

NEWS WRAP

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North Waziristan is a wild border land, suspected by USA and Britain, to be a logistics centre of Islamic terrorist strikes, in different parts of the globe. Consisting of foreign Al-Qaeda volunteers, Afghan Taliban, Pakistani Islamists and local Waziris, there are about 8000 gunmen in the auto-nomous tribal area. During the 20th Century, map makers have been shot to conceal the region's mysteries. Pakistan army helicopters conduct night operations in the mountaineous valleys, while searching for al-Qaeda militants. Artillery and rocket fire are exchanged by troops and gunmen. Towards the end of July 07, about 80,000 Pakistani troops sealed all the roads into Miran Shah, the provincial capital. Government troops entrenched in the surrounding hills, fired artillery salvo. After militants blew up government buildings, the army moved into parts of Miran Shah. Many of the 60,000 Miran Shan town people are likely to be trapped. Fleeing mud homes in adjacent villages, numerous families have headed for Bannu, in neighbouring North West Frontier province. Occupying hilltops in South Waziristan, Taliban forces have installed their own checkpoints, for obstructing army supply lines, and to stall control by government troops. Taliban rockets have fired on new army checkpoints on the main arterial routes from the town. Looters have robbed computers from offices and schools. There are fears that the fighting in Waziristan may cause a civil war in entire Pakistan. But smuggling of cattle on lorries to Afghanistan continues to thrive.

There has been a secret meeting with President Musharraf and Benazir Bhutto in Abu Dhabi. American plan to bolster Musharraf as a support in the terror war, allows the former Prime Minister a central role. The proposals envisage Bhutto and Musharraf to form a governing coalition, that would keep the extremists secluded, after the due November elections. Musharraf's ambition to remain both president and head of the armed forces is causing disagreement. Since the army flushed out fundamentalists from Islamabad's Red Mosque in early July 07, there have been bombings throughout Pakistan. With his power grip weakening, Musharraf may be willing to give the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) a share of the power; but he would prefer Benazir Bhutto to remain on the side lines.

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Serbs commemorated the 618th anniversary of their defeat in the Battle of Kosovo at the hands of the Ottoman Turks, during last June, Serbia's Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica announced that a new battle for Kosovo was being waged. Since the end of fighting in 1999, Kosovo has been under UN jurisdiction, though technically Kosovo is part of Serbia. Of the two million population in Kosovo, 90% are ethnic Albanians (Kosovars) who seek independence. Following talks between Serbia and the Kosovars, the UN advisor, Martti Ahtisaari submitted to the Security Council his own plan for "supervised independence". The proposal outlined an independent Kosovo, with highly autonomous zones for the Serb minority, and the replacement of the UN mission by an EU mission, with an international governor. Serbia and Russia have rejected the new plans.

Vladmir Putin of Russia has asserted that the Balkans had always been “a sphere of Russian special interest.” Serbia's priority is to join the European Union. Some Serbs and Kosovars donot rule out partition, Kosovars may agree to Serbia occupying the north of Kosovo, while gaining the Albanian-inhabited areas of Serbia, outside present day Kosovo, to a future independent Kosovo. There are fears of similar divisions in Macedonia, Bosnia and beyond.

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The state government of Manipur has rejected the 2001 census report for reasons that it contained “fictitious names”. A cabinet meeting chaired by the Chief Minister decided to reject the report. The union government has been requested by the state authorities, not to carry out any “delimitation exercises” on the basis of the 2001 census report.

Lengthy discussions between the central government and the national Socialist Council of Nagaland - IM (NSCN-IM) have led to the indefinite extension of a ceasefire, between the two sides. The NSCN had pointed out to the government that hundreds of its cadres have lost their lives, at the security operations, over the last ten years.

Representatives of various groups of Naga people, gathered at the venue of the Dimapur talks, holding posters, banners and placards, demanding a peaceful solution.

The Chief Minister of Assam has re-iterated that any outsider, whether Bangladeshi or Foreigner, who came to Assam after March 1971, were of “doubtful origins” and was a foreigner. The state government of Assam has stated that the three thousand people, “expelled” from Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland were “genuine Indian citizens”, and not Bangladeshis. □□□