

Dawn, 1 October 2007

CJ takes suo motu notice of violence

The Supreme Court has summoned top police and administration officials of Islamabad on Monday over use of force against lawyers and media people by law-enforcement agencies in the federal capital on Saturday. Notices to the interior secretary, chief commissioner, inspector general of police, deputy commissioner, duty magistrate and the senior superintendent of police were issued on Sunday after Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry took suo motu notice of the matter. The capital saw pitched battles on the Constitution Avenue after lawyers were manhandled, baton-charged and tear-gassed during a demonstration against President Gen Pervez Musharraf's re-election bid when Election Commission officials were scrutinising nomination papers of presidential candidates...

Daily Times, 1 October 2007

Editorial

The politics in Islamabad today is posited by the opposition as a battle for civilian rule and the confinement of the Pakistan army to its constitutional role. The lawyers community and the opposition political parties may have different agendas up their sleeves, but at the declaratory level it is the civilian-military relationship that everyone is supposed to be trying to correct. Even the ruling party, by keeping a general as president, promises a more reliable reversion to more democracy. The consensus is apparently shared by President General Pervez Musharraf himself. But the antagonists fall apart on whether the post-Musharraf period should be transformational or transitional...

Pak Tribune, 1 October 2007

Article: Musharraf Prepares the Military for his Civilian Presidency

Pakistani President Gen. Pervez Musharraf appointed a new head of Pakistan's top intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), on Sept. 21 and promoted several two-star generals to three-star rank. Though they are part of an ongoing and routine reshuffle, these changes to the army's top brass come as Musharraf prepares to step down as military chief in an attempt to secure his re-election as president. The retirements and appointments of generals are designed to ensure Musharraf's continued control over the military. The new ISI chief, meanwhile, will have his hands full as he tries to deal with a growing desire to live under Islam in Pakistan...

Dawn, 1 October 2007

Musharraf may face new legal battle

Makhdoom Amin Fahim and Justice (ret'd) Wajihuddin Ahmad will challenge on Monday the Election Commission's decision to accept General Pervez Musharraf's nomination papers for the presidential election. President of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) Munir A. Malik said that as chief of the army staff, the general could not contest the elections for the office of the president before completing two years after his retirement. He said the apex court would be requested to stay the presidential poll, scheduled to be held on Oct 6, till a decision on the petitions challenging Gen. Musharraf's eligibility to contest. He said that under the Constitution, the Supreme Court could postpone the presidential election for a specific period...

Dawn, 1 October 2007

Benazir threatens to engage other political forces

WASHINGTON, Sept 30: Chairperson of the Pakistan Peoples Party Benazir Bhutto indicated on Sunday that the attempt to make a power-sharing arrangement had failed and she might engage other political forces. In an interview with CNN, Ms Bhutto hinted that she had met President Pervez Musharraf more than once and every time they met, they had a very good meeting. The PPP chairperson, however, regretted that there were people around President Musharraf who did not want the two parties to reach an understanding and that's why her talks with the government were not fruitful. Ms Bhutto said she was facing pressure from within her party and from her supporters to discontinue the talks and reach out to other political forces for a joint struggle for the restoration of democracy...

Pak Tribune, 1 October 2007

PM on re- election of President

Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said that the historic judgment given by the Supreme Court for the re-election of President Gen. Pervaiz Musharraf for the second term will help strengthen democracy in the country. The Prime Minister was addressing to the proposers and seconders who gathered at the Prime Minister House Saturday morning before leaving for the Election Commission of Pakistan for scrutiny of the papers of President Gen. Pervaiz Musharraf. The Prime Minister congratulated the proposers and seconders on the decision of apex court in the favour of their candidate and said that the verdict has removed uncertainties about the future developments. He said that the verdict has proven the supremacy of constitution as well as the independence of the judiciary. The Prime Minister said that the PML and allied parties have the clear majority for the re-election of President Gen. Pervaiz Musharraf for the second term as President of Pakistan. He said that re-election of President will ensure continued journey toward progress, prosperity and development...

Pak Tribune, 1 October 2007

Journalists say no to aggression

ISLAMABAD: The Journalists community observed Black Day and staged protest rally on the call of Pakistan Union of Journalists against the brutality of police on Journalists outside the Election Commission of Pakistan. The historic rally marched from the Melody Press Club to the Parliament House in which hundreds of journalists participated on Sunday. Political parties of Pakistan, representatives of the Civil Societies, NGOs, lawyers and besides amnesty international, large number of the people participated in the protest rally. President PML-N, Makhdoom Javed Hashmi, Deputy Parliamentary Leader Hafiz Hussain Ahmad, Khuwaja Saad Rafiq, Syed Zafar Ali Shah, President Supreme Court Bar Association, Munir A Malik, Ali Ahmad Kurd, representatives of the Pakistan Minorities, President International Human Rights Observer, Khalid Aftab Solaria, Sameia Raheel Qazi, including Dr. Kausar Firdaus and several MNAs and Senators also participated in the rally...

Daily Times, 2 October 2007

Islamabad IGP, SSP, DC suspended on SC orders

ISLAMABAD: The federal government on Monday suspended the Islamabad inspector general of police (IGP), the senior superintendent of police (SSP) and the deputy commissioner on the orders of the Supreme Court (SC), which held them responsible for using disproportionate force against lawyers and journalists on Constitutional Avenue on Saturday. Contempt notices served: A three-member bench of the SC headed by Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry also served contempt notices on IGP Murawat Ali Shah, District Magistrate Muhammad Ali and Deputy Magistrate Irfan Ahmed for ordering tear-gas shelling on the SC premises...

Daily Times, 2 October 2007

Lawyers observe countrywide strike

ISLAMABAD: The lawyer's community throughout the country including in the federal capital observed strike and took out rallies against police persecutions against lawyers and journalists on September 29 outside the Election Commission office and the Supreme Court. A protest demonstration was staged at the Rawalpindi District Courts. In Lahore, the lawyers took out a rally from Aiwan-e-Adal to the Punjab Assembly. Journalists, activists of the MMA, PTI and PML-N workers also joined the rally. Similarly, lawyers boycotted courts and staged protests in Karachi, Peshawar, Multan, Jhang and other cities.

Daily Times, 2 October 2007

Pakistan topped list of arms purchasers in 2006

WASHINGTON: Pakistan ranked first among all developing world recipients in the value of arms transfer agreements in 2006, concluding \$5.1 billion in such agreements, with India ranking second in agreements at \$3.5 billion, according to a report issued by the Congressional Research Service on September 26. Arms transfer agreements with the top 10 developing world recipients, as a group, in 2006 totaled \$22.2 billion or 77.1 percent of all such agreements with the developing world. India was the leading developing world arms purchaser from 1999-2006, making arms transfer agreements totaling \$22.4 billion during these years (in current dollars)...

Daily Times, 2 October 2007

Benazir-Musharraf deal: National Reconciliation Ordinance ready

LAHORE: The government is planning to promulgate an ordinance in the next 48 hours that would grant amnesty to all politicians, bankers and bureaucrats from all charges relating to misdemeanours, misconduct and misuse of power between 1985 and 2007, according to highly placed sources. The National Reconciliation Ordinance would apply to all those against whom such allegations are outstanding in courts of law and who have not been convicted. As such, the ordinance will apply to former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, but not to another former prime minister, Nawaz Sharif...

Pak Tribune, 2 October 2007

SC moved for staying presidential elections, disqualification of president Musharraf for re-election

ISLAMABAD: Presidential candidate Justice (Retd) Wajih ud Din Ahmad has challenged in Supreme Court (SC) the acceptance of nomination papers of president

general Pervez Musharraf by Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) for re-election and prayed the court to issue orders to stay the presidential elections. An identical petition has been filed by senator Sardar Latif Khosa on behalf of PPP. Through these petitions which have been filed under article 184 (3) of the constitution, the presidential candidates Makhdoom Amin Fahim and Justice (Retd) Wajih Ud Din Ahmad have taken the stance that the acceptance of general Pervez Musharraf nomination papers by CEC is unconstitutional decision. They contended general Pervez Musharraf does not qualify for contesting presidential elections under article 62 of the constitution and he is not eligible to take part in presidential polls in terms of his candidacy under article 63 of the constitution...

Daily Times, 2 October 2007

Editorial: Fatal mishandling of the media

The thrashing meted out by the police to the lawyers and mediemen outside the Election Commission on Saturday has unleashed a much bigger storm against the government than the one it wanted to contain. It also comes at the wrong time because the Supreme Court is now making ready to hear the appeal filed by Justice (Retd) Wajihuddin and Makhdoom Amin Fahim against the Election Commission's acceptance of the nomination papers of President General Pervez Musharraf. The Chief Justice of Pakistan has already taken suo motu notice of it and asked the administration to explain how and why it happened...

