US to boost Pakistan's anti-terror capability
WASHINGTON, Sept 30: The United States has assured Pakistan that it supports the country's 'sovereignty' and 'territorial integrity' amid tensions between the two allies over cross-border raids into Fata. The US assurance - included in a joint statement - followed talks in Washington on Monday between US and Pakistani teams aimed at consolidating a long-term relationship between the two nations. During the talks 'the United States affirmed its support for Pakistan's sovereignty, independence, unity, and territorial integrity', said the statement issued by the US State Department. The talks between US Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte and Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi were part of what is called the 'elevated strategic dialogue' between the two countries.

Editorial: Welcome change of guard at ISI
In a 'major' reshuffle in the Pakistan Army, Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Director General Lt Gen Nadeem Taj has been replaced by newly promoted Lt General Ahmed Shuja Pasha. The change of guard at the ISI will attract attention because it formally required the approval of Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani under whose constitutional tutelage the country's top spy agency is formally supposed to function. If Mr Gilani had so wished, Gen Taj would have continued to remain in place. But this hasn't happened because COAS Gen Ashfaq Kayani wanted it otherwise and the PM had no objection. Gen Taj's move to the Gujranwala corps, however, is important for his career and will not be viewed negatively. The move is interesting because Prime Minister Gilani has been critical of the intelligence establishment of the country in general. He had made an attempt - unsuccessfully - to put the ISI under the Interior Ministry. However, after the Marriott Hotel blast on September 20, he had reason to complain once again, which added to the general public objection to the effectiveness of the intelligence agencies against terrorism in the country, which seemed to have a free hand in choosing and executing its targets. Above all, it was embarrassing that employees belonging to the ISI were attacked and killed repeatedly in Rawalpindi.

Pakistan rejects US demand to question Dr A Q Khan
WASHINGTON: US officials have expressed the desire to talk directly to Dr A Q Khan in the third round of the Pak-US Strategic Dialogue held here on Monday but Pakistan has rejected the demand. Pakistan, however, offered to get all the answers from Dr Khan in case the US has any further unanswered questions, a diplomatic source told The News. A number of officials who participated in the dialogue said that the talks were held in a very pleasant atmosphere and both parties spoke candidly and openly.

ADB approves $500m loan for Pakistan
ISLAMABAD: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a $500 million loan under 'Pakistan Accelerating Economic Transformation Programme', which will provide a breathing space to dwindling foreign currency reserves. 'We are trying to disburse this approved amount as early as possible. It is our effort to transfer $500 million amount into accounts of the State Bank within the date of Sept 30, 2008,' a high-level official at the country's bank headquarters here said when The News approached him in this regard on Tuesday afternoon, adding they were sorting out some relevant legal requirements but the money would be in the accounts of the GoP.
very soon. The countryís foreign currency reserves fell to $7.8 billion on September 29, 2008. By receiving $500 million loan facility from the ADB, the reserves will again cross $8 billion mark, giving a breathing space to the national economy.

News, 1 October 2008
**Editorial: Good in parts**
As the presidential visit to the US concludes the report cards are being marked around the world, with the consensus seeming to be 'Could do better but not bad for a first attempt.' Taking the debit points first; the Presidential address to the United Nations was halting and a little bland and in direct contrast to the ranting of President Ahmadinejad of Iran. President Zardari ranted at nobody but he did touch all the right bases; the down-side was that his speech was distinctly square-wheeled and under-rehearsed. If you are going to address the world from the podium of the United Nations it makes sense to have stood in front of a mirror and done a read-through of your speech first, and the presidential handlers need to have their boss sharpen up his act for the future.

News, 4 October 2008
**18 killed in US strikes on NWA villages**
PESHAWAR: Eighteen people, including women and a child, were killed and several others injured in two different attacks by US pilotless spy plane and jet fighters on villages in North Waziristan Agency (NWA) on Friday. Official and tribal sources said a US spy plane, also known as drone or Predator, fired two Hellfire missiles on Mohammad Khel village, about 20 kilometres west of Miramshah, headquarters of the NWA, in which 15 people were killed and several others injured. There were reports that those killed in the missile attack included some Arabs, who were invited to a dinner by the pro-Taliban tribesmen in the village. According to the villagers and official sources, a US spy plane that had been flying over NWA since Friday morning blitzed two houses owned by the Dawar tribesmen, Daud Jan and Abdur Rahman.

News, 4 October 2008
**Asfandyar survives suicide attack**
PESHAWAR/CHARSADDA: Three inquiry committees have been constituted to probe into a suicide blast at Wali Bagh on Thursday, second day of Eidul Fitr, in which four persons were killed and 18 others injured. The additional inspector general (AdIG) investigation, NWFP, is heading the high-level inquiry committee, while one is being headed by the SP investigation, Charsadda, and another by a senior officer of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA). The experts of the FIA and police examined the site of the blast and sent the specimen of the body of the suicide bomber for a DNA test. At least four persons were killed when a suicide bomber blew himself up at the Hujra of Asfandyar Wali Khan, President of the ANP, who was the target of the attacker at Wali Bagh, Charsadda.

News, 4 October 2008
**PM calls for India-like US nuclear deal**
MULTAN: Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani said Pakistan will demand a civilian nuclear agreement with the United States after Washington signed such deal with India. The US Senate endorsed a landmark US-India nuclear pact, removing the final legislative hurdle for resumption of civilian nuclear trade between the two countries after three decades. Pakistan, the world’s only nuclear-armed Islamic nation, is a key US ally in the ‘war on terror’ but it remains at the centre of global concerns over an international black market run by its top atomic scientist.
Opinion: Restructuring the ISI

By Shaukat Qadir

There is little doubt that the entire intelligence and security system in Pakistan needs revamping, but not the way the Americans want it. After a series of accusations against Pakistan's premier intelligence organisation, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), we recently had another demand from the US, that it be restructured. Before addressing this issue, it is necessary to briefly review the recent history of the ISI to understand the reasons for the accusations and the demands that followed. During the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the CIA worked hand in glove with the ISI, funnelling billions of dollars in cash and munitions of war. After the Soviet withdrawal, followed by the US abandonment of Afghanistan, the ISI had no control over the anarchical events that ensued, until the Taliban entered the affray in 1994, bringing some sort of peace in their wake. At least until 1996, when they fell under the influence of Osama bin Laden. However, the ISI's influence on the Taliban continued till 9/11.

Biden, Palin at one on Pakistan 'danger'

WASHINGTON / NEW YORK, Oct 3: For Democratic vice presidential candidate Joseph Biden, Pakistan is the most dangerous country in the world, with nuclear weapons that can hit Israel and the Mediterranean. His Republican rival Sarah Palin also considers Pakistan dangerous, but sees Iran as the greatest threat to the world peace. Senator Biden also believes that the current economic crisis may force Democrats to reconsider their plans for increasing US foreign assistance which can also affect his proposal for a $15 billion, 10-year package for Pakistan. The two vice presidential candidates clashed on Pakistan, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in their debate telecast live on Thursday night.

Zardari expects world to come up with $100bn

NEW YORK, Oct 4: Citing the threat posed by militants along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and the possible economic meltdown, President Asif Ali Zardari has asked the international community to give Pakistan $100 billion in grant to ensure the country's survival. 'I need your help, if we fall, if we can't do it, you can't do it,' Mr Zardari repeatedly said during an interview with Wall Street Journal's columnist Brent Stephens, published on Saturday. In the interview, Mr Zardari also called for a broader free trade agreement with India and said: 'India has never been a threat to Pakistan.

Pakistan, China to set up joint power corporation

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and China are set to establish a corporation to attract investment for nuclear and coal-based power plants and large dams in the country, sources in the Water and Power Ministry told Daily Times. The Pak-China Joint Power Corporation will also help develop technology and technical expertise for the new power projects. Pakistani and Chinese authorities had discussed the proposal during a meeting in the Foreign Office on September 24 and had decided that a framework for the organisation would be devised in a minister-level meeting in China soon, the sources said.

Iran to reduce Pakistan's gas if Indian supplies suspended

ISLAMABAD: Iran has proposed a reduction in Pakistan's gas supply if supply to India
is wilfully disrupted. Official sources in Islamabad told Daily Times on Saturday that the ECC of the cabinet's Sub-Committee on Gas Import Projects has been informed that Iran has proposed to include the new clause to the proposed Gas Sale Purchase Agreement of the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project. If the supply of gas to India is wilfully disrupted by Pakistan, Iran shall have the right to reduce Pakistan's gas supply in the same proportion

Daily Times, 5 October 2008

EDITORIAL: US and Pakistan's nuclear weapons

The United States' Democrat vice-presidential hopeful Senator Joseph Biden has made an assessment of Pakistan as a 'dangerous' state and has thereby sought to trim the Democrat electoral pitch for maximum advantage. The disenchanted formerly Republican voter is now supposed to vote Democrat because the Obama-Biden team is aware of the 'dangers of terrorism and nuclear proliferation'. Talking about terrorism, Mr Biden said during his TV debate with the Republican candidate for vice-presidentship, Ms Sarah Palin: 'I promise you, if an attack comes in the homeland, it's going to come...from Al Qaeda planning in the hills of Afghanistan and Pakistan. That's where they live'. While this was said to decry the Republican emphasis on Iraq as a source of future danger, the case made against Pakistan as the 'most dangerous place' in the world is a repetition of what the major magazines and newspapers in the Western world have already said

