

Dawn, 1 May 2007

Sindh PPP puts off party polls

The president of the Sindh chapter of Pakistan Peoples Party, Syed Qaim Ali Shah, has announced that after consultations with party chairperson Benazir Bhutto, the party election in the province scheduled for June 10 has been postponed and the date for enrolling new members extended. Speaking at a press conference at the PPP Secretariat here on Monday, Mr Shah said that the new schedule for the election, to be held in the constituencies of provincial seats and on UC levels, would be announced after June 30, following the completion of the party membership drive, now extended up to May 20.

Dawn, 1 May 2007

Editorial: Misplaced priorities

IT was a pleasant surprise that the National Assembly session last Thursday wasn't marred by a lack of quorum, a problem that has been plaguing the assembly since this government came to power. According to a report in January this year, since 2002 assembly sessions have been adjourned more than 300 times for a lack of quorum. What was not very pleasant, though, was the day's business. Instead of discussing issues like poverty, unemployment or loadshedding, this august body of graduates chose to debate the merits of a stage play that supposedly poked fun at the burqa. Just goes to show how divorced our legislators are or choose to be from the basic issues of life.

Nation, 1 May 2007

Accord to boost CBMs

ANKARA Agencies Afghanistan and Pakistan agreed to step up joint efforts against terrorism and boost confidence-building measures during fence-mending talks here on Monday. We decided to reconcile our differences. I can say it's a new beginning, President Musharraf told NTV television after talks with his Afghan counterpart Hamid Karzai. They agreed to deny sanctuary, training and financing to terrorists and to elements involved in subversive and anti-state activities in each other's countries, according to a joint declaration issued after the talks mediated by Turkish leaders. They pledged to initiate immediate action on specific intelligence exchanges as part of their commitment, it said.

Nation, 1 May 2007

Editorial: Painfully slow

THE international conference on Governing for Millenium Development Goals evolved a broad agreement between former Chairman National Reconstruction Bureau Lt Gen (ret'd) Tanvir Hussain Naqvi and the incumbent, Daniyal Aziz, that the federal bureaucracy and provincial governments impeded implementation of the Devolution Plan. There is no disputing Mr Aziz's observation that the local government system is the best possible option to effectively deliver services and carry out donors' programmes and projects if they remain within the prescribed parameters.

Dawn, 2 May 2007

Team to visit Kabul for talks with Karzai: Sherpao

Federal Interior Minister Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao said on Tuesday that a highlevel

Pakistani delegation would leave for Afghanistan on May 3 to discuss with President Hamid Karzai measures to prevent acts of terrorism on both sides of the border. He was talking to journalists after attending a public meeting here on Tuesday. Mr Sherpao said that the delegation would discuss with Afghan leaders joint efforts needed to restrict cross-border movement of terrorists.

Dawn, 2 May 2007

Pakistan one of 10 worst countries for press freedom

The top 10 worst countries for press freedom are Ethiopia, Gambia, Russia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cuba, Pakistan, Egypt, Azerbaijan, Morocco and Thailand, a US-based media watchdog said on Tuesday. The behaviour of all of these countries is deeply troubling, but the rapid retreats in nations where the media have thrived demonstrate just how easily the fundamental right to press freedom can be taken away, said Joel Simon, executive director of the Committee to Protect Journalists, in a statement. The Committee to Protect Journalists assessed countries by looking at government censorship, legal harassment, libel prosecutions, journalist deaths, physical attacks on the press, journalist imprisonments, and threats against the press.

Dawn, 2 May 2007

MMA plans protests outside SC

The Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal has announced that it will hold a demonstration outside the Supreme Court building to express solidarity with Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry who will appear before the Supreme Judicial Council on Wednesday. Talking to reporters here on Tuesday, MMA deputy secretary-general Liaquat Baloch said activists of the alliance would brave the scorching heat as well as administrative and security hurdles to reach the SC building and would remain there till the CJP came out of the court.

Dawn, 2 May 2007

Editorial: Time for greater autonomy

THE reported move by the government to bring a constitutional amendment aimed at devolving more powers to the provinces is welcome. It is time the federal Concurrent List under the 1973 Constitution, handing over for 10 years to the federal government many subjects originally assigned to the provinces, was shortened significantly. The list contains 47 subjects, bringing the total number of legislative powers vested in the federal government to 114. This is the highest number of subjects assigned to a central government in a federal set-up. The 1973 Constitution was adopted in the tragic aftermath of the 1971 war and the separation of the former province of East Pakistan.

Nation, 2 May 2007

Re-election plan 'a sham': HRW

PRESIDENT General Pervez Musharraf's plan to get re-elected by the sitting parliament before the general elections would bypass the democratic process and be a sham, a prominent rights group said on Tuesday, reports Boston Globe. Musharraf, who has made no secret of his plan to stand for a second term, said in an interview last week the current parliament, where a military-backed party holds a majority, would vote for president by

October, before national elections. The US-based group Human Rights Watch said Musharraf's plan would ensure his re-election as president and continuation as army chief. Opposition groups say the plan to get re-elected by sitting assemblies would be unconstitutional.

Nation, 2 May 2007

Editorial: A vulnerable regime

THE suicide attack targeted at the Federal Minister Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao only adds to the growing insecurity within. The vulnerability of the government seems to have increased after this fourth high-profile attack. That the writ of the state is being openly challenged and it has become a prerogative of anti-state elements in the country to take law in their hands to disrupt the system of governance. The defiance to the present administration is coming out strong, making also the innocent citizens the target of terrorism. But what is more distressing is that the government has likewise indulged into a blame-game.

Nation, 3 May 2007

MMA, PML-N rally baton-charged

opposition parties, lawyers community and the civil society on Tuesday staged protest demonstrations outside the Supreme Court against the presidential reference and for the independence of judiciary. Hundreds of protestors, including lawyers, politicians, poets, writers and NGO representatives chanted slogans against President General Pervez Musharraf and in favour of Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry. The protestors at the 7th hearing of Supreme Judicial Council were carrying placards, banners and flags of their respective parties and organizations to make their presence felt.

Nation, 3 May 2007

BB, Nawaz may meet in Dubai today

PPP Chairperson Benazir Bhutto and PML N chief Mian Nawaz Sharif are likely to meet on Thursday today, as latter arrived in Dubai on Wednesday night to condole the death of Sheikh Saeed bin Nahayan Mabarak Al Nahayan, with his father Sheikh Nahayan Mabarak Al Nahayan, Chairman Abu Dhabi Group and head of Bank Alfalah and Warid Telecom in Pakistan. Though Mian Nawaz Sharif is in Dubai to meet Sheikh Mabarak for the said purpose, the two exiled leaders may seize this opportunity to take each other into confidence over the prevailing political situation in Pakistan.

Dawn, 3 May 2007

Altaf blames Lal Masjid for Charsadda suicide blast

Muttahida Qaumi Movement chief Altaf Hussain has blamed religious extremists of Lal Masjid, Jamia Hafsa and Jamia Fareedia for the suicide attack in Charsadda, saying they had threatened to carry out suicide attacks across the country. According to an MQM press release, Mr Hussain called Interior Minister Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao on Wednesday and assured him of his party's cooperation in efforts by the government to eradicate the menace of extremism and terrorism from the country.

Dawn, 4 May 2007

US let Pakistan go nuclear: ex-CIA official

The Reagan administration allowed Pakistan to continue its nuclear programme because it needed Islamabad's support to fight the Russians in Afghanistan, says a former CIA official. Richard Barlow was an analyst for the CIA, monitoring Pakistan's nuclear programme during the Reagan era. In 1989, he moved over to the Pentagon, where he worked for then Secretary of Defence Richard Cheney.

Dawn, 4 May 2007

SJC asked to take notice of 'contempt'

The prosecution counsel on Thursday asked the Supreme Judicial Council hearing a reference against Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry, to take notice of propagation of bias against some members of the council because maligning their conduct amounted to its contempt. Dr Khalid Ranjha, leading the panel on behalf of the referring authority President Pervez Musharraf, cited cases to establish that the SJC enjoyed the authority to take notice against its contempt if serious allegations were levelled against member judges of the council by questioning their conduct.

Dawn, 4 May 2007

Editorial: A question of priority

IT IS unfortunate that while women MPAs of the Jamaat-i-Islami in the NWFP have always raised valid questions regarding women's problems, they have never pressed them into concrete action. Instead, they have tried to push forward laws that do not address women's real needs. For example, last month a bill was put forward that would curb discrimination against women wearing the hijab. It is hard to understand why this bill was tabled at a time when there are more pressing issues that need to be addressed, particularly in the interest of women who do not have access to basic facilities and services.

Nation, 4 May 2007

'Uniform, democracy can't go together'

Former Prime minister of Pakistan and chairperson of PPP Benazir Bhutto has said that Nawaz Sharif can tell in a better way what sort of explanation he needs from PPP, reported a private TV channel Thursday. Benazir was talking to mediemen in Dubai on Thursday. She further said that uniform, presidency and democracy could not exist together. However, she maintained that she was in contact with government and negotiations with government were for the wider interest of Pakistan.

Nation, 4 May 2007

Editorial: Leaders in Dubai

THE stories about a deal between Ms Bhutto and Gen Musharraf being in the offing continue to be the hottest topic along with the judicial crisis. The MMA is using the reports to malign the PPP despite firm denials by important party leaders of any move in the direction. Despite the traditional rivalry between the PML-N and PPP, the former has shown enough maturity not to be carried away by the propaganda with the result that the ARD has remained intact. Few would however deny that the issue has added to the

strains between the two parties. While Ms Bhutto has affirmed that there have been contacts between her party and the government, Mian Nawaz Sharif remains strongly opposed to holding talks with a military ruler.

Daily Times, 5 May 2007

First Pak-Afghan joint peace jirga in August

Pakistan and Afghanistan jirga commissions, which met in Kabul, decided on Friday to hold the first joint peace jirga in the Afghan capital in the first week of August, a joint statement said. A total of 700 delegates, half each from Pakistan and Afghanistan, will participate in the Jirga, said the statement issued simultaneously from Kabul and Islamabad after the two-day meeting between jirga commissions of the two countries. Interior Minister Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao led the Pakistani delegation.

Nation, 5 May 2007

Qazi's formula for govt-Opp reconciliation

MMA President Qazi Hussain Ahmed on Friday proposed an interim national consensus government from within the present Parliament to hold free, fair and transparent general elections if the country is to be steered out of the current quagmire. Giving his formula for government-Opposition reconciliation Qazi suggested the ruling coalition should agree with the opposition parties on certain issues. The issues he said were that the Constitution be restored to the October 1999 position, military dispensation be done away with and a consensus government be formed through the Parliament, the COAS should quit the power and whosoever is entitled, according to the Constitution, be made the acting president, the interim government thus elected should hold fair and free elections. He called for forgetting the past mistakes and embark on new journey towards democracy.

Nation, 5 May 2007

Editorial: Pak-Afghan moot

THE jirga commissions of Pakistan and Afghanistan finally met in Kabul on Friday after a delay of nearly a month. The Ankara meeting between the presidents of the two countries which was preceded by exchange of hot words and ended without a handshake was not an altogether failure as was perceived by some. That Pakistan and Afghanistan are divided over a number of issues is no secret. What is equally significant is that they share problems, like fighting militancy, which they cannot hope to cope with unless they cooperate. So far each side has remained dissatisfied over the performance of the other with Kabul accusing Islamabad of not doing its bit and being rebuked in return for failing to fulfil its own obligations.

Dawn, 5 May 2007

Editorial: Flawed power plan

THE sins of the government are being visited on the people. For seven years the planners in Islamabad did next to nothing to increase power generation, and it was only last year that the government finally woke up to reality as the electricity shortage began to spiral out of control. Even then, supply is yet to improve as demand continues to soar. In the absence of alternatives, the emphasis now is on conservation until new plants become

operational and hydroelectricity levels can be boosted through additional water releases. Top officials, including the prime minister, are quick to link the increased demand for energy the water and power secretary calls it prosperity-driven to the vibrant economic growth of recent years.

Dawn, 5 May 2007

Editorial: Prospects of government, PPP deal

AN old topic in Pakistan that has remained the focus of media attention and current political debate is whether President Musharraf is prepared to secure a deal with Benazir Bhutto and whether she is ready in return to support him for a second term in office in return for making her prime minister or chairman of the Senate in the next government. Supporters of this theory point to the recent statement of Benazir Bhutto in which she has said that in the event of her party forming the next government, she will have no objection to General Musharraf remaining president for another term. She has also said on an earlier occasion that her party is prepared to talk to the government depending upon what is on offer at the time of negotiations.

Dawn, 6 May 2007

It's a purely judicial issue, says president

President General Pervez Musharraf said on Saturday that lawyers must stop using the reference against Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry for political gains and allow the Supreme Judicial Council to deal with the case in a legal and constitutional manner. Addressing a large public rally here, the president said that some elements, particularly a group of lawyers, were trying to politicise the issue, adding that they were trying to manipulate a purely constitutional and judicial matter. Urging lawyers to avoid confrontation, President Musharraf warned people against elements using the CJ's reference for personal and political gains, and said they should not follow them.

Dawn, 6 May 2007

Editorial: Making their role more effective

IT IS heartening that women from five major political parties came together at a workshop in Islamabad on Friday to discuss ways to raise women's representation in their parties. This shows that women now realise that there is no point in working at cross purposes and that a unified front will enhance their empowerment. This is a much needed endeavour because the increase in their numbers in the assemblies now at 33 per cent through reserved seats for women is not enough. After the last election, one had thought that since there were more women parliamentarians, they would be able to play a more active role in governance, particularly in alleviating the lot of women.