Dawn, 3 October 2007

Final phase of the deal

ISLAMABAD, Oct 2: Despite attempt by a major opposition grouping to raise the ante by resigning en masse from the national and three provincial assemblies, General Pervez Musharraf on Tuesday stole the show by dropping the clearest hint to date of soon restoring complete civilian rule by appointing his successor for the top military office, and offering Benazir Bhutto a hand of cooperation in the form of a proposed law offering indemnity and political reconciliation. During a day filled with high degree of tension and excitement, two constitutional petitions were filed against General Musharraf's candidature in the presidential race and the chief justice amazed many with his selection of a nine-judge panel to hear the challenges...

Daily Times, 3 October 2007

SC takes suo motu notice of Islamabad violence

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court (SC) on Sunday took suo motu notice of the use of force by police against lawyers, journalists and representatives of civil society during a protest on Constitution Avenue on Saturday and summoned officials of the city's top administration to appear before it to explain why police beat lawyers, journalists and human rights activists during rallies on Monday (today). Chief Justice of Pakistan Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry has issued notices to the interior secretary, Punjab additional advocate general, IG police, chief commissioner, deputy commissioner and senior superintendent of police, Islamabad, to appear before court in connection with police violence against lawyers, the media and representatives of human rights (HR) and civil society organisations, according to a press release issued by the office of the SC

registrar...

Dawn, 3 October 2007

Kiani named for top army slot

ISLAMABAD, Oct 2: In a clear indication that President Gen Pervez Musharraf is getting ready to hang up his military uniform, Lt-Gen Ashfaq Pervez Kiani has been named virtually as the future Chief of the Army Staff. He has been promoted to the rank of general and appointed Vice-Chief of the Army Staff (VCOAS) for now. He will assume charge of office on October 8 when Gen Ahsan Saleem Hyat, the sitting VCOAS, retires. Lt-Gen Tariq Majid too has been promoted to the general's rank and appointed Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC)...

Daily Times, 3 October 2007

Sattar names lawyers in assault FIR

ISLAMABAD: A police case has been filed against lawyer leaders MA Khan, Munir A Malik, Tariq Mehmmod and Hamid Khan and others, for allegedly provoking their colleagues on Saturday to kidnap and threaten MQM parliamentary leader Farooq Sattar, who is the complainant in the case. Senior lawyers named in the FIR filed in Aabpara police station include Hassan Raza Pasha, Junaid Khokar, Attiq Khan, Shaukat Satti, M Kamran and Chaudhry Zafar, Dr Imtiaz Ahmad, Shabbir Ahmad, Attaur Rehman, Chaudhry Mussadiq, Muhammad Naeem, Chaudhry Sadiq Ali, Munir Ahmad Malik, Malik Mansoor, Aslam Pervez, Imtiaz Gul, Chaudhry Muhammad Zamir, Muhammad Zahid, Muhammad Idrees, Dr Abdullah and Rana Muhammad. Police sources said some lawyers had also been sent to Adiala Jail. The lawyers had protested against President Pervez Musharraf and the police baton-charged and tear-gassed them...

Dawn, 3 October 2007

Govt approves Benazir indemnity package

ISLAMABAD, Oct 2: The ruling Pakistan Muslim League (PML-Q) and its coalition partners on Tuesday endorsed a proposed legislation that would give the People's Party chairperson and some of her top confidants indemnity from court cases, sources said. The sources confirmed that a legislation either in the shape of a bill or a presidential ordinance had been prepared and sent to the president. It could become law within a day or two, they added. Through the new law, the sources added, the government would grant a general amnesty to all those who had held public offices between 1988 and 1999 and against whom corruption cases were pending. However, those who had been convicted by any court during the period would not benefit from the law. Former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, too, could get no benefit because of convictions...

Daily Times, 3 October 2007

Editorial: Trade with India and its problems

Pakistan and India have abandoned the pantomime of propagating hate while opening up trading facilities via the land route on the Wagah border post in Lahore. Now trucks carrying goods will be able to cross the dividing line and unload on the other side. If this is difficult to understand, let us go over the practice of bilateral trade between the two old rivals. Until now each other's trucks were not allowed across the line. The Indian trucks

unloaded on the Indian side and Indian porters carried the goods up to the line where Pakistani porters took them and loaded them onto Pakistani trucks as if in a relay race. The same kind of comic routine was observed on the Pakistani side with customs officials and border guards looking on in pretence of intense scrutiny...

Dawn, 3 October 2007

Resignations revive focus on PPP moves

ISLAMABAD, Oct 2: The presidential electoral college on Tuesday stood hugely impaired, beyond repair, as most opposition parties walked out of it by resigning from the National Assembly and provincial assemblies in a move that could force the government to try to retrieve an almost collapsed political deal with former prime minister Benazir Bhutto. The resignations by 85 opposition members from the 342-seat National Assembly, which is the core of the 1,170-member but 702-vote college, and by an unspecified number from three of the four provincial legislatures that form along with the 100-seat Senate the college, came just five days before the Oct 6 presidential election that opposition seeks to block. The move coincided with challenges filed in the Supreme Court by two rival candidates against President Pervez Musharraf's bid to be elected for another five-year term despite his alleged disqualifications and the naming of a new army chief to succeed him after the election...

Daily Times, 4 October 2007

"I will seek vote of confidence from next assembly"

ISLAMABAD: President General Pervez Musharraf said on Wednesday he would seek a vote of confidence from the new National Assembly formed after general elections. Gen Musharraf, in an interview with Geo television, reaffirmed that he would take off his uniform before November 15 after being re-elected as president by the current assemblies. He said general elections would likely be held two months after November 15, probably in January. He said the resignations of opposition legislators would not affect the presidential election, as only 163 out of 1,170 members of the electoral college had resigned. The president said he did not deny that the United States had a role in talks between the government and Benazir Bhutto, and added that the PPP could help curb extremism in the country. He said power-sharing with the PPP was possible in the future political set-up...

Daily Times, 4 October 2007

PPP will resign on 5th if talks collapse

LAHORE: PPP Central Executive Committee and Federal Council have decided to resign from the assemblies on October 5, a day prior to the presidential election, if the government negotiators do not take the party's proposals seriously. According to party sources, the decision was taken at a joint meeting of the party's committees chaired by party chief Benazir Bhutto in London on Wednesday. Benazir told the meeting that it was the principled stance of the party that if Gen Pervez Musharraf contests the presidential elections in uniform, the party would not support him and would resign from the parliament...

Dawn, 4 October 2007

Judge opposes re-election

LAHORE: Justice Falak Sher, a judge on the nine-member Supreme Court bench that had dismissed on Sept 28 petitions challenging the holding of two offices by Gen Pervez Musharraf, has ruled that the general is not qualified to contest the presidential election. Justice Sher was one of the six judges on the bench who had declared non-maintainable the petitions filed by opposition politicians and lawyers. Three judges had dissented with the majority decision. Justice Sher gave his opinion on Gen Musharraf's qualification to contest the election in his detailed judgment released here on Wednesday " I am of the considered opinion that President Gen Pervez Musharraf is not qualified to contest the ensuing presidential election", he wrote while concluding his verdict...

Dawn, 4 October 2007

Assembly will be dissolved on 8th: Fazl

PESHAWAR, Oct 3: Leader of Opposition in the National Assembly Maulana Fazlur Rehman on Wednesday said that after the disposal of no-confidence resolution against NWFP Chief Minister Akram Khan Durrani on Oct 8, the latter would advise the governor to dissolve the assembly. Talking to journalists at the speaker's gallery after the adjournment of NWFP assembly session, he said that supporters of Gen Musharraf had created some legal complications and restrained Mr Durrani from dissolving the assembly, but these tactics would not validate the re-election of Gen Musharraf. He said President Musharraf had lost the game on moral grounds and he himself had destroyed his credibility by manoeuvring his unconstitutional re-election...

Daily Times, 4 October 2007

INSIGHT: Our slippery slope

On October 2, General Pervez Musharraf promoted Lt Gen Ashfaq Kayani, former Director-General of the Inter-Services Intelligence Agency, as vice chief of army staff, indicating strongly that he is prepared to make the transition from army chief to a civilian president by November 15 if he wins the presidential election. Important this was, both to placate the Supreme Court, which gave an exit to Musharraf by not admitting the petitions against his two offices, and the Pakistan Peoples Party which was hard pressed to support him without some indication that he would shed uniform. The question is, why has it taken Musharraf so long to decide to remove uniform and with great reluctance still? After all, as president, and having put in place the 17th amendment, he is the supreme commander of the armed forces. Why might he have wanted to remain in occupation of Army House?...