Daily Times, 5 October 2008

Opinion: Understanding the insurgency

By Dr Hasan-Askari Rizvi The October 2 suicide attack at the residence of the ANP chief, Asfandaryar Wali Khan, was another frightening reminder of the escalating threat to Pakistani state and society. Coming less than two weeks after the Marriott bombing in Islamabad, the Charsadda attack shows that Pakistan faces something more than pure and simple terrorism, often explained, if not justified, by pro-militancy elements as a reaction to American presence in Afghanistan. The ANP is not known as a pro-US political party, and it has always stood for an independent foreign policy with an emphasis on conflict-free relations with all neighbours. Its support for counter-terrorism is based on protection of Pakistani society, particularly Pakhtun society, from religion extremism and violence. The latest suicide attack shows that anti-Americanism is not the sole explanation for the activities of Islamic militants. Pakistan faces an insurgency led by the Pakistani Taliban with their core base in the tribal areas. They appear well entrenched there, and their activities are now aimed more at the Pakistani state than at supporting the Afghan Taliban, as was the case in the past (though they still cooperate with each other)

News, 6 October 2008

Crackdown launched on Afghans in Bajaur

PESHAWAR: The government on Monday launched a crackdown on Afghan refugees living in the restive Bajaur Agency and rounded up 12 Afghan nationals after a three-day deadline given to them to leave the region expired on Sunday evening. Government officials said the crackdown on the Afghan refugees was launched after their involvement in militancy and attacks on Pakistani security forces was proved. Official sources said security had been beefed up on the roadside checkpoints and 12 Afghan refugees were detained on various posts in Khar, the headquarters of Bajaur

News, 6 October 2008

Opinion: Fixing the tribal areas

By Rustam Shah Mohmand Never before in Pakistan's history or in the British period
have the tribal areas been so devastated by conflict. If we take into account the loss of lives among government forces and tribesmen in the past five years, the figure will cross 10,000. This exceeds the number of Pakistani casualties in the 1971. With no rule of law and no checks and balances that only viable institutions can impose, people can get away with deception, motivated errors or gross and wilful miscalculations or sheer incompetence. These indeed were the hallmarks of Gen Pervez Musharraf’s policies and the governors he chose to appoint in the NWFP

Indian Express, 6 October 2008

**Opinion: A tall order By Ejaz Haider**

Did President Asif Ali Zardari call the militant Islamist groups operating in Kashmir 'terrorists' while speaking with the US newspaper The Wall Street Journal? To begin with, we don't have a direct quote from Zardari on the issue. This is how the report puts it: 'He speaks of the militant Islamic groups operating in Kashmir as 'terrorists' - former President Musharraf would more likely have called them 'freedom fighters'.' Zardari has been castigated in Pakistan for putting it thus but what did he actually say and what was the context? We don't know. Did Bret Stephens, the interviewer, ask him, 'Mr President, do you think the groups fighting India in Kashmir are terrorists?' Did Stephens differentiate between this and that group?

Hindu, 6 October 2008

**Zardari calls J&K militants terrorists**

New York: Declaring that India is not a 'threat' to his country, Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari has described the militants operating in Jammu and Kashmir as 'terrorists,' the first such admission by any top Pakistani leader. 'India has never been a threat to Pakistan. I, for one, and our democratic government is not scared of Indian influence abroad,' Mr. Zardari told Wall Street Journal in an interview. He spoke of the militant groups operating in Kashmir as 'terrorists,' the paper said, noting that former President Pervez Musharraf would more likely have called them 'freedom fighters.'

Hindu, 6 October 2008

**No Indian pressure to free Sarabjit: Pakistan**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Law Minister Farooq Naek said on Sunday that his government was not under pressure from India to release Sarabjit Singh, the Indian national who is on death row following his conviction by Pakistani courts on terrorism charges, but was examining his case from a 'human angle.' Mr. Naek, who is to meet the 42-year-old Sarabjit among other prisoners at Lahore's Kot Lakhpat jail on Monday, told reporters in that city it would be premature to say how the government planned to proceed in the matter

News, 6 October 2008

**Taliban upset at missile hit**

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: The Taliban are unusually angry about the latest suspected US missile strike in Pakistan, indicating that a top militant may have died, officials and residents said on Sunday as the death toll from the attack rose to 24. Several Arab militants were said to be among the dead in Friday's strike in North Waziristan. Two Pakistani intelligence officials said that over the weekend two people wounded in the attack died at a hospital in Miramshah, the main town in North Waziristan. The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to speak to news media, said the overall death toll was now 24

Dawn, 7 October 2008
Suicide bomber sows terror in Bhakkar, attacks MNA: At least 22 killed, 62 injured

BHAKKAR, Oct 6: At least 22 people were killed and 62 others injured when a suicide bomber blew himself up in the outhouse of PML-N leader Rashid Akbar Niwani here on Monday. The blast took place at 4.45pm when Mr Niwani was meeting people of his constituency, listening to their problems. Body parts, shoes and shredded clothes were scattered all over the courtyard. Some of the bodies were beyond recognition. The seriously wounded were taken to the Nishtar Hospital in Multan

Dawn, 7 October 2008

Four militants killed in Darra

KOHAT, Oct 6: Four militants were killed by security forces in Tor Chappar village of Darra Adamkhel on Monday evening. Their office in the village was destroyed and 15 suspected militants were arrested. The Kohat DCO and political agent of Kohat frontier region Siraj Ahmed told Dawn that the troops had besieged a large number of militants holed up in Tor Chappar since Sunday noon. They started pounding their hideouts with artillery from Kohat side and also used helicopters. The arrested militants have been taken to Spina Thana for interrogation

Dawn, 7 October 2008

Opinion: The missing things

By Shahid Javed Burki I did not advocate going to the IMF for support since that would compromise the effort to keep the economy on a trajectory of growth. This is what the country did in 1999 and gave up growth in favour of stabilisation. It was in an effort to pick up growth that the Musharraf administration loosened fiscal and monetary controls over the economy, laying the ground for the current crisis. It is not good for the economy to go through such deceleration and acceleration in growth. It proves unsettling. It would not be prudent to send the economy through such a cycle again

Dawn, 7 October 2008

Nawaz mediating between Taliban, Karzai

ISLAMABAD: PML-N Quaid Nawaz Sharif is playing a key role in conjunction with Saudi Arabia in bringing about a negotiated settlement between the Taliban and the Karzai regime to pave the way for withdrawal of the US and Nato forces from Afghanistan. 'It was for this precise reason that the PML-N chief has put off his departure from Saudi Arabia to Pakistan for another two days,' an informed source told The News. According to his new programme, the PML-N chief will return home on Tuesday. 'Nawaz Sharif was invited by Saudi King Abdullah and he undertook the present visit to stay in Saudi Arabia for nearly two weeks to talk about the nitty-gritty of the peace process,' the source said

News, 7 October 2008

Editorial: Terrorists or freedom fighters?

In an interview to a leading US magazine, President Asif Ali Zardari has described militants operating in Kashmir as 'terrorists'. Till now, every Pakistani leader has described these people as 'freedom fighters'. In yet another diversion from the past, Mr Zardari has stated that India poses no threat to Pakistan and that Islamabad was not intimidated by its international influence. If these words mean a change in Pakistan's policies vis-a-vis its neighbour to the east, they could be immensely significant (not least the fact that in all likelihood it runs counter to the thinking still in currency at GHQ). For the past many decades, indeed since 1947 and the violent birth of the country, Pakistan's strategy in Kashmir has revolved around backing the
freedom struggle in the Indian-held territory. A number of 'jihadi' groups have taken centre stage in this. The Pakistani establishment has always distinguished these forces from militants engaged in terrorism, although the line of distinction has become increasingly hazy over time. Certainly, Asif Ali Zardari seems to be lumping Al Qaeda, the Taliban and the 'jihadis' all together when he uses the term 'terrorist'. Although these organizations have maintained a lower profile since 2003, following a pact between Islamabad and New Delhi, the outfits themselves have been allowed largely to remain intact. Indeed, India has recently complained militants are again being sent across the LoC.

News, 7 October 2008
**Opinion: Fighting the militancy**
By Riaz Khan Seven years after 9/11 the US countdown in Afghanistan has started. 2008 has been the deadliest year so far for American forces with the year's death toll reaching 112. On Sunday Brigadier Mark Carleton-Smith, the senior-most British military commander in Afghanistan, said: "We're not going to win this war." Similar sentiments have been repeated by US General David McKiernan (head of ISAF), who has said that his soldiers are in a "very tough fight." British ambassador Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles has recently said that foreign troops were "assuring the survival of a regime which, without [the troops' presence], would rapidly fall apart." Other US allies, who have sent troops to Afghanistan, are also saying sometimes in public that there is immense pressure on them to bring their soldiers home.

Daily Times, 7 October 2008
**Editorial: Trade corridor: paradigm shift we've been waiting for?**
An official of the World Bank in Islamabad says the Bank is ready to lend Pakistan $2.25 billion for a trade and energy corridor focusing mostly on Gwadar Port and its land link with China: 'the trade and energy corridor that would serve as a gateway for commerce and transport between South Asia, Central Asia, China and the Gulf countries'. In this proposed scheme of things, Pakistan will set up a big oil terminal and refineries at Gwadar with Chinese help because most of the oil will be transported to China from there.

Asian Age, 7 October 2008
**Editorial: Has Zardari really changed Pak line?**
There will naturally be careful efforts in New Delhi to read the tea leaves in the light of Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari's extraordinary remarks in a recent interview to the Wall Street Journal. The Pakistani leader said India had never been a threat to Pakistan, and that the militants operating in Jammu and Kashmir were "terrorists". If Mr Zardari were a stable, strong leader, the sentiments he has given expression to could quite appropriately have been termed revolutionary. They mark an absolute departure from any paradigm that has operated in India-Pakistan relations; and if taken to their logical conclusion, together the two statements offer a formulation that can be a firm foundation for building sturdy, good ties between the two countries. This sense is only reinforced when seen in conjunction with Mr Zardari's March statement as PPP chief that India-Pakistan relations should not be made "hostage" to the Kashmir issue, which should be left for future generations to resolve.