Daily Times, 6 May 2007

CJP asks lawyers to fight for rule of law

Chief Justice of Pakistan Iftikhar Chaudhry on Saturday urged lawyers to continue their fight to uphold the independence of the judiciary. It is my request to you that you should forge unity among your ranks. This is your responsibility to strive for the supremacy and rule of law, Justice Chaudhry said in a televised speech, after arriving in Gujrat from Islamabad.

Daily Times, 6 May 2007

VIEW: Musharraf is in serious trouble(Dr Hasan-Askari Rizvi)

Musharraf can hold on to power but his capacity to address the problems is greatly diminished. The mainstream political parties were opposed to him from the beginning but the MMA extended him reluctant cooperation. He has even lost their support. Pakistans politics is now sharply polarised along pro and anti Musharraf lines. The official circles view him as indispensable and a guarantor of political continuity and stability. This argument clearly makes no distinction between the leader and the political system. President General Pervez Musharraf's survival is viewed as a pre-requisite for the survival of the current political order in Islamabad their being pro usharraf makes sense because tied with the survival of the government is also the political future of the ruling coalition.

Daily Times, 7 May 2007

Nations failing to protect basic human rights disintegrate: Dictatorship an anachronism: CJP

LAHORE: Chief Justice of Pakistan Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry told thousands of cheering supporters on Sunday that dictatorship was a thing of the past and states that ignored the rule of law and basic rights faced destruction. Chaudhry arrived here on Sunday after thousands of supporters turned out to greet him as he travelled by road from Islamabad. The trip takes four hours but took him more than 20. Nations and states which are based on dictatorship instead of the supremacy of the Constitution, the rule of law and protection of basic rights get destroyed, Chaudhry, 58, said in the compound of the Lahore High Court to thousands of lawyers, 16 of Punjab's 23 judges, and opposition activists outside on the street. The reception was organised by the Lahore High Court Bar Association..

Dawn, 7 May 2007

Musharrafs efforts backfiring

WASHINGTON, May 6: The recent events in Pakistan are having an impact on how the US views the government in Islamabad but policy makers in Washington believe that it is still the army that calls the shots, says a commentary in an academic publication. The main questions about President Musharrafs future, however, are internal to Pakistan, write Ambassador Teresita C. Schaffer and Harris Qureshi in South Asia Monitor, published by Washington's Center for Strategic and International Studies..

The Nation, 7 May 2007

PPP leader shot dead in Peshawar

PESHAWAR Former NWFP Minister and PPP founding leader Syed Qamar Abbas along with his nephew was gunned down by unknown attackers here Sunday. Qamar and his nephew Muhammad Ali, riding a bike, were passing through the Khushhal Bazaar of Hashtnagari when they were ambushed, eyewitnesses said. As a result, both of them received critical injuries. They were rushed to a hospital, however, they succumbed to injuries. Syed Qamar was facing a charge of killing Shabir Ahmad Bilour, the son of ANP Central Senior Vice President Haji Ghulam Ahmad Bilour, and his two companions who were killed during the by-elections in NA 1 Peshawar on April 1997..

Daily Times, 7 May 2007

EDITORIAL: Heed the message of Lahore

The non functional Chief Justice of Pakistan, Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, is clearly made of sterner stuff than President General Pervez Musharraf thought when he called him to his camp office and gave him the bad news. Justice Chaudhry arrived in Lahore on Saturday at 3 in the morning to an adoring reception because it took him 22 hours to get through the crowds on the GT road from Islamabad to Lahore. Everywhere lawyers and party activists had lined up to give him a rapturous welcome. What was his cause. He refused to go quietly when he was fired arbitrarily by a man in uniform and the public sees him as salvaging the honour of the countrys judiciary after years of submission by his predecessor judges. Therefore the moment he decided to take a stand he won the sympathy and support of Pakistanis across the nation, if only to show that Pakistan could not be ruled whimsically and arbitrarily for so long without the people indicating they wanted a change of faces and government..

Dawn, 7 May 2007

Opinion: Seeking contacts with Israel (TA Khan)

BEFORE embarking upon his four nation European tour, President Musharraf made yet another offer to Israel to help find a solution to the tangled issues of the Middle East. These offers appear to be rather sudden and unpremeditated and, in the absence of credible evidence of a systematic formulation of Pakistan's conceivable role in the crisis, are widely interpreted as part of some complex manoeuvre to retain the support of the United States for his own absolute power. Since the tour was to terminate in Turkey, Islamabad had its share of rumours of coming clandestine contacts with Israel. Unfair as they might have been, the offer and Israels scotching of it did pose the question why Pakistans diplomacy gets frequently mired in such unproductive ventures..

Dawn, 8 May 2007

SC halts reference hearings, accepts plea for full court

ISLAMABAD, May 7: In what is being described as a delicate balancing act in the midst of a raging judicial crisis, the Supreme Court on Monday stayed the proceedings of the Supreme Judicial Council SJC against Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry but, at the same time, accepted the governments plea and proposed a full court to decide the petitions challenging the composition of the council. Announcing its order in a small but packed to capacity courtroom, a five-member bench also barred all three members of the council, Acting Chief Justice Rana Bhagwandas, Justice Javed Iqbal and Justice Abdul Hameed Dogar and Justice Sardar Mohammad Raza Khan, who earlier had declined to hear the petitions, from sitting in the full court.

Daily Times, 8 May 2007

Pak Afghan jirga may fail to pacify Taliban insurgents

PESHAWAR: A senior member of the Pak-Afghan Peace Jirga Commission has said that two meetings of 700 delegates from Pakistan and Afghanistan may not succeed against the increasing Taliban linked insurgency in Afghanistan. I do not have much hope for success, said Rustam Shah Mohmand, adviser to Interior Minister Aftab Sherpao Khan, who is heading the Pakistani commission in the jirga. The governments of Afghanistan

and Pakistan agreed on May 4 to hold their first joint jirga in the first week of August in Afghanistan, which would be followed by another one in Pakistan. The two countries recently decided to try using the traditional tribal system to combat the Taliban. President Pervez Musharraf and his Afghan counterpart Hamid Karzai agreed to the idea during their joint meeting with US President George W Bush in September last year.

Hindustan Times, 8 May 2007

Spectre of emergency over Pak

The spectre of emergency looms large in Pakistan. On Monday, there was fresh turmoil after opposition parties and human rights groups reacted strongly to Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz's threat the previous night that the government might impose emergency in the country to rein in continuing protests over the removal of its top judge Iftikhar M Chaudhry in March. Pakistan's Supreme Court on Monday temporarily barred the Supreme Judicial Council from hearing allegations of misconduct and abuse of office against Chaudhry.

Dawn, 8 May 2007

Lal Masjid rejects govt decision

ISLAMABAD, May 7: The Lal Masjid administration rejected on Monday a decision by the local administration to construct four demolished mosques on alternative places and said the government was not sincere in resolving the contentious issues. The mosques administration conveyed its reservations to Pakistan Muslim League president Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain who visited the mosque on Monday night. Lal Masjid Media Cell in charge Abdul Qayyum told Dawn that the Capital Development Authority CDA had two days ago issued a notification saying that it had agreed to reconstruct four of total seven razed mosques on alternative places in their same localities.

Daily Times, 8 May 2007

Opinion: Beyond the judicial crisis (RB Rais)

Pakistan has a long and complex history of democratic struggles against military regimes, but each time we failed to transform the movement into a democratic transition. But times have changed Pakistan's political landscape has changed vastly in the last sixty days, in a way nobody imagined it would. Defiance by one person, the chief justice of Pakistan, has inspired countless citizens of country to rally around him in the sweltering heat, and endure beatings by the police, arrests and teargas shells. A wave of unexpected unrest has shaken the regime to its bones. All its well stories should be too familiar to the General to please him by now. Or he himself might have the illusion that he has wit, power and allies that would rescue him from the danger zone he has landed in. Only the wilfully ignorant can deny what is happening before their eyes, in broad daylight.

Dawn, 8 May 2007

Editorial: Shadow of emergency?

EVEN though he was vague about it, Mr Shaukat Aziz's remarks about a possible imposition of the state of emergency deserve to be taken note of. Addressing a press conference in Islamabad on Sunday, the prime minister said the Constitution did provide for such an eventuality but that a decision to that effect would depend on circumstances.

The circumstances he referred to were obviously the countrywide protests by the legal community and political activists following the presidential reference to the Supreme Judicial Council against Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry.

The Nation, 8 May 2007

Editorial: A turning point?

THE decision of a larger, five-member Supreme Court Bench to stay the proceedings of the Supreme Judicial Council in the reference against Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry brings a breath of fresh air in the suffocating atmosphere of government's insistence to let the constitutional process take its course, on the one hand, and the swelling crowds of protesters terming the reference as an attack on the judiciary, on the other. According to the order issued during the course of a hearing of the petition from the CJ challenging his removal, the case now stands referred to a full bench, which will not contain the three SC judges on the SJC, Chief Justice Chaudhry and Justice Sardar Muhammad Raza Khan, who had earlier regretted his inability to hear the case.

Dawn, 9 May 2007

Nato chief sees ties beyond war on terror

ISLAMABAD, May 8: Pakistan and the 26-member North Atlantic Treaty Organisation Nato on Tuesday agreed to institutionalise a political dialogue and expand military cooperation in a bid to develop a relationship beyond the war on terror. In the context of Afghanistan, both the sides agreed that nation building, reconstruction and development rather than a military solution was the key to a durable peace and stability in that country. This was the theme of meetings that visiting Nato Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer held with President Gen Pervez Musharraf, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri. Addressing a press conference with Mr Kasuri after talks, the Nato secretary-general appreciated the role Pakistan was playing to promote peace in the region..

The Nation, 9 May 2007

14 member full court to hear CJ case from 14th

ISLAMABAD - Acting Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Rana Bhagwandas on Tuesday constituted a full court of the Supreme Court comprising 14 judges of the apex court for hearing the CJ's petition. The full court would hear the constitutional petition of Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry and other 23 constitutional petitions on the same subject on day-to-day basis from May 14 onwards. The full court comprised Justice Khalilur Rehman Ramday, Justice Muhammad Nawaz Abbasi, Justice Faqir Muhammad Khokhar, Justice Falak Sher, Justice Mian Shakirullah Jan, Justice M Javed Buttar, Justice Tasadduq Hussain Jilani, Justice Syed Ashhad, Justice Nasirul Mulk, Justice Raja Fayyaz Ahmad, Justice Chaudhry Ijaz Ahmad and Justice Syed Jamshed Ali, Justice Ghulam Rabbani and Justice Hamid Ali Mirza. Justice Khalilur Rehman Ramday would head the full court.

Kashmir Times, 9 May 2007

Opinion: Benazir's dilemma (Kuldip Nayar).

..To argue that her main concern is to have cases of corruption against her and her

husband dropped is not fair. This may be one of her considerations and it is yet to be decided whether she can retain all the mansions and villas she has acquired if the cases are withdrawn in Pakistan or compounded in Switzerland and Spain. What is probably nearer the truth is the observation she made in one of her interviews: If democracy does not return to Pakistan, the Taliban would take over the country. Her inference may be correct but not her reasoning. Since the days of General Zia-ul Haq, fundamentalism has been encouraged by the government. Mullah has been injected into the military discipline to counter national awakening. Musharraf, till the other day, was plugging the same line. He changed I do not know how far when the Frankenstein of terrorism tried to eliminate him. The jihadis are indeed a real danger in Pakistan.

Dawn, 9 May 2007

Editorial: After Mondays Judgment

WITH the Supreme Court now seized of the matter, the legal aspect of the battle surrounding the presidential reference against Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry seems to be getting clearer. Both sides claimed victory on Monday when the apex court stayed the Supreme Judicial Councils proceedings against the non functional Chief Justice and accepting the governments plea proposed a full court to decide the petitions challenging the SJs composition and other related matters. The atmosphere in the Supreme Court on Monday was charged and one lawyer seemed worked up but was allowed to give vent to his feelings. Mr Justice Javed Buttar perhaps summed up the emotive situation when he said that some people had come to the court with some aspirations, and he requested all sides to assist in the dispensation of justice.

Daily Times, 9 May 2007

Opinion: Musharraf and Jamia Hafsa standoff (Ijaz Hussain)

The Hafsa deal has certainly been good for Musharraf, as it has allowed him to focus exclusively on the judicial crisis. However, it has perhaps irreparably damaged his image as Pakistans messiah The Jamia Hafsa crisis seems to have been resolved after Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain parleyed with the Lal Masjid administration and surrendered to their demands. The price tag: the government has agreed to construct all the mosques it had demolished and withdrawn the vacation notices it had served on Jamias Hafsa and Freedia. It has also accepted Jamia Hafsas demand to enforce the Sharia in the country. The episode raises a host of intriguing questions.

Daily Times, 9 May 2007

EDITORIAL: A state of Emergency will bring more trouble

Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said on Saturday that the constitution allowed the government to impose a state of Emergency in the country, if the situation so required. In response, the MMAs leader of the opposition in the National Assembly, Maulana Fazlur Rehman, has retorted that an Emergency will do nothing but bring more trouble for the government. Mr Rehman maintains that an Emergency can be considered only if the trouble is instigated by an anti-state entity, but in the present case, the current judicial crisis is the result of the ruler own mistakes; no martial law or emergency can stop the oppositions movement. Mr Rehman insists that the prime minister's statement about emergency is unjustified because there has been no violation of the law necessitating an

Emergency, as prescribed by the constitution. He said that the grand display of peoples support to the chief justice of Pakistan remains within the bounds of law.