Daily Times, 4 October 2007

Amir accepts 10 resignations, sends 2 to EC

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly (NA) Speaker Chaudhry Amir Hussain on Wednesday accepted the resignations of 10 All Parties Democratic Movement (APDM) MNAs, but referred only two of them to the chief election commissioner (CEC) for notification and further action. The resignations of Shahzadi Umerzadi Tiwana and Dr Saira Tariq have been sent to the CEC. They resigned along with other APDM MNAs to protest the re-election of President Pervez Musharraf in uniform...

Daily Times, 5 October 2007

Deal is done

ISLAMABAD: The months-long direct and indirect talks between President General Pervez Musharraf and PPP Chairwoman Benazir Bhutto concluded late Wednesday night, with both sides agreeing to the draft of a National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO) as part of a power-sharing deal after the general election. The draft NRO proposes termination of all politically-motivated cases pending in Pakistan, as well as those initiated by the government in foreign countries, to the benefit of Benazir Bhutto. The provision to terminate cases in foreign countries was included in the NRO after she had refused to cooperate with President Musharraf. Final draft: PPP Senator Farooq Naik told Dawn News that Ms Bhutto had agreed to the final NRO draft. He said issues relating to Musharraf's uniform, Article 58(2b) and the bar on third-time premierships were still unresolved..

Daily Times, 5 October 2007

Cases against MQM will be withdrawn

LAHORE: The government has agreed to withdraw all cases against Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) leaders and workers, MQM convener Dr Imran Farooq told Geo news on Thursday. Farooq said the MQM had asked the government to withdraw cases against political workers as it had planned to withdraw cases against leaders in the proposed National Reconciliation Ordinance. Earlier, the channel reported that the MQM had directed its ministers to now attend cabinet meetings it had earlier boycotted. daily times monitor...

Dawn, 5 October 2007

Verdict today on petition to stay presidential poll

ISLAMABAD, Oct 4: A 10-member bench of the Supreme Court hearing petitions challenging the eligibility of Gen Pervez Musharraf for the presidential election will on Friday give its verdict on a plea for staying the polls after completion of arguments by the two sides. Justice Javed Iqbal, who is heading the bench, said on Thursday that the court would not take into consideration the repercussions if it found that staying the poll process was a legal and constitutional requirement. The bench includes Justice Abdul Hameed Dogar, Justice Khalilur Rehman Ramday, Justice Mohammad Nawaz Abbasi, Justice Faqir Mohammad Khokhar, Justice Tassaduq Hussain Jilani, Justice Nasirul Mulk, Justice Raja Fayyaz Ahmed, Justice Syed Jamshed Ali and Justice Ghulam Rabbani. The bench asked the two sides to confine their arguments to the grant of interim stay...

Daily Times, 5 October 2007

Musharraf says time for full democracy

ISLAMABAD: President General Pervez Musharraf on Thursday reiterated his commitment to doff his uniform between October 6 and November 15 this year, and said it was the right time for transition towards complete democracy, Dawn News reported. Musharraf said he had given in writing that November 15 was the last date for removing his uniform, adding that before that it is his option. He said that remaining in uniform beyond 2004 was necessitated by the domestic and regional environment at that time. He

said the biggest dictate for leaving the post of army chief was the legal and constitutional obligations. He said the challenges faced by Pakistan in the last few years such as the October 2005 earthquake, recent floods in Sindh and at the Sukkur barrage, proved the value of a president in uniform...

Dawn, 5 October 2007

US warned of reaction to unilateral military action

WASHINGTON, Oct 4: Foreign Secretary Riaz Muhammad Khan has warned that any unilateral US military action in the tribal areas would have dangerous consequences both for Pakistan and the United States. Speaking to the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington, he said that such an action would weaken the government in Islamabad and be unpopular with the Pakistani public. His warning delivered at a gathering of top US policymakers, diplomats and think-tank experts follows a recent statement by former prime minister and opposition leader Benazir Bhutto that if elected she would allow US forces to operate in the tribal belt. Her statement has started a debate in the US media, with some American experts reiterating the demand for allowing US soldiers to strike alleged Al Qaeda and Taliban targets inside Pakistan...

Daily Times, 5 October 2007

VIEW: Bhutto's route to power

Four factors stand out among the causes of increased turbulence in Pakistan's politics. One, the presidential tenure of President Pervez Musharraf and that of the assemblies was coming to an end. It led to renewed hopes of a genuine change after several years of apathy and despair. Musharraf was at the apex of a system that controlled every facet of national life through functionaries whose true provenance was the army. Two, despite achievements in certain specific fields, his system of governance was no longer perceived by the people as either efficient or clean. Three, the empowerment of the media basically through the heroism and spirit of sacrifice of a new generation of journalists has become a factor of change. Four, a weightier factor emerged from the American need to avert another defeat in Afghanistan after the fiasco in Iraq. Washington could not take the risk of losing Pakistan, a key element in the US war in Afghanistan, to forces that may adversely affect the commitment of the Pakistan army to that war...

Daily Times, 6 October 2007

Presidential poll today, result after SC verdict

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court (SC) on Friday allowed the present assemblies to conduct the presidential election on Saturday (today), but directed the Election Commission (EC) to keep the results classified until a final decision is reached on the petitions challenging the candidacy of President General Pervez Musharraf. Presidential hopefuls Justice (r) Wajeehuddin Ahmed and Makhdoom Amin Fahim, along with a member of civil society, had filed constitutional petitions in court for a stay against the acceptance of General Musharraf's nomination papers by the EC...

Daily Times, 6 October 2007

PPP Wont resign from assemblies

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians meeting to devise a strategy

for the presidential election scheduled for today (Saturday) decided not to resign from the assemblies, but had no definite plans on its participation in the process late Friday night. The meetings participants decided to hold another meeting today at 8am for a final decision but insiders told Daily Times the party had decided to abstain from the election process. We have decided not to resign from the assemblies...

Dawn, 6 October 2007

Reconciliation ordinance delivers clean chit

ISLAMABAD, Oct 5: President Gen Pervez Musharraf on Friday promulgated the National Reconciliation Ordinance 2007 after a painstaking process of negotiations between government teams and the People's Party chairperson in order to confer legitimacy on the presidential elections being held on Saturday. The federal cabinet earlier approved the ordinance after a special meeting at the Prime Minister's secretariat. The ordinance, which was given the final shape on Thursday evening after Benazir Bhutto's approval, had been put on hold pending a verdict on the stay petition against the election. The main aim of the ordinance evidently is to give immediate relief to the PPP chairperson. She will get indemnity in all cases that were registered against her by the Nawaz Sharif government ...

The News, 6 October 2007

Editorial: On with the election

By allowing the presidential election to go ahead as planned but barring the Election Commission of Pakistan from notifying its result till a ruling is given on petitions challenging President Musharraf's eligibility for the poll, the Supreme Court may have tried to strike a balance between the demands of the government and the petitioners. Clearly, Friday's ruling implies that the court needs more time to examine the petitions and wouldn't want to expedite its own hearing for the sake of the election. However, the government has insisted in the hearings that if the election were postponed the rest of the world would 'laugh' at Pakistan. One member of the bench hearing the case had observed that the Constitution would not be violated if the presidential election were not held on Oct 6. A fair interpretation of Friday's decision by the Supreme Court would be that the government's request not to delay the election was considered to have substantial merit. It also puts the president in a somewhat odd position -- he knows that in all probability he should win today's presidential election but he has now been told that his victory could well amount to nothing if the ruling eventually ends up declaring him ineligible...

Daily Times, 6 October 2007

NAB to withdraw 507 corruption cases

ISLAMABAD: The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) is planning to withdraw almost 507 cases of corruption, worth millions of dollars, against various politicians, government servants, businessmen, and ex-armed forces officers, Daily Times has learnt. Sources said the amnesty, which pardons corruption during 1986 to 1999, would likely benefit several important politicians and former government servants, including sitting interior minister Aftab Sherpao, water and power minister Liaqat Jatoi, former communication minister Azam Khan Hoti and former senator from NWFP Javed Iqbal Abasi...

