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Nuclear Issues

1. Related News and Analysis

A report in the Daily Times finds secrecy surrounding India's efforts to build nuclear-powered submarines inexplicable. An Indian Parliamentary committee has called for the development of a missile defense shield for India. Writing for Asia Times, S.P. Udayakumar reports on the activists opposing the construction of nuclear power plants in Tamil Nadu. R. Rajaraman's essay in the daily Hindu argues that small nuclear weapons will destroy "the time-tested psychological barrier blocking the road to nuclear holocaust."
"Indian activists want plug pulled on nuke plant"
"Ban battlefield nuclear weapons"

Afghanistan

1. Current Situation

Pamphlets urging the Taliban to carry out suicide bombing against the international forces have reportedly been widely distributed near the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. Afghanistan's former President Burhannudin Rabbani has stated that excluding former mujahideens from a future government will create "distrust and a new crisis." Najmuddin Shaikh's essay in the daily News argues that the former King Zahir Shah should be "fully involved in the entire proceedings" leading to the establishment of a new government in Afghanistan. Negar Azim's article in al-Ahram weekly suggests that dealing with a "past replete with injustice" would be an "enormous" challenge for any new government in Afghanistan.

2. Humanitarian Crisis

More than 300,000 Afghan refugees have returned home from Pakistan in the past seven weeks.

India-Pakistan Tensions

1. News

According to a report in the daily News, at least 150 Indian soldiers have been killed in accidental landmine explosions since the beginning of India-Pakistan border face-off in December. Pakistan has expelled Indian High Commission staffer AK Khanna on charges of espionage. Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf believes that "Indians are definitely worried over the government in Pakistan getting stronger."

Pakistan

1. Pakistan: Domestic Situation

The Supreme Court of Pakistan has begun hearing petitions challenging the assumption of office of president by Pervez Musharraf and the planned holding of the referendum. President Musharraf has stated that he will honor the court's decision. President Musharraf has also said that he is not considering banning any political party. Meanwhile, the Pakistan government failed to prevent Jammat-e-Islami from holding an anti-referendum rally. Pakistani lawyers have also staged demonstrations against the referendum. Sajjad Ali Shah's essay in the daily Dawn criticizes the government for pressuring the recently elected officials of the local bodies into supporting the planned referendum. Writing for Asia Times, Nadeem Iqbal examines the tensions between the government and the press around the issue of the planned referendum. Abbas Rashid's essay in the Daily Times argues that the government is using Islam "as a legitimizing instrument" for the referendum.
"Bar leaders hold rally"
"Breach of oath by nazims"
"Pakistan: The truth, nothing but the truth"

The trial of four men accused of kidnapping and murdering Daniel Pearl is being held in Karachi.

According to a report in the daily News, the US forces have evacuated two Pakistan air bases.

2. US - Pakistan Relations

Mushahid Hussain's essay in Asia Times argues that Pakistan should limit its relations with the US and seek closer links with the European Union. Kahild Ahmed summarizes analysis of US-Pakistan relations appearing in Pakistan's Urdu press.
"Pakistan needs to catch the drift"
"What the Americans are doing to Pakistan"

India

1. India: Domestic Situation

Many people were killed in the continuing communal violence in Gujarat. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) has asked Muslims to stop eating beef and return the three disputed sites as a pre-condition for peaceful co-existence between the two communities. The six-day long deadlock over the Gujarat issue in the Lok Sabha was broken when a motion censuring the government over it's handling of the Gujarat violence was admitted to the House. A report by the National Human Rights Commission has criticized the Gujarat government for its failure to contain communal violence in the State. According to a report in the daily Hindu, the violence against Muslims in the rural areas of Gujarat was largely carried out by Adivasis.
"Adivasis and the genocide"

In an essay for the daily Hindu, Kancha Ilaiah argues that lower caste Hindus have developed "only some sort of a development agenda but not a transformative and liberative one."
"Needed, a transformation"

2. China-India Relations

Writing for the Frontline magazine, John Cherian argues that India and China have taken some steps

towards improved relations.

Kashmir

1. Internal Situation

More people were killed in the continuing political unrest and violence in Jammu and Kashmir. There have been reports of differences within the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) over the last week's meeting in Sharjah between some Hurriyat leaders and a few leaders of Pakistan-controlled parts of Kashmir. According to a report in the daily Hindustan Times, the United Jihad Council (UJC), an umbrella organization of militant groups, has also criticized the Sharjah meeting. Izhar Wani's report in the daily Hindustan Times indicates that madrassas in Jammu and Kashmir have not supported militancy. For the first time in 13 years, 2,500 Kashmiri Pandits celebrated Ramnavmi at the traditional Ramji Temple.

Regional News

1. Sri Lanka

The Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister has stated that the peace process in Sri Lanka is moving ahead rapidly. The Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) leader Rauf Hakeem has expressed satisfaction with his meeting with the head of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). According to a report in the daily Hindustan Times, India is taking a 'wait and watch' approach to the Sri Lankan peace process. Jehan Perera's essay in Eelam Nation argues that there are hidden dangers in a proposed amendment to the country's constitution that seeks to take away the president's power to arbitrarily dissolve parliament after one year.
"Peace process incredibly fast -Vidar Hegelsen"
"Batticaloa: becoming good neighbours again"

2. Nepal

Violent confrontations between the Maoist rebels and the government forces continued in Nepal. The US administration has asked Congress for a $20 million grant in military aid to support Nepal's war against the Maoists.

3. Bangladesh

Rashiduzzaman's essay in the Daily Times argues that Bangladesh "is not a cocoon of (Islamic) terror and orthodoxy."

4. Regional Interest

Chinese President Jiang Zemin has stated that "one of the primary issues for China is to protect developing countries from the pretensions of the United States." He was speaking at the conclusion of his two-week tour of Nigeria, Tunisia, Germany, Libya and Iran.

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