Daily Times, 10 May 2007

SC bans debate on CJP case merits

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court SC on Wednesday warned the media against commenting on the presidential reference against Chief Justice of Pakistan CJP Iftikhar Chaudhry, stating that any comments would amount to contempt of court. The general public, media and lawyers should not debate the presidential reference because it is sub judice, the SC administration said in a statement, which also barred lawyers who are not practising at the SC from entering the court on the days of the CJPs hearing..

The Nation, 10 May 2007

Pak, Czech Republic pledge to fight terror

ISLAMABAD Pakistan and Czech Republic on Wednesday signed four Memoranda of Understanding MoUs to enhance diplomatic ties and increase cooperation in the fields of trade, health as well as science and technology. The two sides also resolved to continue with joint efforts against the global menace of terror and work for the promotion of peace and stability in Afghanistan. The signing of MoUs between the relevant ministries of the two countries was witnessed by Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and his Czech counterpart Mirek Topolanek here at the Prime Minister House, according to an official statement..

Dawn, 10 May 2007

Editorial: Avoiding a clash

WITH the entire nation in a procession mood, the people of Karachi are bracing for what could be a Saturday full of tension, if not violence. Two rallies are to be held one honouring Mr Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry, the other by the Muttahida Qaumi Movement. The details of the MQM rally have not been announced yet, but the programme for the reception to be accorded to the non functional Chief Justice on his arrival at the Karachi airport is ambitious and makes it clear that two of the citys arteries Sharea Faisal and M.A. Jinnah Road will be anything but normal for the hundreds of thousands of vehicles which use these thoroughfares in the hours when the pro CJ rally will be on the move.

Kashmir Times, 10 May 2007

Opinion: The people have spoken (MB Naqvi)

The kind of welcome and love that Mr. Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry, the non functional Chief Justice of Pakistan, received from the legal fraternity and the common people of Punjab, that a road journey from Rawalpindi to Lahore, on May 5 took 23 hours that is completed normally in four to five hours. The delay was caused by two factors: the state created all manner of hurdle to keep swarms of people from coming on to the Grand Trunk Road to see or touch Justice Chaudhry. The people have made an eloquent and decisive political statement: they have vindicated the CJP and sided with what the CJP on forced leave stands for..

Dawn, 10 May 2007

Opinion: New turns in the judicial crisis (Shahab Usto)

FROM the moment Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry left his house in Islamabad, travelling in a small cavalcade of vehicles, till his departure from the stage at the Lahore High Court venue 30 hours later, the cities and roads of central Punjab wore the look of Parisian streets on the eve of the French Revolution in 1789. Thousands of people milled around the Chief Justice's vehicle all along the GT Road, calling for democracy, justice and above all a change in the system. A deluge of people inundating the core of Punjab with representatives of all major opposition parties, civil society, the judiciary, lawyers, media and the common people should have left no doubt in anyone's mind as to the writing on the wall..

Daily Times, 10 May 2007

EDITORIAL: President Musharraf's idea of a failed state

President General Pervez Musharraf said on Tuesday that he decided to act on the reference against the chief justice of Pakistan because he put the interests of the state above personal matters. He also did so, he argued, because he thought the world would perceive Pakistan as a failed state if it slid into anarchy because of the judicial and executive deadlock ensuing out of the actions of Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry. I didn't want the world to label Pakistan a failed state, he said, you have to keep your personal and social relations aside when dealing with matters of the state. The president said he had nothing personal against Justice Chaudhry and took the legal and constitutional action against him when he was convinced about the validity of charges brought against him by the prime minister, Shaukat Aziz. I wanted to avoid a situation similar to the one when Pakistan was about to be declared a failed state, he said..

Dawn, 11 May 2007

Amnesty to militants offered on surrender

QUETTA, May 10: President Pervez Musharraf on Thursday asked militants to surrender their weapons and join the development process. Addressing a public meeting in Sui, he said the government would not take action against people who surrendered but strict action will be taken against those who do not do so. He said the security forces had destroyed 65 farari camps in Balochistan and the remaining three or four camps would be eliminated soon. The president said 65,000 of 90,000 displaced Bugtis had returned to Dera Bugti. He said a large number of Baloch youths were joining the army as officers. Gen Musharraf announced a development package of Rs2 billion for the area. He said foreign companies would soon begin exploring mineral resources in Balochistan. He said coal mines which had remained closed for years had been opened with the help of the army and the civil administration.

The Nation, 11 May 2007

Pakistan shuts Taliban corridor

ISLAMABAD Pakistan on Thursday said it has completed building a fence on the first part of shared border with Afghanistan to prevent militants from infiltrating into the neighbouring country for subversive acts. We have erected the first section of fence on the Afghan border blocking the key corridor used by Taliban militants, said ISPR Chief

Major General Waheed Arshad. He said that Pakistani troops had completed 20 kilometres of fencing in North Waziristan's Lwara Mundi area. He added that it was that difficult part where militants were crossing the border. General Waheed said that another stretch of 15 kilometres on the porous border between Pakistan and Afghanistan would be fenced soon in the South Waziristan Agency. The fencing by Pakistan army is being carried out on the Afghan border in accordance with the decision of Pakistani government that it made in February this year.

The Hindu, 11 May 2007

Editorial: Pressure on Musharraf

Talk of a new Justice Party in Pakistan led by non functional Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhary may be idle chatter. What is undisputable is the emergence of Mr. Chaudhary as a national hero for fighting back when asked to quit by President Pervez Musharraf. It is a commentary on the pent up frustration from the years of direct and indirect military rule that a single act of defiance against the uniform by a functionary of the state can galvanise an entire nation. The extraordinary reception that he got in Lahore last weekend showed how much Pakistan has changed since the March 9 presidential reference against the Chief Justice. The agitation for its withdrawal, spearheaded by the legal community, has revived the political instrument of street protests, long forgotten in Pakistan. It has weakened General Musharraf to an extent that his planned re election from the sitting parliament in its final weeks no longer looks easy. For the first time, the Opposition sees a glimmer of better prospects..

The Nation, 11 May 2007

Editorial: Limits of cooperation

WHILE Islamabad continues to cooperate with the US in its War on Terror, there have to be well defined limits to the support being extended. What is more, these have to be in consonance with the country's sovereignty and integrity. While we have been assured by the government that nothing is being done which could be termed as detrimental to national interest, reports continue to emanate from the US indicating that this might not be so in all cases. Replying to a question by Senator Byron Dorgan in the Senate Appropriations Committee regarding there being US military missions in North Waziristan, Defence Secretary Robert Gates maintained that Al Qaeda activists were concentrated in the western part of Pakistan in Fata and the US had military missions in North Waziristan to deal with them. There is a need on the part of Islamabad to clarify if this means, as is being suggested by a section of the media, that US forces are physically present in Fata to hunt the Al Qaeda. If so, many would call it an infringement of national sovereignty.

Daily Times, 11 May 2007

EDITORIAL: Bad news from Bagh

Following attacks and threats from certain quarters, the United Nations office in Islamabad has announced closure of all its operations as well as offices in Bagh, Azad Kashmir. Why did the UN take such a drastic decision? It took the decision because the houses of two UN officials were torched by extremists who had been warning the UN and other NGOs against employing females. Pakistanis who count all sorts of people as

part of Pakistan's civil society and condemn the NGOs for being foreign agents should carefully read this. The Islamists who have forced the UN to stop its work in an area where Pakistan needs all the help it can get, are on the side of the state, not civil society. If you are not convinced, pay heed to what happened in the National Assembly when the minority MNA, Mr MP Bhandara, proposed an amendment to the Blasphemy Law and was told to shut up by the federal minister for parliamentary affairs.

Daily Times, 12 May 2007

Arrests, blockades ahead of CJP's Karachi visit

KARACHI: An estimated 500 opposition political workers were arrested from late Thursday night onwards ahead of the chief justices rally scheduled for today Saturday. Chaudhry is set to address lawyers and opposition party supporters here, while tensions rose after pro-Musharraf parties said they would hold rival demonstrations at the same time. The pro government Muttahida Qaumi Movement MQM said it was holding a counter-rally on Saturday because opposition parties were politicising the CJP's suspension issue. The CJP and his supporters will hold their rally at Sindh High Court while the MQM will gather about one kilometre away, on the city's main boulevard. The police started conducting raids in a midnight operation across the city, but the police chief said the number was much lower..

Dawn, 12 May 2007

Shujaat fears failure of Lal Masjid deal

ISLAMABAD, May 11: Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, leader of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League, feared that the deal that he had brokered with Lal Masjid and Jamia Hafsa administrations might fail because of delaying tactics of the Capital Development Authority. Lal Masjid and Jamia Hafsa administrators were promised that seven demolished mosques would be rebuilt where they had been before. Highlighting his success in persuading clerics, Chaudhry Shujaat told this correspondent on Friday that he had taken CDA officials into confidence over the issue but they did not appear to be sincerely pursuing the government's policy of resolving the issue peacefully and avoiding an operation. He said that while allowing children to access to the library, the two clerics had agreed that they would vacate the library as soon as a woman librarian was appointed, after which no male or female student would be allowed to carry sticks..

The Tribune, 12 May 2007

Opinion: Mullahs on the march (S Sareen)

A COUPLE of weeks ago, all across Pakistan the so-called civil society finally came out on the streets to protest against the creeping Talibanisation of the country. The immediate trigger for the protests was, of course, the stand-off at Lal Masjid, where the students and administration of two madrasas in the heart of Islamabad have defied the writ of the state and started to enforce their brand of Islam on the citizens of the city. Lathi-wielding students from these madrasas are going about threatening shopkeepers selling music and movie CDs, asking barber shops to close down, issuing edicts to women on what to wear and how to behave in public and warning them of consequences if they don't follow their orders. Emboldened by the weak and compromising attitude of the state and encouraged by the domino effect that their demands are having around the country, the mullahs of Lal

Masjid have announced that they will continue along this path until Shariat law based on Quran and Sunnah are imposed on the whole country.

Kashmir Times, 12 May 2007

Opinion: Pakistans judicial crisis: An epic in the making (D Suba Chndran)

An earlier article in this column discussed the reasons behind Gen Musharraf suspending Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Two months since the event, the issue today has snowballed into a major crisis for Gen Musharraf and his political puppet the PML Q. Thanks to Iftikhar Chaudhrys stubborn response and the popular support, especially from the legal community, today the issue is no more judicial or legal. It has become popular and even political. What are the political implications for the ruling dispensation and Gen Musharraf himself, besides larger questions relating to the relations between two pillars of the State Executive and Judiciary? Will this lead sow strong seeds of a movement that finally will establish an independent judiciary in Pakistan?

Daily Times, 12 May 2007

EDITORIAL: Political accommodation needed in Balochistan

President General Pervez Musharraf visited the Sui fields in Balochistan yesterday and said that the security forces are on the verge of wiping out militant camps in Balochistan. Offering amnesty to the rebels, he pledged that the government would take no action against them if they laid down their arms. He said: They are our brothers and sisters. Give up weapons and terrorism; otherwise the law will take its course. We will not allow terrorism?. He accused the tribal leaders of driving out 90,000 Baloch people into other provinces but chose not to refer to the policies followed by predecessor governments vis ? vis Balochistan which actually made all the injustices possible. Then he claimed that the government had established its writ in Balochistan, and 25 districts which had been previously considered B Area had now been converted into A Area. He also announced a new development package of Rs 2 billion for Sui and claimed the government was carrying out 138 development projects worth Rs 135 billion in Balochistan..

Dawn, 13 May 2007

Riots disrupt Karachi calm: ?34 killed, 140 injured ?rivals trade allegations

KARACHI, May 12: At least 34 people were killed and over 140 others injured as a major portion of ShareaFaisal turned into a battlefield on Saturday when rival political groups clashed with each other soon after the arrival of Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry, who remained confined to the lounge of the airport throughout the day and returned to Islamabad without addressing a lawyers convention on the premises of the Sindh High Court. The utter failure of the Sindh government and the law enforcers to maintain law and order made the city hostage to political workers. However, Adviser to the Sindh Chief Minister on Home Affairs Waseem Akhtar blamed the chief justice for a breakdown in law and order and deaths in incidents of violence.

Daily Times, 13 May 2007

EDITORIAL: Karachi bleeds, nation weeps

Yesterday Karachi saw the worst political violence in Pakistan in many years; over thirty

people were confirmed killed and scores injured in clashes and gunfights between pro-government and opposition groups. Was this unexpected? No. The arrival in Karachi of the Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, was not taken lightly by President General Pervez Musharraf after the great show of force of the anti-Musharraf forces in Lahore. Until that point the government was only uncomfortable with the CJs outings to Rawalpindi and the NWFP. But the Lahore show was unique. It indicated that the movement against General Musharraf was gathering momentum. The reaction of the PMLQ government in Punjab was low-profile, possibly because the Punjab chief minister wanted to avoid a confrontation. Not so, however, with the Mutahidda Qaumi Movement MQM which decided to show its muscle and announced counter rallies against the chief justice.