Daily Times, 6 October 2007

Bold newspapers restricted from covering presidential poll in Sindh

KARACHI: Some journalists who usually cover the Sindh Assembly proceedings have not been issued passes by CM House to cover the presidential election there today. Instead, more sympathetic journalists from other beats have been issued passes from the same organisation. We have received a list from CM House that is limited and many journalists from different bold newspapers including Daily Times are not included, a Sindh Information Department officer said. Urdu daily Ummat confirmed that it had not received a pass...

Daily Times, 7 October 2007

Musharraf is President

ISLAMABAD: President General Pervez Musharraf on Saturday swept the presidential election 386-3 against his rival Justice (r) Wajeehuddin Ahmed, according to unofficial results. Legislators of the PPPP boycotted the election while those of the APDM had resigned before the poll. Musharraf secured 57 percent of the vote from the 702-vote electoral college, which includes members of the Senate, National Assembly and four provincial assemblies. Special security arrangements were made in and around the parliament in Islamabad, while opposition parties and lawyers observed a black day on Saturday. Despite his clear victory, the Supreme Court can still disqualify Gen Musharraf if it decides that petitions challenging his eligibility are valid. The SC has ordered that the official notification of the election results be withheld until it decides the petitions...

Dawn, 7 October 2007

Petitions moved in SC, LHC against indemnity deal

LAHORE, Oct 6: The Supreme Court and the Lahore High Court have been requested to adjudicate the legality of the recently-promulgated National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO). Advocate Tariq Aziz in a petition filed in the Supreme Court said the ordinance patently and manifestly violated Article 25 of the Constitution because it provided for withdrawal of cases only against holders of public offices. He said the ordinance was also in contravention of the principle of equality of status under Article 2-A, Article 4 and Article 8 of the Constitution. He said the mal-intent behind issuance of the ordinance should not be ignored because it gave protection to people accused of plundering the national exchequer...

Daily Times, 7 October 2007

PPPP boycotts election

ISLAMABAD/KARACHI/LAHORE: The lawmakers of the Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) on Saturday boycotted the presidential election, saying the party was opposed to the election of a president in uniform. Speaking on a point of order before the floor of the National Assembly was handed over to Justice (r) Qazi Farooq, returning officer for the presidential poll, PPPP's presidential candidate Amin Fahim said that his party had nominated him for the process only to fulfill the constitutional requirement, and they would not take part in the voting. The PPPP lawmakers in the Punjab and Sindh assemblies also abstained from the voting process...

Daily Times, 7 October 2007

Lawyers protest Musharraf's re-election across country

PESHAWAR/QUETTA/ LAHORE/KARACHI: Lawyers in Peshawar, Lahore, Quetta and Karachi staged rallies against the presidential election on Saturday, resulting in clashes between them and the police. Lawyers in Peshawar protested in front of the Frontier Assembly building by preventing members of the assembly from voting. An armoured police vehicle rammed into the lawyers, fracturing PHCBA President Abdul Latif Afridi's leg and injuring General Secretary Ishtiaq Ibrahim and the Town DSP. The lawyers then set fire to the police vehicle and pelted fire fighters, police and the assembly building with stones until police tear-gassed the gathering...

Dawn, 7 October 2007

US paper calls it an ugly victory

WASHINGTON, Oct 6: In the lead editorial in its late Saturday edition, the Washington Post described President Pervez Musharraf's election as an ugly victory, achieved through an electoral college having little legitimacy. Already tainted, the general's mandate will also be tenuous because the Supreme Court ruled on Friday that the result cannot be certified until it rules on whether Mr Musharraf is violating the constitution by entering the election without stepping down as army commander-in-chief, the Post observed. The good news is that Pakistan's autocratic but ineffectual leader will probably surrender a large share of power in the coming weeks, the Post said while noting that Gen Musharraf had promised that if granted a new mandate as president, he would give up his military command. If he fulfils his promise, according to the newspaper, the Supreme Court might overlook the legal problems with his election...

Daily Times, 7 October 2007

EDITORIAL: Musharraf is President, whether one likes it or not

After the Supreme Court refused to deliver a clear verdict on the opposition's petition asking for a stay, the presidential election has resulted in an unofficial victory for President General Pervez Musharraf. His tenure is to end on November 15. He had told the Court earlier that he would step down as army chief after being re-elected on November 6 and before being sworn in as president for another five years. The Court gave half-victory to the opposition, staying only the official announcement of the result of the presidential election till October 17, when the case against the re-election of President Musharraf by the same assemblies would be decided on merit...

Daily Times, 8 October 2007

Government, PPP in talks over caretaker set-up

LAHORE: The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and the government are currently discussing the formation of a caretaker government and the conduct of fair and free elections, Geo News reported on Sunday. According to the channel, the government has accepted the PPP's demand that nazims would not be allowed to influence the election process. It said that the Election Commission would put certain restrictions on nazims to bar them from interfering in the general elections. The PPP had expressed its reservations on the local government system and said that nazims could use state machinery to rig the

polls...

Daily Times, 8 October 2007

No-confidence motion against CM will be withdrawn

PESHAWAR: Federal Minister for Political Affairs and PML NWFP President Amir Muqam said on Sunday the no-confidence motion against Chief Minister Akram Durrani, voting on which was scheduled for today (Monday), would be withdrawn. Muqam said that the purpose of the motion - to avert a possible dissolution of the provincial assembly so that the presidential polls may be conducted smoothly - had now been achieved. The decision was taken during a meeting chaired by Muqam here at his residence...

Daily Times, 8 October 2007

Govt divided Opp on NRO to win presidential poll: Aziz

ISLAMABAD: The government said on Sunday that it had successfully divided the opposition by promulgating the National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO) of 2007 on the eve of the presidential election, enabling President General Pervez Musharraf to remain president for another five years. We wanted to gain political mileage from [the NRO], and we were successful because President Musharraf got votes from all parts of the country and the opposition could not make the election controversial, said Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and Pakistan Muslim League (PML) President Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain in a press conference at Prime Minister's House...

Daily Times, 8 October 2007

SC not seen annulling Musharraf's vote

ISLAMABAD: President General Pervez Musharraf must wait at least 10 days for a Supreme Court (SC) ruling on the legality of his re-election but the court is unlikely to annul his sweeping victory, analysts said on Sunday. The official result has been postponed until the SC rules on challenges by the opposition who say Musharraf was ineligible to run while army chief even though he has promised to quit the military in weeks. The opposition also objected to Musharraf being re-elected by outgoing assemblies where Musharraf's coalition has a majority just weeks before they are dismissed for a general election due by mid-January. The court will take up the case again on October 17...

Dawn, 8 October 2007

Shujaat claims PPP was outsmarted on ordinance

ISLAMABAD, Oct 7: Buoyed by Saturday's victory in the presidential election, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and Pakistan Muslim League president Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain said on Sunday that the agreement with the PPP on the National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO) had been of huge benefit to the ruling coalition. Chaudhry Shujaat said: The PPP played games with us and we played our game which we won 'raat gai baat gai' If the higher judiciary strikes off the NRO, we have no obligation to renew it or bring any other law in its place. Addressing a news conference along with Chaudhry Shujaat and some ministers at the Prime Minister's House, Mr Aziz said: It was a success of government's policy that opposition parties were sharply divided on various issues, particularly on the presidential election...

Daily Times, 8 October 2007

Editorial: Pakistan under Musharraf's civilian tenure

President General Pervez Musharraf has been elected almost unopposed because of the circumstances in which the election was held on Saturday. The opposition wanted to delegitimise the process and resorted to the strategy of resignations, and boycott, in one case, of its own candidate. But the planned strikes and protest marches did not materialise, except for the fight put up by the lawyers in Peshawar which turned violent; and some mild agitation by the lawyers community at other centres of the electoral college...

Daily Times, 9 October 2007

Durrani advises governor to dissolve NWFP Assembly

PESHAWAR: NWFP Chief Minister Akram Khan Durrani on Monday advised the governor to dissolve the provincial assembly in view of the current situation in the country. I advise the governor under Article 112 (1) of the Constitution to immediately dissolve the assembly in view of the prevailing situation, Durrani told the media after the prorogation of the assembly session. Durrani said that it was his desire that the governor dissolve the assembly by Monday evening, or the assembly will automatically stand dissolved within 48 hours. Durrani said he was not interested in joining a caretaker government, and defended JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman's role in the country's politics, saying that Fazl was a farsighted leader who did not make emotional decisions...

