

PAKISTAN

January 2007 - July 2009

Chronology of Events

Compiled from
The Week In Review



Editor & Contributors

S. Samuel C. Rajiv

Jagannath Panda

Priyanka Singh

Sanjeev Kumar Shrivastav



Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses

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2007

January 6 - 12, 2007

EAM Mukherjee to visit Pakistan; PoK leadership praises India's approach

External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee was scheduled to meet the Pakistani leadership during his January 13-14 visit to Islamabad to invite President Musharraf for the SAARC Summit in New Delhi on April 3-4. Reports pointed out that no deals were likely to be signed during the EAM's visit regarding a host of issues, including the re-opening of the Mumbai and Karachi consulates, or the agreement on "Reducing the Risk from Accidents Relating to Nuclear Weapons", which was initialled during the visit of Pakistan Foreign Secretary Riaz Muhammad Khan to New Delhi in November 2005. Official however pointed out that Mr. Mukherjee's visit was expected to set the tone and tenor for the fourth round of composite dialogue, set to begin in March.¹ In another positive development, for the first time in six decades, the Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK) leadership publicly praised India's approach towards the resolution of the Kashmir issue. PoK Prime Minister Sardar Atiq Khan urged Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to take bold decisions at the earliest to bring lasting peace to the subcontinent.²

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January 13 - 19, 2007

India-Pak agree to commence fourth-round of Composite Dialogue; Kasuri supports PM Singh's suggestion of making Siachen a 'mountain of peace'; Joint terror mechanism to hold its first meeting in March; Pakistan Rangers still supporting infiltration attempts; Pak Army destroys al-Qaeda hideouts in South Waziristan; Gates: Pakistan an "extraordinarily strong ally" in the war against terrorism

External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee's two-day visit to Islamabad from January 13-14 to invite Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz for the April 13-14 SAARC Summit in New Delhi set a positive stage for India-Pakistan interaction for the year.³ The two sides agreed to commence the fourth round of the Composite Dialogue with a meeting of the Foreign Secretaries set for March 13-14. Pakistan Foreign Minister Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri's revealed that Pakistan had presented a detailed plan to address Indian concerns on troop positions on the Siachen glacier.⁴ Mr. Kasuri later added that he supported Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's suggestion for making Siachen a "mountain of peace" by controlling the activity of military on both sides.⁵ Mr. Kasuri added that the two sides never had such sustained discussions on Kashmir in the past 60 years.

The joint mechanism against terror, set up at the Foreign Secretaries' meeting in New Delhi in November 2006, would hold its first meeting in March 2007. The two sides also agreed to complete work on the liberalisation of their mutual visa regimes in February 2007. The EAM also raised concerns over the fates of Indian Prisoners of War (PoW) in Pakistani jails, which was shared by President Pervez Musharraf.⁶ Indian and Pakistani hydrographers embarked on a 20-day-long joint survey of the 65-mile long Sir Creek strip off the Gujarat coast from January 15. The survey aimed to verify the outermost points of coastlines of both countries. The two sides disputed the interpretation of the boundary line between Kutch and Sindh, as depicted in a 1914 and 1925 map.

Amidst the positive indications, the infiltration attempt by terrorists, with the active support of the Pakistan Rangers, that was stopped by the Border Security Force (BSF) in the Akhnoor sector on January 17 threatened to unravel the November 2003 ceasefire agreement between the two sides. The agreement is an important keystone of the ongoing India-Pakistan peace process.⁷ India raised its concern over the firing incident with Islamabad over diplomatic channels.

Meanwhile, the Pakistan Army destroyed alleged Al Qaeda hideouts in South Waziristan near the Afghan border using helicopter gunships. The raids followed the remarks of US intelligence chief John Negroponte that the Al Qaeda and Taliban were both finding shelter in Pakistan's lawless frontier areas.⁸ The visiting US Defence Secretary Robert Gates stated in Kabul that Pakistan was "an extraordinarily strong ally" in the war on terrorism but militancy on the Pakistani side of the border would have to be dealt with.⁹

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January 27 - February 2, 2007

Bush administration against making US military assistance to Pakistan contingent; PM Aziz at Brussels: CD improving climate with India; Aziz addresses NAC, first Pak PM to do so; Musharraf awarded 'King Abdul Aziz Award'

The Bush administration stated that it was against the provisions of the HR1 bill that would make US military assistance to Pakistan contingent on its ability to tackle the rising Taliban threat. The bill has already been endorsed by the House of Representatives and is to be considered by the Senate. Reports in Pakistan were equating the bill with the Pressler Amendment to the 1985 US foreign aid bill under which Washington had blocked the sale of F-16 aircraft to Pakistan on account of its nuclear programme.¹⁰

Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz addressing the foreign relations committee of the European Parliament in Brussels stated that the 'composite dialogue' with India was "improving the atmosphere" between the two countries. He added that it was necessary for both the countries to "move beyond dispute management to dispute resolution".¹¹ Mr. Aziz also became the first Pakistani Prime Minister to address the North Atlantic Council (NAC), the top decision-making body of NATO, signifying the close military links that have developed between the two parties with lot of stakes in Afghanistan.

President Pervez Musharraf traveled to Indonesia and Malaysia during the week to push forward his initiative of the need for Muslim nations to embark on a new peace initiative to tackle the problems of Palestine, Iraq, Lebanon, and Afghanistan. Analysts believed that these were efforts possibly geared towards enhancing the international standing of President Musharraf ahead of the general elections scheduled between November 2007 and January 2008.¹² President Musharraf and Indonesia's Susilo Yudhoyono also agreed to convene an international conference of "Shia-Sunni ulema" to discuss the spurt in bloody violence between the two groups. Indonesia heads the 57-member Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC).¹³ President Musharraf's trip to South East Asia followed his tour of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, and the UAE during the previous week.¹⁴ In Saudi

Arabia, he became the first Pakistani leader to be awarded the 'King Abdul Aziz' award, the country's highest civilian award.¹⁵

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February 3 - 9, 2007

Bush administration to Congress: Restrictions on Pak will hurt American interests; US hands over 8 Cobra helicopter gun ships; Afghan Foreign Minister warns Pakistan against 'nursing hegemonic ambitions towards Afghanistan'; Musharraf admits Afghan Taliban getting support from Pak border areas, says peace deals with tribals only way forward; EAM Mukherjee welcomes Musharraf's statement that militants could not be involved in resolving the Kashmir issue

Reports indicated that the Bush administration informed the Congress that imposing restrictions on Pakistan would hurt American interests in the region. The provisions of the HR 1 Bill introduced in the US Senate would have made US aid contingent on Pakistani actions on counter-terrorism and dealing with the Taliban.¹⁶ The US House of Representatives had already approved the terrorism and proliferation-related restrictions of the bill, "Implementing the 9/11 Commission Recommendations Act of 2007", which was being enacted to implement the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission. The Senate on its part recommended that the President make a commitment of \$3 billion for Pakistan over the next 3 years.¹⁷

The United States meanwhile on February 3 handed over eight Cobra helicopter gunships to Pakistan, the first lot out of a total 40 Cobras that the US was gifting to Pakistan as part of the five-year security assistance programme that began in 2003. US Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker described Pakistan as a strategic partner and hoped that the relationship would continue.¹⁸

The Afghan Foreign Minister Rangeen Dadfar Spanta, on a visit to London on February 3, warned Pakistan against 'nursing hegemonic ambitions towards Afghanistan', and advised it to stop "using terrorism as an instrument of foreign policy". Asking Pakistan to stop cross-border terrorism and stop financing terrorist cells, he added that a peaceful and stable Afghanistan was in the interests of Pakistan.¹⁹

President Musharraf, addressing reporters in Rawalpindi on February 03 conceded that the Taliban fighters were getting support from the border areas of Pakistan. Maintaining that the Taliban were an Afghan problem which needed an indigenous solution, he rejected as "preposterous" suggestions that sections of the army or the ISI were abetting the Taliban.²⁰ Mr. Musharraf also defended the peace deals with tribals in North Waziristan and South Waziristan, stating that they were only way forward. On February 8, 400 Marri tribesmen in southwestern Pakistan's Kohlu area surrendered to the Pakistani government forces and pledged to support the government's policies in the southwest province of Baluchistan. They also pledged their cooperation in government action being taken against militant tribesmen in Dera Bugti and Kohlu areas.²¹

Analysts believed that Pakistan would be very much tempted to use the Taliban as leverage against an Afghan government whose friendship with India was causing unease in Islamabad. However, reports noted that the spate of suicide attacks on Pakistani soldiers and in cities, allegedly by forces friendly to the Taliban, would suggest that the regime of President Musharraf was in a delicate situation and that the Afghan government of Hamid Karzai was conveniently blaming Islamabad in the face of its own inability to counter the Taliban threat and rapidly declining public support.²²

At the Rawalpindi press conference, President Musharraf opined that relations with India were never as good as they were now and added that he was “optimistic” the peace process would bring about the resolution of long-standing disputes. He termed the suicide attack at the Marriott Hotel before the reception to be hosted by the Indian High Commission on the occasion of India’s Republic Day as a handiwork of forces inimical to the peace process. He also added that the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) was “obviously” the true representative of the Kashmiris.²³

On Kashmir Solidarity Day on February 5, Mr. Musharraf, while expressing his support for the people of Kashmir, stated that there was a shift in focus from a “confrontationist stance to reconciliatory resolution of dispute”. The opposition parties and the MMA however denounced the peace talks with India as a conspiracy against the two-nation theory and against the Kashmiri people.²⁴ EAM Pranab Mukherjee welcomed Mr. Musharraf’s statement that militants could not be involved in resolving the Kashmir issue.²⁵ Meanwhile, Pakistan’s Foreign Ministry confirmed on February 06 that the India-Pakistan joint anti-terror mechanism would hold its first meeting on March 6-7 in Islamabad.²⁶

President Musharraf also visited Turkey during the week as part of a series of trips to Muslim countries aimed at injecting new life into peace efforts in the Middle East.

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February 24 - March 2, 2007

After Cheney expresses apprehensions of al-Qaeda regrouping, Foreign Ministry says Pak determined to continue fight against terrorism; Reports: \$10 billion over 5 years not securing Pak support in the war on terror; Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute: al-Qaeda leadership hiding in Pakistan; Foreign Ministers from Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, as well as the Secretary General of the OIC meet in Islamabad on February 25

In the face of growing international pressure over its efforts in fighting the Taliban, the Pakistan Foreign Ministry reiterated that Pakistan was “determined to continue its fight against terrorism, in particular against Al-Qaeda. We are equally determined to curb Taliban militancy and Talibanisation in the tribal areas [of Pakistan]”.²⁷ The statement followed the visit of US Vice-President Dick Cheney to Islamabad during which he expressed “apprehensions” over the re-grouping of the Al Qaeda. During Mr. Cheney’s visit, Mullah Obaidullah, a former Taliban defense minister, was arrested near Quetta, Pakistan. Obaidullah, an important member of the inner core around Mullah Muhammad Omar, the Taliban leader, was the most important Taliban member to be captured since the American-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001.²⁸

Reports pointed out that the US policy of generously supporting Pakistan, to the tune of nearly \$10 billion and more during the past 5 years, was not working in securing more qualitative Pakistani support.²⁹ Reports noted that President Bush has warned Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf that the new Democratic-led Congress could cut aid to his country unless it did more to crack down on Al Qaeda operatives. The House of Representatives recently adopted a bill requiring Mr. Bush to certify Pakistan as making “all possible efforts” to prevent the Taliban from operating in areas under its sovereign control as a condition of continued U.S. military aid. Pakistan received about \$850 million annually in US economic, military and counter-narcotics aid. Analysts believed that about \$350 million of that aid could be affected by the House bill.³⁰

Meanwhile, the Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute in a report alleged that the Al Qaeda leadership was hiding in Pakistan. Stating that without Pakistan’s acquiescence and support, the Taliban would have much more difficulty in sustaining itself as a political entity in Afghanistan, it went on to note the key role that Pakistani Pashtuns would have in the unfolding insurgency in Afghanistan.³¹

Foreign Ministers from Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, as well as the Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the 57-member bloc of Islamic states, met in Islamabad on February 25 to discuss the situation in the Middle East. President Musharraf had recently visited the six countries as well as Iran and Syria for talks on settling conflicts in the Middle East, including the fighting in Iraq and tensions between Washington and Tehran. Mr. Musharraf has stated that he was trying to build consensus among countries that supported “a conciliatory approach” to the region’s problems. The meeting was to lay the groundwork for a summit meeting of Muslim leaders to be held in Mecca in the near future.³²

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March 3 - 9, 2007

Joint terror mechanism gets underway; EAM Mukherjee denies Indian involvement in Balochistan; Pak disputes senior US Gen.’s statement that US troops have been authorized to cross over into Pak territory in pursuit of al-Qaeda and the Taliban; Outgoing US Ambassador Crocker urges the Musharraf regime to conduct ‘free and fair’ elections

The joint-terror mechanism between India and Pakistan got underway during the week with both sides agreeing to use the mechanism to convey information that could help prevent violence and terrorist acts on the territory of the other. However, reports noted that Islamabad had some reservations about cooperating in investigations relating to acts of terrorism that had already been committed.³³

While India asked Pakistan to help track down a suspect in the Samjhauta train bombing, Pakistan on its part brought into discussion the alleged Indian involvement in incidents in Balochistan and “interference” by Indian consulates on the Afghan border inside Pakistan.³⁴ External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee categorically denied Indian involvement in Balochistan. Mr. Mukherjee told the Rajya Sabha that the consulates were necessary due to the large number of Indian projects in Afghanistan.³⁵

Meanwhile, Pakistan rejected the statements by US Lieutenant General Douglas Lute in the Senate Armed Services Committee that US troops were authorized to cross over into Pakistani territory in pursuit of the Al Qaeda and the Taliban. Pakistan’s chief military spokesman Major General Waheed Arshad stressed that only Pakistani armed forces can take action inside the country. Some 80,000 Pakistani troops are positioned down the largely tribal regions bordering Afghanistan, where there have been incidents of fighting that spilled into Pakistan.³⁶

The outgoing US Ambassador to Pakistan, Ryan C. Crocker, who was moving to Baghdad, urged the Musharraf regime to conduct ‘free and fair’ elections, to be held later in the year. Mr. Crocker however stressed that the US did not interfere in political issues in Pakistan but it was providing all possible technical assistance to the administration to ensure free and fair elections conducted in a transparent manner.³⁷

With reports of Iran fencing its 700-km border with Pakistan, analysts noted that Pakistan was fast becoming the most fenced country in South Asia with Afghanistan and India also doing the same.³⁸

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March 31 - April 6, 2007

Human Rights Commission of Pakistan warns against the increasing radicalization of Pak society; Stratfor: Crisis sparked by the ouster of the Chief Justice has weakened Musharraf; US Congress publication: Musharraf could face fate similar to Shah of Iran; Sharif accuses Musharraf of using militants as a bargaining tool with the West; ABC: US supporting Jundullah against Iran; Pak test fires 200 km range Abdali, follows test firing of 700km Babur in previous week; Pak to start serial production of the JF-17 fighter aircraft from 2008

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) warned that the increasing Talibanization/radicalization of Pakistani society in the name of religion was a dangerous trend. It noted that “the

government's inability to answer the threat of Talibanisation in a straightforward and transparent manner had enabled the militants to extend their control over large areas in FATA and FANA" and added that the establishment was "vacillating" in the face of fanaticism.³⁹ Reports also noted that the Taliban's attempts to enforce moral policing were receiving a boost with local administrations supporting such moves.⁴⁰

The US thinktank, Stratfor in a report stated that the crisis sparked by the ouster of the Chief Justice of Pakistan had weakened President Pervez Musharraf's government, and that religious extremists and radical Islamists were gradually spreading their influence beyond the traditional Pushtoon strongholds along the mountainous and tribal Pak-Afghan border areas. It noted that the suicide bombing in Kharian was proof that the jihadist sphere of operations had now expanded into Punjab. According to it, the spread of Talibanisation from Pakistan's border regions into its heartland could force President Musharraf into "sharing power with his secular opponents to salvage his own political position and roll back religious extremism."⁴¹

The Executive Editor of a US-Congress related publication Roll Call, Morton Kondracke warned that Islamists could topple the "increasingly unpopular" Musharraf regime sooner than later. He opined that Musharraf would face a similar fate to that of the Shah of Iran if he did not hold free elections before the end of the year. According to Mr. Kondracke, the two priorities of the Bush administration were thwarting a new Taliban offensive and prevention of a nuclear-armed Pakistan being taken over by Islamic fundamentalists.⁴² In a sign of the Islamists growing assertiveness, a top Pakistani cleric demanded that the federal government impose Sharia in the country within a week or face Islamisation of the society.⁴³

The former Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif accused the regime of President Musharraf of using the militants as a bargaining tool in his relationship with the West. During a meeting with John Tierney, the Chairman of the US House of Representatives Sub-committee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, he urged the United States to help restore democracy in the country as the country's political institutions had become dysfunctional during the last 7 years of military rule. Mr. Tierney told Mr. Sharif that the US Congress was considering proposals to link Pakistan's economic assistance with progress on fighting terrorism and restoration of democracy.⁴⁴ The US Department of State in a report released in the week indicted the Musharraf regime for trying to curb judicial freedom in the country and asserted that the US would seek to build "a more participatory, representative and accountable democracy in Pakistan."⁴⁵

The US news network, ABC News reported that US intelligence was training and supporting a Pakistani militant group, the Jundullah to stage attacks on Iranian soldiers across the border from the gas-rich Pakistani province of Baluchistan. The group took credit for an attack in February that killed at least 11 members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard riding on a bus in the Iranian city of Zehedan. ABC reported that the secret campaign against Iran was discussed when Vice-President Dick Cheney visited President Musharraf in February.⁴⁶

Meanwhile, Pakistan on March 31 test-fired a short-range nuclear-capable ballistic missile, the Abdali with a range of 200 kms. The test followed the launch of the nuclear-capable Hatf-VII (Babur) cruise missile with a range of 700 km in the previous week. The Chief of the Pakistan Air Force ACM Tanveer Ahmed revealed that Pakistan would start serial production of the JF-17 fighter aircraft from 2008. He added that the PAF intended to raise 10-12 squadrons of 200-250 jets by 2015 if adequate funding was available.⁴⁷

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April 14 - 20, 2007

Pak, Afghan force exchange fire; PM Aziz in China: Iran gas pipeline project crucial to Pakistan's economic growth and political stability; Thousands protest against radical religious school in Karachi; MQM Chief: Religious extremists have hurt Islam's image

Afghan and Pakistani forces exchanged fire near Bermal in the Paktika province during the week. The area on the border was being fenced by Pakistan to prevent the movement of the Taliban. Afghanistan alleges that the fence was a distraction from the issue of militant safe havens on Pakistani soil.⁴⁸

President Musharraf, addressing the 60th Formation Commanders conference in Rawapindi, admitted that the Taliban enjoyed support among the tribal population bordering Afghanistan. He however vowed to neutralize the support and added that Pakistan was fighting the war on terrorism on its own interest.⁴⁹ Meanwhile, a tribal chief in Wana, south Waziristan, Mullah Mohammad Nazir, vowed to provide support to Al Qaeda chief Osama Bin Laden if requested by him as Bin Laden was an 'oppressed Muslim'.⁵⁰

On a visit to China, Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz noted that the Iran gas pipeline project was crucial to Pakistan's economic growth and political stability. The project was being opposed by Washington as it fears that the pipeline would weaken efforts to isolate Iran, which it accuses of running a clandestine nuclear weapons program. Mr. Aziz noted that Pakistan's economy was growing at over 7 per cent and its energy needs were growing at 10-12 per cent annually.⁵¹

Meanwhile, the *Daily Times* reported that President Musharraf and former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto had reached a deal whereby Bhutto's Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) would support Musharraf's re-election and the General would ask the National Accountability Bureau to drop corruption charges against her. Mr. Najam Sethi, editor of *Friday Times*, described the deal as a "relationship of convenience".⁵²

In another development, tens of thousands of people rallied in Pakistan's biggest city, Karachi, on April 15 to oppose the radical religious school that had begun a Taliban-style anti-vice campaign in the capital, Islamabad. The leader of the MQM, Altaf Hussain, addressing the rally from London where he is in exile, noted that the religious extremists in the Lal Masjid, or Red Mosque, in Islamabad and the adjoining madrasa, Jamia Hafsa, had hurt Islam's image.⁵³

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April 21 - 27, 2007

Musharraf: Lack of trust with Kabul could hurt US-led operations; Musharraf: Attack on Iran will lead to rise of sectarian tensions inside Pakistan; Bhutto at LSE: Deal with Musharraf would "adversely affect her credibility"

Before leaving on a 4-nation trip to Poland, Spain, Bosnia, and Turkey, President Musharraf urged President Karzai to end accusations about Taliban activities on Pakistani soil. He stated that the lack of trust between the two allies would harm the US-led coalition against al Qaeda and the Taliban militants.⁵⁴ The two leaders are expected to meet in Turkey in talks hosted by the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. During his two-day visit to Bosnia starting April 27, the two sides were expected to conclude several bilateral agreements, including those on cooperation in the defence industry.⁵⁵ In an interview to a Spanish newspaper, Gen. Musharraf stated that any attack on Iran would lead to a rise of sectarian tensions in his own country and added that most Pakistanis were "anti-American."⁵⁶

Even as protests continued against the sacking of the chief justice Iftikhar Chowdhury on March 9, former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, in a lecture at the London School of Economics and Political Science, asserted that any deal with President Musharraf would "adversely affect her credibility." She however added that restoration of democracy and saving the country from falling into the hands of extremists was "more important" than her credibility. In her view, the creeping extremism in Pakistan could be checked successfully by letting the moderate political parties to function unhindered.⁵⁷

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April 28 - May 4, 2007

Bhutto in Dubai: admits to holding talks with Pak government, says democracy only solution to end corruption in Pak; Protests against sacking of Chief Justice continued; Pak High Commissioner to India: SAFTA prospects tied with the resolution of political differences over key issues like Kashmir; NATO and Pakistan vow to strengthen relations and establish a "mature political dialogue"

Former Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, at the release of her book in Dubai admitted that she had been holding talks with the Pakistani government since 2002 but that the objective of her talks was to "end military rule". Stating that democracy was the only solution to the 68 percent corruption prevailing in Pakistan, she added that democracy and uniform couldn't go together.⁵⁸ The previous week, she had stated that it would be an honour for her to be elected as Prime Minister

but that Gen. Musharraf could continue as the President. Analysts however noted that there were a lot of imponderables including those of the extent of Gen. Musharraf's powers, constitutional requirement which barred a person holding the post of prime minister for more than 2 terms, corruption charges and in absentia conviction against her, among other issues.⁵⁹

Protests continued against the sacking of the former chief justice Ifthikar Choudhury. The government arrested 1000's of supporters of the judge belonging to the opposition parties ahead of a massive rally planned in Lahore on Saturday.⁶⁰ On International Press Freedom Day on 3 May, journalists across Pakistan held demonstrations and accused the government of suppressing and undermining press freedom. They held that the government's claims of giving complete freedom to the press were "hollow slogans".⁶¹

Meanwhile, the Pakistani High Commissioner to India, Shahid Malik Malik, addressing the PHD Chamber of Commerce in New Delhi, linked the prospect of Pakistan opening up the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) to India with the resolution of political differences over key issues like Kashmir. He also linked granting of the MFN status to India on the evolving political relationship. Bilateral trade, registering an increase of over 380 per cent in the last 3 years, is expected to reach \$1.5 billion in the current year.⁶²

Among other developments, NATO and Pakistan vowed to strengthen and widen relations to establish a "mature political dialogue", ahead of a ground-breaking visit to Islamabad by NATO Secretary-General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer. Mr Scheffer, who will be accompanied by NATO's top military commander Gen John Craddock, is the first head of the 26-nation alliance to visit Pakistan.⁶³

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May 5 - 11, 2007

Washington-based CSIS: Though Musharraf's credibility stands "badly undermined," too early to write his "political obituary"; European Parliament member Baroness Emma Nicholson: Pakistan has consistently failed to fulfil its obligations to introduce meaningful and representative democratic structures in AJK

Thousands attended a rally graced by the suspended Chief Justice of Pakistan, Ifthikar Choudhury in Lahore on 5 May, who warned that "the idea of dictatorship" was over and that states which ignored the rule of law and basic rights faced destruction.⁶⁴ Justice Choudhury was suspended by the government on 9 March on charges of corruption. The Washington-based think-tank, Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in a report noted that though President Musharraf's credibility stands "badly undermined" by the recent series of events, it was too early to write his "political obituary". The report notes that after more than seven years of governing, Musharraf's grip on keeping order had loosened, and that the question of his legitimacy was reasserting itself.⁶⁵

European Parliament member Baroness Emma Nicholson in her 'Report on Kashmir: Present Situation and Future Prospect', regrets that Pakistan has consistently failed to fulfil its obligations to introduce

meaningful and representative democratic structures in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). The report would be discussed in the House of Commons on 21 May. The report urges the Pakistan government to do more to live up to its commitment made in the human rights field. It calls on both India and Pakistan to take the opportunity to inject a new impetus for exploring options for “increased self-governance, freedom of movement, demilitarisation and intergovernmental cooperation on issues such as water, tourism, trade and the environment and to promote a genuine breakthrough in seeking a resolution of the Kashmir dispute”.