Tribune, 7 October 2008
**Separatists take exception to Zardari's remarks**
Separatist leaders in Kashmir have resented and strongly reacted against the statement of Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari, wherein he had described the Kashmir militants as 'terrorists' and that India was no threat to Pakistan. The
hardline Hurriyat Conference chairman, Syed Ali Geelani, said it was wrong on Zardari's part to say that India was no threat to Pakistan. 'This is against the historical facts', he said, claiming that the three Indo-Pak wars and the Kargil war had taken place only on 'India's initiative'. 'Friendly countries do not fight', Geelani commented and added that India had celebrated the creation of Bangladesh after the 1971 war.

Tribune, 7 October 2008
**Editorial: Zardari speak; Begin a new era in India-Pakistan relations**
WHATEVER may have prompted Pakistan President Asif Zardari to tell some truths, they are indeed welcome. In an apparent turnaround of the Pakistani position, the civilian President has, for the first time, admitted that India has never been a threat to his country. More interesting, he has described the Kashmiri militant groups operating from Pakistan as 'terrorists', instead of 'freedom-fighters' as his predecessor General Pervez Musharraf had once described them. He has also spoken strongly in favour of better trade relations with India and identified some items like cement and cotton, which can be exported to India. All this is music to the Indian ears used as they are to hearing threats of 'thousand-year wars' and 'jehads' from across the border

Daily Times, 8 October 2008
**Editorial: Sectarian killers enter Punjab**
A PMLN member of the National Assembly, Mr Rashid Akbar Niwani, was recently attacked by a suicide-bomber in the Punjab city of Bhakkar, killing 25 of his guests and injuring him. He was targetted because he is a Shia and no one is in doubt about the sectarian nature of the attack. It is safe to say that the attack has been mounted by a sectarian organisation. Neither is it a secret that most such organisations are fighting Al Qaeda's war in Pakistan along with some other hardline Deobandi militias. The footprint of the Taliban is clearly visible there. Bhakkar has seen only some sectarian mayhem but came in the cross-hairs of the killers since its nextdoor city of Dera Ismail Khan in the NWFP became the scene of Shia slaughter recently. Mr Niwani's brother says the family had received threats but the government could do very little to save them. Yet the Shia of Bhakkar were worried after the DI Khan hospital suicide blast in September and feared that the storm would come their way in Punjab. The Friday Times of September 12, 2008, writing about the government's neglect of the sectarian stand-off in Kurram Agency and the subsequent follow-up attacks in DI Khan, had written, 'The Shia of nextdoor Bhakkar are scared because they are influential in the city and can be targeted'

Daily Times, 8 October 2008
**Opinion: Is this our War? y Ijaz Hussain**
Ever since Pakistan joined the US-led war on terror in 2001, controversy has raged on whether it is our war or America's. When Pervez Musharraf ruled the roost, his government owned it while most political parties, including his own PMLQ, refused to. Despite this divide, the debate on the ownership of the war remained low-key. The devastating Marriott bomb blast has, among other things, revived this debate as never before. Whereas the Pakistan government has reaffirmed its ownership, opposition political parties and the public at large do not seem convinced. Given the shrill, passionate debate that has taken place on the issue in the media following the Marriott tragedy, the divide seems to have widened. Further, it has raised the question: why, if it is our war, has the government failed to sell it to the public?
Army called out to protect parliament
RAWALPINDI: The Army was called out on Tuesday night to protect the federal capital against any security threat in view of the volatile security situation across the country as the joint session of parliament meets today (Wednesday) for an in-camera briefing. Three companies of the Pakistan Army took up positions in the 'Red Zone' of Islamabad to protect the Parliament House, the Aiwan-e-Sadr and the whole of Constitution Avenue against any security threat

Gates rejects defeatism in Afghanistan
WASHINGTON: US Secretary of Defence Robert Gates said on Monday that there was "no reason to be defeatist" in Afghanistan, and refused to rule out the idea of negotiation with insurgents willing to reconcile with the Afghan government. Gates, speaking aboard a plane en route to a visit with European ministers, indicated he will again press Nato allies to send more troops to Afghanistan during an alliance meeting in Budapest on Thursday and Friday. "We continue to see the need for additional forces in Afghanistan. I want to make sure that everybody understands that the increase in US forces are not seen as replacements for Nato contributions, but as reinforcement," Gates said

College, school blown up, cops kidnapped in Swat
MINGORA: In another big blow to educational activities in Swat, militants on Tuesday blew up two historic education institutions in the valley. Sources said the Excelsior College and Sangota Public School were blown up in the evening. The militants also claimed to have captured four persons, including two policemen, in the restive valley. Taliban spokesman Muslim Khan, however, claimed to have kidnapped two police and two Frontier Corps personnel.

Editorial: Bhakkar blast
Terrorism has killed another 22 people in the country. Sixty others have been hurt, among them PML-N MNA Rashid Akbar Niwani, whose house became the target for a suicide bomber. The bomber hit at a time when the MNA was meeting the people of his constituency. In this, the attack resembled the one at Charsadda a few days ago, outside the guest house of the ANP chief, from which Asfandyar Wali himself escaped only narrowly. Some reports state an attempted attack using rockets may have been made on the home in Peshawar of the NWFP chief minister. It is unclear why politicians are being targeted, or if the attacks are even inter-linked. There are now so many currents of violence running through our society that it has become impossible to decipher one from the other. The attack in Bhakkar, at first guess, seems to have sectarian motives. Protests by people in the area and in neighbouring Dera Ismail Khan immediately after the incident reflected similar suspicions. A detailed report in this newspaper has raised the possibility that the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LJ), a Sunni extremist outfit founded in Jhang and banned in 2001, may be behind the bombing. If this conjecture proves accurate, it would demonstrate the ban on a group believed to be behind many sectarian incidents in the 1990s, has served no purpose at all. This is an alarming prospect, suggesting that over the last eight years we have been unable to act against even the most dangerous terrorist organizations, which have inflicted mayhem within our society

Opinion: Unwilling to shake off America's grip? By Shireen M Mazari
Clearly, it involves the US creating space within the tribal areas to move in militarily and eventually restructure the whole Muslim nuclear entity of Pakistan. Attacking civilians and thereby creating chaos and panic which would inevitably lead to a mass displacement and add to the pressure on the central government in Islamabad. Also, knowing full well after all if we can conclude that such killings will create more space for extremists and terrorists, one can assume the US analysts and advisers must have done the same that by unleashing a war against our tribals and abusing our sovereignty they will create more space for the terrorists; and thereby more reasons to further destabilise us from outside while we face increasing attacks from our home-grown terrorists. Let us not fool ourselves the US is no friend but a powerful enemy and its ultimate aim is to defang us in terms of our nuclear assets

News, 9 October 2008

23 militants killed in Bajaur fighting
PESHAWAR: After a brief uneasy calm, security forces again started pounding positions of militants in Badano village of Mamond Tehsil of the restive Bajaur Agency on Wednesday, killing 23 people, including eight foreign militants. Also, security forces destroyed 13 houses, some of them owned by tribal militants, including one belonging to banned Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) Spokesman Maulvi Omar, in his native Badano village. Military officials said four gunship helicopters were sent to target militants' positions in Mamond area after an armed Lashkar led by local tribal elders was unable to enter the Badano village and destroy positions of tribal and foreign militants, who were giving tough time to the Lashkar

Daily Times, 9 October 2008

Editorial: Army, India, Al Qaeda and Zardari
On the day President Asif Ali Zardari sat down at the Presidency and discussed national security and operational preparedness of the armed forces with the Services Chiefs, an AFP report noted that 'A month after coming to power, President Asif Ali Zardari risks losing the support of Pakistan's powerful military establishment with a string of foreign policy gaffes'. The assessment was attributed to both named 'analysts' and unnamed 'sources'

Dawn, 9 October 2008

Suicide attacker destroys police HQ in Islamabad
ISLAMABAD, Oct 9: A suicide bomber rammed an explosive-laden car into headquarters of the Anti-Terrorist Squad of police on Thursday, injuring eight policemen. The explosion partly destroyed a three-storey block of the Anti-Terrorist Squad building and left a four-foot deep crater. The bomber struck a target in a high security zone, though the city has been on high alert in the wake of a suicide truck bomb that killed 55 people and destroyed the Marriott hotel on Sept 20. Very few policemen were in the building at the time because they were on duty guarding the parliament.

Dawn, 10 October 2008

No consensus in sight on terror war policy: Joint session to resume on Monday
ISLAMABAD, Oct 9: If the government aims at creating a national consensus on its strategy in the 'war on terror' through the joint session of parliament, it seems to have failed in its objective as all opposition groups have been expressing dissatisfaction with the briefing and the quality of answers to their questions. However, the onus of giving solid and unwavering suggestions for formulation of a new strategy on the war on terror rests with the opposition when they start speaking
on Monday the third day of the in-camera session. The PML-N's parliamentary leader, Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan, called upon the government to summon former president Pervez Musharraf to the session to tell the parliament about the 'rules of engagement' agreed upon with Washington.

Dawn, 10 October 2008

Schoolgirls among 12 killed in Dir bomb blast
UPPER DIR, Oct 9: Twelve people, four schoolgirls among them, were killed and 10 others injured when a roadside bomb hit a prison van and a school bus in Upper Dir district on Thursday. Police and hospital sources said that three policemen and five prisoners were among the dead. The prisoners were being taken from a court in Lower Dir's Timergara area to Upper Dir when the remote-controlled bomb went off in the Khwago Oba area, some five kilometres south of Dir Khass, the district headquarters. The school bus, which was behind the prison van, was hit by shrapnel.