Dawn, 9 October 2007

Fazl sees no future for APDM, wants MMA kept intact

LAHORE, Oct 8: The Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam doesn't see any future for the All Parties Democratic Movement, but will like the Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal to remain intact and play a better political role, the party's chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman says. He told Dawn on Monday that his party was part of the APDM in its individual capacity, not as a member of the MMA. Therefore, he said, it would review its relationship with the coalition because of the latter's role in the NWFP assembly. Set up in July at an all-party conference in London, the APDM comprises the MMA, Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz), Awami National Party, Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaaf and a number of smaller parties...

Daily Times, 9 October 2007

SHC serves contempt notice on Sindh CM

KARACHI: The Sindh High Court's senior-most judge has told the chief minister to explain why he should not be held in contempt of court for allegedly condoning graffiti that was critical of the court's decision to release four senior lawyers. A five-member full bench will hear the case on October 18, according to a notice issued on Monday. The case in question concerns four lawyers who were detained by the city police but were released in the evening of the same day when the SHC chief justice ordered their release against personal bonds of Rs 5,000 each...

Dawn, 9 October 2007

Legality of NRO challenged in SC

ISLAMABAD, Oct 8: Insaf Welfare Trust chairman Dr Aslam Khaki on Monday requested the Supreme Court to declare as unjust the recently promulgated National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO) 2007 for being a corrupt deal that violates the fundamental rights of the people. The scenario and political environment in which the ordinance has been promulgated clearly speak about the political deal on power sharing and not on national reconciliation, a five-page petition said. This is the third such petition filed before the apex court as well as the Lahore High Court seeking adjudication against the legality of the ordinance. The petitioners said that the ordinance patently and manifestly violated Article 25 of the Constitution because it provided for withdrawal of cases only against holders of public offices...

Daily Times, 9 October 2007

Chopper escorting Musharraf crashes

RAWALPINDI: Three army personnel, including a brigadier, and a PTV cameraman were killed and the president's spokesman Maj Gen (r) Rashid Qureshi and seven others injured when a Pakistan Army helicopter crashed near Muzaffarabad on Monday. The helicopter was escorting President General Pervez Musharraf on his visit to the affected areas on the second anniversary of the October 8, 2005, earthquake. The helicopter developed a technical fault when it left Muzaffarabad, and crash-landed at Majohi, catching fire. Four people including Brigadier Zahoor Ahmed, naik Ajmal, sepoy Rashid and PTV cameraman Muhammad Farooq were killed in the incident...

Daily Times, 9 October 2007

Martial law likely if SC verdict goes against Gen Musharraf

Washington: Harlan Ullman, a political analyst and adviser to two Washington think tanks, told a Canadian news outlet that if the Supreme Court decides against President Pervez Musharraf when it resumes hearings on Oct. 17, then I think there is going to be martial law and God knows what's going to happen in Pakistan. He told CTV, Canada, that the situation in Pakistan potentially is a crisis and the US should be focusing far more attention on it, but was afraid that when it does, it may be too late. According to Ullman, We're sitting on top of a powder keg times ten...

Dawn, 9 October 2007

Pakistan, India to discuss CBMs from Oct 18

ISLAMABAD, Oct 8: Pakistan and India will hold back to back expert-level talks on conventional and nuclear confidence building measures (CBMs) in New Delhi in the third week of October during which they are expected to firm up the two pending agreements on speedy return of inadvertent border crossers and incidents at sea. This was stated by the outgoing Foreign Office spokesperson Tasnim Aslam while responding to a question at a weekly news briefing here on Monday. Ms Aslam, who has been designated as Pakistan's ambassador to Italy, was addressing her last news briefing as the spokesperson. She said the talks on conventional CBMs with India would be held on October 18 and the meeting on nuclear CBMs on October 19. Recalling that the last round was held in April 2006 in Islamabad, Ms Aslam said: These meetings will review the implementation of the CBMs already agreed upon. Also, the two sides may discuss new

proposals....

Daily Times, 10 October 2007

50 more killed as jets bomb militant hideouts

MIRANSHAH/PESHAWAR: Another 50 people were killed as fighter jets bombed militant hideouts in North Waziristan on Tuesday, taking the total death toll from three days of fighting to around 250. Military spokesman Major General Waheed Arshad said fighter jets bombed militant targets in Ipi, Khedherkhel and Khushali Torikhel villages in Mir Ali tehsil in the afternoon. Security sources said 50 people were killed in the bombing, though there was no official confirmation. AFP, citing security sources, reported that 50 militants were killed and a similar number injured...

Daily Times, 10 October 2007

Governor's rule or interim CM in NWFP: decision today

ISLAMABAD: NWFP Governor Lt-Gen (r) Ali Mohammad Jan Orakzai will today assume executive authority over the province under Article 129 of the Constitution after the provincial assembly's dissolution in the afternoon. However, the sources said the federal government had not yet decided whether to impose governor's rule in NWFP or appoint an interim chief minister. It will be decided on Wednesday, the sources said. According to the Constitution, the provincial assembly will automatically stand dissolved 48 hours after the chief minister advises the governor to dissolve the assembly...

Dawn, 10 October 2007

Musharraf wont take oath before SC verdict

ISLAMABAD, Oct 9: President General Pervez Musharraf has said that he will not take the oath of the office of president until the Supreme Court gave its verdict on his eligibility. As the judiciary has fixed October 17 (as the next date of hearing), with the order not to declare the results officially, and if it (the case) continues, I will not take oath, he said in a programme of the ARY Television. Brief excerpts from the president's interview, to be telecast on Wednesday at 9:10pm, were aired by the ARY on Tuesday. In reply to a question, the president termed negative the PPP's absence from voting in the presidential election. He, however, said that PPP's decision of not resigning from the assemblies was positive...

The News, 10 October 2007

US to continue cooperation with Pakistan: Townsend

WASHINGTON: The White House reiterated that Pakistan's president, Pervez Musharraf, had been a helpful ally in fighting terrorism and Pakistan offered sacrifices in the war against terrorism; accordingly, Washington will continue cooperation with Musharraf government. The White House released its new homeland security plan Tuesday, which it said "incorporates lessons learned from exercises and real-world catastrophes."...

Dawn, 10 October 2007

Benazir claims seat in parliament

KARACHI, Oct 9: Pakistan People's Party chairperson Benazir Bhutto has moved an

urgent application in the Sindh High Court to press her claim to a National Assembly seat reserved for women following withdrawal of cases against her. She submitted through advocate Farooq H. Naek that she was no longer disqualified due to cases pending against her in accountability courts or her conviction under Section 31-A of the National Accountability Bureau Ordinance for her inability to defend herself. The newly-promulgated National Reconciliation Ordinance has quashed all cases against her and declared Section 31-A ab initio void. Ms Bhutto said she was at the top of her party's list as a candidate for one of the women's seats and had filed a petition in the Sindh High Court to be declared elected in 2002....

The News, 10 October 2007

Editorial: Talking with the insurgents

Amid an increasingly worsening security situation in Afghanistan, there has been news of aggressive efforts by the government to hold direct negotiations with the Taliban insurgents. There have also been sporadic reports of the Taliban's willingness to talk. If there is any truth in the news, it would be highly significant since it would be the first time that the insurgents would have responded somewhat positively to the government's continuous attempts to bring them to the negotiating table. It would be premature to say if there could be a real breakthrough since a number of questions still remain unanswered with regard to the most wanted negotiations with the Taliban if these happen at all. However, the development does deserve to be termed at least a good omen towards peacemaking...

Dawn, 10 October 2007

Red notices to be withdrawn: govt

ISLAMABAD, Oct 9: The government will withdraw red notices issued through Interpol against former prime minister Benazir Bhutto and her spouse Asif Ali Zardaria. This will be done in the light of government's reconciliation policy, Ministry of Interior spokesman Brig (ret'd) Javed Iqbal Cheema said on Tuesday. Whatever the government requires to fulfil the norms of reconciliation will be done, he told journalists in a weekly briefing on the law and order situation. He told Dawn after the briefing that the red notices against the PPP leaders would be withdrawn soon and a request had been made to Interpol in this regard. It is pertinent to mention here that Interpol had recently asked the government of Pakistan to update it on the status of Ms Bhutto whether she still was a wanted person by the government...

Daily Times, 11 October 2007

General elections in January: Aziz

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said on Wednesday that elections for the national and provincial assemblies would be held in the first week of January under a caretaker setup and predicted that the ruling Pakistan Muslim League (PML) and its allies would emerge victorious. I think the elections for national and provincial assemblies will be held in the first week of January, Aziz said while speaking at an Iftar-dinner arranged for journalists at Prime Minister's House. He said a caretaker government would be set up after the present government's term had completed to ensure free and fair elections...