The report among other things notes that AJK is governed through the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs in Islamabad; that Pakistani officials dominate the Kashmir Council and that the Chief Secretary, the Inspector-General of Police, the Accountant-General and the Finance Secretary are all from Pakistan; disapproves of the provision in the 1974 Interim Constitution which forbids any political activity that is not in accordance with the doctrine of Jammu and Kashmir as part of Pakistan and obliges any candidate for a parliamentary seat in AJK to sign a declaration of loyalty to that effect; and is concerned that the Gilgit-Baltistan region enjoys no form of democratic representation whatsoever. It has also expressed concern regarding the lack of freedom of expression in AJK and reports of torture and mistreatment, of discrimination against refugees from Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir and of corruption amongst government officials.⁶⁶

The Pakistan government informed the National Assembly that 34 countries deported 115,762 Pakistanis in the last two years for either entering illegally or being engaged in illegal activities in their territories. The corresponding figures were 73,001 in 2005-06 and 42,761 in 2006-07. The data did not include those deported from India, Afghanistan and Bangladesh.⁶⁷

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May 12 - 18, 2007

34 people killed in violence as rival political groups clash over issue of Justice Chaudhury; Afghan and Pak forces trade fire; Iraq rejects Pak proposal for a Muslim peacekeeping force, saying more foreign troops not welcome in Iraq; Musharraf: Benazir and Sharif will not be allowed to return before the general elections

In a major domestic violence, at least 34 people were killed and over 140 others injured, as a major portion of Sharea Faisal turned into a battlefield. This violence occurred when rival political groups clashed with each other soon after the arrival of Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry, who remained confined to the lounge of the airport throughout the day and returned to Islamabad without addressing a lawyers’ convention on the premises of the Sindh High Court.⁶⁸ On the other hand, President Gen Pervez Musharraf has declared that the pro-government rallies held in Karachi and the federal capital were a clear demonstration of support for him and his policies, and said the killings and violence witnessed in Karachi was mainly because Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry refused to adhere to the administration’s advice of not going to the port city.⁶⁹

At the international level, Afghan and Pakistan forces have traded fire across their border for a second day as officials announced that eight policemen and four civilians had died in the fighting. The clashes, described by the Afghan defence ministry as the worst for decades between the two countries, erupted late in the Paktia province, about 120 kilometers southeast of Kabul.⁷⁰

In another development, Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari rejected a Pakistani proposal for a Muslim peacekeeping force, saying more foreign troops were not welcome in Iraq. Inaugurating a meeting of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, Pakistani President Gen Pervez Musharraf had raised the idea of a peacekeeping force for Iraq drawn from Muslim nations.⁷¹

On the political news, the Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf said that Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif will not to be allowed to return to the country before the general elections. The Pakistani President in his interview with a private news channel said that “No. They (Ms Benazir and Mr Sharif) cannot return before elections”.⁷²

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May 19 - 25, 2007

PPP welcomes call of the National Democratic Institute urging Musharraf to separate the offices of President and Army Chief; Bhutto: Musharraf has lost confidence of fellow officers; Sharif: The notion that the US also wants democracy restored in Pakistan is a ‘joke’; US Undersecretary Burns: US stands by Musharraf but wants him to do more to quell Taliban and al-Qaeda violence in Afghanistan

After the failure of police to control activities of the local Taliban, 15 tribes in Bannu gave the government three days to take action against militants. Shortly after the tribes announced the deadline, police in the adjoining Lakki Marwat district claimed that a local Taliban commander, Qari Sarfaraz, had been arrested.⁷³

Meanwhile, the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) welcomed the National Democratic Institute (NDI) call urging General Musharraf to separate the offices of President and Army Chief he was holding currently. PPP Vice-Chairman Makhdoom Amin Fahim said that it was reassuring that international institutions like the NDI were now demanding restoration of genuine democracy in the country.⁷⁴

On the other hand, former prime ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif were keeping up their media pressure on President Musharraf. In an interview to *Telegraph*, Ms Bhutto asserted that neither the international community nor the armed forces would continue to back the present regime “if domestic protests continue to escalate”. She also alleged that Gen Musharraf had lost the confidence of his fellow army officers.⁷⁵

Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on his part launched a campaign in Europe, the US and Canada, warning them that if they continued to support one individual (President Musharraf), they would only end up alienating “160 million Pakistanis thirsting for democracy.” In an interview published in *Der Spiegel*, the PML-N leader called the notion that the US also wanted to see democracy restored in Pakistan as a ‘joke’.⁷⁶

The US Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns affirmed that the US stood by President Musharraf in the current conflict with opposition forces in Pakistan but wanted him to do more to quell Taliban and Al Qaeda violence in Afghanistan.⁷⁷ The visiting Italian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mr. Massimo D’Alema also expressed the hope that the rule of law and civil rights would be safeguarded in Pakistan to ensure free and fair elections.⁷⁸

On the economic front, with no real increase in domestic consumption, Pakistan's oil import bill is expected to cross \$8.8 billion next year due to an 8.5 per cent increase in international prices. According to foreign exchange estimates, oil imports would be about 12 per cent higher than current year's revised estimates of \$7.88 billion.⁷⁹

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May 26 - June 1, 2007

Chomsky: Indo-US nuclear deal would encourage China to have a similar arrangement with Pakistan; Afghanistan and Pakistan vow to deepen cooperation "at all levels"; A Spanish court acquits 11 Pakistanis accused of plotting to blow up buildings in Barcelona

Prominent US scholar Noam Chomsky opined that the Indo-US nuclear deal would encourage China to have a similar arrangement with Pakistan. In an interview published by several US media outlets, Mr Chomsky recalled that shortly after the US and India signed the nuclear deal, China approached Pakistan with a similar sort of agreement. He also warned that the US desire to sell advanced military equipment to India could lead to a dangerous arms race in South Asia.⁸⁰

Afghanistan and Pakistan vowed to deepen cooperation between their governments "at all levels", particularly in the fight against terrorism and repatriating Afghan refugees. In a joint statement, the foreign ministers of Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Group of Eight (G8) industrialized nations vowed to act together in joint operations to stamp out terrorist bases.⁸¹

Meanwhile, among domestic developments, the Minister for Religious Affairs Ijazul Haq stated that he would part ways with the PML if it entered into a power-sharing deal with the PPP. Mr Haq referred to the latest interview of PPP chairperson Benazir Bhutto and said that he had been critical of the course adopted by the clerics of the Lal Masjid for enforcement of Sharia, but the PPP leader had wrongly linked him with their 'misdeeds'.⁸² President Musharraf told officers of the Jhelum Garrison that his move to send the reference against the Chief Justice was a state issue which was far above his personal relationship.⁸³

A book putting a critical spotlight on the military's business was launched from a virtual sanctuary and some high-profile political reviewers seized upon it to denounce the army's role in Pakistani politics. The launching of the book, *Military Inc: Inside Pakistan's Military Economy*, by Dr Ayesha Siddiq, a military analyst, was due to have taken place at the capital's Islamabad Club.⁸⁴

Among other developments, a Spanish court on 29 May acquitted 11 Pakistanis accused of plotting to blow up buildings in Barcelona, but found five others guilty of lesser charges, including collaborating with a terrorist organisation. The 11 were arrested in September 2004 and prosecutors said the defendants had been planning to attack high-rise buildings and a shopping centre in Barcelona.⁸⁵

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June 2 - 8, 2007

Bush: Democracy "more established" in Pak than in other countries; Musharraf imposes fresh curbs on electronic media; Pak National Security Council for a comprehensive strategy to deal with the tenuous internal security situation; Azad Kashmir's PM calls for demonstration of greater responsibility by the Kashmiri leaders on both sides of the divide

US President George Bush noted that democracy was "a lot more established" in Pakistan than in some other nations, and added that much of the political protests seen in the country was "posturing" before the forthcoming elections. The transcript of a roundtable with the media during the G8 Summit in Germany, distributed by the White House, quoted Mr Bush as praising President Gen Pervez Musharraf as a leader who "had effectively routed terrorists" in his country.⁸⁶

Meanwhile, President Musharraf imposed fresh curbs on the electronic media in the second such move within three days, sparking protests from journalists, politicians and lawyers. The Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (Amendment) Ordinance (2007), issued just two days before the commencement of a National Assembly session, empowered the PEMRA to take action on its own against television channels which violated rules.⁸⁷ Pakistan People's Party (PPP) chairperson Benazir Bhutto condemned what she said far-reaching restrictions slammed on private TV channels. In a statement, she charged that the regime was demonstrating intolerance which would undermine the attempts to create a pluralistic and diverse society in the country.⁸⁸

The Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) sought details about how and where the hefty amount of \$63 billion injected into Pakistan's economy after 9/11 had been utilized. PML-N Information Secretary and former Planning Commission deputy chairman Ahsan Iqbal challenged government's claims of improvement in economic sphere and accused the Musharraf-led government of "squandering millions of rupees on publishing misleading advertisements in the media to make false claims of economic performance".⁸⁹

Among other developments, the National Security Council (NSC) discussed in detail issues concerning the chief justice of Pakistan, internal security and growing religious extremism with special reference to 'Talibatisation', and decided to deal with them through a comprehensive strategy. Sources said the governors of Balochistan and the NWFP as well as Interior Minister Aftab Sherpao briefed the meeting on the security situation and proposed 'new measures' to deal with the worsening law and order situation across the country.⁹⁰

Azad Kashmir's Prime Minister Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan, talking to reporters at the Mirpur District Headquarters Hospital, predicted major developments on the Kashmir issue in coming days and called for demonstration of greater responsibility by the Kashmiri leaders on both sides of the divide.⁹¹

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June 9 - 15, 2007

Bhutto asks Bush to put pressure on Musharraf to start democratic process; Pakistan's defence budget for 2007-08 increased to Rs. 275 billion, from Rs. 250.2 billion in the current year; Pak to join the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism; Pak not to unilaterally withdraw troops from the LoC; Union Home Secretary Gupta: New Delhi wont be complacent over the threat from Kashmiri militants

PPP leader Benazir Bhutto asked the Bush administration to put pressure on President Musharraf to start the democratic process in the country. In an op-ed article in the *Wall Street Journal*, Ms. Bhutto noted that the Musharraf regime was "no bulwarks against Islamist takeover" and that it was democracy alone that could "undermine the forces of religious extremism as well as give hope and opportunity to the people of Pakistan".⁹²

Pakistan's defence budget for the next financial year was increased to Rs. 275 billion from Rs. 250.2 billion in the current year. Sources told *Dawn* that separate allocations would be made for the purchase of JF-17 Thunder aircraft from China and F-16 multi-role fighter jets from the United States. Announcing the nearly 10 per cent hike, Minister of State for Finance Omar Ayub Khan noted that the country needed to have credible deterrence and invincible defence to ensure protection of its ideology and economic independence.⁹³

Pakistan also decided to join the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. The Global Initiative, which was jointly announced by the US and Russian presidents at the July 2006 G8 Summit in St. Petersburg, applied to civilian nuclear facilities and activities.⁹⁴ US and Russia welcomed Pakistan's decision.⁹⁵

Pakistan declared that it would not unilaterally withdraw its troops from the Line of Control in the disputed territory of Kashmir. Commenting on President Musharraf's statement that Pakistan was ready to withdraw its forces from the LoC, Foreign Office Spokesperson reiterated that the President had talked about "certain ideas" in the context of resolving the Kashmir dispute which included identifying regions, demilitarization, self-governance and joint management.⁹⁶

Meanwhile, Union Home Secretary Madhukar Gupta told a news conference in Srinagar that the security situation in Kashmir was improving, but warned that New Delhi would not be complacent over the threat from Kashmiri militants.⁹⁷

Among other developments, a group of Indian families returned from Pakistan after finding no trace of the 54 relatives who had disappeared after the 1971 India-Pakistan war. New Delhi has been seeking information from Islamabad about the missing army and air force personnel for more than three decades, but Pakistan always denied that it was holding any Indian prisoners of war.⁹⁸

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June 16 - 22, 2007

Pak Foreign Minister: US has already delivered an unspecified number of F-16 fighter planes; Commonwealth reminds Musharraf of the 2007 deadline not to hold twin posts of President and Army Chief; US NSC: Democratic freedoms should not be "infringed" in Pakistan; Defence Minister Antony: Pakistan would have to authenticate the 'Actual Ground Position Line' (AGPL) on the Siachen Glacier before any forward movement could be made to resolve the issue; Indian Army: No evidence of al-Qaeda presence in Kashmir; Beijing asks Islamabad to locate and hand over 22 Chinese ETIM rebels believed to be hiding in tribal areas in Pakistan; Reports Pak building a new nuclear reactor at Khushab

US Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte held a 45-minute meeting with Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri on 22 June at which an understanding was reached for early convening of the much-delayed second round of the Pakistan-US strategic dialogue.⁹⁹ The Minister also revealed that the United States had already delivered an unspecified number of F-16 fighter planes to Pakistan. Mr. Kasuri stated that Pakistan had requested affiliated weapon systems with the F-16s and "those are also being delivered."¹⁰⁰

President Musharraf has again been politely reminded by the Commonwealth about the 2007 deadline set by it for the separation of the two offices he is currently holding. The reminder came from the Foreign Minister of Malta, Dr Michael Frendo, when he called on the president here. Malta is currently the chair of the 53-member Commonwealth which has been voicing its concern over the president's dual role.¹⁰¹

The United States has said that democratic freedoms should not be "infringed" in Pakistan, sending a firmer signal to President Musharraf about the importance of fair elections. US National Security Council spokeswoman Kate Starr noted that the people of Pakistan had "a longstanding respect for democracy".¹⁰²

The President of Azad Kashmir, Raja Zulqarnain, who was on his first visit to the United Kingdom asked India to withdraw its troops from the occupied Kashmir so that the people of Kashmir living on the two sides of the Line of Control could freely meet and communicate.¹⁰³

Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan in a press conference stated that President Musharraf had told the top leadership of Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz), including Shahbaz Sharif and Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan, in 1999 that the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) chief Altaf Hussain was "the biggest terrorist in Pakistan" and that he was "receiving funds from India for terrorist activities".¹⁰⁴

Indian Defence Minister A.K. Antony, addressing a Unified Commanders' -in-Chief Conference has said that Pakistan would have to authenticate the 'Actual Ground Position Line' (AGPL) on the Siachen Glacier before any forward movement could be made to resolve the issue. Pakistani officials reacted by noting that the comments appeared to be "pushing the issue back to square one".¹⁰⁵ Pakistani Foreign office also cautioned India against sticking to its old position on the Siachen issue.¹⁰⁶

The Indian army has found no evidence of al-Qaeda presence in Kashmir after claims that the militant network has begun operations in India, an official was quoted as saying. Earlier this month

a video CD was distributed to journalists in Srinagar which showed masked gunman claiming that Osama bin Laden's brainchild had arrived. "Much has been said by the print and electronic media about Al Qaeda's presence in Kashmir but nothing has been established so far to corroborate these reports," said Lt. Gen. H.S. Panag, the head of the Indian army's northern command.¹⁰⁷

Meanwhile, Beijing has asked Islamabad to locate and hand over 22 Chinese rebels who were believed to be hiding in tribal areas in Pakistan. Reports noted that China had provided a list of 22 wanted rebels belonging to East Turkistan Islamic Movement, a secessionist organisation, based in Sinkiang province bordering Pakistan. Interior Minister Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao, visiting China from June 24 would have a three-point agenda including the presence of Chinese rebels in the country's tribal area, security of Chinese people working on different projects in Pakistan and training of security officials of the two sides.¹⁰⁸

Satellite images show that Pakistan was building a new nuclear reactor that could produce weapons-grade plutonium, an American watchdog group alleged warning that it could contribute to an atomic arms race with India. A picture taken on 3 June showed work progressing rapidly on the reactor at the Khushab nuclear site, 170 kms southwest of Islamabad, the Institute of Science for International Security said.¹⁰⁹

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June 23 - 29, 2007

Pak NSC describes 'Talibanisation' as a potential threat to national security; Pak releases 6 Chinese nationals abducted by the Lal Masjid brigade; India and Pakistan begin final round of discussions to resolve differences on the \$7.4 billion IPI gas pipeline project

Describing 'Talibanisation' as a potential threat to national security, a high-level presentation made to President Pervez Musharraf is reported to have called for an immediate action before it is too late. The NSC that met on 4 June with President Musharraf in the chair held exhaustive discussions on Talibanisation in Fata and the NWFP.¹¹⁰ President Musharraf called upon tribesmen to stop cross-border infiltration of unwanted elements who were causing unrest in Pakistan and Afghanistan. He stressed that peace was imperative for development and progress, but made it clear that it could not be achieved through the use of force alone.¹¹¹

The government averted a near 'diplomatic disaster' between Pakistan and China by securing the release of nine Chinese nationals, six of them women, who were abducted by the Lal Masjid brigade from a massage parlour. Islamabad remained in the grip of intense diplomatic and security activity, with the Chinese envoy pleading the case of the abducted women and men with highly-embarrassed

government functionaries.¹¹² China's Public Security Minister Zhou Yongkang on Tuesday called on Pakistan to take further measures to ensure the security of Chinese workers and property, according to the *Xinhua* report.¹¹³

India and Pakistan began a final round of discussions to resolve differences on the \$7.4 billion Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) gas pipeline. Pakistan has been demanding a transit fee for the whole stretch of the pipeline from Iran to the Indian border. But India feels that since Pakistan will also use the pipeline, it should only pay for the extension of the project to its border. Petroleum Secretary M.S. Srinivasan and his Pakistani counterpart Ahmad Waqar led discussions on the rates to be paid to Islamabad. They were joined by Iranian special envoy Hojjatollah Ghanimifard to finalize details that would pave the way for a tri-nation ministerial-level meeting in the second half of July.¹¹⁴ Pakistan and India also swapped draft proposals for 'promotion of friendly exchanges' on 28 June when the culture secretaries of the two countries met in New Delhi to start the fourth round of talks on the subject.¹¹⁵

Among other developments, hundreds of people burned effigies of Queen Elizabeth of Britain and novelist Salman Rushdie during demonstrations across the country, protesting against Rushdie being awarded the knighthood.¹¹⁶

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June 30 - July 6, 2007

Security forces clash with militants inside Lal Masjid; India, Pak Home Secretaries conclude bilateral talks; Benazir charges Musharaf with undermining the constitution, civil institutions and parliament; Pakistan and China to further expand and consolidate bilateral defence ties

Paramilitary Rangers and riot police fought a daylong running gun battle with hundreds of heavily armed and well-entrenched militants around their stronghold of Lal Masjid as a six-month-long standoff between the radicals and the authorities exploded into a major clash on 3 June, leaving at least 10 people dead and more than 150 injured. It was perhaps the worst, and the bloodiest incident in Islamabad's history as never before such a large number of armed militants had taken on the authorities in the heart of the capital.¹¹⁷ China voiced support for the crackdown on Lal Masjid and viewed it as a measure "to safeguard social stability and economic development" of Pakistan.¹¹⁸

Home secretaries of India and Pakistan wound up their bilateral talks short of the two-day schedule because of the Lal Masjid standoff in Islamabad, but both sides said they had made progress since the officials met in May last year. Indian Home Minister Shivraj Patil, who completed a two-day visit to Jammu and Kashmir last week was quoted as saying that Pakistan should not be blamed for all of India's troubles with terrorism. He told reporters during a visit to Srinagar that India and Pakistan were "not in the process of blame game. We are trying to understand and complement each

other.”¹¹⁹ Meanwhile, Indian officials handed over 43 Pakistani prisoners, including two women, to authorities in Pakistan on 30 June after their release from jails where they had been held for periods ranging from two to 15 years. India had arrested the prisoners for crossing the border illegally or for overstaying.¹²⁰

Four missiles were fired on an army base in Landi Kotal night. Officials of the Landi Kotal political administration told *Dawn* that two missiles landed inside the base, but caused no damage. The officials said they had found the launching pads of the missiles at a place near the Landi Kotal-Torkham bypass road, a few hundred metres west of the army base.¹²¹

Among other developments, former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto told the *Sunday Telegraph* that it was difficult to be sure about President Musharraf's next move on the holding of elections. She charged the authorities of undermining the constitution, the civil institutions and the parliament. She also voiced concerns about the validity of any election results, claiming that 30 per cent of the population had been barred from voting.¹²²

Pakistan and China expressed their desire to further expand and consolidate bilateral ties in diverse fields, especially in the area of defence. This was discussed at a meeting between Defence Minister Rao Sikandar Iqbal and the visiting Chinese Admiral Hu Yan Lin, Political Commissar, PLA (Navy). The minister told Admiral Lin that Pakistan attached great importance to its ties with China and thanked the Chinese government for its continued support to the modernization plans of Pakistan's armed forces.¹²³

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July 7 - 13, 2007

Rebel cleric Abdul Rashid Ghazi killed by army commandos at Islamabad's Lal Masjid-Jamia Hafsa as 8-day stand-off ends; Benazir Bhutto: Pakistan faced with being taken over by religious militants if Musharraf's 'dictatorship' continues; Two-day Multi-Party Conference (MPC) involving the PML-N, PPP, JI, JUI and others in London vows to launch a determined struggle to rid the country of army rule; Afghanistan and Pakistan agree on closer cooperation in fighting the Taliban during talks in Istanbul

Rebel cleric Abdul Rashid Ghazi was killed by army commandos at Islamabad's Lal Masjid-Jamia Hafsa compound after the failure of last-minute peace moves led to fierce battles that the government said took at least 58 lives on both sides.¹²⁴ The government earlier on 9 July had agreed to allow 'safe passage' to Maulana Ghazi and his family to end the eight-day standoff at the Lal Masjid mosque in Islamabad.¹²⁵ The government tightened security in major cities and at sensitive sites immediately after the showdown ended. Security along the Pak-Afghan frontier was also beefed up while areas along borders between Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and tribal areas were under strict surveillance.¹²⁶

Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, talking to Sky television has warned that Pakistan faced being taken over by religious militants if President Musharraf's 'dictatorship' continued. While stating

that Gen. Musharraf had taken the right decision over the mosque siege, she added that a military dictatorship needed the external crutch of a militant threat to justify its existence to the international community.¹²⁷

Meanwhile, the two-day Multi-Party Conference (MPC) involving the PML-N, PPP, JI, JUI and others in London vowed to launch a determined struggle to rid the country of army rule. PML (N) Chief Nawaz Sharif demanded that President Musharraf resign from his two posts forthwith and that an interim government take over to hold fair and free elections.¹²⁸