Dawn, 10 October 2008

21 militants dead in Swat bombing
MINGORA, Oct 9: Twenty-one militants and five civilians were killed in bombing by jet fighters and mortar shelling in various areas of Swat on Thursday. Sources said the PAF jet fighters bombed militants' hideouts in Peuchar, Toro Bandai, Yago Bandai, Parang, May Sar, Saland and Landai Sar areas of Kabal tehsil, killing and injuring several militants loyal to hardliner cleric Maulana Fazlullah. The command and control system, training camps and various compounds of militant commanders Omer Rehman alias Abu Obaida and Toor Mullah, which were being used by Maulana Fazlullah, were targeted and destroyed, the ISPR said.

News, 10 October 2008

Opinion: How did we get here? by Dr Muzaffar Iqbal
With an average of three suicide attacks per week in which at least thirty persons die, there will be 1,560 dead Pakistanis within a year. Add to this approximately 15 "extremists" being killed daily in the northern region, and we have a total of 7,035 dead. Further: for every hamlet, village, and hideout bombed, and with every "extremist" killed, we have an average of ten families displaced. So within a year, northern Pakistan will be a huge graveyard and there will be several thousand internally displaced persons living in makeshift camps in the rest of the country. In addition, there will be thousands of emotionally and mentally unstable persons available to anyone who can convince them that life is not worth living anymore, so come on and die for this or that cause. The net result will be an escalation of violence in all parts of the country and the spiral of violence and death reaching all corners of the country. How did we get here? The answer is not simple, but we must begin somewhere, hence, back to basics.

Daily Times, 10 October 2008

Editorial: We must back Army against terrorists!
A joint session of parliament in Islamabad has heard, in camera, the newly-appointed ISI Director General Lt Gen Ahmed Shuja Pasha - who was Director General Military Operations (DGMO) before he got the job - on the terrorist threat facing Pakistan and the army's operations to thwart the terrorists. The briefing has made it clear that to succeed against the militancy in the Tribal Areas the army would need full political backing from the parliament and the people of Pakistan.

Daily Times, 10 October 2008

Opinion: Reconciliation in Afghanistan? By Najmuddin A Shaikh
Polls taken immediately after the second US presidential debate on Tuesday showed that Barack Obama had consolidated his lead. This was partly attributable to Obama's performance, which was impressive, but largely to the fact that despite the passage of the economic rescue package, it seems that confidence has not been restored, and the economic situation is expected to deteriorate further before it improves. This legacy of the Bush era works to the advantage of the Democrats not only in the presidential election but also in the congressional elections. A Democratic White House and a Democrat-dominated Congress are likely to emerge after the November elections. What will this mean for American policy towards Afghanistan and Pakistan?

Hindu, 10 October 2008

**Pakistan voices concern over Siachen**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Friday reiterated its commitment to the peace process with India but also flagged 'serious concerns' over Siachen and the sharing of river waters as the country's new National Security Adviser Mahmud Ali Durrani prepared to leave for New Delhi for talks with his counterpart M.K. Narayanan. The top Pakistani official, who retired from the Army as a major-general and served as ambassador to the U.S. in the Musharraf regime, will arrive in the Indian capital on Saturday for the first ever talks between the National Security Advisers of the two countries.

Dawn, 11 October 2008

**Bomber mows down 50 in attack on jirga**

KOHAT, Oct 10: At least 50 Alizai tribesmen of the Orakzai Agency were killed and 100 others injured on Friday when a suicide attacker blew up his explosive-laden vehicle at a jirga being held at a ground at Khadezai area in the upper Kurram Agency. The injured were being brought to the Kohat Divisional Headquarters Hospital from the site of the blast till late night. Officials said that the Taliban of Darra Adam Khel, who had been warning the elders of the tribe not to raise lashkar against them, were behind the suicide attack.

News, 11 October 2008

**Four kidnapped tribal elders beheaded**

PESHAWAR: The beheaded bodies of four out of the seven kidnapped tribal elders in Bajaur were recovered from Tangi Khawar on Friday, while the other three chieftains were still missing. The seven tribal elders, who had raised an armed Lashkar against the militants in Charmang area, were abducted from Sharif Khana last Thursday. The tribesmen on Friday found four beheaded bodies of the elders in Tangi Khawar. The tribesmen later brought the bodies to the Tangi bazaar where a large number of people gathered to have a glimpse of the deceased. Passions were running high in the area as the local tribesmen strongly condemned the brutal killings of their elders.

News, 11 October 2008

**Anti-Americanism hurts Pakistan more than US**

It was a special moment in Pakistan's history when the military and intelligence chiefs briefed parliament on the war against terrorism. The in-camera briefing affirmed the supremacy of Pakistan's Constitution, which makes parliament with elected representatives of the people the chief decision-maker in the country. At the same time, it showed the importance of Pakistan's military to its security. But those who owe their political careers to a culture of military coups have expressed "unhappiness" over the "inadequacy" of the parliamentary briefing. They are seeking "strategic" knowledge about why we are fighting in Fata and for what objective as if the nation still needs answers to these elementary questions Anti-Americanism hurts
Pakistan more than US

News, 11 October 2008

**Opinion: Talking to the Taliban enemy By Rahimullah Yusufzai**

Suddenly there is a flurry of diplomatic activity instead of the usual military activity on the Afghan front. Exactly seven years after the US invasion of Afghanistan, the deteriorating security situation in the country is prompting a review of the strategies that have failed to hand over victory to the vastly resourceful NATO forces against the ragtag Taliban militia. Unbelievably, there is a military standoff despite the fact that the lightly-armed Taliban guerrilla fighters in terms of firepower should have been no match for the world's only superpower and the best Western armies. Having declared the Afghan war unwinnable, some NATO military commanders want to engage the Taliban not on the battlefield but at the negotiating table. There is talk of negotiations with the Taliban and even offering them a share in the Afghan government as part of a political settlement. In the words of the head of the US Central Command, General David Petraeus, America should be prepared to talk to its enemies.

Daily Times, 11 October 2008

**Editorial: Talking to the Taliban**

The talk in Afghanistan of sitting down with the Afghan Taliban and thrashing out a solution to the conflict is now overt. To nudge the initiative forward, the Governor of NWFP, Mr Owais Ghani, has reiterated his earlier stance that the NATO-ISAF forces should consider talking to Mullah Umar. From Kabul, the signals too are meant for Mullah Umar and not for Al Qaeda or its other followers. Does this show weakness? The British in Helmand are clear that war will not work. They are right because despite their acknowledged efforts half the province is still controlled by the Taliban. The NATO partners of the United States are generally averse to prolonging their stay in Afghanistan for domestic political reasons. But what is striking is that the Americans too are now talking about talks. What could be the reason for this on the eve of a political changeover in Washington in favour of someone like Barack Obama who wants to beef up the war in Afghanistan?

Dawn, 12 October 2008

**Military supports efforts for terror war consensus: Propaganda against ISI angers JCSC**

ISLAMABAD, Oct 11: The military leadership on Saturday backed the government's efforts to forge a consensus on counter-terror strategy. The support was extended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee after a meeting at the JCSC Headquarters. General Tariq Majid, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, chaired the meeting. The meeting was attended, among others, by Chief of the Army Staff General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Noman Bashir, Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Tanveer Mahmood Ahmed, Defence Secretary Kamran Rasool and the chiefs of the Inter-Services Intelligence and the Strategic Plans Division.

Dawn, 12 October 2008

**Drone attack kills four**

MIRAMSHAH, Oct 11: Unmanned drones targeted a residential compound on the outskirts of Miramshah in North Waziristan on Saturday night, killing four people and injuring two. Local people said that they had heard four explosions and Predator drones had been seen flying over the area. They said that two missiles hit a house owned by a tribesman named Rahmat Jahan in an abandoned Afghan refugee camp.
Dawn, 12 October 2008

**Three militants, soldier killed in Swat clash**

MINGORA, Oct 11: Three militants and a soldier were killed while four security personnel were injured on Saturday in an encounter at Barri, in the troubled Swat district. An official of the media cell in Mingora told journalists that security forces clashed with militants at Barri, Kabal tehsil, during a search operation. He said three militants, including commander Nasir and a nephew of Maulana Fazlullah, were killed in the exchange of fire. One soldier was killed and four security personnel were injured, he said.

Dawn, 12 October 2008

**Editorial: Taliban under pressure?**

THE devastating attack on a tribal peace jirga on Friday betrays one obvious truth about the Taliban: they are clearly under pressure. The security forces have been half-heartedly battling them for years but with little success. However, the military operation that began in November seems to have hit them hard. In Swat the situation may be uncertain but in Bajaur the army appears to be gaining the upper hand. But what obviously has rattled the Taliban most is the reaction among some of the neutral tribesmen. Moved by the devastation caused by the war - hundreds of their kinsmen killed and wounded, homes and orchards destroyed, and their means of livelihood crippled - many tribesmen have obviously decided not to sit idle. The lashkars they have organised and the revenge they have exacted on the Taliban by burning their homes and punishing their collaborators through other means are eroding the freedom the militants have enjoyed for a long time. The attack on the jirga near Khadezai in Kurram Agency, killing 50 people, appears to be part of the reaction of the militants.

News, 12 October 2008

**Opinion: Mr Sharif out of sync? By Dr Farrukh Saleem**

The whole world wants to rid us all from the menace of terrorism. Muslim-majority states of the OIC, including Turkey, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the UAE., Albania and Azerbaijan, all have troops in Afghanistan. A total of 43 countries -- including Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Austria, Croatia, Finland, Georgia, Macedonia, Ireland, Serbia, Sweden, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Romania and South Korea--are all fighting terrorism right next door to us.