Dawn, 11 October 2007

Benazir wants armed forces brought under parliament's control

ISLAMABAD, Oct 10: Pakistan People's Party chairperson Benazir Bhutto has stressed the need for unity among all political parties to bring the armed forces under the control of parliament. The PPP has signed a Charter of Democracy calling upon political parties to make the members of the armed forces answerable to parliament, as they are in Washington, London and France, for greater transparency and accountability, Ms Bhutto said in an interview to the Inter-Press Services the text of which was released by the party's media office here on Wednesday. When asked about her party's strategy for controlling army, she said their first step was to separate the offices of army chief and the president...

Daily Times, 11 October 2007

Govt to provide Benazir with extra security

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairwoman Benazir Bhutto will be given extra security on her homecoming next week and she has been allowed to import a special bulletproof car, the government said on Wednesday. Bhutto's party has requested police protection for its leader when she returns to Pakistan on October 18, reported AFP. The move follows a reported threat last week by Baitullah Mehsud a pro-Taliban chief from South Waziristan to kill Benazir in a suicide attack. We will provide her security and we expect her representative to discuss the arrangements with Interior Ministry authorities, Interior Minister Aftab Sherpao said...

Daily Times, 11 October 2007

Nawaz arriving in London next week

WASHINGTON: Former prime minister Nawaz Sharif will return to London from Saudi Arabia next week, the Daily Times was told on Wednesday morning. Nadir Chaudhry, press secretary to the PML leader, confirmed reports that have appeared here and there to the effect that the exiled prime minister would be leaving the Kingdom soon. With the Saudi guarantors of the understanding that required Sharif to stay away from Pakistan for 10 years, now willing to let him go, the deal, such as it was, has become infructuous. The Saudi royal house was greatly perturbed by the negative reception in Pakistan of the role the Kingdom and its representatives played in getting Sharif whisked off from Pakistan within hours of his arrival in Islamabad from London...

Dawn, 11 October 2007

Musharraf moving in right direction: US paper

NEW YORK, Oct 10: Stressing that the last thing the US wants is to further destabilise a nuclear-armed (Pakistan) government threatened by Muslim extremists, the Wall Street Journal said in an editorial on Wednesday that (President Pervez) Musharraf was moving in the right direction, and the US could help to keep him moving. The financial daily observed: The next stage in the political transition rests with the Supreme Court, which has yet to rule on the constitutionality of the presidential election. The paper observed that the court in its ruling said the election could go forward but postponed verdict on Mr. Musharraf's eligibility for presidential office until after the vote. The WSJ stressed: If the judges invalidate his victory, the political upheaval could be messy. A better outcome

would be to allow the election to stand in exchange for conditions that ensure Mr. Musharraf will follow through on his promise for civilian rule...

Pak Tribune, 11 October 2007

Shams-ul-Mulik to be appointed Caretaker CM of NWFP

PESHAWAR: Former provincial minister Shams-ul-Mulik is expected to be appointed as the caretaker Chief Minister of NWFP, the well-placed sources said. It is confirmed that Shams-ul-Mulik is being appointed as the caretaker Chief Minister of NWFP, a source claimed. Earlier, NWFP Governor Ali Muhammad Jan Aurakzai had dissolved the NWFP Assembly on the advice of the Chief Minister Akram Khan Durrani. The Law Department had issued notification about dissolution of the provincial assembly. The nomination of Caretaker Chief Minister is expected any time on Wednesday while the caretaker cabinet would be announced in few days time...

Daily Times, 12 October 2007

Elders negotiating N Waziristan truce

MIRANSHAH: A small jirga of tribal elders is negotiating a ceasefire with government officials in North Waziristan after fierce clashes between security forces and militants in which 250 people have been killed. NWFP Governor Ali Jan Orakzai told reporters in Peshawar that a jirga was negotiating a ceasefire. Once the ceasefire is agreed upon then a larger jirga will discuss permanent peace, he said. Tribal sources in Miranshah said that MNA Maulana Nek Zaman, Maulana Deen Dar and Maulana Muhammad Alam were holding meetings with the military authorities and the militants to reach a ceasefire. The jirga is also trying to negotiate the opening of the Miranshah-Bannu highway for public traffic...

Daily Times, 12 October 2007

Army fumes at BBC interview of abducted soldiers

PESHAWAR: The chief military spokesman has reacted angrily to a BBC report in which three army officers held hostage by the Taliban in South Waziristan were interviewed. This is an attempt to carry out propaganda, Maj-Gen Waheed Arshad told Daily Times on Thursday after militants led by Baitullah Mehsud allowed the BBC access to the three officers for the first time since they and some 250 other soldiers were abducted on August 30. BBC reporter Haroon Rashid wrote that the officers did not want to talk but were pressurised by the Taliban to do so. Gen Arshad warned Pakistani journalists against becoming spokesmen of militants...

Dawn, 12 October 2007

Musharraf's popularity at all-time low: US survey: Majority of respondents against govt-PPP deal

ISLAMABAD, Oct 11: A majority of people in Pakistan think that the country is heading in a wrong direction and the present government does not deserve to be re-elected because of its poor performance. According to a survey conducted by the International Republican Institute (IRI) of the US Republican Party and released here on Thursday, 56 per cent of the people said their economic condition had worsened over the past one year and 65 per cent said they felt less secure today. Another interesting finding of the survey

is that a majority of respondents were opposed to a deal between President Pervez Musharraf and Pakistan People's Party chairperson Benazir Bhutto. The poll was conducted between August 29 and September 13 and the randomly selected sample consisted of 4,009 men and women from 256 rural and 144 urban areas of 60 districts in the four provinces...

Dawn, 12 October 2007

Govt not serious about troops release: militants

PESHAWAR: Tribal militants have said that the government is showing little urgency in securing the release of some 280 soldiers captured by them in South Waziristan more than a month ago, according to a BBC report. The report says that BBC was given exclusive access to the militants and the soldiers. The militants are demanding military withdrawal from the area. We are very serious about the matter and want to resolve it peacefully, Zulfiqar Mehsud, a spokesman for militant leader Baitullah Mehsud told the BBC from their base near the border with Afghanistan. He said he believed that the government had several reasons for not being serious, one was the political crisis in Islamabad over the presidential election. He also said that the government would be trying harder if one of the kidnapped soldiers was the son or relative of a general or minister...

The News, 12 October 2007

Editorial: Interim set-up and polls

A tentative timeframe for the general election has finally been given by the government. Speaking to journalists at an iftar on Wednesday, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said that an interim government would be in place at the federal and provincial levels after the assemblies complete their term on November 15. He also said that within 60 days of the end of the current assemblies -- i.e. by January 15 -- general elections would be held. He said that the actual date of the election would be decided upon and announced by the Election Commission and that this would be the second phase of the election process. The prime minister, like the president, has said on many an occasion, that the government is committed to holding the elections in a free and transparent manner. In response to questions on the controversial and much-criticized National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO), the prime minister said that the idea behind it was to provide a level-playing field to all political parties participating in the coming election...

Dawn, 12 October 2007

Supreme Court asks govt to regularise disappearances

ISLAMABAD, Oct 11: Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry on Thursday gave a concession to the government, allowing it to regularise the disappearance of all the missing persons, but reiterated that the Supreme Court had substantial evidence that the people were in the custody of intelligence agencies. We are deliberately exercising restraint due to the national interest and, therefore, openly asking the government to regularise the custody of the missing persons, the CJ observed, adding that the court would not be in a position to give the concession again. At the last hearing, the CJ had warned of summoning the heads of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), Military Intelligence (MI) and other agencies if the missing people were not released. The chief justice is

heading a three-judge bench hearing pleas for recovery of the missing people...

Pak Tribune, 12 October 2007

SC orders provincial police chiefs to launch crackdown against the hoarders

ISLAMABAD: Supreme Court (SC) has directed Inspectors General police of all the four provinces to launch crackdown against the hoarders. The directives were issued by a 3-member bench of SC headed by the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry while hearing suo moto case against soaring prices of essential commodities. IG's police of all the four provinces, chief secretaries, home secretary Punjab and top officers of Islamabad administration were summoned by the court. The court expressed dissatisfaction over the report presented by the additional secretary on the measures taken by the government for containing inflation and ordered crack down be launched against the hoarders. The cases be registered under housing act besides ensuring the supply of essential goods in the market, SC further directed...