Among other developments, Afghanistan and Pakistan agreed on closer cooperation in fighting the Taliban during talks in the Turkish capital Istanbul. They also vowed to deny refuge to people involved in subversive and terrorist activities.¹²⁹ Gen. Musharraf and Prime Minister Aziz have also strongly condemned the assassination of three Chinese nationals by unknown assailants in Peshawar and have ordered immediate inquiry into the incident seen as an attempt to strain relations between the two countries.¹³⁰

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July 14 - 20, 2007

Musharraf praises the armed forces for showing "bravery, courage and professionalism" during Lal Masjid operation; Pakistan demands that NATO compensate for killing 65 Pakistani civilians, including women and children, in bombings in North and South Waziristan; Pakistan and Sri Lanka agree to work towards diversifying bilateral cooperation

President Musharraf praised the armed forces for showing "bravery, courage and professionalism" to save innocent lives during the Lal Masjid operation and added that "elements in the mosque and the madressah were misinterpreting Islam for their own benefit and misleading people."¹³¹ Meanwhile, the Pakistan Bar Council expressed shock over the Lal Masjid operation and described it as a testimony to the "collusiveness, gross incompetence and inefficient governance on the part of Musharraf's military regime". It questioned the government's failure to check the seminary's transformation into a centre of militants.¹³²

Pakistan has demanded that NATO compensate for killing 65 Pakistani civilians, including women and children, in bombings in North and South Waziristan in violation of the country's sovereignty in the border areas. A Pakistani delegation led by Senator Mushahid Hussain made the demand while visiting the NATO Headquarters. Senator Enver Baig noted that NATO had no mandate to launch operations outside Afghanistan and that it violated international laws in doing so.¹³³ Meanwhile, 17 soldiers were killed on 18 July after security forces fought fierce gunbattles with militants, triggered by two separate ambushes in Ghazlamai and Mir Ali areas.¹³⁴

Among other developments, Pakistan and Sri Lanka agreed to work towards diversifying bilateral cooperation in areas including trade, tourism, education and energy. This was reflected in a statement issued by the foreign office after a 45-minute meeting between Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri

and Sri Lankan Foreign Secretary Dr Palitha T.B. Kohona where the two sides underscored the need to “further strengthen cooperation in different fields including trade, tourism, education, and oil and gas exploration”. They also reviewed progress in bilateral trade following the implementation of the Free Trade Agreement between the two countries.¹³⁵

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July 21 - 27, 2007

Beijing expresses confidence in the Pak government’s ability to maintain social stability in the country; PM of Azad Kashmir: Recent wave of bomb attacks in Islamabad and the NWFP have not derailed the Pakistan-India peace process; Bhutto says she is in contact with Musharraf but “unlikely” to reach a power-sharing deal

Beijing conveyed its gratitude to Islamabad for providing security to the Chinese workers in Pakistan and expressed confidence in the government’s ability to maintain social stability in the country. Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi wrote a note of thanks to Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri, a day after Chinese workers narrowly escaped a suicide bomb attack in Hub, Balochistan.¹³⁶

Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir stated that the recent wave of bomb attacks in Islamabad and the NWFP had not derailed the Pakistan-India peace process. Talking to *Dawn*, Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan, who was on a visit to Canada, refuting the claim of some observers that the Kashmir issue had taken a back seat because of the violence in Pakistan, noted that ‘positive’ events Prime Minister Manmohan Singh’s recent statement calling for the Line of Control to become ‘a line of peace with a freer flow of ideas, goods, services and people’ had also to be taken note of.¹³⁷

Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto said that she was in contact with Gen Pervez Musharraf but it was “unlikely” they would reach a power-sharing deal. Benazir also claimed the United States and Britain had offered implicit support for her return. Meanwhile, Gen. Musharraf continued to face opposition calls to quit amid mounting civil unrest highlighted by the military’s storming of Islamabad’s Lal Masjid earlier in the month.¹³⁸

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July 28 - August 3, 2007

13 people killed in a suicide attack near Lal Masjid; ICG: Musharraf’s efforts to cling to power could fuel ‘Islamic radicalism domestically, regionally and beyond’; India’s NSA: Volatility and instability in Pakistan have neither dented Musharraf’s influence nor credibility nor affected the peace process between New Delhi and Islamabad; Presidential candidate Obama charges Pakistan with being a breeding ground for al-Qaeda

A suicide bomber killed at least 13 people on July 27 when the Lal Masjid reopened to the public after the recent armed forces action even as President Musharraf met with former Prime Minister

Benazir Bhutto in Abu Dhabi. Reports indicated that Bhutto was asked to endorse Musharraf in uniform for the next Presidential term, elections for which were to be held between 15 September to 15 October and in return the government would remove the constitutional embargo on her becoming Prime Minister for a third time. However, the meeting reportedly ended in a deadlock as Ms. Bhutto was not agreeable to Gen. Musharraf holding on to his uniform.¹³⁹

The Brussels-based International Crisis Group (ICG) meanwhile has indicated that President Musharraf's efforts to cling to power could fuel 'Islamic radicalism domestically, regionally and beyond'. The Washington-based International Republican Institute (IRI) in a survey has also revealed that Musharraf's support base had plummeted sharply by 20 percent, from 54 percent in February to 34 percent in June. The poll showed a rising sense of insecurity in the country, and widespread concern that religious extremism was a serious problem.¹⁴⁰

India's National Security Adviser M.K. Narayanan has however stated that the volatility and instability in Pakistan have neither dented Musharraf's influence nor credibility nor affected the peace process between New Delhi and Islamabad. Narayanan added that infiltration across the LoC that divided Jammu and Kashmir had "come down appreciably" after a spurt in April and that infiltration through other sectors like Bangladesh and Nepal was far more serious although not enough attention was being paid to it.¹⁴¹

In a related development, the US Democratic Presidential candidate Senator Barack Obama charged Pakistan with being a breeding ground for al-Qaeda. Obama warned that if President Musharraf did not go after the terrorists, then the United States would be forced to do so.¹⁴²

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August 4 - 10, 2007

Debate in the National Assembly on Pak-US ties; Burns: Indo-US nuclear deal will not fuel arms race in sub-continent; Bush: US and Pakistan would take out al-Qaeda leaders if they had 'actionable intelligence'; Musharraf expresses disappointment at the recently adopted US legislation making aid to Pakistan conditional

The government initiated a debate in the National Assembly focusing on Pakistan-US ties in a move that seemed designed to demonstrate Islamabad's unease at some latest developments and also deflect opposition attacks over both internal and external situations. The move came at the end of a prolonged law and order debate wound up by Interior Minister Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao, who rejected charges mainly from religious parties that the government's deadly military operations against militants, whether in the tribal areas or one at Lal Masjid last month, served only American interests.¹⁴³

On the other hand, a senior US official has assured Pakistan that the civilian nuclear energy deal between the United States and India would not fuel a nuclear arms race in South Asia. Nicholas Burns, the US undersecretary of state asserted that the deal would put India's planned nuclear reprocessing facility under international safeguards in perpetuity. In a special briefing for *Dawn* and some Indian newspapers, Mr. Burns emphasized that any nuclear fuel that India would receive under the deal would be safeguarded by the IAEA.¹⁴⁴

US President Bush addressing a joint news conference on 4 August with the visiting Afghan President Hamid Karzai at the Camp David presidential retreat asserted that the US and Pakistan would take out Al Qaeda leaders if they had 'actionable intelligence' about them, but did not clarify whether he would consult Pakistan before ordering a military strike.¹⁴⁵

President Musharraf has meanwhile expressed disappointment at the recently adopted US legislation making aid to Pakistan conditional, and told a visiting American Senator Richard J. Durbin that it constituted an irritant in the bilateral relations, exacerbated by the statements emanating from Washington advocating unilateral strikes in the country's tribal region. He also underscored that the bilateral relationship ought to be based on trust and confidence in moving forward on issues of common interest.¹⁴⁶

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August 11 - 17, 2007

Pak-Afghan Jirga calls for building durable institutions to guarantee the unity and stability of Afghanistan; Musharraf: Return of Benazir and Sharif before the general elections would disturb political atmosphere; Benazir says she has a "confidential understanding" with Musharraf on the principle of her return from self-imposed exile; Musharraf: "200 per cent sure" that the US would not launch unilateral strikes against terrorists in Pakistan; US law linking aid to Pakistan to its performance in the war against terrorism adopted by both houses of Congress

At the peace jirga in Kabul, Pakistan proposed formation of a joint tribal council to open negotiations with Afghan resistance groups and work for a ceasefire to create necessary conditions for peaceful resolution of the conflict, an official document made available to *Dawn* revealed. The six-page document — titled "Pak-Afghan Jirga: Draft Declaration" — stated that Pakistan would call for durable institutions to guarantee the unity and stability of Afghanistan and underline the need for peace as a 'critical prerequisite' for the prosperity of the Afghan people. The document also noted that there was no military solution to the current conflict in Afghanistan.¹⁴⁷

On the domestic political front, President Musharraf stated that the return of Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif to the country before the general elections would disturb the political atmosphere and added that they would be well-advised not to insist on coming home. Gen. Musharraf was talking to a delegation of the All-Pakistan Newspapers Society's (APNS) executive committee.¹⁴⁸

On the other hand, Pakistan People's Party chairperson Benazir Bhutto said that she had a "confidential understanding" with President Musharraf on the principle of her return from self-imposed exile and on her demand that he should stand down from the army. But Ms. Bhutto said any deal with the president depended on him taking upfront confidence-building steps by the end of August, such as lifting a ban on politicians serving a third term as prime minister.¹⁴⁹ At the same time, Railways Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed claimed that a deal between President Musharraf and Bhutto had already been finalized with 'all details' and Ms Bhutto's recent statements suggesting otherwise were a political gimmick.¹⁵⁰

Former prime minister Nawaz Sharif on his part asserted that there was no case pending against him in any court and that reports about the National Accountability Bureau approaching the accountability courts to seek reopening of various 'cases' was an attempt to find a pretext to block his return to Pakistan. However, he added that he would return to Pakistan no matter what the consequences were.¹⁵¹

On the issue of terrorism, President Musharraf vigorously defended his government's independence from Washington, and stated that he was "200 per cent sure" the United States would not launch unilateral strikes against terrorists in Pakistan.¹⁵²

Meanwhile, a US law that linked aid to Pakistan to its performance in the war against terrorism - the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007 - was adopted by both chambers of the US Congress on 26-27 July and signed into law on 3 August by President Bush. The US government according to the provisions of the law was advised to urge "the government of Afghanistan to enter into a political dialogue with Pakistan with respect to all issues relating to the border between the two countries, with the aim of establishing a mutually-recognized and monitored border, open to human and economic exchange, and with both countries fully responsible for border security."¹⁵³

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August 18 - 24, 2007

Pak warns that it would review unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing if India resumed tests; Benazir wants Musharraf to retire from his position of COAS; Pakistan's defence exports increase to more than \$40 million in 2006-07, due to aggressive marketing efforts;

Expressing serious concern over possible resumption of nuclear tests by India, Pakistan warned that it would review unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing if India resumed tests. Foreign Office spokesperson Tasnim Aslam stated that Pakistan took assertions of the Indian leadership about the possibility of resuming nuclear tests seriously.¹⁵⁴

Meanwhile former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto stated that she wanted Gen. Musharraf to retire from his position as the Chief of the Army Staff to pave the way for younger generals and indicated that she could "get along with some generals". According to report in the Dubai newspaper *Khaleej Times*, she noted that the next two weeks would be crucial for any working arrangement with President Musharraf.¹⁵⁵

Among other developments, Pakistan's defence exports increased to more than \$40 million in 2006-07. It was also reported that France, Germany, South Korea, Turkey, Malaysia, Argentina, among other countries had offered joint ventures to manufacture and market small arms and ammunition. The Chairman of the Pakistan Ordnance Factories (POF), Wah, Lt. Gen. Syed Sabahat Husain noted

that the domestic arms industry was also “meeting domestic requirements of sophisticated arms and ammunition.” He added that the POF’s aggressive marketing efforts had helped it to enhance defence exports in 2006-07 and that it aimed to get more orders.¹⁵⁶

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August 25 - 31, 2007

Musharraf to honour his pledge to step down as COA after December elections; Pakistan test-fires 350 kms range nuclear-capable air-launched cruise missile “Hatf-8” / *Ra’ad* (Thunder); PM Aziz: Pak will continue to build a credible defence capability; All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference calls for declaring the entire state a nuclear-free zone

Syed Anwar Mahmood, the federal information secretary told *The Washington Times* that Gen. Musharraf would honour a pledge to step down as army chief shortly after the presidential elections in December, as mandated by the Supreme Court.¹⁵⁷ Also, President Musharraf’s team of emissaries, led by ISI chief Lt. Gen. Ashfaq Kiani and PPP Chairperson Benazir Bhutto are understood to have discussed, at a ‘final meeting’, the possibilities of convening an all-party conference for achieving a ‘grand national reconciliation’. According to sources, Musharraf has offered to remove the uniform even before the presidential elections. But in the trade-off, he wanted all political parties to agree to elect him president for the next five years after the new assemblies come into being following the next general election.¹⁵⁸

Meanwhile, Pakistan has successfully test-fired a new nuclear-capable air-launched cruise missile “Hatf-8” (*Ra’ad*). The indigenously-developed *Ra’ad*, meaning thunder in Arabic, with a range of 350 kilometers, has been designed exclusively for launch from Pakistan’s air platforms, providing them with a strategic standoff capability on land and at sea. A statement issued by the Inter Services Public Relations noted that the missile had a low detection probability due to stealth design and materials, could carry all types of warheads and had an accuracy comparable to Pakistan’s longer-range cruise missile, ‘Babur’.¹⁵⁹

Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz on his part asserted that a credible defence capability was necessary for peace and that Pakistan would continue to proceed on this path to upgrade its forces. Addressing the closing session of Pakistan Navy’s ‘Shamsheer-e-Behr-III’ war-games at PNS Jauhar, Mr Aziz stated that Pakistan was pursuing the strategy for peace while at the same time improving its defence capabilities to ensure that it was not marginalised.¹⁶⁰

Among other developments, the ruling All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference has called for declaring the entire state as a nuclear-free zone. The central executive committee of the party, with AJK prime minister and president of the party, Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan in the chair, through an unanimously adopted resolution observed that Kashmiris on both sides of the divide should become a bridge of peace between Pakistan and India, and appealed to the global powers to play a proactive peace role in a negotiated settlement of the Kashmir dispute.¹⁶¹

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September 2 - 9, 2007

Reports: Musharraf to seek re-election between September 15-October 15; PPP: Deal being negotiated in Dubai for power sharing between Musharraf and Benazir complete except for "a few small hurdles"; Kashmiri alliance of militants states they would consider a ceasefire in Kashmir if a "sincere and serious" offer came from "some respectable quarter"

Reports indicated that a top-level meeting held at the President's House decided that President Musharraf would seek re-election between September 15 and October 15. The meeting was chaired by President Musharraf himself and attended by Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, PML president Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, Tariq Aziz, chief of staff Gen. Javed Hamid, Attorney-General Malik Abdul Qayyum and representatives of some agencies.¹⁶²

Meanwhile, PPP's Farhatullah Khan Babar and Federal Minister for Railways Sheikh Rashid Ahmed stated that the deal being negotiated in Dubai for power sharing between President Musharraf and PPP chairperson Benazir Bhutto was complete except for "a few small hurdles" which were expected to be removed soon.¹⁶³ The central working committee of the Pakistan Muslim League on its part rejected PPP's terms for a deal with the government, reiterated support for President Musharraf's re-election in uniform and, by a majority vote, called for allowing former prime minister Nawaz Sharif to return home.¹⁶⁴

Among other developments, a Kashmiri alliance of militants stated that they would consider a ceasefire in Kashmir if a "sincere and serious" offer came from "some respectable quarter" ahead of the start of Ramazan.¹⁶⁵

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September 10 - 16, 2007

Sharif forced to board a flight in Jeddah to complete remaining 3 years of his 10-yr exile; Bhutto to return on Oct 18; Negroponte lauds Pakistan's role in the fight against extremism and terrorism

Even as former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was forced to board a flight to Jeddah to complete the remaining three years of his 10-year exile, PPP's senior vice-president Makhdoom Amin Fahim announced that Benazir Bhutto would return to Pakistan (Karachi) on October 18, ending her eight-year self-imposed exile.¹⁶⁶

Meanwhile, the federal minister for parliamentary affairs, Dr. Sher Afgan Niazi stated that President Musharraf would be deemed to have been elected unopposed for another term if the opposition parties did not put up any candidate against him. Opposition parties on their part have been insisting that they would not nominate a candidate if the existing assemblies were asked to re-elect Gen. Musharraf.¹⁶⁷

US Deputy Secretary of State John D. Negroponte, on a visit to Islamabad lauded Pakistan's role in the fight against extremism and terrorism in the region. The American official had a string of meetings with Pakistani leaders, including President Musharraf and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz among others. Mr Negroponte stressed that relations with Pakistan and its people was very important for the US as Pakistan had long been a strong ally and was an important and pivotal nation in the world. He also supported the measures taken by the Pakistan government in tribal areas.¹⁶⁸

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September 17 - 23, 2007

Musharraf to step down as COAS if elected President for a second term; bin Laden calls on Muslims in Pakistan to wage a holy war against the government of Musharraf; Pakistan summons the Indian Deputy High Commissioner in Islamabad to protest against a plan to open the Siachen Glacier to tourists

In a significant move, Gen. Musharraf through his counsel declared before the Supreme Court (SC) that he would step down as army chief if he was elected president for a second term by the parliament and the four provincial assemblies. The statement was the first official announcement by President Musharraf himself to quell speculations regarding his continuance in uniform.¹⁶⁹

In a related development, PML president Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Parvaiz Elahi and party secretary-general Mushahid Hussain Sayed discussed with President Musharraf issues relating to power-sharing talks with Benazir Bhutto and the president's re-election. Sources privy to the meeting noted that nomination papers for the president would be filed keeping in view the SC verdict in the dual-office case.¹⁷⁰

A nine-member SC bench constituted by Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry to hear petitions against holding of two offices by President Musharraf will also hear the request by the petitioners to constitute a full court for the purpose.¹⁷¹

Meanwhile, Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden in a new audio message called on Muslims in Pakistan to wage a holy war against the government of President Musharraf.¹⁷²

Among other developments, Pakistan summoned the Indian Deputy High Commissioner in Islamabad to protest against a plan to open the Siachen Glacier to tourists, saying that the move could cast a shadow over the peace process. The Indian army's plan to take trekkers to the Himalayan glacier was viewed with "deep concern" by Pakistan, according to Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Tasnim Aslam.¹⁷³

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September 24-30, 2007

Petition against Musharraf dismissed; Benazir on A.Q. Khan; TI concerns on government exemptions to defence deals

The Pakistan Supreme Court dismissed on technical grounds petitions against Gen. Musharraf holding two offices, thus giving a legal boost to the military ruler to contest the election for the second term in uniform. It was a majority (six-three) verdict by a nine-member bench headed by Justice Rana Bhagwandas.¹⁷⁴ Attorney-General Malik Mohammad Qayyum also submitted to the nine-member bench that Gen. Musharraf would continue to stay as army chief if he was not re-elected president for a second term.¹⁷⁵ The lawyers' on their part nominated a retired Supreme Court judge, Wajihuddin Ahmad, as their candidate for the 6 October presidential election. The President of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA), Munir Malik noted that Justice Wajihuddin was the first judge to resist the Musharraf-led military rule.¹⁷⁶

Meanwhile, former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto reaffirmed her intention to allow the IAEA to interview Dr A.Q. Khan if she came to power and added that it was in Pakistan's interest to assure the world that it had nothing to hide.¹⁷⁷ The government has however rejected the proposal to let the agency question Khan.¹⁷⁸

Reports during the week noted that Transparency International (TI), the anti-corruption watchdog, has taken a serious note of the Pakistan government's decision to give a blanket exemption to all purchase deals of the defence ministry from the Public Procurement Regulatory Rules (PPRA-2004). Various organizations under the Ministry include the three armed forces — army, navy and air force — as well as the Pakistan International Airlines Corporation, civil aviation and defence housing authorities and a host of other institutions that transact financial deals worth over Rs. 200 billion every year.¹⁷⁹

Among other developments, the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI), the Washington-based think-tank pointed out in a report that Pakistan and Russia were most vulnerable to possible nuclear theft. The report noted that Pakistan's nuclear stockpiles faced huge threats from armed jihadi groups and nuclear insiders with a 'demonstrated willingness' to sell sensitive nuclear technology.¹⁸⁰

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October 1 - 7, 2007

Musharraf elected for a five-year term; National Reconciliation Ordinance with federal cabinet for assent

President Pervez Musharraf won a one-sided election for another five-year term from a truncated parliamentary electoral college amidst boycotts and protests.¹⁸¹ The Supreme Court had declined to

stay the election, but directed the Election Commission not to notify the result till it gave its verdict on petitions challenging the eligibility of Gen. Musharraf to run for the office of president.¹⁸²

Meanwhile, reports noted that the coalition partners of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League (PML-Q) have endorsed a proposed legislation, the National Reconciliation Ordinance that would give the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) chairperson, Ms. Benazir Bhutto among others indemnity from court cases. Sources indicated that the government would grant a 'general amnesty' to all those who had held public offices between 1988 and 1999 and against whom corruption cases were pending.¹⁸³ President Musharraf also stated that he wanted to withdraw cases against Nawaz Sharif and other political leaders as part of a reconciliation process.¹⁸⁴ The final draft version of the Ordinance, approved by the government and the PPP had been sent to the federal cabinet for assent, after approval of which it would be sent to the President for promulgation.¹⁸⁵

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October 8 - 14, 2007

Musharraf waiting for SC verdict on eligibility; Benazir to return next week; 50 people killed in North Waziristan

President Musharraf, in an interview to *Ary* Television stated that he would not take the oath of the office of president until the Supreme Court gave its verdict on his eligibility on 17 October.¹⁸⁶

Gen. Musharraf also advised PPP chief Benazir Bhutto to put off her return to Pakistan until after the Supreme Court's ruling on his eligibility.¹⁸⁷ Ms. Bhutto has however rejected Musharraf's call and noted that it was the Pakistan Muslim League (PML) that was "afraid" of her return and that President Musharraf need not have any problem.¹⁸⁸ She also moved an application in the Sindh High Court to press her claim to a National Assembly seat reserved for women following withdrawal of cases against her.¹⁸⁹

Meanwhile, at least 50 people were killed and over 200 wounded after Pakistani fighter jets bombed a village market near Mirali town in North Waziristan. Military spokesman Maj. Gen. Waheed Arshad has however asserted that the aircraft had targeted militant hideouts.¹⁹⁰

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October 15 - 21, 2007

Over 125 killed in Bhutto welcome rally; Supreme Court on the Sharif brothers: Petitioners cannot be prohibited from returning to Pakistan

Over 125 people in a procession led by former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto upon her return to the country lost their lives after two powerful blasts rocked the slow-moving motorcade edging its way past the Karsaz bridge, on Sharea Faisal. At least 100 people were injured in the explosions. The attack elicited widespread condemnation, including from President Musharraf who called on the PPP leader to register his concern.¹⁹¹

A poll taken before Ms. Bhutto's return found that over 50 per cent of Pakistanis approved of her return, while one in three were opposed. While views were more mixed about the possibility of Ms. Bhutto becoming Prime Minister, the poll revealed that Ms Bhutto was a bit more popular than Gen. Musharraf.¹⁹²

Just before Benazir's return to Pakistan however, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz noted that she was free to return but that she could face corruption charges if courts overturned the National Reconciliation Ordinance. In an interview to CNN, the Prime Minister also insisted that Gen. Musharraf would abide by his promise to quit the post of army chief.¹⁹³