Daily Times, 12 October 2008

**Opinion: Politics of consensus By Dr Hasan-Askari Rizvi**

The security briefing by the military to a joint session of parliament on October 8-9 addressed the demand of the parliamentarians, the media and political circles to take the elected representatives into confidence on the situation in the tribal areas and its fallout on mainland Pakistan. The federal government invited special guests like party leaders, provincial governors and chief ministers to attend the briefing as well. Army Chief General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani held several meetings with President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani during the last five weeks on security issues. The Army and intelligence establishment gave detailed security briefings to the prime minister and leaders of the ruling coalition soon after formation of the new government.
Air strike kills 27 in Orakzai
KOHAT, Oct 12: Twenty-seven militants, including two important commanders, were killed in an air strike in Orakzai tribal region on Sunday, says a press release issued by Frontier Corps. It also said that 12 of those killed were suicide bombers. In an offensive launched in the area troops destroyed the house of local Taliban leader Maulvi Abdul Salam. Sources told Dawn that some helicopters came at around noon following a report about a gathering of Taliban and started shelling militants' hideouts in Alizai, Khadezai, Mamoza, Aakhel and Ghiljo.

Chenab water blocking may hurt ties, says Zardari
ISLAMABAD, Oct 12: President Asif Ali Zardari said on Sunday Pakistan would raise the issue of India's move to block Chenab's water, adding that it could harm confidence-building efforts between the two countries. 'Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had assured me in our meeting in New York that his country was seriously committed to our water-sharing treaty. We expect him to stand by his commitment,' President Zardari said in a statement. He said Pakistan expected India to abide by international agreements. 'Pakistan would be paying a very high price for India's move to block Pakistan's water supply from the Chenab river,' he said.

Editorial: Tough talking
Monday, October 13, 2008 The Taliban have never been easy to talk to. In the period when they were the de-facto rulers of Afghanistan, nobody was talking to them anyway. They were not formally recognised as a legitimate government, there were no diplomatic missions to carry on the business of state. Several countries had 'back-channel' communications including the British, the Americans, the Swiss, and the French; but maintaining a working dialogue with the Taliban was made the more difficult because of their sometimes fluid command structures, and the way in which senior post-holders were moved around. In the months before 9/11 the Taliban were just starting to get to grips with the complex business of running a country, and we will now never know how successful they might have been.

Opinion: The beginning of the Talibanization of Lahore? by Ahmad Rafay Alam
A significant event passed by relatively unnoticed last week when media reported that traders on Lahore's Hall Road deliberately set alight thousands of pornographic VCDs and DVDs. The Anjuman-e-Tajiran had resolved to weed out the 'objectionable' media after vendors in the area reported receiving anonymous letters and phone calls threatening them of dire consequences if the sale of such 'obscene' material continued. The event was widely reported, but the obvious undercurrents did not surface. I learnt of the burning when a local TV station carried an interview of a video trader insisting only a handful of the hundreds of outlets at Lahore's hub of trade in pirated video indulged in selling pornographic material. A study of the undercurrents of this event are quite disturbing.

Opinion: Afghan conflict in a changing world By Tanvir Ahmad Khan
The American presidential election is a long drawn out process during which perceptions of domestic and international issues and the semantics employed to
articulate them keep undergoing subtle and not-so-subtle transformations. This time around it has already gone on, in one form or another, for two years. These two years have seen a continuous erosion of paradigms and doctrines associated with the name George W Bush. As his wars became a trillion-dollar affair and Wall Street faced a meltdown, the mystical belief that the United States can afford to expend blood and treasure forever has suffered a blow

Dawn, 13 October 2008

**Pak-Afghan mini-jirga likely to meet on 27th**

ISLAMABAD, October 13: The much delayed Pak-Afghan mini-jirga is finally likely to be held on October 27 and 28 in Islamabad to evolve a unified voice against extremism and violence that has plagued both the countries. The two-day talks come amid escalating violence in Pakistan and Afghanistan and intense fighting with Al Qaeda and Taliban on both sides of the border. The talks being held as a sequel to last year's US-sponsored Pak-Afghan joint peace jirga, or council of elders, held in August in Kabul, had been delayed because of severe differences between the two governments over fighting terrorism with both sides accusing the other for escalation in violence that has gripped the entire region

Hindu, 14 October 2008

**Opinion: Controlled warlordism, Afghans' best hope By Max Hastings**

While most of the world spent the weekend (October 11-12) trembling for its wealth, in Afghanistan the Taliban busied themselves dying in quite large numbers, during an ill-advised assault on Helmand's provincial capital, Lashkar Gar. Around 50 insurgents were killed, for no loss to NATO and Afghan security forces. This fits the war's pattern. Almost every time the Taliban fights a battle, it loses to overwhelming firepower. Unfortunately, such western successes are strategically meaningless. NATO is absent from vast areas of this intractable country, where the insurgents prosper. There is greater gloom about the conflict than at any time since the Taliban was ousted in 2001. I spent a week in Afghanistan in September, and was shocked by the deterioration since my last visit two years ago. The British army, which justly prides itself on its 'can-do' philosophy, has been sobered by recent experience. Its casualties are acceptable within a context of progress. But they become dismaying against a background of growing Taliban influence and slumping confidence in the Kabul government

Dawn, 14 October 2008

**Cabinet panel suggests drastic changes in FCR**

ISLAMABAD, Oct 13: A cabinet committee has recommended drastic changes in the Frontier Crimes Regulations, including allowing the right of appeal against actions of political agents or district coordination officers in some tribal regions, Dawn has learnt. A meeting of the committee, presided over by Law Minister Farooq H. Naek on Monday, finalised its recommendations for submission to the prime minister. The FCR, in force in seven federally administered tribal agencies and six frontier regions, basically deals with procedure for settling inter-tribal matters

Dawn, 14 October 2008

**25 militants killed in Swat clashes**

MINGORA, Oct 13: Twenty-five militants and two soldiers were killed in fierce clashes on Monday, forcing people in upper Swat valley to leave their homes for safe areas. Security forces resumed a search operation in Kashkor and Karam Dheri villages of Khwazakhela tehsil early in the morning, while a curfew remained in force for the second day. The clashes erupted after an attack by militants on troops during a
search operation

Daily Times, 14 October 2008

Editorial: Chenab waters and Pakistan's fear
President Asif Zardari has given expression to the general unease in Pakistan about the sharp reduction of water in the Chenab River over which India has recently inaugurated the Baglihar Dam in the Indian-administered Jammu & Kashmir state. His statement was careful and it was conditional, admitting an area of uncertainty over whether India was blocking the water or not: 'Any Indian move to block Pakistan's water supply from the Chenab River would damage bilateral ties'. In response to Pakistani requests, India has offered to stage talks in New Delhi on the Chenab water flows on the 23rd of this month.

Dawn, 15 October 2008

High hopes pinned on Zardari's China visit
BEIJING, Oct 14: President Asif Ali Zardari arrived in China on Tuesday for his first official visit since taking office, aiming to cement economic and commercial ties with the long-time ally. President Zardari is expected to sign a range of agreements with Beijing during his four-day visit. The agreements will focus on strengthening strategic, economic and cultural ties. Mr Zardari's visit comes at a time when Pakistan's relations with the United States are strained after a series of air raids and at least one ground assault.

Dawn, 15 October 2008

Suicide attack un-Islamic, says ulema's edict
LAHORE, Oct 14: Ulema of all major schools of thought have declared suicide attacks 'haram'. 'It is a unanimous decree of the ulema that suicide attacks in Pakistan are haram and illegitimate. But it seems as if the government is covertly backing these attacks so that patriotic citizens may not assemble and launch a mass drive for the defence of the country,' said a joint declaration released to the media after a meeting held here on Tuesday. It endorsed a decree earlier issued by religious scholars in Karachi. It alleged that US agenda was being pursued under the cover of terror acts.

Dawn, 15 October 2008

12 militants killed in Bajaur
KHAR, Oct 14: Twelve suspected militants were killed when security forces, backed by helicopter gunships and planes attacked Taliban bunkers in Charmang and Rashakai areas of Bajaur region on Tuesday. Sources said that troops pounded the villages of Chinar, Kotki, Babra and Tangi in Nawagai tehsil with artillery on Monday night and Tuesday. There was a heavy exchange of fire in Rashakai, 10 kilometres from the regional headquarters of Khar, on Tuesday. The troops are facing stiff resistance from the Taliban in the area.

