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CONTENTS

April 12, 2002

Volume 3, #13

Nuclear Issues

1. Related News and Analysis

Afghanistan

1. Current Situation
2. Reconstruction
3. Humanitarian Issues

India-Pakistan Tensions

1. News
2. Analysis

Pakistan

1. Pakistan: Domestic Situation

India

1. India: Domestic Situation

Kashmir

1. Internal Situation

Regional News

1. Sri Lanka
2. Nepal

Nuclear Issues

1. Related News and Analysis

President Pervez Musharraf was quoted in Indian and Pakistani newspapers as having told a German magazine that Pakistan might use nuclear weapons against India "as a last means of defence." India's Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee refused to comment on the story. Russia has stated its commitment to help India develop nuclear energy.

Afghanistan

1. Current Situation

Afghanistan's interim government has reportedly foiled an attempted coup by alleged supporters of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-e-Islami. Hezb-e-Islami has denied involvement in the attempted coup. The Afghan interim authority reportedly did not inform the International Peacekeeping commanders of the arrest of alleged plotters. There were also reports of an assassination attempt on Afghan Defence Minister Muhammad Qasim Fahim. Writing for the daily Dawn, Najamuddin Shaikh argues that the successful implementation of the Bonn Agreement would be in Pakistan's interest.

Afghan interim authorities have begun destroying poppy fields despite violent protests from farmers. Eight militiamen were killed when Afghan interim administration forces recaptured a key trade route to Iran.

At least two rockets were fired at the headquarters of peacekeeping troops in Kabul. The daily Frontier Post reported that a Taliban web site has posted a message claimed to be written by Mullah Umar. Al-Qaida and Taliban are distributing pamphlets offering cash rewards for dead or captured Westerners. Meanwhile, the US military has stated that they have not found any signs of Osama bin Laden in Eastern Afghanistan. Author Ahmed Rashid believes that the US is not "putting enough weight behind the Karzai government."

According to a report in the daily Frontier Post, the Royal Marines in Afghanistan are not well prepared for the "think air of Kabul." Writing for the daily News, Rahimullah Yusufzai reports that three Pakistan prisoners have died at the Cha'ab Prison which hold another 99 Pakistanis.

2. Reconstruction

International agencies have issued an appeal to donors for \$128 million for humanitarian aid.

3. Humanitarian Issues

A UN team is investigating three mass graves found in Bamiyan. The UNHCR estimates that 400,000 Afghan refugees will return from Iran during the current year. An estimated 150,000 refugees have already returned from Pakistan. UNHCR is reportedly running out of funds to facilitate the return of Afghan refugees. Afghan civilians hurt by US bombings have demanded compensation.

India-Pakistan Tensions

1. News

There has been no thaw in India-Pakistan relations.

2. Analysis

In his essay for the daily Dawn, Ghulam Umar, a retired Pakistani General, urges India to pull its troops back from the border.

Pakistan

1. Pakistan: Domestic Situation

President Pervez Musharraf has announced that a referendum asking for the extension of his tenure for five years will be held later this month. He has also stated that the government would make "essential" amendments to the Constitution before the scheduled general elections in October. A report in the daily News suggests that the October elections will be held on a non-party basis. Pakistani political parties, as well as newspapers, have sharply criticized the planned referendum. The constitutional legality of the referendum is also uncertain. The Assistant Secretary of State Christina Rocca has stated that the US considers the planned referendum an "internal matter" for Pakistan.

Zafar Iqbal's two-part essay in the daily Dawn gives a short history of the military rule in Pakistan.

Pakistani newspapers carried many reports on the recent operation against al-Qaeda operatives hiding in the country. An unconfirmed report in the daily Nation states that Osama bin Laden may have been hiding in the Pakistani city of Faisalabad.

According to reports in some Indian and Pakistan newspapers Pakistan is seeking support from the US to train its intelligence services.

Pakistan has promoted two Generals to become corp commanders and has announced other new appointments. Medical doctors all over Pakistan observed a day long strike to protest the widespread killing of doctors in Karachi and other cities of the country.

Pakistan has signed a \$150 million contract with Ukrainian Malyshev tank plant for the supply of 6TD-2 engines.

India

1. India: Domestic Situation

Communal violence continued in the Indian state of Gujarat. Well known social activist Medha Patkar was mobbed at Sabarmati Ashram that was founded by Gandhi. Newspapers had different opinions on the Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's recent visit to Gujarat. Many Indian politicians, social activists, and historians have called for a nation-wide movement against communalism. Sumanta Banerjee's essay in the Economic and Political Weekly argues that India is a "soil fertile with religious prejudices and hatred."

Indian government has announced that it will domestically manufacture 140 Russian-designed Sukhoi 30.

C.P. Bhambhri essay in the daily Hindu examines the recent elections in Uttar Pradesh to argue that the "socially progressive Backward Caste and Dalit parties have rejected the BJP.

Kashmir

1. Internal Situation

Indian and Pakistani newspapers reported continued political violence and unrest in Jammu and Kashmir. According to unnamed official sources about 4,000 Pakistani militants are waiting for the opening of mountain passes to cross into Kashmir. A report in the daily Hindustan Times states that 38,104 weapons, including 23,500 AK type rifles and 9144 pistols and revolvers were recovered between January 1990 and December 2001.

The All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) has stated that it would not join any electoral process that aimed at forming a government. APHC has also accused the Indian government of harassing its leaders. All Bharatiya Janata Party's office bearers in Kashmir have resigned in support of the resignation of their senior leader Abdul Kabuli.

Regional News

1. Sri Lanka

In his first press conference in twelve years, Velupillai Prabakaran, the leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), indicated his openness to renouncing the armed struggle. Sudha Ramachandran's essay in the Asia Times takes a brief look at the life of Prabakaran. The peace process in the country has made possible the opening of the main highway connecting the north with the south of the country.

2. Nepal

Many deaths were reported as the violence in Nepal continued. Nepali political parties have forged an alliance to fight the Maoist insurgency. Some Nepali leaders have asked for a political solution to end the insurgency.

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