In the meantime, the Supreme Court announced its detailed judgment in the exile case of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his brother Shahbaz Sharif. The court elaborated the points in its 23 August short order of the case and stated that Mr. Sharif's release from the prison and his journey to Saudi Arabia after getting a pardon due to an undertaking could not be described as 'forced exile'. It however held that the Sharif brothers could return as "no restraint can be placed on a Pakistani citizen to return to his country and the undertaking given by them had no constitutional legitimacy. As such the petitioners cannot be prohibited from coming to Pakistan". The government had on 10 September managed to send Mr. Sharif back to exile in Saudi Arabia, hours after he had arrived in Islamabad from London.¹⁹⁴

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October 22 - 28, 2007

NWFP disturbances; Bhutto blames the 'establishment' for conspiracy to kill her; PML (N): Caretaker government of pro-Musharraf forces would be "a façade"

Terrorists blew up a high-tension power pylon in the tribal Bosti Khel area of the Kohat Frontier Region, plunging the southern district of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) into darkness.¹⁹⁵ The Pakistan government had earlier deployed 4,000 troops in the Swat valley of NWFP to counter the activities of a pro-Taliban cleric whose men had challenged the writ of the local administration. The move came in response to a bomb attack which injured four security personnel on a military caravan in the Malakand area.¹⁹⁶

The Pakistan Peoples Party leader Benazir Bhutto stated that she had "no information at this stage to conclude that Gen. Musharraf was involved at any level" in the conspiracy to assassinate her on 18 October. She however charged the 'establishment' for the conspiracy.¹⁹⁷ She also called on the terrorists to abandon "the politics of arms" and to respect the constitution.¹⁹⁸

On the political front, the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) (PML-N) has opposed the ongoing talks between Gen. Musharraf and the PPP on the formation of a caretaker government. Ahsan Iqbal, the information secretary of the PML (N) charged that a caretaker government of pro-Musharraf forces would be "a façade."¹⁹⁹

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October 29 - November 4, 2007

Musharraf clamps emergency; Bhutto calls it martial law; White House calls the move "very disappointing"

President Musharraf imposed a state of emergency throughout Pakistan, suspended the Constitution and replaced the superior courts, blaming the growing violence by militants and charging the judiciary for working at "cross purposes" with his government.²⁰⁰ The General's move followed the Supreme Court's overturning of the Provisional Constitutional Order (PCO) restraining President Musharraf and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz from taking actions contrary to the independence of the judiciary.²⁰¹

PPP leader Benazir Bhutto termed the promulgation of emergency as 'martial law' as the Chief of the Army Staff had no powers under the Constitution to clamp an emergency, a power vested only in the President.²⁰² Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz on his part stated that the government of Pakistan was still committed to holding general elections but was undecided about the election schedule.²⁰³

The White House National Security Council spokesman Gordon Johndroe called the move "very disappointing". Secretary of State Rice had earlier in the week stated that the United States would like to see Pakistan evolve as a democracy.²⁰⁴

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November 5 - 11, 2007

Polls before January 9, says Musharraf; PML-N, JI to boycott polls under emergency; President's candidacy decision by weekend: Attorney General; 200 soldiers taken hostage in S. Waziristan freed

In what is implicitly a martial law, President Pervez Musharraf, acting as army chief, imposed a state of emergency throughout Pakistan, suspended the Constitution and replaced superior courts in a move that added further uncertainties into the country's political situation.²⁰⁵ PPP leader Benazir Bhutto condemned the promulgation of the emergency and called for the restoration of the Constitution.²⁰⁶

Later in the week, Gen. Musharraf announced dates for dissolution of the national and provincial assemblies, ignoring pleas by all but three ministers of the 71-member federal cabinet to extend the

tenure of the assemblies to give them more time to prepare for the elections.²⁰⁷ Gen. Musharraf also announced that general elections would be held in the first week of January, but refused to give a date for lifting the emergency rule.²⁰⁸ On their part, the Pakistan Muslim League (N), Jamaat-i-Islami and the Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaaf have decided not to take part in the elections if held under the emergency.²⁰⁹

Meanwhile, Attorney General Malik Qayyum stated that the Supreme Court (SC) would most likely resume hearing petitions challenging the candidacy of President Musharraf for the presidential election on 13 November.²¹⁰

Among other developments, pro-Taliban commander Baitullah Mehsud freed over 200 soldiers who had been taken hostage in South Waziristan on 30 August. This was a day after Gen. Musharraf imposed the state of emergency.²¹¹

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November 12 - 18, 2007

Interim government headed by Soomro sworn in; Benazir put under house arrest, released later; Negroponte in Islamabad; Musharraf: Emergency to stay; Clashes continue in Swat

President Musharraf swore in a caretaker government headed by the Chairman of the Senate Mohammad Mian Soomro on 15 November in order to conduct the forthcoming elections, the dates for which are most likely to be announced on 21 November.²¹²

President Musharraf told the visiting US Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte that the state of emergency would continue to operate till the time of the elections.²¹³ Reports suggested that Negroponte made attempts to convince Musharraf to restore normalcy in Pakistan and resume the stalled dialogue process with the PPP leader Benazir Bhutto.²¹⁴

Ms. Bhutto's plan to march to Islamabad was also stalled as she was put under house arrest in Lahore on 12 November. She was however released later in the week.²¹⁵ The PPP chairperson on her part continued attempts to forge a united front consisting of all political parties opposed to Gen. Musharraf to work towards restoration of democracy.²¹⁶

Meanwhile, fighting in Swat continued between the security forces and the militants, particularly in the Shangla district headquarters of Alipur. The latest clashes resulted in the death of 14 people, mostly militants and injuries to over 20 people.²¹⁷ Reports noted that the army was set to launch a major offensive against the insurgents soon.²¹⁸

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November 19 - 25, 2007

SC clears hurdles for Musharraf’s re-election; Pakistan loses Commonwealth membership; Suicide bombers hit Rawalpindi; Violence in Swat continues; Musharraf in Saudi Arabia

Pakistan’s Supreme Court headed by CJ Abdul Hameed Dogar rejected almost all pleas challenging Gen. Musharraf’s eligibility to contest the presidential election for an extended term, thus paving the way for him to take oath as the civilian President on 29 November.²¹⁹ The judiciary also rejected pleas against the emergency quoting the ‘doctrine of necessity’.²²⁰

Domestic opposition to the emergency continued with the chairman of Tehrik-I-Insaaf party, cricketer Imran Khan going on a hunger strike while still in detention demanding the restoration of the judicial structure as it existed before the imposition of emergency.²²¹ On the international front, Pakistan lost its Commonwealth membership after the regime failed to meet the deadline relating to the lifting of emergency rule.²²² The US Pentagon officials have also reiterated that the flow of US aid would be subject to Pakistan’s accountability in combating terrorism.²²³

At least 18 people were killed and 40 injured after two suicide bombers struck military installations and personnel in Rawalpindi on 24 November.²²⁴ Civilian casualties were also reported in Swat and Shangla when helicopters engaged some militant targets after they had taken 5 people captive.²²⁵ Pakistani forces also marched towards Alipuri, the headquarters of Shangla district which was under the control of the militants for over a week.²²⁶ In an attempt to force the militants to surrender, food blockade was imposed on Swat coupled with ground offensives by the security forces.²²⁷

Among other developments, President Musharraf visited Saudi Arabia during the week to forge bilateral economic and security cooperation.²²⁸

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November 26 - December 2, 2007

Kayani takes over as COAS; Musharraf sworn in as President for second term; Emergency likely to end on 16 December; Nawaz Sharif returns; Violence in Swat continues

Gen. Musharraf took oath as a civilian President for a second term of 5 years on 29 November. General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani took over as the COAS the previous day.²²⁹ In his brief address to the nation, Musharraf promised to restore normalcy soon and stated that the emergency would be lifted on 16 December and that the Provisional Constitution Order (PCO) would also be withdrawn.²³⁰

Nawaz Sharif finally managed to return to Pakistan. In an address to the party workers of PML-N, he made it clear that his goal was to establish the rule of law and a popularly elected government.²³¹ Sharif also filed his nomination papers for the upcoming elections on 27 November. PPP chairperson Benazir Bhutto filed her papers on the same day for the seats NA-204 and NA-207.²³²

Meanwhile, the security forces continued their operations in Swat even as curfew was imposed in Mingora.²³³ Seven militants belonging to the Taliban were also arrested by the police and handed over to the army for interrogation while attempting to flee the Swat Valley.²³⁴ Amidst the ongoing military operations, inhabitants of Shangla started to move back to their homes as the administrative unit resumed working in the district headquarters of Alipuri, which was wrested from under the militants' control.²³⁵

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December 3 - 9, 2007

Musharraf: Elections as per schedule; Nawaz Sharif's candidature rejected; US State Dept.: Pakistan needs to be made more accountable for aid being provided

Addressing members of the Balochistan caretaker government, President Musharraf asserted that elections would take place as per schedule and would be fair and transparent. He affirmed that Pakistan would emerge as a stable and stronger state after the elections.²³⁶ Attorney General Malik Mohammad Qayyum also stated that the amended PCO would be enforced on 15 December coinciding with the end of emergency.²³⁷

The Election Commission meanwhile rejected Nawaz Sharif's candidature for the 8 January polls on the ground that he was convicted in cases of kidnap and tax evasion.²³⁸ It was reported that 13,490 nomination papers for the forthcoming elections were received, out of which 12,443 were accepted.²³⁹

In the troubled Swat province, 26 militants were arrested during the week.²⁴⁰ The security forces also managed to secure Matta town from the militants.

Among other developments, the US State Department expressed the need to make Pakistan more accountable for the military and economic aid being provided in the education and health sectors, to ensure that it was used for the purposes it was being allotted.²⁴¹

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December 10 - 16, 2007

Emergency lifted; Survey: Majority in Pakistan want Musharraf to step down; Violence continues in N.Waziristan and in Swat; NCA re-constituted; Pakistan votes in favour of an Israeli-sponsored resolution at the UN

After incorporating some relevant changes in the Provisional Constitution Order (PCO), President Musharraf finally lifted the emergency on 15 December through the Revocation of Proclamation of Emergency Order 2007.²⁴² Shortly after the order was passed by the Cabinet, the Chief Justice along with other judges of the Supreme Court and the Federal Courts also took oath. The government however did not release the detained judges nor did it remove the restrictions on the media.²⁴³

Even as a survey revealed that over 65 per cent of Pakistanis wanted President Musharraf to step down, Nawaz Sharif, leader of the Pakistan Muslim League (N) launched his party's election campaign during the week.²⁴⁴

In other developments, the caretaker Chief Minister of Balochistan initiated meetings with tribal leaders of the Baloch and Pakhtun nationalist parties to bring about some sort of political agreement in the province. Violence meanwhile continued in North Waziristan, with the death of 15 soldiers and in Swat, where the security forces killed 20 militants in continuing military operations.²⁴⁵

The first meeting of the re-constituted National Command Authority (NCA) with President Musharraf in command, was held on 14 December. The NCA reaffirmed Pakistan's intent to secure its strategic interests along with safeguarding its nuclear assets.²⁴⁶

Among other developments, Pakistan voted in favour of a resolution relating to agricultural practices sponsored by Israel in a committee of the UN General Assembly.²⁴⁷ This was the first instance of a Muslim country supporting an Israeli-sponsored UN resolution.

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2008

January 1 - 6, 2008

Elections rescheduled for February 18; Asif Zardari takes over control of PPP on son's behalf; Pentagon awards contract worth \$498 million to Lockheed Martin for Pakistan's F-16 fighter jets.

The Pakistani Election Commission announced fresh dates for the elections to take place on February 18 instead of on the earlier scheduled date of January 8. The Commission stated that violence in the aftermath of the killing of Benazir Bhutto made it difficult to conduct elections in a peaceful manner.¹

Meanwhile, the will of the deceased opposition leader Ms. Bhutto was read out in the central executive committee meeting of the PPP at Naudero on December 30. Ms. Bhutto's son Bilawal was elected as the Chairman of the party and Ms. Bhutto's husband Asif Zardari as the co-Chairman. Makhdoom Amin Fahim was designated as the PPP's prime ministerial candidate for the forthcoming elections.²

Meanwhile, addressing the nation on television, President Musharraf expressed grief over the loss of Benazir Bhutto and offered to get the matter investigated by Scotland Yard.³ Later in the week, a team from Scotland Yard visited the site of assassination and consulted the local police and members of the Special Investigation Group of the Federal Investigation Agency.⁴ The PPP meanwhile, rejecting the post-mortem report of the slain leader, demanded the setting up of a UN commission to investigate the matter.⁵ Among other internal developments, security forces killed five militants in South Waziristan and captured 52 militants in the troubled valley of Swat.

In a significant move, the US Defence Department endorsed the supply of F-16 fighter jets to Pakistan with a contract worth \$498 million being awarded to Lockheed Martin.⁶

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January 7-13, 2008

Suicide bomb attack hits Lahore High Court; Peace deal initiated in North Waziristan; Scotland Yard delivers preliminary findings on Benazir Bhutto's assassination; US intervention concerns Pakistan

Acts of violence continued across the country as 24 people were killed and around 80 injured in a suicide bomb attack outside the Lahore High Court on January 10. The bomber targeted police personnel deployed to control the lawyers' protests against the Musharraf government.⁷

A peace deal was initiated by a tribal Jirga between the government and pro-Taliban militants on January 12 as a part of which the army withdrew from important check posts in North Waziristan. The situation became peaceful after paramilitary forces took control of the check posts. Prior to this development, at least 50 militants were killed by security forces in North Waziristan on January 9.⁸

Washington meanwhile raised Pakistani concerns by stating that it could go after Taliban targets inside Pakistan on its own.⁹ Later in the week however, the US clarified that it would not indulge in any act which was not acceptable to the government of Pakistan.¹⁰

The Scotland Yard submitted its preliminary report on the assassination of Benazir Bhutto to President Musharraf on January 15.¹¹ In a related development, the investigating agencies identified the man who shot at Mrs. Bhutto as belonging to Swabi. More details were not released.

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January 14-20, 2008

NYT: ISI loosing control of militant groups; Scotland Yard: Al Qaeda responsible for Benazir Bhutto's assassination; Suicide bomber hits Peshawar; Swat Valley cleared of militants

The New York Times reported that the ISI had lost control of a number of militant groups that were at some point its protégé. These groups were dejected as the Pakistani military was targeting them in its ongoing operations.¹²

The security agencies meanwhile arrested an 18-year old boy named Aitzaz on January 19 at Dera Ismail Khan who is allegedly the key suspect in Benazir Bhutto's killing. The boy confessed to the interrogators that he had been trained in South Waziristan along with Sher Zaman who was also arrested with him.¹³ Prior to this, the Scotland Yard in its report had confirmed the Al Qaeda connection in the killing of Bhutto.¹⁴ In a related development, the PPP sent a petition to the UN to initiate a probe in the assassination of Benazir Bhutto.¹⁵

In other domestic political developments, the PML-N demanded some sort of a national government, a proposition which was rejected by President Musharraf earlier in the week.¹⁶ Musharraf reiterated that the polls would be conducted as per the schedule.

Incidents of violence continued across the country. A suicide bomb attack in Peshawar killed 10 people and injured at least 25 on January 17.¹⁷ Taliban militants took control of a fort in South Waziristan during the week which nonetheless was recaptured after a successful operation by the army.¹⁸ The army also claimed success of 'Operation Rah-e-Haq' in the Swat Valley, which had been underway since several weeks and involved a large number of troops.¹⁹

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January 21 - 27, 2008

Kidwai: Pakistan's nuclear assets safe; Musharraf meets Rice at Davos, reaffirms intentions of democracy; Success for security forces in militant operations in South Waziristan

Amidst increased international concerns over the safety of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal, the Director General of the Strategic Planning Division, Lt. Gen. Khalid Kidwai told reporters that at least 10,000 troops were deployed to safeguard the nuclear facilities in Pakistan.²⁰

President Musharraf, in Davos to attend the World Economic Forum, on January 23 held a meeting with the US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and reaffirmed his intention to reinstate democratic rule in Pakistan.²¹

Meanwhile, the Interior Ministry spokesman stated on January 22 in Islamabad that the Scotland Yard team would be allowed to interrogate Aitzaz, the boy arrested in case of Benazir Bhutto's assassination.²² Reports noted that the US Consulate in Karachi was also amongst other targets.²³

Among other developments, as a result of the ongoing military operations, 50 militants were arrested in South Waziristan and some areas were cleared of militants by the Army.²⁴ Significantly, Maulvi Abdul Raziq, a close aide of Fazlullah was also detained in the Kot area of Charbagh in Swat on January 25 by the police.

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January 28 - February 3, 2008

Suicide bomb attack kills 25 in Charsadda; Ceasefire in South Waziristan; US financial aid worth \$830 million announced for Pakistan; Benazir killed by bomb not gun, says Scotland Yard

In a continuing spate of violence, at least 25 people were killed and 35 injured in a suicide bomb attack in Charsadda, Peshawar during an election rally of the Awami National Party (ANP) on February 9. The Provincial President of the ANP, Afrasayab Khattak, who was supposed to address the meeting however escaped unhurt.²⁵

Meanwhile, the Taliban declared a unilateral ceasefire in South Waziristan on February 6 stating that the security forces would not be targeted by them.²⁶ Prior to this, they had issued a warning to the local tribesmen in the area against giving any assistance to the government officials.²⁷ In other domestic developments, the Scotland Yard in its report on the assassination of Benazir Bhutto asserted that she died of a head injury caused by a bomb blast and not from a gunshot wound as claimed by some.²⁸

President George Bush meanwhile announced financial assistance worth \$830 million for Pakistan under the budget plan for 2009 “to foster strategic partnership” even as the Annual Threat Assessment presented to the US Congress on February 5 by US intelligence acknowledged that the nuclear assets of Pakistan were indeed “vulnerable.”²⁹

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February 4 - 10, 2008

Interior Ministry: Security plans for the February 18 elections approved; Anti-militancy operations continue across country

A Spokesperson of the Interior Ministry in Islamabad announced on January 29 that the federal government had approved four security plans so as to peacefully conduct the upcoming general elections on February 18.³⁰ The US on its part, through Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher, urged Pakistani authorities to do away with “serious distortions” to ensure a fair election process.³¹ A report in the Chicago Tribune noted that the PPP would be the decisive factor in determining the ‘future of Pakistan’ owing to the sympathy wave in which the PPP candidates were expected to head for victory in the polls.³²

Security operations continued in various parts of the country with 24 militants who were holding security personnel hostage getting killed in Peshawar in the Kohat tunnel on January 27.³³ At least 12 more ‘foreign militants’ were killed in North Waziristan later on January 29 in an operation by the Army. These militants had allegedly held 300 children hostage in a school.³⁴

Amidst widespread protests of the lawyers’ across the country, the President of the Supreme Court Bar Association Aitzaz Ahsan called for a complete boycott of the judges who had taken oath under the Provisional Constitution Order (PCO).³⁵ Later however on February 2, Ahsan was put under detention by the Punjab government for this act of contempt.

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February 11 - 17, 2008

40 dead in a PPP election rally; 81,000 troops deployed for polls; Pakistan’s Ambassador to Afghanistan abducted; Operations continue in Swat

At least 40 people were killed and 93 injured in a bomb explosion in Parachinagar where a PPP election rally was being held on February 16. Reports indicated that the bomb was planted in a car.³⁶ In another incident of pre-election violence, militants bombed six polling stations near Anyat valley in Khar on the same day.³⁷

Meanwhile, Chief of Army Staff General Kayani stated that the government had deployed over 80,000 troops including para-military forces at nearly 9000 polling stations considered to be sensitive in an attempt to ensure peaceful and fair polls.³⁸

Among other developments, Tariq Azizuddin, Pakistan's Ambassador to Afghanistan was abducted from the Khyber tribal region along with his security guards on February 11. A massive search was launched on the Pak-Afghan border by the security forces.

As a part of the ongoing offensive against militants in Swat, security forces arrested 36 militants on February 10 and another 10 in Karachi on February 15.³⁹ The Army also launched massive operations against militants in Darra Adam Khel after rockets were fired on 'telecommunication installations' on February 14.⁴⁰

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February 18 - 24, 2008

PPP and PML-N emerge victorious, to form a coalition government; PPP's Fahim likely to be the new Prime Minister; US reiterates Musharraf's role in the new government

In the general elections held on February 18, the PPP won 88 and the PML-N 65 out of the total of 268 seats that were contested. The results inflicted a crushing defeat on PML-Q backed by President Musharraf.⁴¹ Reports stated that talks were still on for the formation of a coalition government comprising of the PPP and PML-N, which would also likely include the Awami National Party (ANP).⁴² The PPP on its part endorsed Makhdoom Amin Fahim as its prime ministerial candidate on February 22. The party also took a stand that the newly elected National Assembly would take a decision on the issue of deposed judges.⁴³

The election process which was otherwise peaceful claimed the lives of at least 19 people and injured 157.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the Commonwealth Secretary General Don Mckinnon, in a message to the Secretary of the Election commission in Pakistan welcomed the conduct of the elections and acknowledged that they were 'fair and peaceful'.⁴⁵

US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher on his part asserted that Washington still backed a strong role for President Musharraf in the new government.⁴⁶ The American and British envoys in Islamabad also met with members of the PPP and the PML-N on February 22 and discussed issues relating to the formation of a government.⁴⁷

Meanwhile, efforts were initiated in the troubled area of North Waziristan to restore a controversial peace deal which was earlier criticized as being lenient to the demands of the militants. The decision

to this effect was taken after the authorities and the tribal leaders reached a consensus in a meeting at agency headquarters in Miramshah on February 24.⁴⁸

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February 25 - March 2, 2008

Official election results notified; PPP undecided on Fahim's candidature

The Election Commission of Pakistan on March 2 officially notified the results of the February 18 polls.⁴⁹ According to the 'Party-Wise Total Vote Bank' compiled by the Election Commission of Pakistan, the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) secured about 15 million votes in the National Assembly seats; the Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-e-Azam (PML-Q) stood second with around eight million votes; the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) came third with around 6.8 million votes.⁵⁰

Meanwhile, the PPP, the PML-N and the Awami National Party (ANP) together claimed to have the support of 171 newly elected Members of National Assembly (MNAs) to form a coalition government.⁵¹ It has also emerged that the PPP leadership is still undecided about its prime ministerial candidate. More names for the post have been proposed by representatives from various provinces.⁵²

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March 3 - 9, 2008

National Assembly session to be called in ten days time; Army to support the new elected government; PPP undecided on prime ministerial candidate; PPP and PML-N demonstrate two-third majority in Punjab Assembly

President Pervez Musharraf has stated that he would convene parliament in 10 days time, and vowed full support for the incoming government. "Durable, stable governments should be formed at the Centre and provinces for five years," Musharraf said at Jacobabad on March 7.⁵³ For his part, Army Chief General Kayani affirmed in Islamabad that the Army would support the newly elected democratic set-up and stay outside the government structure.⁵⁴

Meanwhile, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) once again postponed the announcement of its prime ministerial candidate subject to further discussion on the issue among party members.⁵⁵ There were

some reports of differences between Asif Zardari and Makhdoom Amin Fahim.⁵⁶ Having together secured a two-thirds majority in the Punjab assembly,⁵⁷ Asif Zardari and Nawaz Sharif met in Bhurban on March 8, to work out a detailed framework for the forthcoming coalition government at the centre.⁵⁸

Amongst other developments, as many as 42 people were killed and 58 others were wounded in a bomb blast in Darra Adamkhel on March 9 during a tribal peace jirga.⁵⁹ In another incident of violence, two suicide bombers attacked the Navy War College in Lahore on March 4, killing four naval personnel and injuring 21 others.⁶⁰

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March 10 - 17, 2008

National Assembly session commences on 17 March; PPP and PML-N sign a MoU for running coalition government; 30 people killed in a suicide bomb attack in Lahore