Daily Times, 15 October 2008

Editorial: Inviting terrorists into parliament?
The JUIf chief and one of the leaders of the ruling coalition, Maulana Fazlur Rehman, has demanded that the people who are called terrorists by the government should be allowed to present their point of view in parliament during the in-camera session. This means that he wants the Pakistan Army to be put at par with the people it is fighting in the Tribal Areas. Is this his idea of 'justice'? When it comes to choosing, will he support the terrorists and spurn the army? The last JUI-led MMA government in Peshawar did exactly that for five years until it was dissolved on the eve of the
2008 elections and later routed in the elections by the people for such policies

News, 20 October 2008

**IMF urges Pakistan to accept funding**

DUBAI: The government of Pakistan should consider an emergency support package from the International Monetary Fund, a senior IMF official said on Monday ahead of talks on Pakistan's restructuring plan. Mohsin Khan, director of the IMF's Middle East and Central Asia department, said Pakistan has not made a formal request to the IMF for emergency funds but that options were running out. 'Market borrowing is not an option, not in the current markets,' Khan told Reuters in an interview. Officials from the IMF and Pakistan will meet on Tuesday in Dubai to discuss details of a financial restructuring plan, which does not include IMF funding at this stage, Khan said. Pakistan is rapidly losing foreign currency reserves

Hindu, 20 October 2008

**Opinion: How to wind down the Afghan war By M.K. Bhadrakumar**

While the opinion among American politicians favours a vaguely Afghan variant of the Iraqi 'surge,' the silver lining is Washington's sheer unaffordability of an open-ended war in Afghanistan. Slowly, imperceptibly, it is becoming official American thinking that a United States 'exit strategy' in Afghanistan ought to involve reconciliation with the Taliban. U.S. Defence Secretary Robert Gates admitted as much recently. He said: 'There has to be ultimately, and I'll underscore ultimately, reconciliation as part of the political outcome to this [war]. That's ultimately the exit strategy for all of us.' True, he spoke with caveats but his statement marked a beginning since it was made in the approach to a historic transition of political power in Washington

Dawn, 20 October 2008

**22 civilians die in air strike on Swat village**

MINGORA, Oct 19: Fighter jets bombed a village in Swat's Matta tehsil on Sunday morning, killing at least 47 people, including 22 non-combatants and damaging a dozen houses. Locals feared that the death toll might rise because most of the injured could not be taken to hospitals owing to curfew and a number of people were believed to have been trapped under the debris. The media information centre in Mingora claimed that 25 militants were killed in the air strike in Barthana and scores injured. It said security forces had also destroyed a guesthouse, or hujra, of commander Alamgir being used as a 'den' by militants

News, 21 October 2008

**Boucher's visit offers nothing except warnings**

ISLAMABAD: US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher's visit to Pakistan had somewhat inconsequential impact on the bilateral ties of the two countries as the US official had come on a 'fact-finding' mission and to make an assessment of the outcome of the visit of President Asif Ali Zardari across the Karakuram. He has been talking tough on a number of counts and the reasons are quite understandable. No tangible announcement was made by him to redeem Pakistan from its current imbroglio except a warning on the account of hobnobbing with extremists. It was a glaring example of carrot and stick policy of Washington, a source said

News, 21 October 2008

**Seven militants among 16 killed in Swat**

MINGORA/PESHAWAR: Sixteen people, including seven militants, were killed and 25 others injured during a clash between security forces and Maulana Fazlullah-led
militants in Shah Dherai area of the restive Swat Valley on Monday. The clash was followed by the militants' attack on a security forces' check-post in Shah Dherai area of the Kabal tehsil, the hotspot of pro-Taliban combatants. The ISPR-run Swat Media Centre (SMC) said security forces killed seven militants and wounded 10 others in the clash. According to a press release issued by the SMC, forces effectively retaliated when the militants attacked their check-post with rockets. It said security forces suffered no loss in the clash. During the fight, several mortar shells hit houses in the same locality, resulting in the death of nine persons, including a woman and two children, and injuries to 15 others.

News, 21 October 2008

**Opinion: Talking peace with militants by Khalid Aziz**

Since April of this year the military changed the method of fighting the insurgency in FATA and the NWFP. Prior to 'Operation Zalzala,' which was conducted in the Mahsud area of South Waziristan from January to April, the military strategy was guided by a minimalist response. However, this led to poor results with declining morale among troops. It also created a perception in people's mind that the government was ambivalent in its approach. Although the Pakistani military has begun to challenge the supremacy of the militants in Bajaur and Swat, the policy needs to be refined to make it more robust. In Bajaur a difficult decision was taken to challenge the highly trained group of militants, many of whom, like Qari Ziaur Rehman, belonged to the Afghan Taliban movement. A large number of other Central Asian militants are also present here. Only a detailed investigation will shed light on how and from where such militants are able to enter Bajaur and Swat. Information suggests that such infiltration is occurring from Tajikistan and the Kunar and Nuristan provinces of Afghanistan. If that is so, one would like to know the reason why no counteraction is taken to block this route by Afghanistan?

Daily Times, 21 October 2008

**Editorial: Getting Afghanistan together**

President Asif Ali Zardari is supposed to have told the visiting US Assistant Secretary of State, Mr Richard Boucher, that the growing production of drugs in Afghanistan was having ill effects in Pakistan since the terrorists were now being funded increasingly with drug money. He said one reason terrorism had increased was Pakistan's interdiction of the drug routes in Pakistan, and if the war against terrorism had to be won the allied forces in Afghanistan must stop drug production in Afghanistan. This was important, he argued, because the battle in Pakistan was turning and local tribal lashkars were increasingly taking on the intruders.

News, 22 October 2008

**13 militants killed in Bajaur bombing**

PESHAWAR: Military authorities on Tuesday said fierce bombing by PAF warplanes and shelling by Army's gunship helicopters on suspected hideouts of militants in various places of the restive Bajaur Agency had killed 13 more militants and injured eight others. Also, the Salarzai tribal Lashkar appealed to the government to send personnel of law-enforcement agencies to take control of the region as it had cleared the same from militants. Military officials based in Khar, headquarters of the Bajaur Agency, told The News by telephone that jet fighters and gunship helicopters continued bombing militants' positions in Charmang, Chinar, Kohi, Babra and Hashim areas of Nawagai Tehsil.

News, 22 October 2008

**Editorial: Another cold shoulder**
The US assistant secretary of state has, like the Chinese, remained unsympathetic to Pakistan's pleas for an immediate cash injection to bail it out of economic crisis. Boucher told the top Pakistani leadership that the 'Friends of Pakistan' forum that Washington played a key role in setting up would offer 'strategic support' but would not put hard cash down on the table. This is not what Pakistan's managers want to hear. The tough words from Boucher, who had attended a preliminary meeting of the Friends forum days ago, leaves the country with almost no options but to go for what the finance adviser has called 'Plan C' a loan facility from the IMF. The fact that Boucher met Pakistan's top leaders, including the prime minister, the president and the finance adviser indicates how much significance was attached to his Islamabad visit. Indeed, this is expected to be the last trip to the capital by Boucher in his present capacity. The predictions coming in from Washington are that the career diplomat, who has handled South Asia for the Bush administration, will opt to bow out with it by the end of the year

**Daily Times, 22 October 2008**

**Editorial: Making the borders 'irrelevant'?**

As fifteen trucks laden with 'gift items' cross the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir today, a first step will have been taken in 'making borders irrelevant', a policy agreed between Pakistan and India. The decision on this policy was taken last month by the PPP coalition government and agreed to by New Delhi. The idea is to replace an earlier policy of confrontation in which neither party was making headway with a lateral attempt to 'to solve the Kashmir dispute by creating 'soft borders' and allowing free movement of goods and people'

**Daily Times, 23 October 2008**

**Historic 14-point anti-terrorism resolution adopted unanimously**

ISLAMABAD: In a historic resolution on Wednesday, the parliament said the Pakistani nation was united against terrorism and sectarian violence and would tackle the problem by addressing its root causes. The 14-point resolution, drafted after two days of rigorous negotiations, was passed unanimously. Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani moved the resolution, which he said would serve as policy guideline to the government in framing a national security strategy

**Daily Times, 23 October 2008**

**Editorial: A dangerous lack of consensus**

After meeting the FATA and NWFP representatives on Tuesday, President Asif Ali Zardari has asked the political leaders of the country to 'own' the war on terror because 'military and security agencies cannot be left to fight the war alone'. He explained that 'the fight against terrorism is part of a larger struggle to save the country, the federation and its democratic structure'. The representatives of the Tribal Areas at the meeting reportedly insisted on ceasefire and negotiation. A similar effort to evolve a consensus in parliament is meeting with disagreement. An in-camera session of the parliament has tapered off without making a dent in the discord that prevails there. Therefore a 16-member 'multi-partisan' committee is not expected to make great headway in arriving at an agreed text of a resolution aimed at 'owning the war against terrorism'

**News, 23 October 2008**

**12 insurgents killed in Bajaur operation**

PESHAWAR: Security forces on Wednesday carried out fierce air strikes on the positions of militants and claimed to have killed 12 Taliban fighters in various parts of Bajaur. Also, there were rumours that Maulvi Omar, a spokesman for the banned
Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), has been killed in the heaviest bombing by PAF jetfighters on his native Badano village in the Mamond subdivision. Tribal sources told The News from Mamond that they had never witnessed warplanes blitzing militants' strongholds with such intensity before. 'It seems that the security forces were aware of the presence of some important Taliban commanders in Badano area, prompting the planes to blitz the village and its surrounding hills,' said Gulzada, a resident of the nearby Seway village

News, 23 October 2008

**Opinion: Revisiting our US alliance By Soban Adil**

Pakistan today experiences an increased level of conflict and a perception is being built to undermine its military capability. In this context, America's approach needs to be seen in the context of its long-term strategic interests in the region, which forces it to engage with Pakistan. However, to achieve this it pursues a policy of controlled chaos enabling it to keep the option of political and military intervention alive. In the case of Pakistan this shifting of conflict and creation of chaos serves the interests of most of the regional stakeholders and power-brokers operating inside Afghanistan. The coalition finds benefit in reduction of military operations on its side. Afghanistan finds it beneficial because the world's attention is diverted towards Pakistan. India is obviously happy, and so is Russia, while Iran is content since because its potential economic competitor Pakistan is handicapped by persistent security concerns

Daily Times, 24 October 2008

**Editorial: Interpreting the 'national consensus'**

After making public a variety of clashing views, all parties in the joint parliamentary session in Islamabad have produced a unanimous 14-point document of 'national consensus' on the war on terror. This is an important moment in Pakistan's history in so far as the politicians did not sabotage the session as they appeared to indicate earlier, but agreed to make an effort to arrive at a consensus over the crisis of terrorism in Pakistan. Needless to say, any 'consensus' among people of differing points of view had to be abstract and broad, which is what the agreed document is. The corollary to that is that its interpretations will abound in the days to come

Daily Times, 24 October 2008

**Opinion: Four years and a good beginning By Ejaz Haider**

Fifteen trucks crossed the Line of Control Wednesday. While India and Pakistan have to go a long way towards normalising, the recent troubles in Kashmir being just one example of how much more needs be done, there is no gainsaying that the two sides have come a long way forward too. Old mindsets still persist. There are also problems of internal politics. India is preparing for its next round of general election in mid-2009; Pakistan is grappling with its own political woes. It will take some optimism to think that either side, notwithstanding the expressions of good will and the recent meeting between the National Security Advisors, will do something really radical to push the process forward

News, 24 October 2008

**Bitter fruits of IMF bailout**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan will have to cut its defence budget by 30 per cent in the next four years if it agrees to the IMF conditions for a bailout package now being discussed in Dubai between the two sides, a document containing the IMF conditions seen by this correspondent reveals. Under extremely tough conditions, Pakistan would get $9.6 billion from the IMF during the next three years at a mark-up rate of
16.7 per cent per annum, reveals the document. The IMF funding will not be rescheduled, says the document. Pakistan would also furnish to the IMF 48 hours before signing the funding agreement details of all loans it got under the bilateral and multilateral arrangements.