The Nation, 13 May 2007

Opinion: Snowballing of rallies (Ikramullah)

According to latest reports from Karachi today 12 Ma 12 person have been killed and several wounded as a result of an explosion in Malair and firing in the City. Shakra-i-Faisal, the route of Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry's welcome to Karachi rally and also of the MQM's counter rally was said to be the main center of disturbance. After his arrival at the Karachi airport, the provincial government offered to provide helicopter facility to the CJ to reach the Sindh High Court where he was to participate in the golden jubilee celebrations of the SHC Bar. But the CJ declined the offer. The City remained in a grip of violence for the whole day. The office of a private TV channel came under heavy gunfire after it telecast live the bloody events. Following the presidential reference to the Supreme Judicial Council in respect of the Chief Justice of Pakistan on 9 March 2007, the initial protest by a section of the Bar, triggered a campaign for the independence of judiciary and restoration of democracy..

Dawn, 13 May 2007

Editorial: Battlefield Karachi

As most people dreaded, Saturday's peaceful rallies turned Karachi into a battlefield, leading to a tragic loss of life and limb. The full casualty toll will of course be known later, but it appeared at times as if there was no government in Karachi and it was gunmen who ruled the nation's biggest city. Writing in this space on Friday we had pleaded with the two sides, If the rule of law and the people's interests were dear to them, one or the other should have had the good sense and decency to defer or advance the date of its rally. Regrettably, neither side bothered to heed this warning. Later in the day, a notice was served on the lawyers accompanying Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry asking them to leave Karachi. If the arrival of these lawyers was the cause of violence, the Sindh government should have anticipated it, acted a couple of days earlier and coordinated its action with the Punjab government..

Daily Times, 14 May 2007

Rangers get orders to shoot rioters in Karachi

KARACHI: The government ordered Rangers to shoot rioters on sight and imposed Section 144 as eight people were killed and nine, including three policemen, injured in a second day of violence here on Sunday. On Saturday, 34 people were killed and more

than 130 wounded in the worst political street violence in the country in two decades, sparked when the suspended chief justice of Pakistan tried to address supporters at the Sindh High Court. Sunday's casualties took the death toll from two days to 40 dead, and raised the spectre of bloody ethnic feuding that plagued Karachi in the 1980s and 1990s. The Rangers have got extra powers of shoot on sight and arrest in case of riots and violence, Major General Javed Zia, head of the Rangers, told AFP..

Dawn, 14 May 2007

ARD gives strike call for today

ISLAMABAD May 13: The Alliance for Restoration of Democracy on Sunday condemned the violence in Karachi and gave a call for a countrywide strike on Monday. The announcement was made at a news conference which followed an emergency meeting of the alliance convened by its chairman Makhdoom Amin Fahim at the PPP secretariat. Besides Mr Fahim, ARD leaders Raja Zafarul Haq, Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Iqbal Zafar Jhagra, Tehmina Daultana and Jehangir Badar were present at the press conference. They blamed the federal and Sindh governments for Saturday's events and said it had been planned to thwart the opposition's struggle for supremacy of the judiciary. They alleged that the government had prompted and patronised its ally to disrupt the peaceful campaign. They claimed that the government was creating grounds for imposing emergency in the county, but warned that such a move would aggravate the situation, instead of resolving any issue..

Dawn, 14 May 2007

Editorial: Woes of quake victims

GIVEN the scale of destruction in Balakot after the 2005 earthquake levelled this NWFP town, it was to be expected that rehabilitation of the victims and reconstruction would be a gargantuan task for Erra, the earthquake authority. But the recent protest by quake survivors in Balakot underlined just how little has been done to make the town more habitable. Aggravating the slow reconstruction process is the government's vacillation on relocating the town some 20 kilometres away, even though the NWFP government approved the master plan for this project some time ago. The anger of Balakot's inhabitants is justified. They braved unbearable weather conditions last winter when they were forced to live in damaged tents.

Daily Times, 14 May 2007

EDITORIAL: Musharrafs political options are closing

Everybody had predicted at the end of 2006 that 2007 would be a tough year for President General Pervez Musharraf. These predictions were made without even venturing a remote guess that he would confront a rather peaceable judiciary and precipitate an unprecedented crisis. Despite the annulment of the privatisation of the Steel Mills by the Supreme Court at the hands of a proactive chief justice of Pakistan, no one had even dreamed that the president would try to get rid of him in the way that he did. When he tried to axe the chief justice, world opinion was shell-shocked. No one thought that the general would relapse to his pre-Kargil commando persona. In fact, many people thought he was in a temporary retreat after a series of failures experienced on other fronts..

The Nation, 14 May 2007

Editorial: Emergency ruled out

The mood on the 12th in the federal capital couldnt have been more different than that in the nation's financial capital. Not because of any difference in the views and opinion of the general public; where the larger public's disposition lies in the current judicial crisis has more or less been ascertained through the events of the past two months. The difference in the moods, rather, can be gauged from the contrast between the 37 and counting casualties and the 100 plus injured in the CJs visit to Karachi and the low turn out, cultural festival-like event the pro government rally in Islamabad turned out to be. According to reports, the government's rally on the 12th was preceded by a mobilisation of the government machinery to maintain a respectable turn out. Despite this, however, the rally managed to get far lesser participants than was expected of it. Furthermore, a substantial chunk of the participants had left the venue by the time the President arrived to address the rally..

Dawn, 15 May 2007

Countrywide shutdown: Outrage over Karachi killings Enthusiastic response to oppositions strike call

ISLAMABAD, May 14: A sense of anger and grief was more than evident on the streets across the country on Monday, as most businesses and shops from Khyber to Karachi remained closed. In many cities and towns, public transport remained off the road, bringing normal life to a halt on what was supposed to be the first working day of the week. The strike was observed on a call given by the combined opposition in protest against mayhem in Karachi on Saturday when hundreds of armed men took control of the streets and Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammed Chaudhry and his lawyers were prevented from leaving the airport to attend a bar association function in downtown Karachi..

The Nation, 15 May 2007

Justice Falak refuses to hear CJs petition

ISLAMABAD Justice Falak Sher on Monday refused to sit in the full court comprising 14 judges of the Supreme Court for the hearing of Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry's petition. However, Acting Chief Justice Rana Bhagwandas later reconstituted the full court for the hearing of the CJs petition and other 23 identical petitions. The reconstituted full court, headed by Justice Khalilur Rehman Ramday, comprises Justice Muhammad Nawaz Abbasi, Justice Faqir Muhammad Khokhar, Justice Mian Shakirullah Jan, Justice M. Javed Buttar, Justice Tassaduq Hussain Jilani, Justice Saiyed Saeed Ashhad, Justice Nasirul Mulk, Justice Raja Fay, Justice Ch Ijaz Ahmed, Justice Syed Jamshad Ali, Justice Hamid Ali Mirza and Justice Ghulam Rabbani. The full court was reconstituted on the request of Justice Khalil-ur-Rehman Ramday..

Indian Express, 15 May 2007

Opinion: Cornered after Karachi (C Rajamohan)

Sundays tumultuous developments in Karachi suggest Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf has lost none of his famed tactical genius. The enduring problem for Musharraf, who is said to have served with some distinction in Pakistans special forces,

has been his poor strategic judgement. His move to pit the Muttahida Quami Movement, which rules the roost in Karachi and is currently an ally of the army, against the Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry's planned rally on Saturday was brilliant to the extent that it could have left the army smirking at a political class tearing itself apart. In any confrontation there is always the unexpected. The 40 deaths, the count on Monday evening, from the violent clashes leave no room for a political compromise in the current confrontation between the army and the popular opposition led by the lawyers.

Daily Times, 15 May 2007

EDITORIAL: Dadullah, Taliban, Afghanistan and Pakistans Afghan policy

The Taliban leader Mullah Dadullah, second in authority only to Mullah Umar, was killed Saturday in the province of Helmand in Afghanistan by NATO ISAF forces acting together with Afghan troops. Those of us who have seen the Taliban's promotional DVDs showing beheadings of Afghans while held upside down by three men will understand the significance of this death. He first acquired a reputation for brutality when in 1998 he put the Hazaras of Bamiyan to the sword, so much so that the Taliban chief, Mullah Umar, had to withdraw him from there. Mullah Dadullah was about forty years old. He lost his leg in 1996 and routinely used Islam to justify extreme savagery on his victims whom he accused of spying for the US. He worked on the principle of intimidation and was a hero to the many couch potato Islamists in Pakistan.

Dawn, 15 May 2007

Editorial: After the bloodbath

THE enormity of the crimes committed in Karachi on Saturday and the full extent of the damage done to the city's social fabric now seem to be sinking in. One is appalled that the police should have abstained from their duty and disappeared without a trace, throwing a city of more than ten million to the wolves. The total chaos in the administration is evident from a top police official's disclosure to a foreign news agency that he did not know who had placed containers at traffic junctions to block the movement of traffic. It would be incorrect to say that the law and order machinery had collapsed; instead, what happened was that the entire law enforcement machinery was sidelined, allowing unidentified apparatchiks to run the show. .

Kashmir Times, 15 May 2007

Opinion: Mush ties himself into knots (Inder Malhotra)

BEING a very intelligent man, Pakistan's president, General Pervez Musharraf, must be cursing himself for his folly of March 9. For, what must have appeared to him a trivial matter two months ago has blown into the most serious and still escalating crisis he has faced since he seized power on October 12, 1999. Let the story be told as it has developed so far. On that fateful day he called the country's Chief Justice, Iftikhar Mohammed Chaudhry, to the Army House, one of his two official residences where he lives, as against working in daytime at Aiwan-e-Sadar presidential palace. There, in the presence of top army and intelligence officers, all of them Musharraf loyalists, the judiciary's head was pressurized intensely to resign or else face the consequences.

Daily Times, 16 May 2007

25 die in suicide blast at Peshawar hotel

PESHAWAR: Twenty five people were killed and up to 35 injured when a suicide bomber blew himself up on the ground floor of the Marhaba Hotel owned by an Afghan national here on Tuesday. Most of those killed were Afghans, including the restaurants owner Sadruddin and his two sons, two women and a five year-old child. The attack came at around 12:50pm as the hotel restaurant was crowded with customers for lunch. Interior Ministry spokesman Brig r Javed Iqbal Cheema told reporters in Islamabad that 25 people were killed and 35 injured in the blast.

Dawn, 16 May 2007

Musharraf shrugs off criticism over Karachi killings

ISLAMABAD, May 15: President Gen Pervez Musharraf at a meeting with parliamentarians of the ruling PML and its coalition partners on Tuesday showed defiance in the face of criticism over the ongoing judicial crisis and shrugged off the criticism over Saturdays killings and violence in Karachi. Inside sources told Dawn after the meeting that the president was poised and composed during deliberations on the political turmoil, acts of terrorism in Karachi and elsewhere and gave guidelines to coalition partners for working cohesively as a well knit unit. He said there was no threat to the democratic system and accused the opposition of politicising a judicial matter and creating chaos in the country.

Indian Express, 16 May 2007

Opinion: When the future calls (Husain Haqqani)

Recent events indicate that General Pervez Musharraf has no intention of becoming the first ruler in Pakistani history to relinquish power without first trying to hold on to it by all means, fair or foul. Instead of allowing politics to take its course, Musharraf is once again insisting on his indispensability. It appears that he hopes to do so with threats of violence ignited with the help of allies in Karachi, some of whom have now taken to shouting the slogan, Pakistan without Musharraf is unacceptable. By most accounts, backed up with video footage, the violence in Karachi was initiated by the pro-government Muttahida Qaumi Movement MQM which claimed that it "controls" Pakistans financial capital and largest city.

Dawn, 16 May 2007

Editorial: Border quagmire

INSTEAD of getting better, Pakistans relations with Afghanistan seem to have deteriorated, for political antagonism looks like giving way to military clashes. The good offices of the Turkish government had aroused hopes that the Ankara summit would put an end to the blame game between the two countries. Instead, there is a sharp deterioration as can be seen in two days of clashes between Pakistan and Afghan security forces in the Paktia region, leaving 12 dead, including some civilians. On Monday gunmen fired at a convoy carrying officials after a tripartite US Pakistan Afghan flag meeting at Teri Mengal in the Kurram Agency. The firing killed a Pakistani and an American soldier and pointed to the Talibans ability to attack at a time and place of their

choosing. Against this background, one would doubt if the Reconstruction Opportunity Zones ROZs Ms Condoleezza Rice spoke of have a chance of ever becoming a reality.

Daily Times, 16 May 2007

EDITORIAL: Can Musharraf be both army chief and president?

Qazi Hussain Ahmad, President of Mutahidda Majlis e Amal MMA, has done what was feared by those who would have President General Musharraf president for another five years. He has filed a constitutional petition at the Supreme Court challenging the tenure of General Musharraf as army chief. The honourable Supreme Court is already going through the tortuous routine of setting up a full bench to hear the reference pertaining to its chief, Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, who is a potential victim of General Musharrafs bid to remain all powerful. Now, in another example of political matters finally ending up with the judiciary, the judges are going to be on tenterhooks. Qazi Hussain Ahmad has filed the petition under Article 184 (3) of the Constitution, maintaining that General Musharraf attained the age of superannuation in August 2003 and should not have continued his army job thereafter..

Dawn, 17 May 2007

Iraq rejects proposal for OIC force

ISLAMABAD, May 16: Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari on Wednesday rejected a Pakistani proposal for a Muslim peacekeeping force, saying more foreign troops were not welcome in Iraq. Opening a meeting of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference on Tuesday, Pakistani President Gen Pervez Musharraf had raised the idea of a peacekeeping force for Iraq drawn from Muslim nations. Asked by reporters about the idea on Wednesday, Mr Zebari said the idea had been raised and knocked down before. My governments position is not for welcoming any more troops. We want our troops, the Iraqi troops, to rise up and stand, lets say to stabilise the situation, Mr Zebari said..