Amidst uncertainties related to the post of prime minister in the forthcoming coalition, the National Assembly session began on March 17 as per a presidential order.⁶¹ Earlier Nawaz Sharif and Asif Zardari signed an agreement called the "Murree Summit Declaration," in Bhurban on March 9 pertaining to the structure of a PPP and PML-Q coalition government in the country. Among other things, the agreement called for the restoration of the deposed judges within 30 days of the formation of the federal government.⁶²

Zardari has been acquitted in the last of several pending cases against him rendering him free of all corruption charges.⁶³ He expressed his willingness to take up the coveted post of prime minister citing his party's willingness on the issue.⁶⁴ Reports stated that his differences with Fahim on this issue still remains unsettled. Notably, the PML-N is also opposed to Fahim's candidature owing to his alleged proximity to President Musharraf.⁶⁵ In a related development, Fahim, while addressing a press conference in Islamabad, rejected downright that he was in any way interested in becoming the president of Pakistan in exchange for giving up his candidature for premiership.⁶⁶

A suicide bomb attack hit the Federal Investigation Agency in Lahore and left at least 30 people dead and several injured on March 11.⁶⁷

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March 24 - 30, 2008

Yusuf Raza Gilani sworn in as the new PM, secures two-third majority in the National Assembly; 23 ministers to be inducted in the coalition cabinet; New Corp Commanders for Lahore and Mangla

After being sworn in as the new Prime Minister of Pakistan, Yusuf Raza Gilani proved his majority in the National Assembly (NA) with a unanimous vote of trust.⁶⁸ Earlier, the NA had elected him for the post with 264 votes.⁶⁹ He promised to bring about positive changes in the system, including fixing the minimum wage at Rs. 6000 and an increase in the support price of wheat. Later on March 30, Gilani announced the abolition of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and stated that the subsequent cases would be taken up by the normal courts.⁷⁰

PML's Nawaz Sharif meanwhile expressed his displeasure with the coalition government headed by PM Gilani - the Pakistan Democratic Alliance, over the inclusion of the MQM in the coalition government. He blamed the MQM for the Karachi bloodshed which killed 48 people.⁷¹ President Musharraf on the other hand expressed his willingness to cooperate fully with the new government.⁷²

US Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte and Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher visited Pakistan during the week and met with PM Gilani among other interlocutors. PM Gilani assured the American delegations that the new government was determined to fight terrorism and that Parliament shall take all key decisions.⁷³

In other developments, top-level changes were also effected in the Army with Lt. Gen. Ijaz Ahmad Bakshi and Lt. Gen. Nadeem Ahmed taking over as Corps Commanders of Lahore and Mangla respectively.⁷⁴

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March 31 - April 13, 2008

Law Minister: Deposed judges to be reinstated within 30 days; PM: Democracy threatened by dictatorship; Jirga system to be revived in Swat to tackle the Taliban resurgence; Bush expresses apprehensions about attacks on US by Pakistan-based terrorists

The newly-appointed Federal Minister of Law, Farroq H. Naek made it clear that the deposed judges would be reinstated within a period of 30 days as had been decided in the Muree Declaration of

March.⁷⁵ The Ministry of Law also submitted its report to the Prime Minister Gilani on the amendment of the Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR) and restoration of judiciary.⁷⁶

Prime Minister Gilani meanwhile expressed concerns over the possible threat posed from dictatorship to the newly-elected democratic government.⁷⁷ Gilani was speaking in the backdrop of a violent incident in Karachi as a result of a conflict involving two groups of lawyers in which at least nine people were killed and several injured.⁷⁸ The co-chairman of the PPP, Asif Zardari addressing a joint press conference in Lahore asserted that the Parliament would determine the future course of the relationship between the elected government and President Musharraf.⁷⁹

Amidst reports indicating the resurgence of the Taliban in Swat, the NWFP government decided to revive the Jirga system in order to amicably resolve the problem of militancy in the region.⁸⁰

In other developments, the NATO Summit in Bucharest called for direct talks between Pakistan and the coalition forces in Afghanistan.⁸¹ President Bush in a television interview also expressed fears over the possibility of attacks on the US by terrorists located in Pakistan.⁸²

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April 14 - 20, 2008

Judiciary to be restored in the current session of National Assembly; Talks between PPP and MQM; Gen. Musharraf asks China and Russia to help in stabilization of Afghanistan

Reports noted that the ruling coalition government has decided unanimously that the deposed judges would be soon re-established by a parliamentary resolution, as promised in the Bhurban Declaration.⁸³ Meanwhile, the MQM announced its decision to sit in the opposition as a result of the failure of the talks with the PPP in Karachi on April 18.⁸⁴ Later in the week however, Prime Minister Gilani, while addressing a meeting of the Sindh cabinet expressed his willingness to work in cooperation with all the political parties in Sindh. This suggested that some sort of understanding with the MQM would be reached.⁸⁵

In other developments, the Interior Advisor to the Prime Minister, Rehman Malik met the Governor of the NWFP Owais Ghani in Islamabad on April 18 to deliberate on the 'future strategy' to counter militancy in the region and bring peace and security.⁸⁶

President Musharraf wrapped up his six-day visit to China during the week. He urged both China and Russia to participate in the 'joint cooperative effort' to bring forth peace and development in Afghanistan.⁸⁷ US officials meanwhile in Washington asserted that Pakistan was a crucial factor in the fight against terrorism.⁸⁸

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April 28 - May 4, 2008

Coalition government in crisis over the restoration of judiciary; Peace talks with militants discontinued

The issue of restoration of judges threatened the existence of the newly elected democratic government. PML-N's Nawaz Sharif went to Dubai to meet the PPP co-chief, Asif Zardari to resolve the deadlock in view of the approaching deadline of April 30.⁸⁹ Zardari on his part maintained that the reinstatement of judges would be done through a constitutional package.⁹⁰ The crisis could be averted after two rounds of talk between the parties of the ruling coalition in Islamabad, after which reports noted that the judiciary was likely to be reinstated on May 12 by a resolution of the National Assembly.⁹¹

In a related development, an official spokesperson speaking on behalf of President Musharraf affirmed that the President would oppose the process of restoration of judges and seek a stay order to that effect from the Supreme Court.⁹²

Meanwhile, the peace talks initiated by the Pakistani government with the militants suffered a setback as the supreme commander of the Tehrik-i-Taliban (TTP), Baitullah Mehsud decided to discontinue the talks with the tribal Jirga. Reports noted that he was unhappy with the federal and the NWFP governments and that he had termed their efforts towards peace as being not genuine.⁹³

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May 5 - 11, 2008

Continued predicament over restoration of judiciary; Parliament to determine the working relationship between the government and President; Senate demands revision of pro-US policy

The stalemate over the restoration of the judiciary continued even though the leaders of the coalition government reportedly met in London on May 9 to resolve the issue.⁹⁴ Soon after the meeting, Nawaz Sharif asserted that if the Bhurban Declaration on reinstating the judiciary was not abided, his party would withdraw support to the government.⁹⁵ Earlier, a legal committee comprising of members of

both the PPP and the PML-N finalized a draft resolution on reinstatement of judges in Islamabad on May 7.⁹⁶ Reports indicated that due to the current impasse over the issue, the May 12 deadline was not likely to be met.

Prime Minister Gillani meanwhile stated that the nature of the working relationship with the Presidency would be decided by the Parliament in accordance with the constitutional norms.⁹⁷ The newly-elected senators on their part called for a change in Pakistan's pro-US policy, which they termed was a legacy of the preceding military government.⁹⁸ Their call interestingly coincided with reports noting the Pentagon's decision to block aid to Pakistan for allegedly not using US funds optimally.⁹⁹

In developments in FATA, the government sought support from the tribal Jirga to negotiate the peace process. Accordingly, talks with the Taliban leader Baitulla Mehsud were held by the Jirga in Peshawar on May 8.¹⁰⁰ Troops from the South Waziristan Agency (SWA) were also withdrawn to facilitate the peace making process.¹⁰¹

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May 12 - 18, 2008

Restoration of judiciary unresolved after negotiations in London fail; PML-N walks out of federal cabinet; Deposed judges reject undertaking fresh oaths; Several killed in US missile strikes in Bajaur

Negotiations between the PPP and the PML-N to resolve the issue of judiciary could not be resolved even after the US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher reportedly made an intervention to facilitate reconciliation.¹⁰² The PML-N on its part registered its protest by walking out of the federal cabinet. The announcement to this effect was made by PML-N chief Nawaz Sharif on May 12 in Islamabad. Sharif has however clarified that the PML-N would continue to support the government to sustain democracy.¹⁰³ Soon after the PML-N pullout, the leader of the PPP in the Senate, Raza Rabbani assured the Upper House that the judges would be reinstated even though the talks had failed.¹⁰⁴

In a related development, the government made a proposal to reappoint the deposed judges of the provincial High Courts by asking them to undertake fresh oaths.¹⁰⁵ The arrangement reportedly could not materialize as the new offer would make these judges junior to their colleagues who had earlier accepted to function within the PCO in November 2007.¹⁰⁶

In other developments, reports noted that missile strikes from US spy planes killed at least 14 people in Damadola village in Bajaur region during the week.¹⁰⁷ The US refused to comment on the incident.

Washington has meanwhile toughened its stance on the ongoing talks that the Pakistani government was conducting with the militants and called for concrete results from the negotiations.¹⁰⁸ As a result of the peace talks with Baitullah Mehsud, the Taliban released Tariq Azizuddin, Pakistan's Ambassador to Afghanistan on May 17, after 97 days of captivity.¹⁰⁹

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May 19 - 25, 2008

EAM in Islamabad to reinvigorate Indo-Pak dialogue process; PPP proposes 65-point programme to amend constitution; Mehsud not to extend cooperation on the Bhutto assassination; Bush urges resolution of Kashmir issue

External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee paid a short visit to Islamabad on May 21 during which he met his Pakistani counterpart Shah Mehmood Qureshi. Both the countries agreed to strengthen the existing CBMs and endorsed enhanced level of cooperation on the J&K issue.¹¹⁰ An accord on consular access to prisoners was also signed. Foreign Minister Qureshi described terrorism as a 'common menace' and reiterated Pakistan's desire to fight it jointly with India. He also gave a commitment for maintaining ceasefire along the LoC.¹¹¹ The ground work for the Foreign Ministers meeting was laid by the Foreign Secretary-level talks held on May 20 in Islamabad.¹¹²

In domestic developments, PPP co-chief Asif Zardari announced the 62-point constitutional package to amend the constitution. The package incorporates the provision to reinstate the deposed judges.¹¹³ Reports also noted that the proposals also intend to curtail the powers of the President.¹¹⁴ Prior to releasing the proposals, Zardari reportedly asserted that President Musharraf was an impediment to the proper functioning of democracy in Pakistan.¹¹⁵

Meanwhile, the Taliban leader Baitulla Mehsud addressing a press conference in Kotkai on May 24 reiterated that the jihad in Afghanistan would continue. Mehsud also asserted that he would not extend any cooperation to the UN probe on the assassination of Benazir Bhutto.¹¹⁶

In other developments, President Bush in his meeting with Prime Minister Gillani in Sharm-eL-Sheikh in Egypt on May 18 expressed happiness on the progress made in Indo-Pak relations and stated that the Kashmir issue was "ripe for solution."¹¹⁷

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May 26 - June 1, 2008

Constitutional package approved by Zardari after suitable amendments; Budget session to start on June 2; Zardari and Nawaz Sharif intend to remove Musharraf from office; President Bush assures support to Musharraf

Reports noted that Asif Zardari, PPP co-chief has approved the constitutional package presented to him by Law Minister Farooq H Naek on May 30 in Islamabad. The package is said to incorporate the changes that were earlier proposed by Zardari.¹¹⁸ Before this, the PML-N agreed to most of the provisions in the package initiated by PPP, except on the issue of the reinstatement of the judges. Reports noted that the PML-N has again put forth its demand to restore the judges through a parliamentary resolution.¹¹⁹

Other reports noted that the PPP and the PML-N reportedly reached an understanding on removing President Musharraf from office. Addressing a meeting in Lahore on May 28, Nawaz Sharif asserted that Musharraf should be punished for violating the constitutional norms during military rule.¹²⁰ Gen. Musharraf on his part condemned the reports of his resignation.¹²¹ In the midst of these developments, US President Bush reassured his support to Musharraf through a telephonic conversation on May 31.¹²²

In other developments, the deposed Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhary, addressing a gathering of lawyers in Faisalabad on May 25, affirmed that the judiciary's struggle for reinstatement of 'rule of law' would continue.¹²³ He also demanded that the judges who violated the November 3, 2007 judgment of the Supreme Court against emergency should be put to trial.¹²⁴

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June 2 - 8, 2008

Suicide bomb attack on the Danish Embassy in Islamabad; Musharraf refuses to step down; Budget session commences on June 2; 64 militants released in Timergara

The Danish Embassy in Islamabad was hit in a suicide car bomb attack on June 4 leaving at least eight people dead and dozens injured.¹²⁵ The Pakistan Foreign Office however clearly asserted that incident would not impinge on the ongoing peace talks with the militants.¹²⁶ The government also released 64 militants from Timergara jail as a result of the peace accord signed with the Tehrik-i-Taliban.¹²⁷

Reports during the week citing PPP sources suggested that President Musharraf had consented to step down.¹²⁸ Gen. Musharraf however, addressing journalists in Islamabad on June 7 categorically stated that he did not intend to resign and that he was ready to face impeachment.¹²⁹

Meanwhile, the budget session of the National Assembly began on June 2. Reports noted that the budget would be presented on June 10.¹³⁰ Reports also noted that the deposed lawyers would proceed on a 'long march' to Islamabad on June 10 in order to push forward the process of their reinstatement.¹³¹

In other developments, the Pakistan government officially requested the United Nations to conduct a probe into the assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto which took place in December 2007.¹³²

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June 9 - 15, 2008

11 Paramilitary troops die in US air strikes; PML-N frames charges against Musharraf; The 'Long March' ends in Islamabad; Economic Survey shows decline in GDP

At least 11 paramilitary personnel along with 10 militants were killed as a result of US air strikes in the Sheikh Baba area near the Afghanistan border in Mohmand tribal region on June 11. The incident invoked wide criticism in the country.¹³³ Later in the week on June 13, US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher stated that the US and Pakistan would jointly investigate the matter. The statement came in the wake of a meeting between US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi during a conference in Paris.¹³⁴

In other developments, the 'long march' of lawyers culminated in Islamabad on June 14. As many as 40,000 lawyers participated in the protest march.¹³⁵ The march, which was organized to pursue the reinstatement of deposed judges however failed to clearly delineate a future strategy.¹³⁶

The Economic Survey for 2007-08 was meanwhile released by the Finance Minister Syed Naveed Qamar on June 10 in Islamabad. The Survey, noting the overall deteriorating situation in the Pakistan economy, reported a sharp decline in the GDP from 7.2 per cent to 5.8 per cent. It stated that the country failed to meet its economic targets due to domestic and external disturbances.¹³⁷

In other developments, Prime Minister Gilani, addressing the National Assembly on June 9, stated that he intended to curtail the defence expenditure of the country as a goodwill gesture towards its neighbours.¹³⁸

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June 16 - 22, 2008

Defence budget debated in the Parliament; Stalemate between PPP and PML-N over judiciary continues; Taliban threatens to scrap the peace deal in Swat; Bush backs Karzai's threat to pursue Taliban inside Pakistan

Pakistan's defence budget was for the first time debated in the Parliament on June 17. Raza Rabbani, leader of the house in Senate stated that this was in accordance with the Charter of Democracy signed earlier between the two parties of the coalition government.¹³⁹ The differences between the coalition partners however continued over the issue of judiciary and on the question of impeachment of President Musharraf. This was even after Mr. Zardari and Mr. Nawaz Sharif held another round of meeting in Lahore on June 18.¹⁴⁰

In other developments, the Taliban in Swat threatened to scrap the peace deal if the government did not enforce all the provisions of the deal within a week.¹⁴¹ The warning prompted the government of NWFP to initiate efforts to save the peace agreement. Towards this end, Wajid Ali Khan, head of the provincial government's implementation committee in NWFP, held talks with Taliban leaders at Dewlai on June 20.¹⁴² In a related development, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on June 18 in Washington stressed that the peace deals should not bestow 'impunity' to militants and that they should be subjected to appropriate counter measures.¹⁴³

Meanwhile, President Bush, addressing a joint press conference with British Prime Minister Gordon Brown in London on June 16, supported Afghan President Hamid Karzai's threat to pursue Taliban elements inside Pakistani territory.¹⁴⁴

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June 30 - July 6, 2008

A.Q. Khan: Pakistan delivered centrifuges to North Korea in 2000; 30 soldiers abducted in Kurram; Security forces clear Khyber agency of militants; Boucher visits Islamabad

The controversial nuclear scientist A.Q. Khan reportedly confessed that Pakistan had sent centrifuges to North Korea in 2000 and that the army, including President Musharraf, had “complete knowledge” of the transaction. Khan was speaking to the Associated Press on telephone on July 4.¹⁴⁵ Reports noted that the statement would spark bitter controversy in the country, cause huge embarrassment to the army and could add to the worries of Gen. Musharraf.

Meanwhile, US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher visited Pakistan on June 30, his second visit during the year. During talks with Prime Minister Gilani, Boucher articulated American concerns regarding the failing law and order situation in FATA as well as the deterioration in Pakistan’s internal politics.¹⁴⁶ Addressing a press conference on July 2, the US official defended President Musharraf’s policies, noting that issues like the food crisis and combating militancy required urgent.¹⁴⁷

In other developments, security forces successfully cleared the Bara town in Khyber Agency of militants, with out facing much resistance.¹⁴⁸ Operations were however withheld at the request of the tribal jirga which intended to conclude a truce with the militants.¹⁴⁹ Prime Minister Gilani also issued directives asserting that operations to curb militancy ought to be “result-oriented and conclusive.”¹⁵⁰ Meanwhile, at least 30 soldiers were taken hostage in Kurram by local tribesmen suspecting them to be members of a rival group on June 30.¹⁵¹

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July 7 - 13, 2008

Serial bomb blasts in Karachi; Suicide bomb attack kills 15 policemen in Islamabad; Spate of violent incidents across country; UN agrees to probe the assassination of Benazir Bhutto

At least 50 people were reportedly injured in series of bomb blasts that hit parts of Karachi on July 7. No casualties were however reported in the blasts described as ‘low intensity.’¹⁵² Earlier on July 6, a suicide bomb attack killed 15 police men and two civilians in Islamabad near the venue of a conference organized to commemorate the anniversary of the Lal Masjid incident.¹⁵³

In continuing incidents of violence across the country, at least 4 paramilitary troops were killed by militants at Landi Kotal in the Khyber Agency on July 8, a day before the initiation of the peace deal by the tribal Jirga.¹⁵⁴ The Taliban also attacked a convoy of the security forces in Hangu district on July 12, killing 17 personnel belonging to the Frontier Constabulary and four civilians.¹⁵⁵ In another incident, nine soldiers died in a NATO air raid in Angoor Adda town near the Pak-Afghan border on July 11.¹⁵⁶

In other developments, Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, addressing the UNSC on July 10, had asserted that Islamabad will not allow operations by foreign troops within its territory.¹⁵⁷ Secretary General Ban Ki Moon on his part agreed to the conduct of a UN probe into the assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. He was addressing a press conference with Mr. Qureshi on July 11 after formalizing the details of the independent enquiry commission.¹⁵⁸

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July 14 - 20, 2008

NATO deploys on Pak-Afghan border; Gilani: Operations against militants in tribal areas to continue; Obama calls for shift in US focus from Iraq to militants' sanctuary in Pakistan

The Pakistan Army went on high alert after reports noted that NATO forces were deployed along the Afghan border. Helicopters were also deployed and troops were airlifted to the area further escalating tensions.¹⁵⁹ Reports noted that coalition forces positioned in Paktia province of Afghanistan launched an offensive in Pakistan's North Waziristan Agency on July 15.¹⁶⁰ However, US Defence Secretary Robert Gates, talking to the press at the Pentagon on July 16 denied the reports, calling them 'exaggerated.'¹⁶¹

Security forces meanwhile seized control of Zargari town on July 17 after a fierce operation against the Taliban.¹⁶² Reports also noted that peace talks in NWFP with Baitulla Mehsud broke down with Mehsud issuing an 'ultimatum' to the provincial government to resign.¹⁶³ Amidst these developments, Prime Minister Gilani asserted that the security forces would continue to operate against the militants in the tribal areas to avert a security threat such as 9/11.¹⁶⁴

In other developments, the Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama on July 15 stated that US foreign policy needed to shift its 'single-minded' focus on Iraq and instead concentrate on the tribal areas in Pakistan which have provided a safe haven to the militants.¹⁶⁵

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July 21 - 27, 2008

US to divert \$230m of counter-terrorism funds to help upgrade Pakistan's F-16 fighters; Outbreak of violence in Swat; Hike in fuel prices; Indo-Pak dialogue begins in New Delhi

The United States will allocate \$230m of counter-terrorism funds to facilitate the upgrading of Pakistan's F-16 fighter jets. The acting spokesperson of the US State Department, Gonzalo Gallegos made an announcement to this effect in Washington on July 24. He also stated that the US did not inform India before taking the decision on the diversion of the aforementioned funds.¹⁶⁶

The fifth round of Indo-Pak Composite Dialogue at the Foreign Secretary-level began on July 21 in New Delhi. Reports quoted Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon as stating that the talks were held in a 'stressed' atmosphere due to the attack on the India Embassy in Kabul earlier in the month.¹⁶⁷

There was outbreak of violence in the Swat region, including damage to local schools and markets, due to the breakdown of the peace accord on July 25. The security forces on their part claimed to have arrested some militants.¹⁶⁸ Meanwhile, members of the ruling coalition registered their opposition on the use of force in FATA during a meeting with the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Gen. Kayani in Islamabad on July 23. The COAS was reportedly giving a briefing to the leaders of these political parties on the prevailing security situation in the tribal areas.¹⁶⁹

In other developments, the Pakistan's Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) hiked petrol prices by Rs. 11 per liter and that of diesel by Rs. 9.5 per litre.¹⁷⁰ These prices came into effect on July 21.