News, 24 October 2008
**US drone attack kills 10 militants**
PESHAWAR: Some 10 militants were killed and six others seriously injured in yet another pre-dawn missile attack by a US spy plane on a Madrassa and a house in Danday Darpakhel village near Miramshah in the North Waziristan Agency (NWA) on Thursday morning. The militants died in the attack belonged to Ahmadzai Wazir and Mehsud tribes of South Waziristan and Dawar tribe in North Waziristan. The US aircraft fired four Hellfire missiles on Madrassa Sirajul Uloom and the adjoining house of former Afghan Taliban commander, Maulana Pir Muhammad, who is now part of pro-America Hamid Karzai-led government in Kabul.

News, 24 October 2008
**US military training programme for FC starts**
WASHINGTON: A small contingent of US military instructors have begun a training program scheme aimed at turning the Frontier Corps into an effective counter-insurgency force, a US military official said on Thursday. About 25 US military personnel last week began training Pakistani counterparts at a location in Pakistan outside the troubled tribal areas where the Frontier Corps operates, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. 'It has started. It is a train-the-trainer mission,' the official said, emphasizing that the Americans would not directly train the Frontier Corps, but only their Pakistan Army instructors. The aim is 'basically to train the Frontier Corps in counter-insurgency warfare to make them more effective in the tribal areas,' the official said. Meanwhile, Pakistani officials in Washington said the government is planning to supply assault rifles to thousands of tribesmen willing to take up arms against the militants in the tribal areas.

News, 24 October 2008
**Editorial: Reviewing terror**
The joint session of parliament after a marathon discussion between party representatives, has finally passed a unanimous resolution on the battle against terror. The carefully worded, 14-point resolution does not say very much, but calls for an urgent review of the national security situation, seeks a review of the methodology of combating terror and advocates an 'independent' foreign policy. The resolution, reportedly adopted after many hours of heated debate between members of the 16-member parliamentary committee formed to finalize it, was tabled before parliament well into Wednesday night. During the meeting to discuss its provisions, demands from the JUI-F chief that an immediate ceasefire be called, had led to threats of a walkout from him. The resolution, to meet the demands of those seeking an end to armed action, calls broadly for dialogue with all stakeholders and the withdrawal of army units where possible with civilian forces taking their place.

**Pakistan's Tribal Militias Walk a Tightrope in Fight Against Taliban**
PESHAWAR, Pakistan - Two tribal elders lay stretched out in an orthopedic ward here last week, their plastered limbs and winces of pain grim evidence of the slaughter they survived when a suicide bomber blew himself up in the midst of their tribal gathering. These wounded men, and many others in the hospital, were supposed to be the backbone of a Pakistani government effort to take on the Taliban, and its
backers, Al Qaeda, with armies of traditional tribesmen working in consultation with the Pakistani military.


**India rejects Pak charge on Chenab river flow**

NEW DELHI, Oct 24: Rejecting Pakistan's charge that it had blocked Chenab river water flow, India today turned down the neighbouring country's demand for compensation, asserting that there was no wrong-doing by it. At the meeting of Indus Water Commissioners here in the backdrop of Pakistan's allegations, the Indian side furnished data related to outflow of water in river Chenab from this country to show that it had released sufficient quantity despite low availability, sources told.


**Anti-Taliban protest in Afghanistan**

KABUL, Oct 24: More than 1,000 people shouted anti-Taliban slogans in eastern Afghanistan on Friday, protesting against the slayings this week of 26 young men from their community. The unprecedented demonstration in the eastern Laghman province was one of the largest anti-Taliban gatherings since the fall of the Islamist regime following the US invasion in late 2001. On Sunday, Taliban had stopped a bus in southern Kandahar province's Maiwand district, a militant-controlled area, and killed 26 of the passengers. A Taliban spokesman said the men were targeted because they were members of Afghan security forces.


**China preparing rescue package for Pakistan**

BEIJING: China is quietly working to provide Pakistan a soft loan of $1.5 billion to overcome its financial crisis in addition to more than $3.7 billion to be invested in the telecom and power generation sectors in the next two to three years, Chinese officials told The News here on Friday. Despite all security issues and financial pressures, China has decided to stand by its two trusted friends - Pakistan and Nigeria - where China will invest more than $4 billion by the end of 2009, they said. Top Chinese government officials emphasised that both Nigeria and Pakistan were very important countries for China. Many Chinese oil companies are working in the dangerous Niger delta zone of Nigeria, while in Pakistan China is planning to connect its Xingjian province with African countries through the Gwadar Port.


**Opinion: Humanising Pak-China relations By Saleem H Ali**

It is time to again humanise the Pak-Chinese relationship. Pakistan's friendship with its giant northern neighbour clearly deserves greater attention and must be approached with greater creativity and less sentimentality. The residents of Islamabad will surely remember the militant assault on massage parlours in the city two years ago, which escalated into a siege of Lal Masjid. Chinese massage parlours were declared by the ulema of the mosque to be dens of sin and, much to the embarrassment of the government, some of the Chinese massage therapists and acupuncturists were held hostage by madrassa students under accusations of spreading immorality.

News, 26 October 2008

**Army bound to back parliament's decisions: COAS**

KAKUL: Chief of the Army Staff General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani has said that Pakistan Army is bound to ensure implementation on decisions taken by parliament and would
come out to the expectations of masses. He said that the unanimous resolution passed by parliament against the scourge of terrorism and extremism was a positive move and there was complete harmony among the masses over the eradication of terrorism. He was addressing the passing out parade of 118 PMA Long Course, Ladies Integrated Course-3, Technical Graduate Course-22, Graduate Course 32 and Integrated Course-37 at the Pakistan Military Academy, Kakul, here on Saturday

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News, 26 October 2008

**1,500 militants killed, 300 held in Bajaur action**

KHAR: After getting complete control of the strategic Loisam town of Khar Tehsil, top military officials on Saturday claimed to have killed around 1,500 militants and arrested their 300 foreign associates in the ongoing military operation in the troubled Bajaur Agency. Briefing a team of national and international media persons during their visit to the violence-hit tribal agency, Frontier Corps (FC) Inspector General Maj-Gen Tariq Khan and ISPR DG Maj-Gen Athar Abbasi said the security forces had taken control of the strategically-located important town of Loisam in Khar subdivision, the headquarters of the Bajaur Agency, and also established the government's writ there and other urban areas and towns

News, 26 October 2008

**Pakistan to move WB on Chenab flow**

NEW DELHI/ISLAMABAD: Indus Water Commissioner (IWC) Jamaat Ali Shah has said Pakistan will approach the World Bank and receive compensation from India for obstructing water flow from the Chenab River and defects in the design of the Baglihar Dam, says an Indian news agency. Talking to Indian journalists at the Indra Gandhi Airport before his departure to Pakistan, Jamaat Ali Shah said he visited the district Dooda of Occupied Kashmir and found several defects in the Baglihar Dam. "Talks at length were held with my Indian counterpart but I am not satisfied with it," he said

Daily Times, 26 October 2008

**Opinion: Blind to the threat -Dr Hasan-Askari Rizvi**

If the Taliban agenda was nothing more than the expulsion of US and NATO troops from Afghanistan their efforts to expand their domain to some of the settled districts of the NWFP makes no sense. And what is the justification of the sectarian violence in Kurram Agency? The government and major opposition parties are euphoric over the unanimous passage of the resolution on militancy in the tribal areas during the joint session of parliament. They think that they have evolved a credible approach to dealing with the insurgency and its violent fallout in mainland Pakistan.

Dawn, 27 October 2008

**Tribesmen stand up to Taliban; lose 12, kill 7**
MINGORA, Oct 26: Twelve jirga members were executed and seven militants, including commander Mulla Shamsher, were killed in fighting between a tribal force and militants loyal to radical cleric Maulana Fazlullah in Swat valley on Sunday. Taliban spokesman Muslim Khan said Mulla Shamsher Ali, two other militants and 12 members of a Lashkar were killed in the clash. He said the Taliban had shot the jirga members and then hanged them to 'teach' the local people a 'lesson' for moving against Taliban

Daily Times, 28 October 2008

Pak-Afghan jirga for joint efforts against terror: Reconciliation, talks vital for lasting success: Qureshi

ISLAMABAD: Negotiations and reconciliation are necessary to succeed in combating terrorism and extremism, Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said on Monday. He said terrorism posed the gravest threat to Pakistan and Afghanistan and both countries should forge closer co-operation to eliminate the menace. 'This is the gravest threat to both countries and they need to co-operate closely to effectively counter and completely eliminate this curse,' he said while addressing the inaugural session of the Pak-Afghan mini jirga (jirga gai)

Daily Times, 28 October 2008

Editorial: A strategy for Balochistan

The secretary of the Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Reconciliatory Committee on Balochistan, Senator Babar Awan, says he has a strategy for a solution to the problems of Balochistan. He has it narrowed down to 'three Rs': reconciliation with all political forces, rebuilding national institutions and reallocating resources. The roadmap will have 'five steps' and it will kick off with a jirga of intellectuals and other stakeholders from Balochistan on October 31 in Islamabad. After that another jirga comprising all the political parties of the province would be held.