Daily Times, 13 October 2007

LHC disposes of Benazir's appeal against conviction

LAHORE/RAWALPINDI: A division bench of the Lahore High Court (LHC) on Friday disposed of an appeal from Benazir Bhutto challenging her conviction in absentia in the SGS-Cotecna and ARY references by a Rawalpindi accountability court, declaring it infructuous. Meanwhile, a Rawalpindi accountability court adjourned a hearing into pleas seeking the withdrawal of NAB cases against Benazir and her husband Asif Zardari till October 17...

Daily Times, 13 October 2007

SC steps in way of NRO

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court (SC) on Friday declined to stay the National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO) 2007, but held that any benefit drawn by any public office-holder under the ordinance would be subject to the final decision of the court. A three-member bench headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry that initiated hearing of petitions challenging the ordinance also appointed Mian Allah Nawaz, former chief justice of Lahore High Court, Shaiq Usmani, former judge of Sindh High Court and Sardar Khan, former attorney general for Pakistan, as amicus curiae (friends of the court) to assist in interpreting the constitutional provisions...

Dawn, 13 October 2007

'War on terror' to continue, says Kayani

PESHAWAR, Oct 12: Vice Chief of Army Staff General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani has said there will be no let up in the war on terror till it reaches its logical end and all necessary support will be provided to troops engaged in the fight. Gen Kayani visited the corps headquarters here on Friday and called on Corps Commander Lieutenant General Mohammed Masood Aslam. The general was given a detailed briefing on the prevailing security situation in the western borders and Fata.

Dawn, 13 October 2007

2 nationalists produced in ATC

By Aziz Malik HYDERABAD, Oct 12: Following a warning given by the Chief Justice of Pakistan that he would summon heads of intelligence agencies if the missing persons are not released, Sindh police on Friday produced two missing nationalists in the anti-terrorism court here on Friday. Acting judge of the ATC Abdul Rasool Memon remanded Jeay Sindh Qaumi Mahaz activists Chetan Bajer and G. M. Bhagat to judicial custody and asked police to produce them in the court on October 24..

The News, 13 October 2007

Triumph of corruptocracy

By Babar Sattar After his coup General Pervez Musharraf declared that Pakistan had hit "rock bottom" and "rise it must." He condemned the-then prevailing culture of corruption and collusion and assured the nation that Pakistan would be cleansed of degenerate political elites and that "true democracy" would be ushered in. The argument seemed logical and encouraging to those incensed by a decade of loot and "dysfunctional democracy." At the time it seemed incomprehensible how our already depleted fortunes could be diminished any further. But the general has really put to the test this nation's faith in its own resilience. Every time there is a near consensus that we have finally hit rock bottom, the rulers show more imagination...

Daily Times, 14 October 2007

PML, not Musharraf, has problems with my return: Benazir

DUBAI: Former premier Benazir Bhutto, who is returning to Pakistan from her self-imposed exile on October 18, has said that President Pervez Musharraf had no problem with her return, but the ruling Pakistan Muslim League (PML) was afraid of it. Bhutto, 54, told Gulf News that the precise schedule for her homecoming would be announced on October 16. She also rejected President Musharraf's request asking her to delay her return till the announcement of the Supreme Court's verdict on his eligibility to contest the presidential poll...

Daily Times, 14 October 2007

MMA on the verge of split

By Azaz Syed. ISLAMABAD: Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) is on the verge of split as rift between Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) is deepening day by day and even dissolution of NWFP Assembly has failed to bring them closer, Daily Times learnt on Saturday. In order to keep the alliance intact, a meeting of MMA's Supreme Council has been called on October 22 in Islamabad in which JI along with other allied parties will ask Maulana Fazlur Rehman to either leave the alliance or stop supporting Musharraf...

Dawn, 14 October 2007

MMA to form alliance with PTI, PML-N, says Qazi

By Ashraf Mumtaz. LAHORE, Oct 13: The Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal, Pakistan Muslim League-N and Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaaf will form an electoral alliance for the upcoming general elections, MMA president Qazi Hussain Ahmed said on Saturday. Talking to Dawn, he said as these parties had identical views on a number of issues, they would contest elections together. The MMA chief said that the All Parties Democratic

Movement had been set up to wage political struggle for the restoration of democracy and it would work for attainment of that goal even if the Supreme Court legitimised Gen Pervez Musharraf's election as president in uniform...

The News, 14 October 2007

Battleground Waziristan

The battlefield is a scene of constant chaos. The winner will be the one who controls that chaos, both his own and the enemies. Napoleon Bonaparte. Allah, America and the army are the factors that have traditionally balanced power equations in Pakistan. But now a fourth called Afghanistan, and its violent influence in Waziristan, is increasingly turning into a dangerous focal point for the country and the region. As President General Pervez Musharraf basks in the glory of a 'civilian' victory, he faces a rapidly deteriorating situation on the borders along Afghanistan in Waziristan...

Dawn, 14 October 2007

Eid: Nawaz slates govt, Benazir wants quake victims remembered

ISLAMABAD, Oct 13: Former prime minister Nawaz Sharif in his message on the occasion of Eidul Fitr criticised the policies of the Musharraf regime in strongest words while PPP chairperson Benazir Bhutto in her message did not even make any mention of political issue after reaching an understanding with the Musharraf regime. In a statement issued from Saudi Arabia and released by the party's Central Secretariat here on Friday, Mr Sharif said 160 million people of Pakistan would celebrate Eid in real terms when there would be no price-hike, unemployment, poverty, injustice and lawlessness in the country...

Daily Times, 17 October 2007

Caretaker setup on Nov 15

LAHORE: Information Minister Muhammad Ali Durrani has said that the caretaker prime minister and provincial chief ministers will assume charge on November 15, and the incumbent provincial governors will continue to discharge their constitutional duties till the formation of a new government...

Daily Times, 17 October 2007

SC resumes hearing of petitions against president today: Martial law possible if SC rules against Musharraf, says Afgan

LAHORE: The imposition of martial law can't be ruled out if the Supreme Court decides that President General Pervez Musharraf's re-election from the present assemblies is invalid, said Federal Parliamentary Affairs Minister Dr Sher Afgan Khan Niazi on Tuesday, as the court prepared to hear petitions today challenging Gen Musharraf's eligibility for the election...

The News, 17 October 2007

The president's bribe

The lights are dim. You can hardly recognise the faces in the darkness of the night. A briefcase full of unmarked dollar bills is exchanged in unseen hands. In another sordid deal, a few million dollars are transferred to a numbered bank account as illegal

gratification in the shadowy world of private banking. This is how bribes are paid in the modern world in unspoken discretion. Even on our Third World streets, when a traffic sergeant pulls a motorist to a stop and opens up his challan book with a look that says Chai pani ka kharcha, a fifty or a hundred rupee note is quietly tucked in with the license for inspection.

Dawn, 17 October 2007

Waziristan calm amid talk of ceasefire

MIRAMSHAH, Oct 16: The government on Tuesday said it was considering a request by militants to cease fire and negotiate an agreement to restore peace in the Mirali sub-district after days of bloody clashes with security forces left over 200 people dead and many more wounded. But residents of Mirali said a ceasefire agreement between militants and security forces had already been reached following mediation by a tribal jirga from Hangu and Orakzai tribal regions...

Dawn, 17 October 2007

Benazir slams clampdown on supporters

LONDON, Oct 16: Former prime minister Benazir Bhutto condemned on Tuesday a crackdown on supporters preparing to welcome her home this week, saying 11 people had been shot and injured. Ms Bhutto also said there was a risk of an assassination attempt on her when she returns from a self-imposed exile to Karachi on Thursday, saying she was wrangling with Pakistani authorities over security arrangements. Speaking to Britain's Sky News television, Ms Bhutto said she hoped lots of people would turn out to welcome her home, but added she had heard of restrictions on some people trying to travel to Karachi...

Dawn, 17 October 2007

Pakistan slams delay in closure of Afghan refugee camps

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 16: Pakistan has criticised UN agencies operating in Afghanistan for delaying closure of four Afghan refugee camps close to the border which serve as a source for the flow of cross-border militants. The closure of these four camps is being delayed because of inexplicable reluctance, including on the part of UN Agencies, to facilitate the return of the refugees, said Pakistan's UN Ambassador Akram Zaki addressing the Security Council's meeting on Afghanistan...

Daily Times, 18 October 2007

'I will rid Pakistan of extremism, dictatorship'

DUBAI: Former premier Benazir Bhutto pledged on Wednesday that she would return to Pakistan to rid it of extremism and dictatorship by bringing in democracy. Ms Bhutto is due to arrive in Karachi today at around 1:00pm. Tomorrow (Thursday) at this time we will be on board the plane for Karachi, which is a day that I and all the people in Pakistan who love democracy and who believe in fundamental human rights have been waiting for, the two-time premier told a press conference in Dubai, flanked by her two daughters and her husband Asif Zardari...