Daily Times, 17 May 2007

Most judges in the dock under military rule: Justice Ramday

ISLAMABAD: All but one of the four references previously filed against judges of superior courts came under military regimes, and in the one instance where charges were filed under a civilian regime, the accused judge was exonerated, Justice Khalilur Rehman Ramday observed on Wednesday. Justice Ramday heads a 13 memebr full court bench of the Supreme Court that heard the arguments of government lawyers seeking the dismissal of Chief Justice of Pakistan CJP Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhrys petition, on Wednesday. The petition challenges the presidential reference against the CJP. Justice Ramday made the remarks after Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada, counsel of President Gen Pervez Musharraf, gave an overview of the record of references filed against judges in Pakistan.

The Hindu, 17 May 2007

Editorial: Musharrafs crisis of legitimacy

A week, they say, is a long time in politics. On May 5, even after Iftikhar Chaudhary made the point in Lahore that the people of Punjab were on his side, the possibility existed that President Pervez Musharraf could still fall feet first from the crisis triggered

by his ill advised decision to sack the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan. A show of contrition from the General withdrawing the reference against Mr. Chaudhary may have deflated the agitation. The Pakistan leader would not have come out of the mess completely unscathed but a deal with Pakistan People's Party leader Benazir Bhutto, which was very much on the cards then, would have cushioned his fall. After the events of May 12, President Musharraf has closed virtually every dignified route out of the present crisis. Using the Muttahida Qaumi Movement, the government's ally in Sindh, to prevent another possible show of strength by the Chief Justice in Karachi was a spectacular own goal.

Daily Times, 17 May 2007

Editorial: Events take another dangerous turn

The country was reeling under the shock of the 40 killed in Karachi when a suicide-bomber took the lives of 25 people at a restaurant in Peshawar in what the NWFP law minister Malik Zafar Azam thought was an act of retaliation for the killing of the Taliban military commander Mullah Dadullah two days earlier in Afghanistan. According to one eyewitness, the separated legs of the bomber carried a message in Pushto and Persian: those spying for America will face the same consequences. The owner of the hotel, which is located near the historic Masjid Mahabat Khan, was from Mazare Sharif in northern Afghanistan and most of the customers at the hotel were Afghans. But the incident carried all the signatures of the violence that has been committed recently in Islamabad, Peshawar, DI Khan and Charsadda.

The Nation, 17 May 2007

Editorial: Peacekeeping in Iraq

GENERAL Musharraf's suggestion for sending a Muslim peacekeeping force to Iraq under the UN umbrella to help stabilize the country is symbolic, but then symbolism is important. Addressing the inaugural session of the 34th Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers in Islamabad on Tuesday, he said Pakistan stood for peace in Iraq and wanted all outer forces to stop interfering in its internal affairs so that it could regain peace. He spoke at length about various issues facing the Muslim World and called upon its leadership to take collective measures to improve the situation. There is no disputing his assertion that the Muslim World is currently the epicentre of most of the conflicts and masses are the principal victims of global violence. As the OIC Secretary General claimed that the organisation had made a lot of progress, the President very rightly highlighted the need for its complete overhaul to enable it to meet today's challenges.

Dawn, 17 May 2007

Editorial: Peshawar suicide bombing

MOMENTS of respite are becoming harder to come by in these troubled times. With the country, and particularly Karachi, still reeling from the savagery of May 12, the death and mayhem in Peshawar on Tuesday dealt a fresh blow to peace and stability in the country. The blast at the Marhaba restaurant was the ninth suicide attack in less than five months and the third in the NWFP capital in 2007. Suicide missions across the country have so far claimed at least 88 lives this year and left nearly 230 injured. The attackers' motives are still being debated, the dominant theory being that the restaurant was targeted

because it was owned by an Afghan Uzbek who publicly supported Abdur Rashid Dostum, the warlord from MazareSharif who is now allied with President Hamid Karzai.

Daily Times, 18 May 2007

Reference against CJP justiciable: SC

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Thursday observed that the presidential act of directing the Supreme Judicial Council SJC to open an inquiry against a judge could be challenged in the court, though the council's proceedings were protected in the Constitution. On Thursday, counsels for the federation Ahmed Raza Kasuri and Malik Muhammad Qayyum argued that the petition filed by Chief Justice of Pakistan CJP Iftikhar Chaudhry was not maintainable because a presidential reference against the CJP was pending with the SJC, whose proceedings could not be questioned in any court.

Dawn, 18 May 2007

Opposition protests paralyse Senate

ISLAMABAD, May 17: The opposition paralysed the Senate for the third day on Thursday by noisy protests against the weekends bloodshed in Karachi and asked the government to resign for its alleged responsibility in the massacre that heightened an already raging judicial crisis in the country. The evening sitting after a forced days recess lasted hardly seven minutes for the usual recitation from the holy Quran and slogan-chanting before Chairman Mohammedmian Soomro adjourned the house until 10.30am on Friday for possibly another day of similar protests and a likely prorogation by a presidential order, as happened with the National Assembly on Tuesday.

Dawn, 18 May 2007

Opinion: Controversial US missile policy (MA Bhatti)

..Indeed, the international reaction to the BMD initiative was highly significant. India, under a BJP government, was quick to endorse it with the then Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh issuing a statement in support of it. The only other major country to support it was Japan. President Putin of Russia opposed it as did China. Pakistans attitude was close to that of China. The 9/11 events that led the US to declare war on terror and to call for a global coalition to join it forced significant changes in global diplomacy. Many analysts call it a watershed in world history. Virtually the whole world, including Russia and China, joined in this war.

The Nation, 18 May 2007

Editorial: Tank hit again

IN a tragic replay of anger against government policies, certain militants elements fired rockets and a hand grenade in Tank on Wednesday, killing five persons and injuring 17 others, including five security personnel. The target was a checkpoint jointly manned by the police and Frontier Corps, but a rocket strayed into the busy Rizwan Grain Market in Waziristan area in the heart of the city and resulted in heavy casualties, including the five deaths. A similar attack three days earlier had claimed the lives of two persons and curfew was imposed. It is not clear whether the attack emanated from South Waziristan where a peace agreement has been in force.

Daily Times, 18 May 2007

PM calls for adopting collective self-defence for Muslim states

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz has called for adopting means for collective self-defence of the Muslim countries to ward off external aggression. Addressing the concluding session of 34th Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers ICFM here Thursday, Aziz said: We shall enhance the capacity of Islamic countries to defend them against external domination and foreign aggression by acquiring the means for effective and collective self-defence. He said the Islamic world was passing through a critical period and certain forces were trying to push the West and Islamic world towards a real conflict. He cautioned that all such dangerous trends must be reversed for a better world.

Dawn, 19 May 2007

Lal Masjid brigade kidnaps 4 policemen

ISLAMABAD, May 18: The Lal Masjid brigade on Friday made four policemen hostage, accusing them of spying for the government and raising the fear of a possible crackdown. Later in the night, police registered an FIR against the two Lal Masjid clerics and 72 of their followers, citing terrorism and other charges. More details of the FIR were not available. Interior Minister Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao, Interior Secretary Syed Kamal Shah and senior security officials held a meeting with the clerics late on Friday night and put all security agencies on high alert. There was a likelihood that security forces might mount an assault on the mosque but no action was taken till the filing of this report.

Daily Times, 19 May 2007

Musharraf may mull extra-constitutional steps to boost standing

LAHORE: President General Pervez Musharraf said on Friday he may consider extra-constitutional methods to enhance his term after the forthcoming general elections. I have some options in mind to enhance my standing, Musharraf said in an interview with Aaj television aired on Friday. The president, however, said that he would decide about his uniform after December 2007, and would not violate the Constitution in this matter. Asked what would he do if the parliaments two third majority asked him to retain his uniform, Musharraf said, Well, if this happens I will think about it...After all this is democracy in which you cant ignore the peoples will. Musharraf denied there was any crisis of legitimacy in Pakistan, saying a democratic government was working in the country. He said the opposition parties had created the issue of legitimacy.

The Hindu, 19 May 2007

From Lahore to Karachi: Musharraf's crisis (Nirupama Subramaniam)

AFTER KARACHI last Saturday, the political battle lines in Pakistan are firmly drawn. This agitation is no longer about the reinstatement of Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhary. It is now about the removal of President Pervez Musharraf. And he is fighting back. All talk of a deal between him and Benazir Bhutto has receded, and the violence in Karachi has opened up new fronts in this war. To understand what happened in Karachi over the weekend, we have to revert to Lahore. Mr. Chaudhary's victorious procession through Punjab into the city that is seen as the political barometer of Pakistan was the first

indication that the stakes had risen in what began as an agitation spearheaded by lawyers for the withdrawal of the March 9 reference against Mr. Chaudhary.

Daily Times, 19 May 2007

Editorial: Is a deal still possible?

Is the so-called deal between President General Pervez Musharraf and Ms Benazir Bhutto still in the realm of possibility? Some people say that the President-General is still capable of flexibility at the last moment. Others think it is too late for that because Ms Bhutto has given a signal from abroad that if President Musharraf now wants to talk of any deal he will have to talk all the parties in the field. She said: With 42 people dead in Karachi I just cannot envisage such a thing at this moment. The fact is that no politician is likely to reach out to the president at this delicate moment lest the people think they have been betrayed to a military dictator. The change in public opinion has been sudden and diametrical in just two months.

Indian Express, 19 May 2007

Opinion: Careful in Karachi (Mini Kapoor)

After the violence in Karachi on the weekend, the consequences are still being counted. By Tuesday, the Karachi-based Dawn was worrying in its editorial about ethnic relations in the city, given the bases of the political parties thrown suddenly in confrontation on the streets. The Muttahida Qaumi Movement and the opposition parties have blamed each other for Saturday's killings and given lists of their martyrs, but for the people of Karachi the issue is far grimmer than the blame game, because the spectre of ethnic violence is haunting the city, it wrote. Since the mid-nineties, Karachi has had ethnic peace. Even though bomb blasts in mosques, attacks on foreign missions and murder of diplomats occurred, the ethnic violence that rocked the city in the eighties and the first half of the nineties appeared to belong to the past.

The Nation, 19 May 2007

Editorial: Reality check

THE government has generally opposed the return of the exiled leaders though it has put forth different reasons for that. Mian Nawaz Sharif it was maintained could not be allowed to return because of an agreement he had supposedly signed with the government and Ms Benazir Bhutto could come back but would have to face the cases against her with the implication that she could be put behind bars the moment she landed. The issue was being projected as a purely legal matter rather than political. But when General Musharraf tells a private TV channel No, they cannot return before elections, one is forced to conclude that the opposition to their return is in fact related to the electoral concerns of the ruling coalition. Is it not unjust to keep them in exile simply because the ruling party feels insecure in their presence during the polls? With the legal veneer rubbed off the argument to keep them out, this should encourage the two leaders to decide to return.

Dawn, 20 May 2007

Two policemen freed in Lal Masjid swap: GHQ meeting looks for final solution

ISLAMABAD, May 19: Lal Masjid militants on Saturday freed two of the four

policemen they had kidnapped overnight after the government facilitated the release of five of their colleagues, including a former employee of an intelligence agency, on bail. Lal Masjid in charge Maulana Abdul Rasheed Ghazi said the remaining two policemen would be freed after the government released other six seminary students. However, four seminary students and a former ISI official Khalid Khawaja, who was pursuing the case of missing people in the Supreme Court could not be released because their surety bonds were not deposited in the court.

Daily Times, 20 May 2007

Peshawar suicide attack Talibans revenge

PESHAWAR: The May 15 suicide attack on the Afghan owned Marhaba Hotel was the Talibans revenge for the arrest of their senior military operational commander a month ago and the killing of Mullah Dadullah in Afghanistan. The attack on the hotel was planned from inside Afghanistan targeting the owner and his son, highly placed sources told Daily Times on Saturday. Around 25 people, including the hotel owner and his son and relatives, were killed when the suicide bomber blew himself up as customers packed the hotel restaurant at lunchtime on Tuesday. The sources said senior Taliban commander Mullah Saedullah and Qari Rehmat Din, Afghan prayer leader in Mardan district, were picked up from areas close to the hotel and handed over to the United States in April.

Paktribune, 20 May 2007

8 Family Planning Officials kidnapped in North Waziristan

MIRANSHAH: Armed men have kidnapped eight officials of Family Planning Department including five women and shifted them to some unknown place. According to Secretary Law and Order in the Tribal Areas, Arbab Muhammad Arif, these officials were going to Miranshah from Banu in a coach when they were kidnapped near Nurak by some armed men. He said that efforts are underway for the recovery of kidnapped officials of Family Planning Department. Meanwhile, according to a private TV Channel, the kidnapers left the driver with his vehicle.

Daily Times, 20 May 2007

Editorial: An extra constitutional threat?

With a petition against his constitutional status pending at the Supreme Court, President General Pervez Musharraf says he may consider extra constitutional methods to enhance his term after the forthcoming general elections. This is the first blatant statement made by him since he took power and promised not to act like a chief martial law administrator. He was talking about his re election by the electoral college in October November before the next general elections. Why did he refer to the need for taking extra constitutional methods? President Musharraf says he will make the decision about taking off his uniform after December 2007, presumably after being elected for another five year term as president while he is still wearing his uniform.

