspected militants blew up a government health centre with explosives during the night of Thursday and Friday at Hamzoni village near Mir Ali in North Waziristan tribal agency. Official sources said the

militants forced the guards and staff inside the centre to come out of the building and then placed explosives there to blow it up. The militants told the guards that the centre was being used to spread obscenity and immoral activities.

The News, 28 May 2006

Arbab, Muttahida bury the hatchet

ISLAMABAD: President Pervez Musharraf's intervention and backdoor efforts helped remove differences between the major coalition partners of the Sindh government here on Saturday. The confrontation between Chief Minister Arbab Ghulam Rahim and the Muttahida Qaumi Movement has ended for the time being, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said while addressing a news conference at the Prime Minister House here on Saturday evening

The News, 28 May 2006

President wants world standard Gwadar port

RAWALPINDI: President Pervez Musharraf on Saturday directed adherence to top international standards in realisation of facilities at the Gwadar deep seaport, saying the important national asset would be a vital factor in turning Pakistan into a hub of regional trade. Speaking at a meeting that reviewed progress on development of the port in Balochistan, the president underlined that timely completion of the port on modern lines would accrue tremendous benefits both for the local populace and the national economy. Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz also attended the meeting

Dawn, 28 May 2006

Foreigners' access to Dr Khan ruled out

ISLAMABAD, May 27: The Foreign Office on Saturday ruled out the possibility of Pakistan changing its position on providing foreign interrogators direct access to scientist Dr A.Q. Khan for questioning on his 'nuclear network'. "We have conducted thorough investigations into the A.Q. Khan network and shared all the information with the IAEA and relevant countries, and if anything new comes up we are ready to investigate," acting Foreign Office spokesperson Sohail Mehmood told Dawn referring to demands by US lawmakers for direct access to the scientist

The Nation, 28 May 2006

Afghan Dosti buses cross border sans passengers

PESHAWAR - The newly-launched bus service between Peshawar and Jalalabad may run into snags as two Jalalabad-bound buses Saturday left for Afghan border city without any passenger due to strict visa requirements. According to eye-witnesses and managers of the Pak- Afghan Dosti Bus Service, the FIA officials at Torkham under the agreement signed between the two governments stopped issuing tickets to the passengers who have no valid documents like passports and visas. Even an Afghan woman alongwith her ailing son was not allowed to travel the bus for not possessing valid visa and passports, they informed

The News, 29 May 2006

Pakistan rules out US hot pursuit

PESHAWAR: Rejecting reports of Osama bin Laden's presence in the remotest Kumrat Valley of the district Dir Upper and threat of a possible US attack against the world's most wanted man as baseless, Interior Minister Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao on Sunday said, "There is no such threat." "These are mere speculations, mostly raised by the Hamid Karzi-led Afghan government. There is no possibility of presence of Osama, or his men in the forests and hard terrains of Dir Upper, or anywhere else in the country. Hence there is no threat of any attack by coalition forces," Sherpao told reporters after his address to a tribal Jirga of the Mohmand tribal agency here

The News, 29 May 2006

Two troopers die in Waziristan suicide attack

PESHAWAR: At least two paramilitary troopers were killed in a suicide attack at Datta Khel, some 30 kilometres west of Miranshah, the headquarters of the North Waziristan tribal agency, while a pro-government tribal elder was shot dead by unidentified assailants on Sunday. An unidentified suicide bomber blew himself at Datta Khel at 3pm, killing a Jawan of the paramilitary Frontier Corps and a Khassadar. Identity of the bomber, who also died on spot, could not be ascertained

The News, 29 May 2006

I learnt about Kargil from Vajpayee: Nawaz

LONDON: It was from an urgent call from his Indian counterpart, Atal Behari Vajpayee, that he first learnt about the invasion of Kargil by the Pakistani troops, the then Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif disclosed on Sunday, squarely blaming Gen Pervez Musharraf for launching the campaign. "Mr Prime Minister, what is happening in Kargil?" an indignant Vajpayee, asked him over telephone in May 1999, according to the 56-year-old Pakistani leader, who said he had got to know about the Kargil operation only then. Almost all Pakistani corps commanders were also unaware of Musharraf's plan and "just two or three of his close aides," Nawaz Sharif, who is living abroad in exile for over six years, told PTI in an interview here, days after he and another former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto came together and pledged to topple Musharraf. Through the Kargil operation, Musharraf, the then Chief of the Army Staff, had "sabotaged" the understanding reached by him with Vajpayee at Lahore to resolve all Indo-Pak problems including Kashmir, Sharif said. Nawaz Sharif finds it ironic that India should be talking to Pakistan's military ruler. "You are talking to the same Musharraf (who did Kargil). I fail to understand," he said