The government also placed the intelligence agencies - the ISI and the IB under the Interior ministry in order to have a better control on their activities.¹⁷¹

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July 28 - August 3, 2008

CIA: Links between the ISI and Taliban intensified; Gilani in US; Violent incidents across country; Indo-Pak peace process to continue

The New York Times, citing a report by the Deputy Director of the CIA, Stephen R. Cappes, who had visited Pakistan in mid-July, noted that links between the ISI and militants operating in the tribal areas of Pakistan had intensified.¹⁷² US officials also concluded that ISI was involved with the resurgent Taliban groups in Afghanistan which had led to a rise in violence on the Pak-Afghan border.¹⁷³ The decision to place ISI under the Interior Ministry was meanwhile revoked.¹⁷⁴

Earlier in the week, Prime Minister Gilani on visit to the US met President Bush at the White House on July 28. Reports noted that the US President reiterated that the US respected Pakistan's sovereignty. Pakistan Information Minister, Sherry Rehman stated that the issue of US missile attacks in the tribal areas of Pakistan was not discussed during the meeting between Gilani and Bush. However, concerns relating to the missile attacks were reportedly communicated to the US establishment.¹⁷⁵

Meanwhile, the spate of violent incidents across the country continued. At least six people were killed in a missile attack in South Waziristan on July 28.¹⁷⁶ Two security persons were killed and at least 30 kidnapped in Mingora on July 29 and five soldiers were killed along with 25 militants in Swat on July 30.¹⁷⁷

In other developments, Mr. Gilani and Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh met during the SAARC summit in Colombo during the week. Both the leaders vowed to continue the Indo-Pak peace process. The Pakistan Prime Minister reportedly assured investigations into the alleged involvement of Pakistani agencies in the Kabul bombings.¹⁷⁸

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August 4 - 10, 2008

President Musharraf to seek vote of confidence; Ruling coalition meets to discuss charges against Musharraf; Violence continues in Swat; Floods affects 100,000 people in Rajanpura

The ruling coalition finally agreed to go ahead with the impeachment process against President Musharraf under Article 47 of the constitution.¹⁷⁹ A special committee comprising of leaders of the PML-N, the PPP and others met in Islamabad on August 10 to discuss the proposed charge sheet against Musharraf.¹⁸⁰ The PPP and the PML-N leadership which met on August 8 also decided to make Musharraf into a non-functional president.¹⁸¹

President Musharraf meanwhile, addressing a luncheon on August 4 at the Governor House in Quetta charged India along with other foreign elements of creating instability in Balochistan.¹⁸²

In continuing violence in Swat, at least 14 militants including a Taliban commander were killed on August 6.¹⁸³ Taliban leader Baitullah Masood on his part threatened to launch country-wide suicide attacks if the government continued its operations in Swat.¹⁸⁴

In other developments, at least 6 people lost their lives and over 100,000 displaced after heavy rainfall caused floods in the Rajanpur area of Multan. Reports noted that the flood swept away hundreds of dwellings and caused heavy damage to agriculture.¹⁸⁵

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August 11 - 17, 2008

Musharraf resigns in the face of impeachment charges brought against him; US supports Musharraf's stay in Pakistan; Violence in Kurram Agency and Swat

The countdown to President Musharraf's ouster began during the week with the draft committee of the ruling coalition finalizing the charge sheet against him. Musharraf was accused of violating the constitution. The military operations in FATA and Balochistan, the iniquitous Lal Masjid incident, as well as charges of financial indiscretion were also leveled.¹⁸⁶ PML (N) chief Nawaz Sharif, addressing a gathering in Lahore on August 14, asserted that Musharraf had committed grave acts detrimental to Pakistan and therefore did not deserve to be granted a safe exit.¹⁸⁷

Efforts to persuade President Musharraf to resign from his post bore fruit with Gen. Musharraf resigning on Aug 18. The government on its part had also contemplated the possibility of providing 'blanket immunity' to Musharraf if resigned, under article 248 of the constitution.¹⁸⁸

Report noted that the United States intended to ensure that even if Musharraf was impeached, he should be permitted to stay in Pakistan in an 'honourable' way. US Ambassador to Pakistan, Anne Patterson, after discussions in Washington, reached Islamabad on August 16.¹⁸⁹

In other developments, violence in different part of the country continued. At least 36 people were killed in Parachinagar on August 16 as a result of clashes between two militant groups.¹⁹⁰ One group of militants reportedly entered the Kurram Agency from North Waziristan. On the same day, security forces killed at least eight militants in Swat when they were attacked in the course of search operations in the area.¹⁹¹

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August 18 - 24, 2008

Suicide bomb attack on military installation; Presidential elections to be held on September 6; Violence in Swat and Kurram Agency continues; Rice: No political asylum for Musharraf in US

At least 70 people were killed in twin suicide attacks outside the gates of an ordnance factory in Wah Cantonment on August 21.¹⁹² The Tehrik-e -Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack.¹⁹³

The Election Commission announced on August 22 that elections for a new president would be held on September 6. The process of nomination and scrutiny would be completed by August 28.¹⁹⁴ Reports in the week suggested that there was consensus in the PPP on Asif Zardari's candidature for the presidency. The Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) also expressed its support for Zardari.¹⁹⁵ Meanwhile, the US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stated that the possibility of granting asylum to former President Pervez Musharraf was not being considered.¹⁹⁶

Militant attacks continued resulting in the death of nearly 70 people, including around 50 militants, in Swat on August 23.¹⁹⁷ Earlier in the week, at least 47 people were reported to be killed in clashes between the security forces and militants in Shawar in the tribal region of Kurram Agency.¹⁹⁸

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August 25 - 31, 2008

PML-N withdraws support to government; PPP: November 3 order cannot be reverted; Security operations in FATA to be withheld during Ramzan; 40 militants killed in Swat

The ruling coalition finally split up with the PML-N withdrawing support from the PPP-led government on the pretext of inaction on the judicial issue and Zardari's candidature for presidency. While addressing a press conference in Islamabad on August 26, PML-N chief Nawaz Sharif also announced that Saeeud Zaman Siddhiqui, a former Chief Justice, would be his party's candidate for the upcoming presidential polls.¹⁹⁹ Reports noted that as many as 32 candidates have filed the nomination for the election.²⁰⁰ Prime Minister Gilani meanwhile asserted the sovereignty of the Parliament by stating that the president should have no right to dismiss the popularly-elected assemblies.²⁰¹

The PPP also expressed its vulnerability on the November 3 constitutional order issue with Law Minister Farooq H. Naek stating on August 27 that the controversial order could not be revoked.²⁰² Naek further added that since the order was passed in the Supreme Court, it was beyond the power of the National Assembly to undo it. Amidst these developments, eight deposed judges took fresh oaths at the Sindh High Court on August 27 in Karachi.²⁰³

In other developments, the government decided to withhold the security operations in FATA beginning from August 31 till the end of Ramzan.²⁰⁴ Earlier on August 30, at least 40 militants were reportedly killed in security operations in Swat.²⁰⁵

Reports noted that the chief of the Pakistani Army, Gen. Pervez Kayani met with the Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. Mike Mullen on a US aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln on August 28 in the Indian Ocean. The two were said to have discussed military to military ties between the two countries.²⁰⁶

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September 1 - 7, 2008

Asif Ali Zardari elected as Pakistan's new President with clear majority; PPP to abolish 17th Amendment; Assassination attempt on PM Gilani's motorcade; Dozens killed in Swat and Peshawar

Asif Ali Zardari, the PPP co-chief, won the presidential elections held on September 6 with a thumping majority. Having been acquitted of corruption charges in most of the cases, reports noted that Zardari's election would restore a complete democratic structure in the country.²⁰⁷ Earlier, speaking at the Prime Minister's residence on August 31, Zardari called for a 'national consensus' for solving critical issues facing Pakistan and stated that the PPP would work towards 'political and national unity.'²⁰⁸

Prime Minister Gilani meanwhile, addressing the upper house Senate on September 2, reiterated the PPP's stand on the abolition of the 17th Constitutional Amendment. Gilani also stated that the president ought to play a neutral role in state affairs and that he should work towards forging unity amongst the various states.²⁰⁹ Gilani's motorcade was attacked in Islamabad on September 3. However, Gilani was not in the car as it was on its way to pick him up from the airport.²¹⁰

In other incidents of violence, at least 17 militants and 9 civilians were killed in Swat on September 4.²¹¹ A suicide bomb attack in Peshawar claimed the lives of 30 people and injured as many as 79 on September 6.²¹²

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September 8 - 14, 2008

US air strikes continue to target militants within Pakistan; Zardari sworn in as the new President; PML-N not to join the cabinet; Gilani: 1973 constitution to be restored

The New York Times in a report published on September 11 revealed that US President George Bush had approved the use of Special Forces personnel inside Pakistani territory, without the prior approval of Islamabad.²¹³ The Pakistani establishment reacted strongly to the report with Chief of Army Staff Gen. Pervez Kayani asserting that "no external force would be allowed to conduct operations inside

Pakistan.”²¹⁴ However, reports noted that air strikes by the United States within Pakistani territory continued. A US missile strike in North Waziristan on September 12 for instance killed at least 12 people and injured 14 others.²¹⁵

Mr. Asif Ali Zardari was sworn in as the new President on September 9. Shortly after the oath-taking ceremony, Zardari stated that the President will be “subservient” to the authority of the Parliament.²¹⁶ Earlier, the PML-N decided not to be part of the coalition government despite Mr. Zardari’s offer to them on September 8.²¹⁷

Prime Minister Gilani meanwhile reasserted his conviction to restore the 1973 constitution. He was addressing a delegation of members of the US Congress in Islamabad on September 7.²¹⁸

In other developments, at least 60 militants were killed during security operation in Bajaur Agency on September 13.²¹⁹ Also, security forces reportedly killed 8 militants in Swat on September 11.²²⁰

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September 15 - 21, 2008

60 dead in suicide attack in Islamabad; Gordon Brown in Islamabad; Negroponte: Unilateral actions will not curb militancy; Boucher calls for reforms in ISI; Peace talks in Swat fail

In what is being termed as ‘Pakistan’s 9/11,’ at least 60 people were killed and hundreds injured in a suicide attack at the Marriott hotel in Islamabad on September 20. The incident took place a short while after the newly-elected President Asif Zardari addressed the Parliament. A truck full of explosives slammed into the hotel premises located in a high security zone of the capital.²²¹ Reports also suggested that the actual target of the truck bomb was the Parliament building where civil and military leaders had gathered for Zardari’s address.²²²

President Zardari met British Prime Minister Gordon Brown in Islamabad on September 16. Both leaders discussed among other issues, the ongoing US strikes in the tribal regions bordering Afghanistan and the rising discontentment due to the death of civilians in US missile strikes.²²³ In a related development, US Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman, Michael Mullen visited Islamabad during the week. He reiterated the US commitment to respect the sovereignty of Pakistan. Islamabad had earlier expressed strong reservations against unilateral US air strikes.²²⁴ US Deputy Secretary of State, John Negroponte, in a statement in Washington on September 18, also noted that “unilateral actions cannot defeat militants in Pakistan.”²²⁵

US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, Richard Boucher on September 15 voiced apprehensions about possible linkages between the ISI and al-Qaeda. He called on the Pakistani establishment to introduce reforms in the intelligence agency.²²⁶

Meanwhile, ceasefire talks between the army and the Taliban in the Swat region failed.²²⁷ At least 21 people were killed during security operations in the Bajaur Agency on September 14.²²⁸

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September 22 - 28, 2008

Asif Zardari in the US: World is safer under President Bush; Fighting continues in Bajaur and Darra; Kayani: Army committed to fight the war against terror; Afghan Consul General abducted in Peshawar

Newly-elected Pakistan President Asif Zardari on a visit to the US met with President Bush on September 23 in New York. The two leaders discussed the situation in FATA and reports noted that President Bush promised to respect Pakistan's territorial sovereignty.²²⁹ US Defence Secretary Robert Gates had however earlier noted that the US had a right to strike at terrorist outfits within Pakistan and that Islamabad was expected to cooperate with it as a "willing partner."²³⁰

Meanwhile, in an interview to the Washington Post, President Zardari noted that the world was a "safer place" due to the able leadership of President Bush. Zardari further asserted that the "axis of evil is growing." He however did not specify who constituted this particular axis.²³¹

Pakistan's Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) revealed that at least 50 militants were killed in Darra in security operations on September 23.²³² 14 people were also reportedly killed and several injured when militant targets in the Bajaur Agency were attacked by helicopter gun ships and artillery.²³³ Amidst these developments, Army Chief General Kayani on September 21 asserted that the army was committed to fight the war against terror.²³⁴

In other developments, Afghan Consul General Abdul Khaliq Farahi was kidnapped on September 22 in Peshawar by unidentified persons.²³⁵

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September 29 - October 5, 2008

Lt Gen Ahmed Shuja Pasha is new ISI Chief; Joint session of parliament called on October 8; the United States and Pakistan to work together to counter insurgency, says President Zardari

Lt Gen Ahmed Shuja Pasha has been appointed as the new Director General of the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) on September 29.²³⁶ Pasha, just promoted from major general, had been Director General of Military Operations (DGMO). In this capacity, he headed the Pakistan Army's operations in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), and so his appointment provides no indication of a change in the military establishment's war on terror policy. He has represented Pakistan at the tripartite commission meetings and served as UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon's adviser on peacekeeping operations. Meanwhile, a joint session of parliament is called on October 8 where the top intelligence and security officers would give a briefing to the members of parliament on the ongoing 'war on terror.'²³⁷

In other developments, talks were held between the United States Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte and Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi in Washington on September 30. The meeting focused mainly on security operations in FATA.²³⁸ Meanwhile, Pakistan has reportedly rejected the US demand to hold direct talks with Dr A Q Khan within the framework of the broader Pak-US strategic dialogue.²³⁹ Before this President Asif Zardari stated in New York on September 28 that Pakistan would work along with the US to develop trained counter-insurgency units within the army.²⁴⁰

Elsewhere, at least 21 people, 16 of them foreign nationals, were reported killed in missile attacks in North Waziristan on October 3. According to local sources, the missile was fired from a Predator drone which hit a house in the village some 15km west of Miramshah. Military sources, however, denied that any NATO drone had carried out the attack inside the Pakistan territory. According to Reuters, the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force had informed Pakistan it would be conducting an operation across the border from North Waziristan.²⁴¹ Meanwhile, the Afghan diplomat Abdul Khaliq Farahi who was kidnapped by militants in Peshawar on September 22 was released on September 29.²⁴²

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October 13 - 19, 2008

President Zardari visits China; Pakistan and china sign 11 pacts; Economic crisis prevails; Around 100 militants killed across the country

President Zardari was on an official visit to China during the week in which he held 'formal talks' with his Chinese counterpart Hu Jintao in Beijing on October 16.²⁴³ Earlier Pakistan and China signed as many as 11 pacts which included MoUs and several initiatives for cooperation in the sectors of trade, energy, agriculture, telecommunication and space. These agreements were inked at the Great Hall in Beijing on October 15 in the presence of both the leaders.²⁴⁴

Pakistan is facing economic crisis due to a sharp decline in the foreign exchange reserves as noted by the Financial Advisor to the Prime Minister, Shaukat Tareen in a press conference in Islamabad on October 18. He further stated that if the dollar requirements are not fulfilled by international financial institutions within 30 days, Pakistan would have to approach International Monetary Fund (IMF) to redress the problem.²⁴⁵

Meanwhile, the joint session of the parliament which was summoned on October 15 to provide briefing to the members of parliament about the ongoing 'war on terror' had to be adjourned for a day due to death of PML-Q leader Nasrullah Khan.²⁴⁶

In other developments, fighting against the militants continues and the security forces claimed having killed at least 60 militants in Swat on October 17.²⁴⁷ In Bajaur Agency, 14 Taliban militants were reported killed on October 14.²⁴⁸ On the other hand, 27 militants were also killed in air strikes conducted in Kohat on October 12.²⁴⁹ Amidst these developments, President Zardari while addressing a high level meeting in Islamabad on October 18 was reported to have noted that the government will only initiate talks with militant who give up arms completely.²⁵⁰

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October 27 - November 2, 2008

Over 300 killed in earthquake in Balochistan; US air strikes kill 32 in North and South Waziristan; PM Gilani: US attacks counterproductive

North and central Balochistan was hit by a massive earthquake measuring 6.4 on Richter scale on October 29.²⁵¹ Reports indicated that over 300 people lost their lives while at least 500 people were injured and 40,000 rendered homeless. Relief aid also could not reach the affected areas on time as most of the connecting roads were damaged. Powerful aftershocks were felt in the adjoining areas.²⁵²

At least 32 people were reported killed in US missile attacks in North and South Waziristan on October 31.²⁵³ Prime Minister Gilani termed the US attacks as "counterproductive" and added that

the attacks “from across the border have retarded our efforts and strengthened militancy.”²⁵⁴ The Pakistani Foreign Office also noted that the relations between Islamabad and Washington were “strained over the handling of militancy.”²⁵⁵

In other developments, militants operating in Khar, Bajaur province intended to surrender to the state authorities and give up arms without any conditions.²⁵⁶ Reports also noted that tribesmen killed at least 20 Taliban militants in a fierce battle that took place in Mingora on October 26. The tribesmen had repulsed an attempt of the militants to kidnap the chief of the tribal militias, Pir Samiullah.²⁵⁷

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November 3 - 9, 2008

Federal cabinet expanded; Richard Boucher and Gen. Petraeus visit Islamabad; IMF sanctions \$9 billion; 22 killed in Bajaur

The Federal cabinet was expanded on November 4 with President Zardari administering the oath to 40 new ministers, 18 of whom were ministers of state. Portfolios of some of the ministers were also changed.²⁵⁸

US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher and US Centcom Chief Gen. David Petraeus visited Islamabad on November 2 to discuss issues relating to the ongoing ‘war on terror’ with the political and military establishment in Pakistan.²⁵⁹ Reports noted President Zardari telling the visiting delegation that US missile attacks inside Pakistan were proving “counter productive.”²⁶⁰

The IMF meanwhile agreed to give Pakistan a loan worth \$9 billion over the next two years. The loan would help Pakistan meet the difficult economic situation with in the country.²⁶¹ In another development, two officials of Khanani and Kalia International (KKI) were arrested on November 7 on charges of illegally transferring billions of dollars outside the country.²⁶²

In continuing violence in the restive Bajaur province, 22 tribal people were killed and at least 45 injured in a suicide bomb attack on November 6.²⁶³ A day later, 20 militants were killed in the same region in security operations which also involved air strikes.²⁶⁴

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November 10 - 16, 2008

Zardari hopes for a change in US policy under new administration; NATO trucks hijacked by militants near Afghan border; Investigations into the dollar scam continues

Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari, addressing the UN General Assembly on November 13, stressed the need for cooperation amongst states to tackle global problems.²⁶⁵ In his meeting with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Zardari apprised her of the security situation in Pakistan and sought Washington's help in restoring order in his country.²⁶⁶ Zardari had earlier expressed the hope that President-elect Barack Obama would "re-evaluate American military strikes on Al Qaeda and Taliban targets" inside Pakistan.²⁶⁷

Meanwhile, at least 13 trucks carrying supplies for NATO forces were reportedly hijacked from the Peshawar-Tokham highway near Pakistan-Afghanistan border on November 10. Reports noted that the militants were from Afghanistan's Nangrahar province.²⁶⁸ A suicide bomb attack in Peshawar also killed at least 4 people and injured more than dozen on November 11.²⁶⁹

In other developments, Finance Adviser, Shaukat Tareen announced at a press conference in Karachi on November 15 that the IMF would lend \$7.6 billion to Pakistan to overcome its financial crisis.²⁷⁰ Reports also noted that the Federal Investigations Agency (FIA) had broadened the scope of its investigations into the multi-billion dollar scam in which two officials of Khanani and Kalia International were the co-accused.²⁷¹

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November 17 - 23, 2008

US drone attacks continue despite protests in the National Assembly; Spate of violent incidents in tribal region; 'Friends of Pakistan' meet in Abu Dhabi

Prime Minister Gilani, speaking at the National Assembly on November 20, termed the continuing US drone attacks in the NWFP as "intolerable."²⁷² The Pakistani Foreign Office also reportedly sent a letter to the US Ambassador in Islamabad noting its concerns regarding this issue. However, the attacks continued with at least five people getting killed on November 22.²⁷³

The flurry of violent incidents across the country continued unabated. At least 16 militants, including a Lashkar commander, were killed in Khar on November 16.²⁷⁴ 44 Taliban were killed on November

20, over 10 of whom were reportedly 'foreigners,' in Khar/Mingora on November 20.²⁷⁵ Again in Bajaur Agency, 22 militants were killed and 5 injured near the Damadola area on November 21.²⁷⁶

Meanwhile, Gen. Kayani, at the NATO Defence Committee meeting in Brussels on November 19, urged NATO member countries to engage the Pashtun residents along the Pak-Afghan border in their security operations.²⁷⁷ In other developments, 'Friends of Pakistan' group made up of 14 countries, including the US and Saudi Arabia, met in Abu Dhabi on November 17 to discuss strategies of helping Pakistan overcome the prevailing economic crisis as well as meet its energy requirements.²⁷⁸

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November 24 - 30, 2008

Zardari condemns Mumbai terror attacks as "detestable"; Attacks overshadow Foreign Minister Qureshi's visit to India; Both countries sign accord to fight terror and liberalize visa regime; PM Gilani: US missile strikes affecting Pak Army strategy against insurgents; 25 militants killed in security operations in Michini area; IMF loan worth \$7.6 billion approved

The deadly terrorist strikes on Mumbai during the week which led to the death of over 180 people increased tensions between the two sub-continental rivals. President Asif Ali Zardari condemned the attacks as 'detestable'. He also called on both countries to jointly cooperate to fight terrorism.²⁷⁹ In the face of charges that the attackers had Pakistani links, Islamabad agreed to send its ISI chief, Lt. Gen. Ahmed Shuja Pasha to India, an offer which was later withdrawn. Reports indicated that the initial decision to send the ISI chief was probably taken under US pressure.²⁸⁰ With tensions mounting between the two countries, analysts believed that there was likelihood of heavy deployment of Pakistani troops on the border facing India in order to be prepared for any possible Indian moves.²⁸¹

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi, who was on a visit to India during the week, also condemned the attack. During the Home Secretary-level talks which took place on November 25, the two countries agreed to fight jointly fight terror under the framework of the composite dialogue and not to indulge in a blame game.²⁸²

Prime Minister Gilani meanwhile stated during a televised interview that US missile attacks inside Pakistani territory were adversely affecting the strategy of the Pakistan army to counter militancy in the tribal areas.²⁸³ The spokesman for NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, Brig. Gen. Richard Blanchette on his part noted that co-operation with Pakistan was the "best ever."²⁸⁴ At least 25 militants were killed and 40 arrested in security operations in Michini area on November 24.

In other developments, IMF executive board approved a loan worth \$7.6 billion loan on November 25 "to restore the confidence of domestic and foreign investors."²⁸⁵

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December 1 - 7, 2008

Pakistan political parties express solidarity with the governments position in the wake of Mumbai attacks; US urges Pakistan to cooperate with India on terror attack probe; Zardari: India and Pakistan should sign an agreement to counter terror; Car bomb explosion in Peshawar kills 22

In the backdrop of the Mumbai terror attacks, an all-party meet was held in Islamabad on December 2. Reports noted that representatives of 58 political parties who had gathered - both from the ruling coalition as well as the opposition, expressed solidarity with the government's position over the issue.²⁸⁶ President Asif Ali Zardari noted that great countries like India "could not be held hostage by non-state actors."²⁸⁷ Earlier, in an interview on November 30, Zardari stated that India and Pakistan should sign an agreement to facilitate questioning of suspected militants in each others' territory.²⁸⁸

In the wake of the attacks, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice flew to the sub-continent and met with both the Indian and the Pakistani leadership. At a press conference in New Delhi on December 4 prior to her visit to Islamabad, Rice asked the Pakistani authorities to cooperate "fully and transparently" with India in investigating those responsible for the Mumbai attacks.²⁸⁹ The Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael Mullen also urged Pakistan to look into "any and all possible ties" of militant groups based in Pakistan to the Mumbai carnage.²⁹⁰

Amidst increasing international pressure, Prime Minister Gilani on his part reportedly told a visiting delegation of US Senators that Pakistan would not allow the use of its territory for militant activities.²⁹¹

In other developments, at least 22 people were killed and around 90 injured in powerful car bomb explosion in Peshawar on December 5.