Dawn, 20 May 2007

Editorial: Whats the Lal Masjid brigade up to?

KIDNAPPINGS and suicidal attacks Lal Masjid clerics have decided that these are their weapons in their self-appointed mission to establish the rule of Sharia in Pakistan. It is

not clear which precise Quranic verse or sayings of the Holy Prophet suggest this mode of jihad for spreading good and suppressing evil. On Friday, the followers of the Lal Masjid chiefs the Lal Masjid brigade kidnapped four police officials. These hostages are in addition to the two cops they kidnapped on March 28. According to the mosque administration, 11 of the brigade have been detained by the security agencies, and they will not free the kidnapped police officials unless the 11 followers of Maulanas Abdul Aziz and Abdul Rasheed Ghazi are released by the government.

Daily Times, 20 May 2007

Opinion: Confrontation and political change (Dr. HA Rizvi)

The military establishment and the political leadership in some countries like Brazil have successfully negotiated the transition to civilian and participatory rule. A similar effort is needed here on the part of General Musharraf and the top brass of the military. Pakistans domestic politics has entered a difficult and uncertain phase. The semblance of stability and non-vulnerability of the Musharraf government has been tarnished by the fallout of its attempt to get rid of the chief justice of Pakistan and the Sindh government's bid on May 12 to stop the CJP from addressing the Sindh High Court Bar Council meeting.

Dawn, 21 May 2007

Baton wielding brigade braces for showdown

ISLAMABAD, May 20: Tension mounted in the capital over the Lal Masjid issue on Sunday when police took 36 students of Jamia Fareedia in pre-emptive detention, and the madressah militants taking to streets and blocking traffic. Police claimed that the Jamia students had been picked up because they were reinforcing the militants, known as the Lal Masjid brigade, which had kidnapped four policemen on Friday in their latest escapade. Two of the policemen were released in exchange for grant of bail to five Lal Masjid madressah students. Heavily armed Rangers, elite force and reserve police from the Punjab Police Constabulary were called out in Islamabad and, at one stage, it seemed that a massive crackdown on Lal Masjid and Jamia Hafsa was being planned.

Daily Times, 21 May 2007

Jirga declares truce at Afghan border

PARACHINAR: A tribal jirga of Pakistani and Afghan elders agreed on Sunday to declare a ceasefire and reopen border routes at Guisar and Tri Mangal in Kurram Agency. The routes were closed following clashes between Pakistani and Afghan troops over the contested border. The jirga consisting of 40 tribal elders each from Pakistan and Afghanistan discussed the situation arising out of skirmishes between the Pak Afghan forces.

Dawn, 21 May 2007

Iftikhar to address lawyers on 26th

ISLAMABAD, May 20: Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry will address lawyers on the Supreme Court premises on May 26. This was announced by Supreme Court Bar Association SCBA president Munir Malik and Pakistan Bar Council vice chairman Mirza Aziz Beig at a press conference here on Sunday. Mr Malik said the SCBA had arranged a seminar and invited the Chief Justice to preside over it. The theme

of the seminar is Separation of power and independence of judiciary. He said a large number of lawyers from across the country were expected to attend the seminar and warned the government against creating hurdles in the way of the holding of the seminar..

Daily Times, 21 May 2007

EDITORIAL: The Lal Masjid absurdity

The government Lal Masjid drama has now gone beyond the realm of the absurd. It is amazing that followers of the two brothers, Maulanas Abdul Aziz and Abdul Rasheed Ghazi, can violate the writ of the state with impunity while the government, which has no qualms in using force against its political opponents, tucks tail and runs at the slightest threat. Consider the happenings since last Friday: the followers of the two clerics kidnapped four police officials and demanded that eleven of their brood, currently in official custody, be released in return. The government immediately went into its usual defensive mode and began negotiating with the Lal Masjid administration to try and secure the release of the detained cops..

Dawn, 21 May 2007

Opinion: The decisive phase is here (Javid Husain)

THERE is little doubt by now that the struggle spearheaded by the legal community but supported by all the mainstream opposition political parties against General Musharraf's dictatorial rule, which was triggered by the high-handed manner in which the reference against the Chief Justice of Pakistan was handled by the government, has now entered the decisive phase. The turning point may have been the overwhelming welcome that the Chief Justice received in Punjab for his address to the Lahore High Court Bar Association. The recent tragic developments in Karachi resulting in the loss of precious lives and material destruction have further exposed the insensitive and brutal nature of the present political system in the country, thereby giving a further impetus to the democratic movement..

The Nation, 21 May 2007

Editorial: Lal Masjid crisis

THE release of two kidnapped policemen by the Lal Masjid administration as a gesture of goodwill on Saturday would not help matters much. The main question of the government's failure to enforce its writ after months of attempts at persuading the hardline clerics to relent remains unanswered. They are still keeping two other security personnel in custody who, they say, will be set free only as a quid pro quo for freeing six seminary students..

Daily Times, 22 May 2007

Madrasa students kidnap, free 3 more cops

ISLAMABAD: Students of the Jamia Fareedia madrasa briefly kidnapped another three policemen on Monday, as the area remained tense at the prospect of a crackdown on Lal Masjid. An operation at Lal Masjid appeared imminent on Sunday after the arrests of 37 madrasa students, but the spotlight shifted to Jamia Fareedia, located at the foot of the Margalla Hills in the posh E7 Sector, on Monday. A heavy contingent of police and Rangers backed by armoured personnel carriers moved within a kilometre of the

madrassa as students holding batons stood guard outside. Some 2,500 Punjab Constabulary personnel were called in to take part in a possible operation to free the kidnapped policemen.

Dawn, 22 May 2007

Muttahida blamed for Karachi killings

LAHORE, May 21: Opposition leaders on Monday asserted that bloodshed in Karachi on May 12 had laid the foundation of disintegration of the country under a conspiracy hatched by the regime. They said that on that day armed men operated in unison with law enforcement agencies who just abdicated their constitutional duty leaving people at the mercy of fascist elements. Speaking at the end of a combined opposition rally outside the Lahore High Court on The Mall, they sought registration of criminal cases against Gen Pervez Musharraf, Sindh Governor Ishtaratul Ibad, Chief Minister Arbab Ghulam Rahim, MQM chief Altaf Hussain and all those responsible for the carnage. The call for the rally was given by the Muttahida Majlisi Amal MMA..

Daily Times, 22 May 2007

SC questions blanket cover for SJC

ISLAMABAD: Justice Khalilur Rehman Ramday of the 13 member Full Court of the Supreme Court SC on Monday observed that the Supreme Judicial Council SJC did not enjoy blanket protection under the Constitution and its proceedings were subject to judicial review. The SJC is not a court but a tribunal and if it sentences a judge and goes to the extent of prosecuting his family with mala fide intentions, then no remedy will be available to him because the findings of the council are final. Does it mean that he should wait for the Day of Judgment to have justice in his case? Justice Ramday said while countering an argument by government lawyer Malik Qayyum that the SJC enjoyed the status of a court and had exclusive jurisdiction to hear references against judges.

The Nation, 22 May 2007

Opinion: Constitution and protests (Justice retd. F Khokhar)

The violence in the streets of Karachi upon the arrival of Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry is a very sad event. On the 12th May the riots that started to sabotage the rally of the Chief Justice turned bloody with 34 people dead. The frustrating part is that the root cause of these clashes was not pro or anti Chief Justice. It had more ethnic tone to it. Since 9th of March with General Musharraf suspended the Chief Justice of Pakistan, the protests, rallies and processions have been largely by lawyers who believed in the supremacy of constitution and freedom of judiciary..

Daily Times, 22 May 2007

Editorial: Two absurd but significant cases

When seen in contrast with the government Lal Masjid standoff in Islamabad, two recent cases, though unrelated, show where we might be headed in terms of our conception of what, where and how the state must intervene to streamline social life and relations. The first is the alleged blasphemy case implicating a 79 year old Christian, Walter Fazal Khan; the second, the marriage of two girls. The alleged blasphemy case has all the classic ingredients. Mr Khan, a resident of Samanabad, Lahore, lives in a house worth

Rs12.4 million with his 82 year old wife, Gladys Walter Khan. On May 9, Mr Khan was taking his morning bath when Raja Riaz, a Muslim tenant of Mr Khans, knocked at his door and told him that something was burning in the house. Later, they found a burnt book in the drawing room, which Mr Riaz determined to be a copy of the Holy Quran.

Dawn, 22 May 2007

Editorial: Many faces of the crisis

..The federal government must come clean on this issue. President Pervez Musharraf has spoken to the media and given a TV interview. But what is missing is a televised address to the nation giving his own version of the ongoing crisis and what he plans to do to come to grips with it. People wonder why a comprehensive governmental version is not forthcoming this time, unless the president thinks the May 12 tragedy is not worth all this bother..

Daily Times, 23 May 2007

CJP case shouldnt go Tamizuddin cases way, Justice Ramday remarks

ISLAMABAD: Justice Khalilur Rehman Ramday remarked on Tuesday that it would be unfortunate if the Supreme Courts judgment in the chief justice of Pakistan (CJP) case was viewed like the Federal Courts verdict in the Maulvi Tamizuddin case. God forbid that the SC decision in this case should meet the fate of the Maulvi Tamizuddin case, Justice Ramday said in response to state counsel Malik Qayyum's remarks that the CJP case was the most significant in Pakistans history after the Maulvi Tamizuddin case. Justice Ramday, head of the 13-member full court hearing a constitutional petition by CJP Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry and 22 other identical petitions, asked Qayyum not to refer to the Maulvi Tamizuddin case, saying that it was now referred to embarrass the court, BBC Urdu reported.

Dawn, 23 May 2007

Quitting govt among three MQM options

LONDON: The Muttahida Qaumi Movement could make a clean break from the ruling coalition and sit on the opposition benches or it could take the less drastic route of withdrawing its ministers from the federal cabinet or from both the federal and provincial cabinets, but continuing to sit on the treasury benches. The MQM Rabita Committee, after its three-day marathon meetings which ended here on Tuesday, has proposed these three options which would now be presented to the MQM workers throughout Pakistan to elicit their opinion. According to a spokesman for the MQM International Secretariat, the committee would take a final decision in the light of views expressed by party workers which then would be presented to Altaf Hussain for approval.

Daily Times, 23 May 2007

BLA rejects offer of amnesty

QUETTA: Banned Baloch guerrilla organisation, the Balochistan Liberation Army BLA, on Tuesday rejected President Pervez Musharraf's offer of amnesty, saying surrender before the state was not acceptable at any cost. In two separate exclusive interviews with Daily Times here, BLA spokesmen said they were offended by the way President Musharraf had been making fun of Baloch people asking them to surrender their

weapons. If the president does not stop underestimating Baloch fighters and spreading disinformation about their cause, he will be killed or pushed back to India, said Biburg Baloch, a BLA spokesman. Speaking to Daily Times via satellite phone, he said the governments offer for amnesty provided the Baloch surrender before the state was not acceptable at any cost.

The Nation, 23 May 2007

Editorial: Ruling coalition woes

FORMER Prime Minister Mir Zafarullah Jamalis meeting with General Musharraf only a day after quitting the PML in protest against the party leaderships attitude of not taking him into confidence over important matters comes as no surprise. Apart from submitting his resignation, he also presented a four-page charge sheet against Ch Shujaat Hussain in the PML Central Executive Committees meeting in Islamabad on Monday. Mr Jamali refused to reverse his decision despite being asked by Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and Ch Shujaat since he blamed both of them for harbouring prejudice against him. And he minced no words to point out, there is no point in staying in the PML when the Party President and the PM do not give us time to discuss important matters related to the party..

Dawn, 23 May 2007

Opinion: The Karachi mayhem (Ghayoor Ahmed)

MAY 12 was a black day for Karachi as on that day there was an unbridled reign of terror that was let loose by the criminals with total immunity. It looked as if the governments writ did not exist in the city on that fateful day. It is, however, clear that this was not a case of maladministration, inefficiency or a breakdown of the government machinery. On the contrary, it was an insidious and deliberate violation of the rule of law, a flagrant disregard for human life and an egregious abuse of power by the present rulers of Sindh who wanted to create a situation in Karachi that would prevent the Chief Justice of Pakistan from addressing the Sindh High Court Bar Association an event that was planned long ago. The city of Karachi and its suburbs were under siege by the criminals who perpetrated atrocities on innocent people with total immunity..

Daily Times, 23 May 2007

Opinion: Democracy, with or without America (Dr. Manzur Ejaz)

Everywhere in the US, Pakistani expatriate groups are holding protest rallies and organising teach in sessions on democracy and independent judiciary. Over the last weekend an impressive protest rally was held in front of the White House. The growing movement in Pakistan for the restoration of democracy and institutionalisation has also galvanised the Pakistani expatriates in the United States. They are all expecting the US government to re-evaluate its policy towards General Pervez Musharraf's government and support the aspirations of Pakistan's civil society.

Daily Times, 24 May 2007

Its time for talks with Taliban: West should learn from us: Musharraf

LAHORE: President General Pervez Musharraf said in an interview with The Globe and Mail that talks with the Taliban and other opposition may be necessary to bring stability

to Afghanistan. We have to have a multipronged strategy. In Afghanistan it is only the military strategy which is working now, Gen Musharraf said, adding that peace could not come from the barrel of a gun. [The] political element is the negotiations between warring factions. Who are the warring factions? Warring factions are the Afghan government and the coalition forces on one side and the militant Taliban and even non-Taliban ... so some form of negotiations between these two.