Daily Times, 28 October 2008

Editorial: Fight for Bajaur

The public has been provided its first look at the situation in militant-infested Bajaur, where the military has been battling terrorists for almost two months now. The IG Frontier Corps, for the first time since the operation began, took journalists on a guided tour of the area of combat. The visit in itself indicates growing military confidence, with the media personnel briefed about the long, hard fight waged to regain control over key territories. After battles in which 1,500 militants and 73 soldiers were stated to have been killed, state forces had regained control of key areas, including the Lowi Sam region. This is an important strategic gain as roads into Swat and Mohmand Agency lead through this area. Its return to government hands will impede militant movement across the terrain it commands, and as such have a potential impact on the fierce fighting still taking in Swat.

News, 29 October 2008

Opinion: In Musharraf's footsteps By Asif Ezdi

Shortly before Musharraf’s unceremonious ouster from the presidency last August, some PML-Q leaders suggested to him that he should cancel the NRO and restore the deposed judges before resigning. This advice was given not because these politicians wanted him to undo his vandalisation of the constitution before being booted out of office but in order to create difficulties for his successor and the new government. If Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry was restored, they told Musharraf, he would become a problem for Zardari. Musharraf, who played by the same Machiavellian code as these politicians, decided not to follow this advice because, as he said afterwards,
Zardari would not restore Iftikhar Chaudhry and Musharraf's "enemies" (Zardari and Nawaz Sharif) would start fighting on this issue. And if Iftikhar Chaudhry was restored, Musharraf reasoned, he would not spare Zardar

Dawn, 29 October 2008

**Islamabad and Kabul agree on contacts with militants**

ISLAMABAD, Oct 28: The first Pak-Afghan mini-Jirga formally decided to hold talks with militants in their respective areas of control if the Taliban agreed to adhere to the countries' constitutions. However, the jirga dropped the condition that militants should first renounce violence. Both Kabul and Islamabad had earlier insisted that talks with the Taliban would be possible only if the militants laid down arms and renounced violence. But, the declaration adopted at the end of the mini-jirga only talked about 'urgent and imperative need of dialogue and negotiations with opposition groups in both countries with a view to finding a peaceful settlement of the ongoing conflict, upholding the supremacy of constitutions of both countries'

Dawn, 29 October 2008

**US willing to hold talks with Taliban, says report**

WASHINGTON/NEW YORK, Oct 28: The US is willing to hold direct talks with elements of the Taliban in an effort to quell unrest in Afghanistan, the Wall Street Journal reported on Tuesday, citing unidentified Bush administration officials. The Washington Post reported that Taliban leader Mullah Omar had shown openness to the idea of repudiating Al Qaeda, which encouraged the Bush administration to explore the possibility of holding direct talks with the militia. Jane's Defence Weekly reported that the Taliban had conveyed this message to representatives of the Afghan government during a meeting in Saudi Arabia last month

Dawn, 29 October 2008

**Editorial: Superpower arrogance**

WHETHER it is a member of the 'axis of evil' or 'a major non-Nato ally', the Bush administration does not seem to miss an opportunity to flaunt its military prowess and the unilateralism that has been its characteristic. With the presidential election only a week away, American forces on Sunday raided a Syrian town and claimed killing eight people, including what a US military spokesman described as 'one of the most prominent foreign fighter facilitators'. The raid would remind the world of the Sept 3 attack by American troops in Fata, the first to come in the wake of President Bush's secret order, signed in July, authorising raids inside Pakistan, the 'frontline state' in the war on terror. The Sept 3 raid by American special forces that killed 20 people in Angoor Adda sent shock waves across Pakistan. Since then, even though an incursion by US troops has not taken place, the Pentagon has continued to launch missile attacks on suspected Taliban targets in Pakistan - 18 have been reported since September - with the casualties each time not necessarily being the militants


**Pakistan Protests U.S. Attacks**

Published: October 29, 2008 PESHAWAR, Pakistan - The Pakistani government lodged a formal protest on Wednesday over American missile attacks on the Taliban and Al Qaeda in the nation's tribal areas and told the American ambassador the strikes should be 'stopped immediately,' the Foreign Ministry said. Ambassador Anne Patterson was summoned to the ministry two days after a missile strike by a drone in South Waziristan killed 20 people, including several local Taliban commanders

Daily Times, 30 October 2008
Over 200 killed, hundreds injured, almost 15,000 displaced: Ziarat: after shock
ZIARAT: At least 200 people were killed, hundreds injured and an estimated 15,000 left homeless on Wednesday when a predawn earthquake hit parts of Balochistan, chiefly the summer resort district of Ziarat. Ensuing landslides destroyed about 1,500 houses and blocked roads. Scores of people are believed to be buried under the rubble. Wailing villagers dug through rubble with their bare hands in a desperate search for loved ones. The Meteorological Department said two tremors had struck at 4:30am and 5:15am, with the second, more severe, having a magnitude of 6.5. Originating at a shallow depth of 10km in the Sulaiman Range, the quake caused major damage in Ziarat, Quetta, Pishin and Chaman. Wam, Warchom, Kan and Kawas towns were among the worst hit in Ziarat

Daily Times, 30 October 2008

Editorial: Regional stakes in peace with the Taliban
The 50-member Pak-Afghan 'jirgagai' or mini-jirga has concluded its session in Islamabad on Tuesday with a call to initiate peace talks with the Taliban, 'including all who are involved in the conflict situation'. Two committees have been formed, one to ensure that the resolution of the 'jirgagai' is implemented, and the other to actually engage the Taliban in negotiations. The Afghan side, represented by former foreign minister Mr Abdullah Abdullah, has clearly changed its mind. It once used to denounce all efforts for peace talks with the militants made by Pakistan.

News, 31 October 2008

Balochistan quake death toll rises to 300
QUETTA: The death toll from the Balochistan earthquake could climb above 300, officials said on Thursday. Multiple aftershocks continued to rock the Balochistan region, creating fresh fears among survivors who prepared to spend a second night in the open in sub-zero temperatures. 'The death toll may be 300 or even more,' Balochistan Revenue Minister Zamarak Khan told AFP. The district health officer of the historic hill town of Ziarat, Ayub Kakar, said 300 had already been reached. But determining the exact number of victims remained difficult as many families buried their dead immediately in line with tradition, without going to hospital and leaving no official record, he added. Tens of thousands of people are estimated to have been made homeless by the quake, and villagers from Gogi, 25 kilometres (15 miles) from Ziarat, travelled to Quetta to draw attention to their plight

News, 31 October 2008

Pakistan, Afghanistan to continue trilateral summit process
ISTANBUL: Pakistan and Afghanistan on Thursday agreed to continue the trilateral summit process with the help of Turkey, for cooperation in political, security and counter terrorism fields to ensure peace and stability in the region. The important meeting between Afghan President Hamid Karzai, Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, held here on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum, also decided to hold the second trilateral summit at the earliest convenience of the three presidents. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, while reading the joint declaration following the meeting, said during the meeting the president of Afghanistan and the prime minister of Pakistan expressed satisfaction on contacts and cooperation between the two countries and had agreed to continue with their dialogue process

News, 31 October 2008

13 more killed in Swat
MINGORA/PESHAWAR: The security forces on Thursday killed 10 more militants and injured two others during operations in various areas of Kabal Tehsil of the restive Swat Valley. The forces took action in Akhun Killay, Kotlai, Dagai, Saidu Sharif Airport and Kanju, using gunship helicopters and artillery to pound suspected positions of the militants. According to the ISPR-run Swat Media Centre, the forces entered Sirsenai village where, during a house-to-house search, an exchange of fire took place with the Taliban, resulting in the death of three militants. One militant was also arrested and a large quantity of explosives and CDs recovered from some houses.

News, 31 October 2008

**Taliban rule out talks with mini-Jirga**

PESHAWAR: The Taliban on Thursday ruled out talks with the Jirga members in the presence of foreign forces in Afghanistan. 'We will neither hold talks with the peace Jirga delegation in the presence of foreign forces nor accept the present constitution of Afghanistan,' said Zabihullah Mujahid, a Taliban spokesman, in an interview with the Afghan Islamic Press. 'Not a single word was uttered in the peace Jirga about the real issue of the area - the presence of foreign troops,' he said, adding, 'Civilians are being killed, their houses are demolished but the peace Jirga did not discuss this issue.'

News, 31 October 2008

**Opinion: Obama is better by Yasser Latif Hamdani**

Between a rock and a hard place, between the devil and the deep blue sea there are countless ways of describing the stark Catch 22 situation in which we in Pakistan are forced to see the current US election. On the one hand we have the charismatic and eloquent Obama, who most Pakistanis have taken a strong liking to because he promises a break with what are generally conceived by the common people here as pro-military dictatorship policies of the Grand Old Party. But Obama has also engaged in rhetoric that scares most Pakistanis. The idea of a US attack on the NWFP isn't so much an issue of sovereignty as of repercussions. Already Pakistan is facing the brunt of terrorism in the world with our lives and property insecure and our future uncertain. Added to our misery are the economic woes which have been exacerbated by the war on terror. Most Pakistanis also fear that the Democratic Party, at least since Bill Clinton's second term in office, has been moving decidedly closer to India, Pakistan's principal rival. This fear is only partially true and in the long run inconsequential.