Dawn, 18 October 2007

Sharifs was not a forced exile, says SC

ISLAMABAD, Oct 17: The Supreme Court announced on Wednesday its detailed judgment in the exile case of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif and his brother Shahbaz Sharif. The court elaborated the points in its August 23 short order of the case and said that the former prime minister's release from the prison and his journey to Saudi Arabia after getting a pardon due to an undertaking could not be described as forced exile...

Daily Times, 18 October 2007

Troop withdrawal from Waziristan will tick off NATO: Kasuri

LAHORE: Foreign Minister Khusrhid Mehmood Kasuri said on Wednesday that the NATO troops of 37 countries present in Afghanistan would not stay silent if Pakistani troops were called back from Waziristan and the surrounding areas, Geo News reported. He also told journalists at a function that the clash in Waziristan had been instigated after militants in the area had conducted a series of criminal acts, and not on American directives, Online reported...

Dawn, 18 October 2007

Benazir homecoming: security blanket all over Karachi

KARACHI, Oct 17: Bhutto loyalists kept streaming into Karachi late into Wednesday night to welcome the People's Party chairperson upon her arrival after eight years in self-exile. At a pre-departure press conference in Dubai, Benazir Bhutto said she wanted to create for the people of Pakistan a country where they have opportunities for employment, economic well-being, the primacy of civilian rule and a society free of extremism...

Dawn, 18 October 2007

UK denies role in Musharraf's deal with PPP

LONDON, Oct 17: Sidestepping a query about UK's presumed role in nudging Gen Pervez Musharraf and Benazir Bhutto into a power-sharing agreement, British Foreign Secretary David Miliband said Pakistani politics was a matter for Pakistani politicians and that the UK had nothing to do with it. We always had close links with Pakistan, but we have nothing to do with its internal politics, that is the matter of Pakistani politicians, reiterated Mr Miliband when asked if he was satisfied with the latest political developments in Pakistan...

Dawn, 19 October 2007

Benazir survives midnight carnage: Twin blasts cast shadow over homecoming : At least 125 dead

By S. Raza Hassan, Imran Ayub, Azfar-ul-Ashfaq & Shamim-ur-Rahman. KARACHI, Oct 18: Over 125 participants of a procession led by former prime minister Benazir Bhutto upon her return to the country lost their lives on Thursday night after two powerful blasts rocked the slow-moving motorcade edging its way past the Karsaz bridge, on Sharea Faisal. At least 100 people were injured in the explosions. Former FIA chief Rahman Malik told a private television channel that the explosions clearly targeted Ms Benazir's specially-built vehicle. He added that many top PPP leaders were injured...

Daily Times, 19 October 2007

News Analysis: Significance of Benazir's homecoming

She came, she saw and she wept with joy. Contrary to the moralising pundits who had predicted doom and gloom for Benazir Bhutto because she did an unsavoury deal with a military dictator in exchange for the reprieve of the National Reconciliation Ordinance, the masses in their multitudes seem to have approved her strategy to come back into power after being out in the cold for eleven years. In an indirect way, they have reiterated their view that affinity to power is a huge magnet for them. They refused to come out to vote for her in 1997 because they knew that the establishment wouldn't let her back into office, just as they now sense that the powerful domestic and international establishment wants her back in office and they want to be part of the homecoming...

The News, 19 October 2007

Musharraf-BB relationship

If true democracy means providing a level playing field to all political parties and politicians, Benazir Bhutto's return home after more than eight years of self-imposed exile ought to be hailed as the beginning of a much-needed process in which the military, or President General Pervez Musharraf to be precise, is willing to allow a party of the masses to compete with the ones that were artificially created or propped up through dubious means. It also signals the weakening of the General's stranglehold over the country's politics and this is something to be welcomed by all those yearning for Pakistan to become a truly democratic state...

Daily Times, 19 October 2007

BB wants IB chief Ijaz Shah sacked

LAHORE: Former prime minister Benazir Bhutto has demanded that the government sack Intelligence Bureau (IB) chief Brig (r) Ijaz Shah, PPP spokesman Senator Farhatullah Babar quoted her as saying after the late night blasts on Thursday in Karachi that killed dozens of people. Ms Bhutto's husband Zardari told Geo TV that he did not think that extremist elements were behind these blasts, adding that some elements within the government, including some ministers, were responsible for the blasts. He said the PPP was a democratic party and was not a threat to jihadi elements...

Dawn, 19 October 2007

Phased operation against militants in NWFP planned

PESHAWAR, Oct 18: The federal government is seriously considering a phased operation to check growing militancy and improve deteriorating law and order situation in the NWFP, credible sources said. The fast deteriorating law and order situation in parts of the province was discussed at a high-level meeting in Islamabad on Wednesday, co-chaired by President Musharraf and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, the sources said. According to them, Chief Secretary Sahibzada Riaz Noor made a detailed presentation and suggested steps that were required to be taken to stem the tide of militancy in the province, particularly in southern and northern districts...

Daily Times, 20 October 2007

Blasts were attack on democracy: Benazir

Benazir Bhutto, former premier and chairwoman of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), said on Friday the suicidal blasts during her homecoming parade on Thursday were an attack on democracy, and an attack on the very unity and integrity of Pakistan. Wearing a black armband to mourn the lives lost in the attacks, Benazir told a press conference at Bilawal House that three people were responsible for the attack. I'll consult my legal counsel on whether to name them in the case or not and if they advise me, I'll do it, she said.

Dawn, 20 October 2007

Musharraf, Benazir vow to fight terrorism

President Gen Pervez Musharraf on Friday called Pakistan People's Party chairperson Benazir Bhutto and condemned attack on her rally. President Musharraf and Ms Benazir are reported to have expressed their resolve to combat extremism and terrorism. The president, according to an official handout, expressed grief over the deaths of party workers and assured a thorough investigation to bring perpetrators of the heinous crime to book...

Daily Times, 20 October 2007

Govt says Qaeda, Taliban may be behind Karachi blasts

The suicide attack on former premier Benazir Bhutto that killed 136 people may have been the work of Al Qaeda and the Taliban, AP quoted authorities as saying on Friday, as forensic experts studied the severed head of the alleged bomber to try to determine his identity. A provincial government official had cited intelligence reports that three suicide bombers linked to pro-Taliban warlord Baitullah Mehsud were in Karachi. Mehsud's spokesman could not be reached for comment, but an alleged associate of the militant commander, Isa Khan, denied Taliban involvement. The attack bore the hallmarks of militants linked to Mehsud and Al Qaeda, according to Home Secretary Ghulam Mohtarem. He suggested that Bhutto's camp had not taken the need for security seriously despite warnings.

Dawn, 20 October 2007

Hearing in Nawaz cases adjourned: 'Nawaz will return next month'

An accountability court on Friday adjourned till November 8 hearing in three corruption cases against Mian Nawaz Sharif and his family after the prosecution sought a new date saying that a leader of the former prime minister's party had stated that he would return in the first week of next month. National Accountability Bureau Deputy Prosecutor-General Zulfiqar Ahmed Bhutta submitted to the Accountability Court No 4 that PML (N) leader Javed Hashmi had claimed that Mr Sharif would return to Pakistan in the first week of November.

Daily Times, 20 October 2007

Don't blame me, says Mehsud

Taliban commander Baitullah Mehsud on Friday denied any involvement in attacks on Benazir Bhutto that killed 133 people. I had nothing to do with it, Baitullah Mehsud told Reuters by satellite phone from an undisclosed location about the attack on Bhutto's

motorcade as it edged through hundreds of thousands of supporters gathered to welcome her from years of exile. Mehsud, who operates in Waziristan, a tribal region on the border with Afghanistan that has become a centre of Al Qaeda and Taliban activity, had been widely reported as issuing threats against Bhutto after she announced plans to return to Pakistan after eight years of self-imposed exile. His fighters are currently holding more than 200 Pakistani soldiers hostage, having captured them in late August.

Daily Times, 20 October 2007

Waziristan to be pacified once and for all

An all-out battle for control of North and South Waziristan is about to commence between the army, the Taliban and their Al Qaeda adherents, according to a report published in The Asia Times. The report states that a Pakistani security official, speaking to Asia Times Online on condition of anonymity, said the army aimed to completely pacify the two Waziristans once and for all...