Dawn, 24 May 2007

Operation plan ready, but govt hesitant: Lal Masjid standoff

ISLAMABAD, May 23: Security forces are reported to have finalised a plan to launch an operation against militants of Lal Masjid and are waiting for a green signal from the government, a source in the local administration told Dawn on Wednesday. However, the government seems reluctant to use force against the Lal Masjid administration which has challenged the writ of the government many times in the past. An interior ministry spokesman has recently said the government will try to resolve the issue through dialogue, instead of raiding the madrasah.

Dawn, 24 May 2007

Focus on SJC role in SC hearing

ISLAMABAD, May 23: A senior counsel representing Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry in the presidential reference case told the Supreme Court on Wednesday that the Supreme Judicial Council acted to safeguard the tenure of superior court judges, rather than removing them as adjudicators. Barrister Aitzaz Ahsan interpreted in a different way the provision of article 209 under which the council proceeded against judges. A 13 member larger bench headed by Justice Khalilur Rehman Ramday took up 23 identical petitions challenging the filing of a reference against the chief justice, composition of the council and its competence to try the chief justice.

Daily Times, 24 May 2007

Editorial: How is comparison with Tamizuddin Case relevant?

Justice Khalilur Rehman Ramday, the leading judge on the Supreme Court SC bench hearing the case pertaining to the defrocking of the chief justice of Pakistan, Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, said on Tuesday: God forbid that the SC decision in this case should meet the fate of the Maulvi Tamizuddin case. He was responding to a comparison made in the court by the government lawyer that the chief justice CJP case was the most significant in Pakistans history after the Maulvi Tamizuddin case. In a general sense, the Tamizuddin Case was the first instance of an anti democratic trend in Pakistan. A civil servant governor general Ghulam Muhammad dissolved the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan in 1954.

The Nation, 24 May 2007

Editorial: Love for uniform

WHAT General Musharraf told the BBC about his attachment to the uniform would surprise many. National leaders are expected to be realistic and are not supposed to indulge in sentimentality. While one can understand that it is natural for people to develop emotional ties with institutions that they have served for long, it is equally

natural to understand that one has to leave them one day in accordance with the rules that govern superannuation. To say that the uniform is his second skin and he finds it hard to think of shedding it is rather odd. If government officials were allowed not to part with their jobs on account of the emotional attachment, most heads of departments would retain the office as long as they were alive, blocking the promotions of juniors.

Dawn, 24 May 2007

Editorial: The only way out of the crisis

THERE is no cut and dry formula for taking the country out of the current crisis, but if there is one that could help lower tensions and perhaps bail the government out it lies in a firm announcement of the date for the next general election. For the last two years, vagueness often bordering on disinformation has characterised the governments attitude towards the polls. The last election was held in October 2002 and the National Assembly met in November. Which means its five-year term expires in November this year. Since elections must be held within 90 days of the dissolution of the National Assembly, the date for the next electoral exercise could be sometime in February 2008. In other words, a vote could be more than nine months away. This is too much for this nation, which, as experience shows, does not have a tolerance limit of more than three years for any government.

Daily Times, 25 May 2007

Musharraf blames conspiracy for Karachi violence

DERA GHAZI KHAN: President Pervez Musharraf said Thursday that recent political violence over the suspension of Pakistan's chief justice was the result of a conspiracy to stoke ethnic tensions. Around 40 people were killed in Karachi on May 12, the bloody climax to two months of protests against the removal of top judge Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry. There are certain elements who gave ethnic colour to the crisis in a bid to create further chaos and cause more bloodshed in Karachi, Gen Musharraf told a public rally in Dera Ghazi Khan. He said the clashes in Karachi were between political groups and the politicisation of a judicial matter had led to the violence..

Dawn, 25 May 2007

Lal Masjid frees two policemen

ISLAMABAD, May 24: Lal Masjid students on Thursday freed the two security officials kidnapped on May 18, following the release of several of their colleagues as a result of back channel negotiations between clerics of the mosque and the local administration. Spokesman of the interior ministry Brig Javed Iqbal Cheema, however, claimed that the two policemen of the Islamabad police Assistant Sub-Inspector Aurangzeb and constable Jehangir were released unconditionally. They have not been released on a reciprocal basis, he said. Madressah students on May 18 held hostage four policemen Assistant Sub Inspector Aurangzeb, constables Yasir Shah, Iftikhar Ahmed and Raja Jahangir accusing them of spying for the government. Two of them were released on May 20..

Daily Times, 25 May 2007

Pakistan Spain MoU on human smuggling soon

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Spain would soon sign a Memorandum of Understanding MoU to combat transborder human trafficking after a team of the Federal Investigation Agency FIA currently visiting Madrid finalizes preconditions for a formal agreement in this regard, sources in the agency told Daily Times on Thursday. The team would also probe into a well coordinated racket of international human traffickers using Ginny Conakry Iceland route to transport South Asians to Europe. Tariq Pervez, the FIA Director General, said that the team comprised Additional Director General Immigration Mirza Yaseen and another senior official of the investigation agency.

Daily Times, 25 May 2007

Opinion: Are Pakistani nukes secure (Alex Stolar)

Fears that the current unrest could lead to a takeover of the Pakistani government by extremists are also misplaced. Religious parties are an important element of Pakistani society, but their political clout remains limited. It has been a very painful week in Pakistan. On May 12, over forty died when violence broke out in Karachi between political factions supporting and opposing President Pervez Musharraf. Three days later, a suicide bomber entered a hotel restaurant in Peshawar and detonated the explosives strapped to his body, killing at least twenty persons. Recent turbulence has renewed fears that Pakistan's nuclear weapons and materials may be vulnerable to breakdowns in command and control or theft.

The Nation, 25 May 2007

Opinion: Contradictions galore (Javid Husain)

It was amusing to hear from General Pervez Musharraf during a recent interview on a Pakistani private channel that he would not violate the Constitution of Pakistan in such matters as his re election and keeping his uniform after December 2007. The statement was touching coming from a person who overthrew a constitutionally-established and democratically elected government in violation of his oath as an army officer to uphold the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and to desist from engagement in any political activities whatsoever. While stressing his respect for the Constitution, the President also made the point that former Prime Ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif would not be allowed to return to the country before the next general elections.

Daily Times, 25 May 2007

Editorial: Learning from Musharraf

Talking to a foreign newspaper President General Pervez Musharraf has said that Pakistan was the only country that had a military, political, developmental and administrative strategy to defeat extremism, and that the West should come and learn from us. He added that talks with the Taliban and other opposition may be necessary to bring stability to Afghanistan. He said a number of other things too that must be carefully noted. General Musharraf said that although Pakistan gave the Taliban diplomatic recognition, it did not create them. He also claimed that his policy towards the Taliban was worth following, achieved mostly through talking to the local powerbrokers. He insisted that the policy was successful in the tribal areas of Pakistan that are subject to Talibanisation.

Daily Times, 26 May 2007

Make Karachi arms-free: Musharraf

KARACHI: President General Pervez Musharraf on Friday directed the Sindh government to chalk out a comprehensive strategy and campaign to make Karachi weapons free. Addressing a high level meeting at Chief Ministers house here, Musharraf directed the Sindh government to maintain religious harmony and improve security in the provincial capital by seizing weapons from the people at the earliest. He said that previous campaigns had failed because only ordinary citizens handed over their weapons to the government, while anti social individuals eluded the authorities..

Dawn, 26 May 2007

Opposition warns of civil disobedience: Extra-constitutional action

ISLAMABAD, May 25: Opposition leaders at a multi party conference convened by the Muttahida Majlis i Amal MMA on Friday said they would launch a civil disobedience movement if President Pervez Musharraf took any extra constitutional action to thwart the movement for the independence of the judiciary. The conference called upon the Chief Justice of the Sindh High Court to set up a judicial commission for fixing responsibility for the May 12 killings in Karachi. Other demands included the sacking of the governor and the CMs adviser on home affairs, and the extradition of MQM chief Altaf Hussain from Britain. More than 20 speakers expressed their views on the political polarisation, insecurity, the law and order situation and the violation of the Constitution.

The Nation, 26 May 2007

Editorial: EU critique of Pakistan

WHILE the government could attribute ulterior motives to the opposition and medias outcry against the lack of progress towards putting the country on the road to democracy, it would be hard put to challenge the European Parliaments charge that President Musharraf has not been able to implement his undertaking made in 1999 that the armed forces have no intention of staying in charge any longer than was absolutely necessary to pave the way for true democracy to flourish. On the human rights situation the EU Parliaments views were no different, which were contained in the Report on Kashmir, Present Situation and Future Prospects, passed with Emma Nicholsons amendments by an overwhelming majority 522 to 9. The EU also lamented the negative chain of events and the outbreak of violence, following the presidential reference against the Chief Justice.

Dawn, 26 May 2007

Lal Masjid gears up for attack on CD, video shops: Taliban jihad in NWFP backed

ISLAMABAD, May 25: The Lal Masjid administration on Friday announced that its students would attack audio and video shops, massage centres and brothels in Islamabad if their owners did not wind up their businesses immediately. Our students can attack these outlets anytime because the deadline given to their owners had already passed, Lal Masjid khatib Maulana Abdul Aziz said in his Friday sermon. The deadline ended last month and the owners fear attacks from the mosque brigade anytime. We are insecure and need government protection, the owner of a CD shop in Abpara market told Dawn. He said that a group of 40 to 50 baton wielding people, some of them covering their

faces, had visited different markets two months ago and asked owners of CD, audio and video shops to switch over to other business.

Daily Times, 26 May 2007

Editorial: CJP case: conspiracy or movement?

President General Pervez Musharraf said on Thursday that the recent political violence over the suspension of Pakistan's chief justice was the result of a conspiracy by certain elements to stoke ethnic tensions. He focused on the killings that took place in Karachi on May 12 and tried to play down the real contours of what happened by saying, not too convincingly, that the parties involved in the violence were in the process of reconciling their differences. There is no doubt that the president is minimising the enormity of what has been happening in Pakistan over the past two months. This not too subtle masking of reality by General Musharraf is understandable but it becomes worrisome if it leads the government to misconstrue what is in fact going on in the country. The president must grasp clearly the forces his faulty policies have unleashed before he can think of formulating a policy of remedy..

Daily Times, 27 May 2007

Extremism threat to Pakistans solidarity

KARACHI: The growing spectre of religious extremism is a potential threat to the solidarity and integrity of Pakistan, President General Pervez Musharraf warned on Saturday. Some vested interest are promoting extremism in the country in the name of Islam. They are misinterpreting our religion to serve their personal agenda, which must be prevented, Gen Musharraf said in an address to officers of the armed forces at Corps Headquarters Karachi. He said some mosques and madrassas were being used to promote religious extremism, which was a dangerous trend. He appealed to the public to keep vigilant for such conspiracies aimed at dividing them in the name of religion and sect..

Dawn, 27 May 2007

Authoritarianism prone to abuse of power: CJ

ISLAMABAD, May 26: Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry on Saturday said authoritarianism was maligned because it was the antithesis of the concept of separation of powers and devoid of checks and balances. It is a system inclined towards the abuse of power, misuse of authority and devoid of respecting fundamental rights of the citizen like right to life, liberty, equality and prosperity, the chief justice said, adding that such system paid no heed to fundamental rights like freedom of conscience, thought, expression, religion, movement and association. Justice Iftikhar was speaking at a seminar on Separation of powers and judicial independence at the Supreme Court auditorium..

Daily Times, 27 May 2007

Editorial: Karachis past and future

In a statement that he must have personally doubted, President General Pervez Musharraf directed the Sindh government on Friday to chalk out a comprehensive strategy and campaign to make Karachi weapons free. At the meeting where he said this he also made reference to maintaining religious harmony and improving security in the provincial capital by seizing weapons from the people at the earliest. The unreality of the directive

was immediately countered by the chief minister of Sindh, Arbab Ghulam Raheem, who said flatly that it would be impossible to disarm Karachi..

Dawn, 27 May 2007

Editorial: Crisis unending

SINCE March 9, when Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry was made non functional, the country has not known normality. One incident after another has led to the spread and aggravation of the crisis and added to the peoples anguish over the shape of things to come. One worry overshadows all others will the crisis now raging culminate in a victory for democracy or will it leave in its wake things more horrible? The people have these misgivings because they fear a repetition of the past when popular movements were followed by events that froze the political process and pulled the country back into autocracy. No event did more to accentuate the sense of crisis and a drift towards anarchy than the May 12 killings. Karachi has still not recovered from the trauma, and its reverberations are being felt throughout the country.

Daily Times, 27 May 2007

Opinion: Exploring the reconciliatory option (Dr HA Rizvi)

Because Pakistan has shaped up as a uni focal political system, the opposition was bound to focus on the sole source of power. Had Musharraf allowed the development of autonomous political institutions and processes as intermediaries between him and the people, the oppositions anger would not have been focused just on him. The confrontation between the government and the opposition continues unabated; both sides are upping the ante every day. The leaders of the protest movement are confident that they can keep the pressure on for basic changes in governance and political management in Pakistan. The government and its supporters are equally determined to protect their interests by confronting their political adversaries..