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December 8 - 14, 2008

Government bans Jamatud Daawa; Defence Committee of Cabinet decides to cooperate with India in fighting terror; More than 200 NATO trucks burnt in Peshawar by militants

The Pakistani government listed the Jammāt-ud Daawa, an off-shoot of Lashkar-e-Toiba, under the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) after the UN Security Council added several organizations, including the LeT, to the list of terrorist organizations based in Pakistan.²⁹² Under the renewed international pressure, Islamabad asked the concerned authorities to keep a strict watch on the activities of these groups. Agencies raided offices of these organisations and seized assets held by them.²⁹³

Meanwhile, the Pakistan government turned down India's demand to extradite militants. This was in response to the second demarche sent by India for handing over three militants charged in the Mumbai attack.²⁹⁴ In a related development, the Defence Committee of the Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani, met in Islamabad on December 8 and decided to extend cooperation to India in the wake of recent developments.²⁹⁵

In a daring operation, militants burnt down at least 160 trucks carrying NATO supplies in Peshawar on December 7.²⁹⁶ Armed militants were reported to have burnt another 53 NATO vehicles on the next day in a similar fashion when they barged into the Jamil Terminal in Peshawar.²⁹⁷

In other developments, the Bush Administration has reportedly prepared a strategic review of issues which will be confronted by the Obama administration on the Pak-Afghan border. The review notes that US aid to Pakistan shall be subject to the latter's success in fighting militants effectively.²⁹⁸

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December 15 - 31, 2008

India-Pak tensions rise in the aftermath of the Mumbai attacks; Zardari to BBC: No concrete proof that Mumbai terrorists came from Pakistan; EAM Mukherjee: All options on the table to deal with the evolving situation; PM Dr. Singh: Nobody wants war; International interlocutors call for restraint and dialogue

Tensions between India and Pakistan in the aftermath of the November 26, 2008 terror attacks continued with Pakistani officials insisting that they have the capabilities to thwart any India attack. Even as the Directors General of Military Operations (DGMO's) of the two countries remained in contact, EAM Mukherjee denied that India had mobilized its forces in order to attack Pakistan.²⁹⁹ Some reports did however indicate that the Indian Air Force mobilized its assets for a possible strike against terrorist infrastructure inside Pakistan.³⁰⁰

EAM Mukherjee meanwhile, addressing a press conference in Srinagar on December 16, stated that the India-Pak composite dialogue process could only resume if Islamabad took "more decisive action"

against terrorists.³⁰¹ Reacting to Mr. Zardari's statement, in an interview with the BBC, that there was no firm proof that the terrorists who attacked Mumbai came from Pakistan, Mr. Mukherjee stated that "enough proof" had been given to Pakistan and accused it of failing to deliver on its promises of dealing with terrorists. He added that all options were on the table to deal with the evolving situation.³⁰² PM Singh however stated that "nobody wants war" and called on Pakistan to make "an objective effort to dismantle the [terrorist] infrastructure in the interests of people of India as well as of Pakistan."³⁰³

Meanwhile, Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT), believed to be behind the terror attack on Mumbai, denied that it was responsible but vowed to continue its armed struggle against India's hold over a part of the Muslim-majority region of Kashmir. An LeT spokesperson accused the Indian government of linking the "Kashmir freedom struggle with terrorism to give legitimacy to its occupation of our land."³⁰⁴ A resolution passed by Pakistan's National Assembly on December 24 urged India to stop making "unsubstantiated allegations" and "hostile propaganda" against Pakistan that "seek to cover their intelligence failure" and "do not serve the cause of peace in the region."³⁰⁵ PM Gilani told reporters in Multan on December 26 that if India launched surgical strikes, Pakistan will be "compelled to respond."³⁰⁶ Report also indicated that Pakistan was moving some of its troops stationed in FATA to the Indian border.

International interlocutors meanwhile put pressure on Pakistan to act against terrorist elements operating with impunity from within its territory. British Prime Minister Gordon Brown for instance, on a visit to Islamabad on December 14, stated that three-quarters of terror plots investigated by the British authorities showed links with the al-Qaeda in Pakistan. He told Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari that it was "now time for action, not words."³⁰⁷

US President George Bush on his part called for strong regional action to curb the menace of terrorism but added that Mr. Zardari had "strong anti-terrorism resolve."³⁰⁸ UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon urged New Delhi and Islamabad to resume dialogue to discuss outstanding issues between them. The Chinese Foreign Ministry also urged the two countries to resume "dialogue and consultation to solve relevant issues and improve their relations as major countries in South Asia."³⁰⁹ Russia also called on India and Pakistan to show "maximum restraint and not allow the situation on the border to develop into one of force." It added that negotiations were the only way out of the crisis.³¹⁰

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2009

January 1 - 15, 2009

Bush calls up Zardari, Manmohan; Pak continues to deny involvement in Mumbai attack; NSA Durrani finally admits that Kasab is Pakistani, loses his job; India steps up diplomatic efforts against Pakistan; PM Gilani: India has shared 'information, not proof'; US State Department imposes sanctions against elements of the A.Q. Khan network

US President George Bush called up the Indian and Pakistani leadership on December 31, 2008 and urged them to avoid any action that would lead to increased tensions. PM Dr. Singh, citing the sophistication and military precision of the attacks, accused Islamabad of using terrorism as an "instrument of state policy" and charged that "some official agencies" of Pakistan were involved in the November 26 carnage.¹

Pakistan however continued to deny any involvement in the Mumbai attacks, despite EAM Mukherjee stating that the information dossier handed over to Islamabad on January 5 also contained proof given by the FBI of the involvement of elements within Pakistan. The Indian contentions were backed up by the US also with Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Richard Boucher stating that it was clear the "attacks have links to Pakistan or lead to Pakistani soil."²

Pakistan's National Security Adviser Mehmud Ali Durrani admitted on January 7 that the lone surviving gunman Ajmal Kasab was a Pakistani, a fact reiterated by the Pakistani Foreign Office as well.³ Mr. Durrani was later sacked from his job, with reports indicating that his statement on Kasab was responsible for him losing his job. India also urged Pakistan to "own the nationality of all the Mumbai attackers" and not to be in "a state of denial" over the issue.⁴ Despite these developments however, PM Gilani told the National Assembly on January 13 that the dossier given by India had "information but no proof" of the involvement of Pakistan-based elements.⁵

India on its part stepped up its diplomatic efforts with Foreign Secretary Shiv Shankar Menon briefing envoys of important countries about the information furnished to Pakistan detailing the linkages of the Mumbai terrorists with Pakistan. Reacting to India's demand that Pakistan hand over terror suspects, the visiting British Foreign Secretary David Miliband stated that it will be better if they were tried by the Pakistani justice system. He also pointed out that there was no extradition treaty between the two countries.⁶

In other developments, multiple blasts rocked Lahore on January 9, injuring about 10 people. The US State Department on January 12 imposed sanctions against 13 people and three firms implicated in the nuclear proliferation network set up by Pakistani scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan. These sanctions were imposed under the terms of the Nuclear Proliferation Prevention Act (NPPA).⁷

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January 16 - 31, 2009

EAM Mukherjee: India ready for trial of Mumbai suspects in Pakistan; Pak Interior Minister: Investigations have revealed the involvement of foreigners; Gilani: Mumbai probe findings will be shared with India; EAM Mukherjee: No normalization of ties with Pak until Mumbai culprits are brought to justice; Third phase of military operations against Taliban begin; Pakistan signs a \$500 million loan with the World Bank; China gives \$500 million to improve Islamabad's foreign exchange reserves

EAM Pranab Mukherjee told reporters on January 15 that India was ready for a "fair trial" of Mumbai terror suspects within Pakistan. Report noted that this was in contrast to the earlier contention of demanding that Pakistan hand over these suspects to India.⁸ Pakistani Interior Minister Rehman Malik meanwhile stated that investigations by the Pakistanis have revealed the involvement of "foreigners." He added that Pakistani investigations would take some more time as India took 42 days to provide information regarding the attacks.⁹

President Zardari on his part asserted that investigations into the Mumbai attacks will be carried out transparently in accordance with the information provided by India. PM Gilani on January 25 stated that the findings of the Pakistani probe into the Mumbai attacks will be shared with the people of Pakistan and India and maintained that Pakistan wants friendly ties with both of its neighbours, India and Afghanistan, "on the basis of equality."¹⁰ Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee told Al Jazeera on January 28 that there will not be any normalization of ties with Pakistan until it dealt properly with the Mumbai attacks.¹¹

In other developments, PM Gilani at the WEF in Davos stated that US drone attacks on Pakistani territory were counterproductive and fuelling militancy. He called for a new approach by the US administration to tackle the threat of the Taliban.¹² US Defence Secretary Robert Gates however stated that drone attacks will continue as "both president Bush and President Obama have made clear that we will go after al-Qaeda wherever it is ..."¹³ Meanwhile, the third phase of Pakistani military operations against the Taliban began in the last week of January with Pakistani Army Chief vowing to defeat the Taliban in the Swat valley.

In other developments, Pakistan signed a \$500 million loan with the World Bank, having a maturity period of 35 years in a bid to stabilize the country and fight poverty. Reports also noted that China released \$500 million to help improve the country's foreign exchange reserves, which stood at just over \$10 billion, after the Chinese infusion.¹⁴

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February 1 - 15, 2009

US drone attacks continue; Zardari: Taliban trying to take over Pakistan; Gilani: World appreciates Pakistani 3 D's strategy of dialogue, development and deterrence; Pakistan lodges IFR against alleged mastermind of Mumbai attacks, India welcomes the development; UN Commission set up to probe Benazir's assassination

US drone attacks continued with 28 militants getting killed in South Waziristan on February 14. Reports noted that those killed included a number of Uzbeks and Arabs as well. Expressing surprise over Pakistani concerns regarding the US drone attacks, US Senate Intelligence Committee Chairperson Diane Feinstein stated that these drones took off from a Pakistani airbase.¹⁵

President Zardari meanwhile told CBS that the Taliban were "trying to take over the state of Pakistan. So, we're fighting for the survival of Pakistan. We're not fighting for the survival of anybody else."¹⁶ Addressing a review meeting of the situation in FATA and Swat on February 13, Mr. Zardari stated that the government had no alternative except to use force against the Taliban to end militancy in the country.¹⁷ Earlier on February 7, Mr. Zardari announced a 'no-limits package' made up of internal funding and support from 'Friends of Pakistan' - a group of the rich countries supporting it, for NWFP and FATA to fight poverty and militancy. The funding included nearly Rs. 300 million compensation package for those killed and wounded in the tribal areas during the military operations against the Taliban.¹⁸ PM Gilani, after attending the WEF in Davos, told reporters in Islamabad that the world supported the Pakistani strategy of dialogue, development and deterrence - the three D's strategy, of dealing with the Taliban.¹⁹

Pakistan formally handed over the details of its investigation into the Mumbai terror attacks to India on February 12, with the Adviser to the Prime Minister on Interior Rehman Malik admitting that the attacks were "partially planned" in Pakistan.²⁰ After reports noted that Pakistan arrested 6 suspects linked to the Mumbai attacks, India urged Islamabad to take further steps to "dismantle the infrastructure of terrorism" on its territory.²¹ It also termed the Pakistani action a "positive development." The US and the UK welcomed the arrests as well as the filing of FIR against 8 suspects belonging to the LeT, including Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi. A LeT spokesperson however charged that the charge sheets were filed in order to "win appreciation" from India and the US and to "implement India's agenda of suppressing the people's struggle for freedom in Kashmir."²²

In other developments, UN Secretary General announced the setting up of a three-member commission to probe the assassination of PPP leader Benazir Bhutto. It will be led by Chile's Ambassador to the UN Heraldo Muñoz. Reports also indicated that Pakistan will get a \$750 million loan from the IMF in March.

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February 16 - 28, 2009

Sharif brothers disqualified by the SC, Nawaz alleges conspiracy; Sharia law to be implemented in Swat, NATO, US, UK express concern; Zardari visits China

Domestic political developments took a turn for the worse with the Supreme Court disqualifying Shahbaz Sharif from membership of the parliament and the imposition of Governor's rule in Punjab, under Article 234 of the Constitution. The SC thus upheld the decision of the Lahore High Court which had disqualified Nawaz Sharif from contesting a by-election, citing his conviction for conspiring to hijack the plane bringing then-army chief Gen. Musharraf to Pakistan. The court had then conditionally allowed Shahbaz to hold the chief minister's office until an election tribunal decided his case.²³ The PML(Nawaz) leader Nawaz Sharif charged Mr. Zardari of deceiving them and decided to launch a nationwide agitation against the decision.²⁴ Islamabad however denied any involvement in the Courts decision.

Meanwhile, the Taliban declared a 10-day ceasefire in Swat after the decision to implement the Shari Nizam-e-Adl Regulations in Malakand by the NWFP government. While the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) welcomed the agreement, NATO and UK expressed concern over the deal, stating that the deal risked creating a safe haven for the Taliban.²⁵ US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told reporters in Tokyo a day after Pakistan struck a deal to implement sharia in Swat that her country was studying the agreement and trying to understand the Pakistani government's "intention and the actual agreed-upon language." She added that "activity by the extremist elements in Pakistan poses a direct threat to the government of Pakistan as well as to the security of the US, Afghanistan and a number of other nations."²⁶ President Zardari however asserted that the deal will not affect the government's policy against the Taliban. The Taliban on its part stated that it would consider a permanent ceasefire after the government agreed to allow Sharia law in Swat.

In other developments, President Zardari landed in China on February 20 for a four-day visit, his second visit in just four months. Reports noted that the visit was meant to promote economic cooperation, improve agriculture output in Pakistan and seek Chinese assistance to meet the energy crisis facing the country.

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March 1 - 8, 2009

Sri Lankan cricket team attacked by gunmen; Zardari accuses Sharif brothers of inflexibility; Clinton and Miliband: Pakistan facing severe internal security threat

The Sri Lankan cricket team was ambushed by unidentified gunmen on their way to the cricket stadium on March 4, sending shock waves across the world and signifying to the tenuous security situation in the country. About a dozen gunmen ambushed the convoy with rifles, grenades and rockets, wounding six players, a British coach and a Pakistani umpire, and killed at least seven security personnel. Interior Minister Rehman Malik stated that a foreign hand was involved in the incident. He however declined to name the country. Malik added that the technique of the terrorists in Lahore appeared similar to those involved in the Mumbai attacks.²⁷

Domestic political developments remained fluid with President Zardari accusing the Sharif brothers of 'inflexibility' following their disqualification by the SC and therefore hindering any efforts at reconciliation. President Zardari and PM Gilani met on March 2 and urged reconciliation and dialogue to deal with the crisis following the imposition of Governor's rule in Punjab.²⁸

Meanwhile, 2 missile strikes by the US killed 8 people in South Waziristan in continuing military operations during the week even as Secretary Clinton, speaking at the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting in Brussels, stated that Pakistan was facing a serious internal security threat.²⁹ The same sentiment was expressed by British Foreign Secretary David Miliband who stated that Pakistan was facing a "mortal threat" from its internal enemies.

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March 9 - 15, 2009

'Long March' begins in Lahore; Nawaz Sharif defies house arrest orders; Gilani and Kayani meet to discuss the situation; US, and UK make diplomatic efforts to help broker a compromise

Amidst mounting political crisis, the controversial 'Long March' finally began in Lahore on March 15. PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif, defying his house arrest orders, took part in the march which was made up of lawyers, members of the civil society and party activists.³⁰ Reports however noted that Prime Minister Gilani had asked the Interior Ministry to ensure that Sharif got adequate security.³¹

Reports pointed out that President Zardari was contemplating a 'package deal' to address some of the major grievances of Mr. Sharif on the issue of judges and on the Supreme Court verdict on the Sharif brothers which debarred them from contesting elections. Mr. Zardari's moves were supported by the Pakistan army establishment as well as by the US.³²

Army Chief Gen. Kayani had met Prime Minister Gilani on March 11 in a bid to defuse the crisis situation in the country.³³ PM Gilani also had a meeting with the Governor of Punjab on March 12 to discuss the situation in Punjab arising out of governor's rule.³⁴

Reports also talked about the mediation efforts launched by the United States and Britain to end the confrontation between Mr. Zardari and Mr. Sharif. Richard Holbrooke, US Special Envoy to Pakistan and Afghanistan, for instance spoke to the Pakistan President, Prime Minister and Mr. Sharif to broker a compromise.³⁵

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March 16 - 22, 2009

Iftikhar Chaudhury and sacked judges restored: Gilani and Nawaz Sharif initiate reconciliation process; Gates expresses concerns on activities of Quetta Shura in Balochistan

After a long drawn battle, Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhary and the sacked judges were reinstated in accordance with their position prior to November 2, 2007.³⁶ The announcement to this effect was made by Prime Minister Gilani in his address to the nation on March 16.

Prime Minister Gilani and Nawaz Sharif meanwhile met on March 22 at Raiwind and agreed to bury their differences and work in conformity with the Charter of Democracy.³⁷ The two leaders also discussed the issue of Governor's rule in Punjab and the overall security situation the country.³⁸ Reports also noted that the government would seek the reversal of the Supreme Court verdict which debarred the Sharif brothers from contesting polls.³⁹

In other developments, US Defence Secretary Robert Gates, speaking at the Pentagon, expressed concern over the militant activities of Quetta Shura, a group of Taliban extremists in Balochistan. Gates also reiterated the US commitment to capture al-Qaeda chief, Osama bin-Laden.⁴⁰

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March 23 - 29, 2009

Reports: Pakistan not happy with Obama's new AfPak strategy; 76 killed in suicide bomb attack in Khyber Agency; Iftikhar Chaudhary resumes duties as Chief Justice; Zardari reiterates PPP's commitment to bring peace to Balochistan

Reports noted that Pakistan was not happy with President Obama's AfPak strategy announced on March 27. The US President's assertion that there would not be any more 'blank cheques' for Pakistan was being especially viewed with concern in Islamabad.⁴¹

At least 76 people were killed and over 100 injured in a suicide bomb attack at Jamrud in Khyber Agency on March 27. Several security persons were also killed in the blast which took place in a mosque on the Peshawar-Torkham Highway.⁴²

Governors' rule in Punjab was withdrawn after the PPP announced its decision to support the chief ministerial candidate of PML-N. Nawaz Sharif and PM Gilani reconciled their differences after meeting at Raiwind on March 22. Mr. Sharif stated that he would now work with the PPP "for changing the destiny of the nation."⁴³

The newly reinstated Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhary, after taking charge on March 24, vowed to free the judicial system of corruption and restore the rule of law. PM Gilani on his part, addressing the PPP parliamentary party meeting in Lahore on March 25, claimed that it was the PPP which had rescued the federation by reestablishing the judiciary.⁴⁴

In other developments, President Zardari, addressing party workers on a visit to Quetta on March 26, reiterated the PPP's commitment to bring peace to Balochistan.⁴⁵

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March 30 - April 5, 2009

At least 8 killed and 93 injured in a terrorist attack on Lahore police centre; Baitullah Mahsud claims responsibility for the attack; 12 people die in drone attack in the Orakzai tribal agency; At least 55 dead in a series of suicide attacks in less than 24 hours; Pakistan Supreme court restores Shahbaz Sharif as Chief Minister of Punjab

Seven police trainees and a civilian were killed and 93 others injured as terrorists attacked a police training school in Manawan, which is just six kilometers from the Wagah border with India.⁴⁶ Pakistani Taliban commander Baitullah Mahsud claimed responsibility for the attack, stating that it was "revenge for the drone attacks in Pakistan."⁴⁷ He also threatened to launch an attack on the US as a protest against the drone attacks in the tribal areas and the announcement of a \$5 million reward on his head.⁴⁸

The US however showed its intention to widen the scope of the drone attacks when it launched an attack killing twelve people in the Orakzai tribal agency on April 1, the first such strike in the region. Orakzai Agency is the only tribal region, out of the seven regions of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), which does not share its border with Afghanistan.⁴⁹ President Obama meanwhile, addressing a press conference in London on April 1, warned that al-Qaeda was planning to attack the US mainland from Pakistani soil and vowed to defeat the terror organisation.⁵⁰

In continuing violence inside Pakistan, a suicide bomber blew himself up in a camp of the Frontier Constabulary, killing at least eight FC personnel and injuring 12 others on April 4. 30 people were killed in a suicide attack in the North Waziristan Agency (NWA) on the same day while 26 people lost their lives and more than 40 others were injured when a suicide bomber blew himself up at the **Chakwal** city's main mosque on April 5.⁵¹

Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari, along with Turkish President Abdullah Gul and Afghan President Hamid Karzai, at the Third Turkey-Pakistan-Afghanistan trilateral summit on April 1 in Ankara, vowed to increase coordination among their political, military and intelligence tiers to jointly fight militancy and terrorism and achieve greater economic cooperation to bring peace and stability to the region.⁵²

In other developments, the Supreme Court of Pakistan overturned an order barring Shahbaz Sharif, brother of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif from holding office, and allowed him to return to his post as chief minister of Punjab.⁵³

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April 6 - 12, 2009

Violence erupts in Balochistan after Chakwal suicide attack; PM Gilani calls for a “comprehensive and integrated national counter terrorism policy”; Holbrooke: Taliban inside Pakistan directing war in Afghanistan against US forces; British PM Brown asks Zardari to take action against rising militancy inside his country in the aftermath of arrest of 11 Pakistanis in the UK; Zardari urges PM Gilani to implement Charter of Democracy

After the horrific suicide attack in Chakwal on April 6, violence erupted in Balochistan province leading to the death of more than two dozen people and injuring several more.⁵⁴ In view of the rising incidents of terror within the country, Prime Minister Gilani chaired a meeting on national security on April 6 in Islamabad and called on the states to formulate a “comprehensive and integrated national counter terrorism policy” to fight terrorism effectively.⁵⁵

US Envoy Richard Holbrooke, who was on a visit to Islamabad during the week, charged that top Taliban leaders positioned inside Pakistan were directing the war in Afghanistan against US forces.⁵⁶ Prime Minister Gordon Brown also urged President Zardari to take concrete action against rising militancy in his country after the UK police arrested at least 11 Pakistanis on charges of plotting a terror attack.⁵⁷

In other domestic developments, President Zardari initiated the process to implement the Charter of Democracy (CoD) and urged the government of PM Gilani to adopt the charter as soon as possible.⁵⁸ Later, the National Assembly adopted a resolution authorizing the speaker to introduce the legislation in the house.⁵⁹

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April 13 - 19, 2009

Nizam-e-Adl Regulation 2009 adopted by NA and signed by President Zardari; PML-N refuses to join coalition government; Suicide attacks kill 27 in Hangu and 17 in Charsadda; \$5 billion aid pledged to Pakistan over a period of two years

The Nizam-e-Adl Regulation 2009, which envisages implementation of Shariat law in parts of the country, was signed by President Zardari in Islamabad on April 13. This was soon after the National Assembly adopted a resolution to endorse the same.⁶⁰ The Whitehouse spokesperson Robert Gibbs, reacting to the development, noted that this was against the spirit of human rights and democracy.⁶¹

Prime Minister Gilani meanwhile met with Shahbaz Sharif, Chief Minister of Punjab province, and invited the PML-N to join the government.⁶² The offer was however turned down by PML-N chief Nawaz Sharif on April 16.

The spate of violent incidents continued across the country with at least 17 people getting killed in Charsadda on April 15. 27 security men were also killed and 55 injured in Hangu as a result of another suicide bomb attack on April 18.