The News, 30 May 2006

PML stalwarts for rapprochement with Benazir

SLAMABAD: Many stalwarts of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League are trying to convince present regime heavyweights to initiate a direct communication channel with PPP chairperson Benazir Bhutto through political people instead of the backchannel contacts that have not yielded desired results till date, sources told The News. PML leaders Hamid Nasir Chattha and Mian Manzoor Wattoo pleaded a rapprochement with the Benazir-led PPP when they met President Pervez Musharraf a couple of days back, and lately Wattoo has been in contact with former prime minister Benazir Bhutto's aides in Pakistan

The News, 30 May 2006

Landmine explosion kills three children in Bajaur

KHAR: A land mine exploded Monday in a village in Inayat Qala, a village about 10 kilometres north of Khar Bajaur Agency, killing three young girls who were playing in a field, an official said. Pakistani troops in a retaliatory strike accidentally killed a civilian Monday after a bomb blast hit their convoy in North Waziristan

Dawn, 30 May 2006

High-tech weapons to boost air defence: Musharraf

ISLAMABAD, May 29: President General Pervez Musharraf said on Monday that Pakistan Air Force would be equipped with high-tech aircraft and state-of-the-art weapon systems and made stronger, more effective and operationally ready to ensure the country's security. President Musharraf was addressing the concluding session of a two-day commanders' conference of Pakistan Air Force at the Air Headquarters here

The News, 31 May 2006

Budget outlay to stand at Rs 1.5 trillion: Salman

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Finance and Economic Affairs Dr Salman Shah has said that the total outlay of the federal budget 2006-07 will stand at Rs 1.5 trillion, which is to be Rs 402 billion (36 per cent) up compared with the total size of the budget of the current financial year that stands at Rs 1.098 trillion. Out of the Rs 1.5 trillion budget Pakistan will arrange Rs 1.2 trillion from its own resources, Dr Shah along with Minister of State for Finance Omer Ayub Khan told a pre-budget press briefing here on Tuesday. With regard to the defence budget, Dr Shah said defence expenditures in real terms are on the decline for last many years. A few years ago these expenditures stood at 6.5 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and at present defence expenditures have come down to just 3.5 per cent of the GDP, showing a continuous decreasing trend

The News, 31 May 2006

UAE to pump billions of dollars into Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) vowed Tuesday to further cement the whole gamut of their relations and focus on boosting economic and trade ties, defence and security relations, and invest in mega infrastructure development projects. Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and visiting Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al-Maktoum held talks on the whole-range of relations. They held a one-on-one meeting in which the two leaders agreed to expand and further strengthen their relations at a time when the two countries also signed three Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) for cooperation in development of mega infrastructure projects, bringing in investment running into billions of dollars, besides permission to the Dubai Islamic Bank to operate fifty branches in Pakistan

Daily Times, 31 May 2006

Dawa sends relief goods to Indonesia

LAHORE: Jammatud Dawa (JD) has dispatched the first consignment of relief goods worth Rs 1.8 million for Indonesian earthquake victims, and it will send a team of doctors and volunteers to the quake-hit areas soon. Addressing a press conference, Al-Khidmat Group Chairman Maulana Ameer Hamza said the organization had begun collecting relief goods from all over Pakistan. He said surplus relief goods would be sent to October 8 earthquake victims of Pakistan. Hamza said relief goods including food, medicine, surgical equipment, tents, clothes and bedding were sent from the JD office at Markaz Qadisia

The Nation, 31 May 2006

Navy to have 3rd locally built Agosta 90-B

ISLAMABAD-Pakistan will induct its third indigenously built submarine, Agosta 90-B (Hamza) into the naval fleet in August, this year, it was reliably learnt here on Tuesday. The nuclear strike capable submarine Hamza, to be commissioned in August, is built with the French technical assistance and it is the latest in Agosta 90-B class, said an official here. Earlier, two submarines of the same class had been inducted into Pakistan's Naval fleet, he added