Daily Times, 28 May 2007

MMA caravan on way to Lahore: Leaders want end to dictatorship

RAWALPINDI: A Muttahida Majlis e Amal MMA caravan left on Sunday for Lahore via GT Road to express support for the judiciary and protest against the May 12 violence in Karachi. MMA President Qazi Hussain Ahmad, Secretary General Maulana Fazlur Rehman, Deputy Secretary General Liaquat Baloch and other senior leaders of the MMA lead the caravan. They will address several public meetings during the journey. Addressing the caravan participants in Gujar Khan before leaving for Lahore, Qazi Hussain said the government was denying basic rights to people and the time had come to remove General Musharraf from power. Agencies add: Addressing the caravan participants, MMA leaders said the international community is patronising Pakistans dictatorship and damaging democracy..

Dawn, 28 May 2007

Opinion: Choices before Benazir (Ahmed Sadik)

THE political situation in today's Pakistan is not only highly fluid but also extremely hazardous for any civilian politician. This does not mean that it is a hopeless situation which is beyond redemption. The situation can be better put across as one that is alarming

and demands political leadership of the highest order to be able to pull the country out of the current chaos that it finds itself in at present. Indeed, it calls for a leadership that can inspire hope among the common people that all is not lost after all the years of rampant inflation and joblessness making life miserable. The dire need is to put in place a government that can perform the necessary role of political reconciliation and simultaneously deal with the worsening economic problems.

Daily Times, 28 May 2007

EDITORIAL: Problem of absolute power

The Chief Justice of Pakistan, Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, told a seminar on Saturday that concentration of power in one hand could be dangerous, adding that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. He advocated the separation of powers in the country with full autonomy granted to the judiciary so that it could function in complete freedom from the pressure of the executive. Everything Mr Chaudhry said resonated with the audience of lawyers at the Supreme Court Bar Association auditorium in Islamabad because his words were all truisms, proved by state practice over centuries. The only aspect of the gathering which was new was the political situation in Pakistan and the public response to the incumbency of President General Pervez Musharraf and a certain level of public disenchantment with the politics of the Pakistan army..

The Nation, 28 May 2007

Opinion: Time for regime change (Dr. F Hussan)

This governments abrupt and seemingly ruthless behaviour towards the Chief Justice of Pakistan has triggered such a velocity of political agitation against the military rule as never seen in the past in Pakistan. Indeed nowhere in recent history has third world country seen such massive uprising by essentially educated middle classes against the those in authority as witnessed in this country. As far as the evolving story of the attempted ouster of the Chief Justice of Pakistan is concerned it continues to grip the minds and thoughts of most in Pakistan. Abroad as well there is an enormity of interest in this entire developing story since epitomises the inherent struggle between representative values and anti-democratic thinking which is usually backed by the countrys armed forces..

Dawn, 29 May 2007

SC wont bother about consequences: Ramday

ISLAMABAD, May 28: Justice Khalilur Rehman Ramday, heading a 13 member bench of the Supreme Court hearing identical petitions challenging the presidential reference against Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry, said on Monday the court would decide the case without giving a thought to consequences. We have to decide the case irrespective of any apprehension about consequences. That has never been in our minds, he said. He made the remarks when Barrister Aitzaz Ahsan, the lead counsel of the chief justice, was presenting arguments in response to remarks made earlier by Justice Ramday that the executive had a record of not obeying such orders in the past. He cited examples of various constitutional cases about dissolution of governments.

The Nation, 29 May 2007

Musharraf blamed for May 12 deaths

LONDON - PML N Quaid and former prime minister Nawaz Sharif on Monday accused President General Pervez Musharraf of having masterminded the killings of some 40 political opponents in Karachi earlier this month. In an interview with AFP, Nawaz Sharif also said the killings of those protesting the removal of CJ Iftikhar Chaudhry amounted to the biggest blunder committed by any Musharraf. Apart from a blunder, it is also a very heinous crime that he has committed, said Nawaz. The ousted premier charged that Musharraf and MQM chief Altaf Hussein, who also lives in London, orchestrated the killings because Musharraf faced increasing threats to his grip on power, adding that the British authorities should investigate. It is Musharraf, who in league with the MQM, has done all that. There is no doubt in my mind, he said.

Daily Times, 29 May 2007

After Musharraf four possibilities

LAHORE: The mounting pressure on President General Pervez Musharraf raises the question of what the political landscape would look like were he to be removed from power or assassinated. The Economist Business Asia intelligence unit in a report on Monday says that the most likely outcome would be some form of civilian military power sharing agreement, with the roles of president and chief of army staff separated. However, there are other possibilities, including an Islamist coup, a full military takeover and, at the other extreme, a return to full democracy. These four potential outcomes are explored below: Scenario 1: An Islamist coup: One challenge to Musharraf's rule albeit one relatively unlikely to succeed could come from the Muslim political establishment. The Muttahida Majlis e Amal offered Musharraf its support in 2002, helping to legitimise his rule.

Daily Times, 29 May 2007

Opinion: How long will Musharraf last? (RB Rais)

We do not have a clear answer to our first question, but what we can see over the political horizon are two words in bold print: instability, uncertainty. This is a question on the mind of every Pakistani today; it is also being debated in the western academic and policymaking circles. Tagged with it are several other questions: how will Musharraf leave the political scene that he has dominated for the last seven and half years; will there be a lot of bloodshed in the streets of our cities, replays of the May 12 carnage in Karachi, before he decides to quit; will the evolving anti regime movement, in its drive to restore democracy, cripple the state and make it dysfunctional; how big and blinding a political storm can we expect in the coming days.

Daily Times, 29 May 2007

Opinion: MQM on slippery slope (Dr HK Nizamani)

The MQM's main plank is its self proclaimed status as a middle class party in a country where, according to it, other parties and leaders are under the effective control of feudal bosses. Interestingly, both Mr Khan and Barrister Ahsan would comfortably qualify as middle class professionals. Everything was executed as per script. People were warned of violence and television channels relayed images of roadblocks ensured by trucks whose

tires had been flattened to make sure that monsters couldn't be moved. These trucks were laid as traps so that when the killings started, innocents were unable to escape. The administration at all levels knew how the scene would unfold. So, they shouldn't just be blamed for ignoring the ominous signs of impending violence; rather, they should be held responsible for orchestrating the bloodbath in cahoots with their political allies.

Daily Times, 30 May 2007

President offered accommodation if I resigned

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry said in an affidavit filed in the Supreme Court on Tuesday that President General Pervez Musharraf told him on March 9 that he would be accommodated if he resigned. In the affidavit, Justice Chaudhry revealed the inside story of his March 9 forced stay at Army House in Rawalpindi, where he was left with intelligence chiefs for five hours after he refused to resign. He said that he was allowed to go home unceremoniously only after he was stripped of his judicial powers and his official vehicle was stripped of the national flag and official insignia. In the affidavit under oath, filed in the Supreme Court through his counsel Aitzaz Ahsan, the CJP gives details of events he faced from March 9 to 13..

Dawn, 30 May 2007

Refugee camps to be closed by 2009

ISLAMABAD, May 29: The government has approved a comprehensive plan to repatriate an estimated three million Afghan refugees and close all refugee camps by 2009, official sources told Dawn on Tuesday. The plan, based on a two-pronged approach, has been worked out by an inter ministerial committee headed by Federal Minister for Interior Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao in consultation with all people concerned. Pakistan has been hosting millions of Afghan refugees for more than two decades. About 2.9 million Afghan refugees are still in the country despite the fact that an even number had already been repatriated to Afghanistan by 2002.

The Nation, 30 May 2007

Editorial: Call for impartiality

AS the Sindh High Court has already taken suo moto notice of the May 12 mayhem in Karachi that left over 40 people killed, Chief Minister Dr Arbab Rahim has said in a rather threatening tone that his government will cooperate with the court only if it maintains impartiality. In an interview with BBC on Monday, he went to the extent of saying that these days the judiciary was interfering too much into matters of postings, transfers and land disputes. These remarks merit comment. Dr Rahim insisted that nobody was targeted in his home and only those were killed who went out into the streets; they were engaged in some activity so they died. Coming from someone who claims that his government's first priority is to maintain law and order, it sounds callous and irresponsible. And his assertion that judicial enquiries in the past had remained counterproductive is not valid.

Daily Times, 30 May 2007

Editorial: Is our justice humane?

Justice Khawaja Muhammad Sharif of the Lahore High Court on Monday has sentenced

a same sex couple, Shumail and Shahzina, to three years of imprisonment in separate jails and slapped a fine of Rs10,000 for each. Failure to pay the fine will add another month to their imprisonment. The punishment is for lying, not marrying. The couple was punished after they had apologised to the judge for lying. We think the punishment is harsh and angry. We think that even the lying part of the crime should have been subject to mitigation. The court should have been more humane after getting to know the facts of the case, which was not an ordinary same sex marriage case. Was the couple truly same sex? If both were girls, what about the beard on the face of Shumail who now stands defined as a girl?

Dawn, 30 May 2007

Opinion: Aftermath of May 12 (Najamuddin A Shaikh)

..It is also no secret that the Americans have been making it clear to all and sundry that the battle against extremism cannot be won unless the army joins hand with the mainstream political parties, primarily the Peoples Party, which in the estimate of the Americans has the truest liberal credentials. It is also no secret that the Americans are becoming increasingly impatient with the gap that they see between Musharrafs verbalised anti extremism strategy and its actual implementation, this gap being best exemplified by the Jamia Hafsa standoff. The American perception that Musharraf is stringing us along and milking us for whatever he can get, delivering sops rather than substance, is getting stronger.

Daily Times, 31 May 2007

Pakistan, Afghanistan and G8 to cooperate against terrorism

POTSDAM: Germany: Afghanistan and Pakistan vowed on Wednesday to deepen cooperation between their governments at all levels, particularly in the fight against terrorism and repatriating Afghan refugees. In a joint statement, the foreign ministers of Afghanistan, Pakistan and the group of eight G8 industrialised nations said they needed to act together in joint operations to stamp out terrorist bases. They further committed to continue supporting moderation, fighting all forms of extremism and terrorism, including its financial, training and ideological centres through mutually agreed and coordinated action, the statement said. The statement was issued after a meeting between Afghan Foreign Minister Rangan Dardar Spanta, his Pakistani counterpart Khursheed Mehmood Kasuri and the foreign ministers of Germany, Britain, US, Italy, France, Japan, Canada and Russia..

Dawn, 31 May 2007

Apex court urged to rectify past mistakes: Validation of unconstitutional measures

ISLAMABAD, May 30: The Supreme Court was told on Wednesday that time had come to rectify its past mistakes of legalising unconstitutional measures, including the validation of the October 1999 military coup. Senior advocate Fakhruddin G. Ebrahim, representing the Balochistan High Court Bar, also said that President Gen Pervez Musharraf could not be extended constitutional immunity because he had become president through extra constitutional measures. My case is that President Musharraf is not a duly elected president and, therefore, does not enjoy constitutional immunity, Mr Ebrahim argued before a 13 member larger bench of the apex court hearing identical

petitions challenging the filing of a reference against the chief justice, composition of the Supreme Judicial Council and its competence to look into charges against the chief justice..

The News, 31 May 2007

Opinion: A semi failed state (Mir Adnan Aziz)

When called a failed state we are irked and cry hoarse that we are not one. One step down follows the semi failed state defined as a country whose government maintains all the trappings and appearances of power, legitimacy, and control. Its army and police are integral and operative not so in Karachi on that fateful and tragic May 12. Its institutions function. Its government and parliament promulgate laws and its courts enforce them. It is not challenged by any competing military structures within its recognised borders, unfortunately we are..

Dawn, 31 May 2007

Opinion: State anarchy or democracy? (IA Rehman)

TWO significant lessons have been burnt into the peoples consciousness since Bloody Saturday May 12, 2007: first, that anarchy in the land has entered an advanced stage, and, secondly, that the regime's ability to prevent its friends and defenders abroad from speaking aloud about its vulnerability and lack of legitimacy has nearly been exhausted. Both of these lessons portend a grave situation ahead. Usually, anarchy is described as a state of disorder as evident in a rise in crime, spread of lawlessness and a weakening of the state's writ. This is the lowest form of anarchy in which non-state actors rule the roost. The states culpability in such situations is limited to failure to enforce order and its desire to control lawlessness is not necessarily questioned. This form of anarchy has been in evidence in Pakistan for quite some time..

Daily Times, 31 May 2007

Editorial: Who is targeting Peshawar?

Another car bomb in front of the NWFP High Court in Peshawar has left one dead and nine seriously injured. This is not the first time that Peshawar has been subjected to terrorist action. And it is not the first time that commentators are bemused over the motivation of those causing it. The NWFP government of Mutahidda Majlis e Amal MMA keeps hinting that the blasts in the province are being engineered by the federal government. The animus of the JUI chief minister, Mr Akram Durrani, is of a piece with the acrimony on which the clerical politics of Pakistan is based. But the acts of terrorism have also targeted a federal minister and the Pakistan army and are therefore difficult to pin on the intelligence agencies serving the federal government..

Daily Times, 31 May 2007

Opinion: Very interesting times, indeed (Kamran Shafi)

The opinion of the vast majority of Pakistanis is that the army should never ever be allowed into power again. No power sharing; no nothing. Let it behave like the national institution it is, and therefore be respected as such. Of all the shameful things the MQM could say about Imran Khan when he took Altaf Hussain head-on, the most shameful by far are their personal attacks on him. Such are the MQMs fortunes these days, however,

that even that tactic fell flat on its face with El Supremo himself appearing in all his glory just two days later, asking for the mean spirited anti Imran wall chalking in Karachi to be cleaned up and demonstrations against him stopped.