In other developments, a donors' conference held in Tokyo pledged aid worth \$5 billion spread over a period of two years to Pakistan. President Zardari on his part promised to fight militancy more effectively. The conference was attended by representatives of 31 nations and 18 international organizations, each of whom expressed concern over the deteriorating law and order situation in the country.⁶³

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April 20 - 26, 2009

Clinton: Pakistan poses a 'mortal threat' to global security; Kayani and Mullen discuss US drone attacks; Sufi Muhammad calls for instituting Darul Qaza in Malakand; Gilani defends the Nizam-e-Adl

The United States expressed extreme concern over the rapidly changing developments in Pakistan with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stating that Pakistan posed a "mortal threat" to global security and therefore urgent action was needed to tackle the situation. She was speaking before the House Foreign Affairs Committee on April 22.⁶⁴ Clinton also expressed fears about the dangers of Pakistan's nuclear weapons falling into militant hands.⁶⁵ American high-level engagement with Islamabad continued with the Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Mike Mullen meeting Gen. Kayani in Islamabad on April 22 to discuss issues relating to US drone attacks and President Obama's AfPak strategy.⁶⁶

Reports meanwhile noted that the Taliban influence remained unchecked with militants warning security forces to keep out of the Swat valley.⁶⁷ The chief of Tehrik Nifaz Shariat-e-Muhammadi, Maulana Sufi Muhammad also demanded the dismantlement of the existing judicial system in the Malakand division and instead called for a court of Darul Qaza to be instituted.⁶⁸

In other developments, even as Prime Minister Gilani justified the imposition of the Nizam-e-Adl in the Swat valley, PML-N chief Nawaz Sharif stated that the Taliban posed a grave danger to the country.⁶⁹

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April 27 - May 3, 2009

Obama: Pakistan's civilian government "very fragile"; Pak Army takes on the Taliban in Buner and Dir; Sectarian violence flares up in Karachi as MQM activists killed by Pashtuns

President Obama, addressing a press conference on completing 100 days in office, stated that Pakistan's civilian government "is very fragile." He added that the "obsession with India as the mortal threat to Pakistan has been misguided, and that their biggest threat right now comes internally."⁷⁰ However, later in the week, Richard Holbrooke, US Special Envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan, clarified that the US administration had full faith in Pakistan's civilian government and its ability to fight militancy effectively.⁷¹

The Pakistan army meanwhile along with the Frontier Corps launched a joint operation in Dir and Buner to stop the Taliban advance. At least 70 militants were killed in Dir whereas around 60 were reported killed in the Buner operation.⁷² Sufi Muhammed, the chief of TNSM, opposing the security operations in Dir, called off talks with the civilian government and demanded that the action be stopped with immediate effect.⁷³

Meanwhile, sectarian violence erupted in Karachi after 5 people including 2 MQM activists were reportedly killed by Pashtuns in the northern part of the city. The violence subsequently spread to central and eastern parts of the city leaving at least 34 dead and several injured.⁷⁴

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May 4 - 10, 2009

Zardari to members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee asserts Pakistan's resolve to fight Taliban; Islamabad launches security operations in Swat, at least 140 Taliban militants killed

President Asif Ali Zardari, in Washington to attend the trilateral summit with the Afghan and US Presidents, addressed members of the House Foreign Relations Committee on May 4. He asserted Pakistan's strong resolve to roll back the increasing Taliban influence in his country.⁷⁵ The summit meeting took place in the background of reports indicating the lack of confidence of the American administration on achieving positive outcomes from the effort.⁷⁶

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Gilani, in an address to the nation, declared a full fledged war on the Taliban in the Swat and Malakand Division.⁷⁷ Security forces continued their operations against militants resulting in the death of over 140 Taliban men.⁷⁸ The militants on their part attacked government offices, including the DIG office and a museum in Saidu Sharif in Mingora on May 5.⁷⁹ The peace agreement in Swat crumbled as the militants took over Mingora a day earlier, prompting the Pakistan government to respond militarily.⁸⁰

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May 11 - 17, 2009

At least 200 Taliban militants killed in Swat; ISPR: 10 percent of Swat militants are foreign nationals; Government offers peace talks in exchange for Taliban giving up its arms; UN: 834,000 civilians displaced due to Pak. security operations; Holbrooke: US needs to give 'sustained support' to Pakistan in the fight against militancy; EU pledges support to civilian government in Islamabad

At least 200 militants were reported killed in the ongoing military operation against the Taliban in Swat valley. The security forces concurrently gained control over key strategic posts in the area, including Shangla Top, Dir and Buner.⁸¹ Over 83 militants were accounted for in Dir itself. The Pakistan Army meanwhile stated that over 10 per cent of militants operating in Swat were of foreign origin.⁸² The government also offered peace talks to the Taliban provided they give up their arms and stop fighting the armed forces.⁸³ The UN on its part stated that as many as 834,000 civilians have been displaced due to the Army's offensive.⁸⁴

Reports noted that the US has given the Pakistan Army considerable control over drone attacks targeted against militants inside Pakistan. The move was intended to help the army better fight the militant outfits.⁸⁵ US envoy Richard Holbrooke on his part, speaking before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on May 12, advocated 'sustained support' to Pakistan in its military operations and urged that there be no delay in providing any kind of aid to Islamabad.⁸⁶

In other developments, the EU pledged support to the civilian government in Pakistan while it was facing its current challenges. The EU will hold a summit on June 17 to discuss vital security issues that Pakistan was dealing with.⁸⁷

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May 18 - 24, 2009

US pledges aid worth \$110 million for IDPs in Pakistan; UN urges international aid worth \$543 million; Zardari: Victory is the only option while dealing with Taliban; Gilani: US should review policy of Drone attacks

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated at a press conference on May 19 that \$110 million was being granted to Pakistan as 'emergency aid' to provide amenities for the civilians affected by the army operations in Swat, Buner and Dir. Ms. Clinton added that the aid being provided was important as the rapid proliferation of extremism in Pakistan was also a threat to US security.⁸⁸

The UN on its part pledged \$543 million for the two million refugees displaced due to security operations against the Taliban. UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Pakistan, Martin Mogwanja admitted that the scale of civilian displacement was "extraordinary in terms of size and speed and has caused incredible suffering."⁸⁹ President Zardari also unveiled a package of \$8 billion for the internally displaced people (IDPs) and added that "victory is the only option."⁹⁰

PM Gilani meanwhile urged the US to change its policy on drone attacks inside Pakistan as they were 'subverting' the army's operation against the militants. He noted that there was unanimous consensus among all the political parties regarding the issue of the drone attacks.⁹¹

In other developments, India's new External Affairs Minister S.M. Krishna stated that India was ready to develop friendly ties with Pakistan provided it took tough action to raze the terror infrastructure within its territory.⁹²

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May 25 - 31, 2009

Suicide bomb attacks in Lahore and Peshawar; 'Peace Pipeline' declaration signed between Pakistan and Iran; UN invokes donors to help refugees in Pakistan; SC clears charges against Sharif brothers

A suicide bomb attack in Lahore on May 27 killed at least 27 people and injured over 300. Most of the deaths occurred in a building adjacent to the ISI headquarters in the city, which was reportedly the main target of the attack.⁹³ In the following day, 10 people were killed and several injured in twin bomb blasts in Peshawar.⁹⁴

The Pakistan Army meanwhile secured the town of Mingora in Swat from the Taliban on May 30. Several militant leaders were killed even as the militants fled the area without offering much resistance to the security forces. Mingora connects the Swat area with Malakand division, Buner and Shangla and as such is of much strategic significance.⁹⁵ In a related development, the Inter-Services Public Relations (IPSR) stated that Peucher and Bahrain were also sanitized as a result of security operations in which nearly 30 militants lost their lives.⁹⁶

In other developments, President's Zardari and Ahmedinejad signed an 'inter-governmental framework declaration' to endorse the gas agreement between the two countries.⁹⁷

The UN on its part, stating that over \$500 million were required to help in the relief and rehabilitation of refugees displaced as a result of the security operations, urged the international community to come forward and be of assistance.⁹⁸

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June 1 - 7, 2009

Hafiz Saeed released by the Lahore High Court; US to provide additional aid of \$ 200 million for the Internally Displaced People; Gilani requests US for loan waiver; France to support Pakistan in fighting militancy

Hafiz Saeed, the chief of Jamat-ud-Dawa and main suspect of the 26/11 attacks in Mumbai was released by the Lahore High Court on June 2. The court order contended there was lack of substantive proof against Hafiz to further detain him, reports claimed.⁹⁹ Notwithstanding the US assured additional aid of \$200 million to rescue the refugees in the Swat and Malakand Division, where the security operations against the Taliban are taking place. The announcement to this effect was made by Richard Holbrooke in a joint press conference in Islamabad on June 3. President Zardari and Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi were also present in the press conference.¹⁰⁰ On the economic front, Prime Minister Gilani requested US to strike off its debts which could help steer the country out of economic crisis. This was during his meeting with Holbrooke in Islamabad on June 5.¹⁰¹

Meanwhile, France promised support to Pakistan in its fight against militancy and eventually "to see democracy succeed in Pakistan." This was stated by French Ambassador to the United Nations, Jean Maurice on May 31 at UN.¹⁰²

In other developments, at least 40 people were reportedly killed in suicide bomb attack in a mosque in the village of Hayagay Sharqi in Dir on June 5. The suicide bomber was reportedly a young boy who managed to enter the mosque despite being stopped by others for identification.¹⁰³

The state of the humanitarian crisis in Mingora is reported to be serious and people are deprived of basic necessities such as food, water and electricity due to the ongoing security operations against Taliban in the area.¹⁰⁴

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June 8 - 14, 2009

Targeted killings against political activists kill 13 in Karachi; Suicide attack on Peshawar hotel claims 11; Anti-Taliban cleric killed in Lahore; Gen. Kayani visits Mingora; Defence budget increased to Rs. 343 billion; Gilani: India-Pakistan should resume dialogue to ensure regional peace

A series of 'targeted killings' in Karachi on June 7 led to the death of 13 people, including at least 10 belonging to political parties like the MQM-H. These killings dramatically increased the number of political murders committed in June to 29.¹⁰⁵

A five star hotel in Peshawar was the target of a suicide bomb on June 9, leading to the loss of 11 lives and injured more than 60 people. The explosives-laden vehicle reportedly rammed into the hotel premises after the occupants of the vehicle killed the guards at the gate of the hotel.¹⁰⁶

In another incident, Mufti Naeemi, a noted anti -Taliban cleric was killed in a suicide attack in Lahore on June 12.¹⁰⁷

Meanwhile, the Pakistan Army chief Gen. Kayani paid a visit to Mingora on June 8. Security operations against the Taliban were continuing here and in other places in the Swat valley. He was also accompanied by the Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Rao Qamar Suleman.¹⁰⁸

Pakistan's Minister of State for Finance Hina Rabbani Khar announced in the National Assembly on June 13 that the country's defence budget for 2009-10 was increased to Rs.343 billion due to the ongoing security operations inside Pakistan as well as on account of the country's 'frontline' role in the war on terror.¹⁰⁹

In other developments, Prime Minister Gilani, addressing the Command and Staff College in Quetta on June 10, called for resuming the stalled composite bilateral dialogue with India to ensure peace in the region.¹¹⁰

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June 15 - 21, 2009

Difficult task for Pakistani Army in Taliban stronghold of South Waziristan; US Drone attack kills 13 in South Waziristan; US Congress approves \$1.4 billion for Pakistan with conditions attached; Hundreds of IDPs returning to Buner; UNHCR Report: Pakistan hosts largest number of refugees; EU, Pakistan delegations met in Brussels

Reports noted that South Waziristan was presenting the toughest challenge for Pakistani forces in their fight against the growing insurgency. The region is home to Baitullah Mehsud, who heads the Taliban in Pakistan. Pakistan Army Chief Gen. Ashfaq Kayani on June 15 called for the 'elimination' of Mehsud even as the Army launched a renewed offensive against his hideouts.¹¹¹ 13 people were also killed in an American drone attack against a local Taliban commander in South Waziristan on June 25. Reports noted that there have been 22 drone attacks in Pakistan so far, compared to 36 in the previous year.¹¹²

Both the chambers of the US Congress meanwhile approved a supplemental budget which includes \$1.4 billion in economic and security assistance for Pakistan. The Senate however added a condition requiring a close scrutiny of American policies in Pakistan and Afghanistan.¹¹³

Reports noted that hundreds of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who were uprooted by the fighting in Buner started returning to their homes after authorities urged them to return to secure areas. The government believes that the return of these refugees would help build confidence of the people in that area and contribute to the defeat of the Taliban.¹¹⁴

Meanwhile, the UNHCR report '2008 Global Trends', released on June 16 states that Pakistan is home to the largest number of refugees in the world. These include about 1.8 million Afghans. The report also notes that the number of IDPs in Pakistan had approached the two million mark as compared to 156,000 at the end of 2008.¹¹⁵

In other developments, the first-ever summit between Pakistan and the EU was held in Brussels on June 17. While the Pakistani delegation was led by President Asif Ali Zardari, the EU delegation included President Vaclav Klaus of the Czech Republic, currently holding the presidency of the EU, Jose Manuel Barroso, head of the European Commission, and Javier Solana, High Representative for the EU's foreign policy.¹¹⁶ Among other issues, the two sides discussed measures to help promote democracy in Pakistan.

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June 22 - 28, 2009

US drone strike kills at least 60 people in South Waziristan; Pakistan Army: Swat operation in its final stage; National Assembly sets up 27-member committee to review 1973 Constitution; US Senate approves bill tripling aid to Pakistan; Afghanistan, Pakistan and Russia agree to act against drugs, terror; Pakistan SC dismisses Sarabjit's appeal

Report noted that a drone attack by US forces on June 23 killed at least 60 people at a funeral for a Taliban fighter in South Waziristan. The Pakistani armed forces meanwhile were continuing their operations in South Waziristan against Baitullah Mehsud, the head of the Taliban in Pakistan.¹¹⁷ At least 21 people, including militants and civilians, were killed and several others injured during air strikes launched by Pakistan security forces in the Waziristan region on June 21-22.¹¹⁸ A Pakistan Army spokesperson, Maj. Gen. Abbas stated that operations in Swat were in their final phase and that a decisive action against the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) chief Mehsud and his network was in the offing.¹¹⁹

In domestic developments, the speaker of the National Assembly, Dr. Fehmida Mirza set up a 27-member committee on June 23 to revisit the 1973 Constitution and weigh the pros and cons of repealing the 17th Amendment. Reports noted that women and minorities were not given representation in the Committee.¹²⁰

The US Senate unanimously passed a bill approving \$1.5 billion a year in humanitarian and economic aid to Pakistan for five years, thus effectively tripling non-military aid to the country.¹²¹

At the sidelines of the Foreign Ministers meeting in Trieste, Italy on June 26, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Russia agreed to improve cooperation in fighting terrorism, combating illegal drug production and trafficking and promoting good relations among neighbours. The meeting was attended by Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Rangeen Dadfar Spanta and Sergei Lavrov.¹²²

In other developments, the Pakistan Supreme Court on June 24 dismissed an appeal by Indian prisoner Manjit Singh alias Sarabjit Singh seeking a review of his death sentence awarded by a court in 1991.¹²³

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June 29 - July 5, 2009

Taliban faction withdraws from North Waziristan peace deal; At least 30 Pak soldiers killed in an ambush in North Waziristan; US drone attack kills eight in S. Waziristan; 41 security personnel killed as military helicopter crashes; Pak seals its South Waziristan border with Afghanistan, renews call for fencing of the Afghan border; UN officials

urge more aid to prevent outbreak of diseases in IDP camps; UN commission begins Benazir murder probe

Reports noted that the Taliban faction led by Hafiz Gul Bahadur in the Northwestern tribal region has withdrawn itself from a February 2008 peace deal with the Pakistan authorities to protest against continuing strikes by American drones. This raised the possibility that Pakistani forces may face more fronts in the war against the Taliban. In fact, a Pakistani military convoy was ambushed near Miramshah, the capital of North Waziristan, a day before the group announced its decision, resulting in the death of at least 30 soldiers.¹²⁴

The US meanwhile resumed secret military surveillance drone flights over Pakistan's tribal areas to provide support to Pakistani commanders in their ongoing operations.¹²⁵ A US drone attack on July 3 also killed eight people in Serwekai area of South Waziristan. In a tragic incident, 41 security personnel on board a Pakistani military transport helicopter were killed when it crashed in Chapri Ferozkhel area on the border of Khyber and Orakzai tribal regions on July 3 due to a technical fault.¹²⁶

Reports noted that Pakistan has sealed its South Waziristan border with Afghanistan and imposed curfew in the area to prevent Afghan militants from infiltrating into its territory. This was in the wake of a new offensive by US forces against the Taliban on the other side of the border.¹²⁷ Pakistan Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani on his part, during a meeting with visiting US Secretary for Homeland Security Janet Napolitano during the week, made renewed calls for fencing of the country's border with Afghanistan to effectively prevent militants and drug traffickers from entering its territory. The Afghan government has however been opposing the erection of a fence at the border between the two countries.¹²⁸

UN officials meanwhile on July 2 warned against an outbreak of water-borne diseases among internally displaced people (IDP) if humanitarian agencies did not receive adequate funding from the international community. The officials reiterated their appeal for funding to help the largest internally displaced population since the Rwanda crisis of 1994. Sources indicated that the UN had received only \$193 million in response to a \$543 million aid appeal for about two million IDPs.¹²⁹

In other developments, a UN Commission made up of three members has formally begun inquiry into the assassination of former Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. The commission is being led by Chile's UN Ambassador Heraldo Munoz, who also heads the UN Peace-Building Commission.¹³⁰

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July 6 - 12, 2009

Zardari acknowledges militant groups were “deliberately created and nurtured” by Pakistan for “tactical” objectives; Pak government: Operations in Swat and Buner over; Reports: Baluchistan insurgency on the rise; US air strikes kill over 40 insurgents, Taliban leader Fazlullah wounded; US House of Representatives approves aid to Pakistan with strict conditions

President Zardari acknowledged that militant groups were “deliberately created and nurtured” by Pakistan for “tactical” objectives. He made these comments while speaking to retired civil servants who met him on July 7 to discuss national security issues. This was for the first time that a Pakistan president has acknowledged complicity in creating terror groups.¹³¹

Pakistan’s Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Qamar Zaman Kaira meanwhile told reporters on July 8 that the military operation in Swat and Buner had been completed and these two districts were safe for people who had been displaced to return to their homes. He however did not rule out possibility of isolated incidents of terrorism.¹³² Other reports suggested that insurgency in Baluchistan was steadily gaining ground with the province’s governor noting that the situation was “pretty volatile.”¹³³

Two US air strikes on July 8 killed at least 43 militants and wounded militant leader of the northern Swat valley, Maulana Fazlullah. The attacks, on a forest training camp and a vehicle convoy, were aimed at eliminating the network of Taliban leader, Beitullah Mehsud. Pakistan military spokesman Maj. Gen. Athar Abbas confirmed that Fazlullah was injured in one of the strikes, according to “credible information.”¹³⁴ Earlier on July 7, a US drone attack killed at least 16 militants in South Waziristan.

In other developments, the US House of Representatives on July 9 approved a \$48.8 billion spending bill, inclusive of \$1.5 billion for Pakistan. Both chambers of the US Congress have separately approved legislation to triple US assistance to Pakistan to \$1.5 billion a year. The Senate version, known as the Kerry-Lugar bill, now has to be reconciled with the House version, which seeks strict conditions for providing economic and military assistance to Pakistan.¹³⁵

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July 13 - 19, 2009

PM Gilani: 1973 Constitution would be restored to its true spirit; 13 militants killed in fresh clashes in Swat; Clinton: Pakistan has emerged as home to a “syndicate of terrorism”; US sets conditions for talks with Taliban; Nawaz Sharif acquitted by Supreme Court of hijacking charges; UNHCR official shot dead in Pakistan

Pakistan PM Yousuf Gilani, speaking at the convocation of the International Islamic University on July 12, stated his determination to change the present “hotch-potch” system of government, which according to him was neither presidential nor parliamentary. Asserting that the 1973 Constitution would be restored to its true spirit, he favoured a truly federal parliamentary system.¹³⁶

Security forces on July 15 killed 13 militants in fresh clashes at Kabal town in Swat. The town is reportedly being seen as a likely hideout for Taliban leadership. The Pakistan Army on its part claimed that more than 1,700 militants have been killed in the two months offensive in the Swat region while about 160 security personnel lost their lives.¹³⁷

In a major foreign policy speech at the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington on July 15, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated that the US was willing to engage those Taliban fighters who had given up violence. She also acknowledged Pakistan's key position in bringing peace to Afghanistan.¹³⁸

Secretary Clinton, currently on a five-day visit to India stated that the US was keeping a close watch on the actions being taken by Pakistan against terrorists. She added that Pakistan had emerged as home to a "syndicate of terrorism" involving the al-Qaeda, Taliban and many other terror organisations "... connected in a way that is deeply troubling to us, and I know to India." Clinton also expressed the hope that the perpetrators of Mumbai attacks would meet their "day of reckoning" soon.¹³⁹

In domestic developments, the Pakistan Supreme Court on July 17 acquitted former PM Nawaz Sharif of hijacking charges, effectively removing the last legal hurdle for him to run for public office. Sharif was earlier convicted of hijacking charges in 2000 and went into exile in Saudi Arabia.¹⁴⁰

In other developments, UN chief Ban Ki-moon condemned the killing of a UNHCR official and his bodyguard in the northwestern city of Peshawar on July 16.¹⁴¹

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July 20 - 26, 2009

Sufi Muhammad arrested on charges of encouraging violence and terrorism; Holbrooke announces aid worth \$165 million for Swat refugees; UNICEF: 1 million people will remain displaced till year-end; Pakistan, France sign accord to set up anti-terror task force; Pak SC asks Musharraf to defend his November 3, 2007 action replacing the constitution

Pro-Taliban cleric Maulana Sufi Muhammad, who brokered a peace deal between the Pakistan government and militants in the Swat Valley in February 2009, was arrested on July 26 on charges of encouraging violence and terrorism. The peace deal with the government had resulted in the imposition of Shariah or Islamic law in the valley in exchange for an end to over two years of fighting. The deal collapsed in April when the Taliban advanced into neighboring districts, forcing the Pakistan military to launch a counter-offensive under US pressure.¹⁴²

US Special Envoy Richard Holbrooke, at a press conference in Islamabad during the week, announced another tranche of \$165 million in humanitarian aid to the country. The Obama administration has

already given over \$300 million for the rehabilitation of refugees affected by the military operations in Swat.¹⁴³ The UNICEF's Louis-Georges Arsenault meanwhile stated that about half of the estimated two million people who fled the fighting in Swat and FATA could remain displaced for the rest of the year.¹⁴⁴

Pakistan and France on July 20 signed an agreement to set up a joint task force for sharing information about terrorists. The accord was signed by the visiting Interior Minister of Pakistan Rehman Malik and his French counterpart Brice Hortefeux in Paris.¹⁴⁵

In other developments, the Pakistan Supreme Court on July 22 asked former military ruler Pervez Musharraf to defend his extra-constitutional actions before the court, including his proclamation of emergency and his action in replacing the Constitution with a provisional constitution order on November 3, 2007.¹⁴⁶

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July 27 - August 2, 2009

Dushanbe summit pledges to curb drug trafficking; First Chinese-built frigate commissioned into Pakistan Navy; Six Christians killed by members of radical and banned Islamic sect; Pakistan SC terms November 3 emergency proclamation as illegal and unconstitutional

Pakistan, Afghanistan, Russia and Tajikistan, at a Four Nation Summit meeting in Dushanbe during the week agreed to intensify the fight against drug trafficking in the region. In a joint statement issued after the meeting, Presidents Asif Ali Zardari, Hamid Karzai, Dmitry Medvedev and Emomali Rakhmon expressed concern over the increasing narcotics trade, noting that it was one of the main sources of financing for militancy in the region. They also called on the international community to take "additional steps for a decisive fight against the narco-threat."¹⁴⁷

PNS Zulfiquar, the first of the four F-22P frigates built by China at the Hudong Zhonghua Shipyard in Shanghai, was delivered to the Pakistan Navy and commissioned on July 30. The ceremony was attended by Pakistan Navy Chief Adm. Noman Bashir and Chinese navy and government representatives.¹⁴⁸

Six Christians were killed, several injured and properties destroyed in the Punjabi city of Gorja as members of a banned Islamic sect attacked the Christians over allegations that a Koran was defiled. Federal minister for minorities Shahbaz Bhatti stated that members of the banned Muslim organization Sipah-e-Sahiba were responsible for the incidents. Bhatti also clarified that there was no truth in the allegations that the Koran had been defiled.¹⁴⁹

In other developments, the Pakistan Supreme Court on July 31 denounced the successive military takeovers during the past four decades and declared Gen. Pervez Musharraf's Emergency Order of

November 3, 2007 imposing the emergency and the appointment of over 100 superior court judges, as illegal and unconstitutional. In the historic judgment, a 14-judge bench headed by Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry declared as unconstitutional Justice Abdul Hameed Dogar's appointment as the Chief Justice of Pakistan after the imposition of emergency.¹⁵⁰ President Zardai and Prime Minister Gilani on their part welcomed the verdict and termed it a triumph of democratic principles in the country.¹⁵¹

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