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Nuclear Issues

1. Related News and Analysis

The daily Hindustan Times reported that "India has asked the US for technical information on its operational Patriot anti-missile system and also sought Washington's nod for involvement in the Israeli-US upgraded Arrow missile system." The same newspaper reported that "three radioactive isotopes [made of radioactive Cobalt-60 and] each weighing 41 kg" were stolen from a steel factory in Kolkata.

T.S. Subramanian's (Frontline, India) report details the January 21 incident at Kalpakkam Atomic Reprocessing Plant of the Bhabha Atomic Research Center (BARC) in which six workers were exposed to radiations levels exceeding annually permissible limits. The daily Hindu (India) notes that "it took six months for BARC to acknowledge the incident, and that we still do not know the exact radiation dose received by the workers involved suggests that the new system to ensure safety is neither transparent nor reliable."

["Nuclear power safety concerns"](#)

M.B. Naqvi (News, Pakistan) argues that "nothing but a total de-nuclearisation of South Asia can ensure stable peace." The daily Hindu (India) reports on a workshop in Chennai organized on the occasion of release of a book, 'Prisoners of the Nuclear Dream.'

["N-weaponisation falsified security"](#)

Afghanistan

1. News

Many people were killed and the US base in southeast Afghanistan was attacked in what are believed to be attacks by the Taliban. Yusuf Pashtun replaced Gul Agha Sherazi as the governor of southern Kandahar. There were also reports of Afghan militia firing rockets and mortar shells at Pakistani border checkpoints in the northwestern tribal district of Mohmand. Despite the poor security situation in Afghanistan, about 390,000 Afghan refugees have returned home from Pakistan and Iran with UN so far this year.

["Nine Afghan policemen killed in ambush: Taliban attack US base, convoy"](#)

["Three Afghan soldiers die in Taliban attack"](#)

["390,000 Afghan DPs return home"](#)

2. Opinions and Analysis

The daily News (Pakistan) believes that "it is utterly improper of the Afghan officials to expect

Pakistan to look after the border and not taking the least part in it." In the same newspaper, another editorial notes that "Karzai's biggest enemies are his friends whose patronage has totally isolated him from his own people." Najmuddin A. Shaikh (Dawn, Pakistan), former foreign secretary of Pakistan, argues that the key to improving the security situation is to reduce "the share in political power and in the military" of the Northern Alliance and the Panjsheris to what "Afghanistan's demography dictates."

["Worsening Afghan situation"](#)

India-Pakistan Relations

1. News

India rejected reports of massive mobilization by the Indian army near the Line of Control (LoC) in the Kargil-Drass sector. The Cable Operators' Association of Pakistan (CAP) has threatened to stop showing local channels unless the Pakistani government withdraws its decision to ban certain international, primarily India based, television channels.

2. Indian Delegation's Visit

Laloo Prasad Yadav, the former Chief Minister of Bihar, was, by far, the most popular member of the Indian delegation. Praful Bidwai (News, Pakistan) writes that "Laloo Prasad Yadav has now given the India-Pakistan interaction a wholly new earthy, plebeian dimension and a new language..." Mani Shankar Aiyar (Indian Express) expressed similar sentiments. In an interview with the daily Indian Express, Yadav stated that "they (Pakistani people) like me because I speak their language."

Akmal Hussain (Daily Times, Pakistan) believes that now "is the moment to lay the foundations of a lasting peace in the subcontinent." I.A. Rehman (News, Pakistan) argues that the visit demonstrated "the key role people-to-people contacts can play in securing normalization of relations." Zubeida Mustafa (Dawn, Pakistan) notes that "the two governments will have to move faster on the 'bumpy road to peace' to use Mr Vajpayee's words, if they are to keep pace with their people's aspirations." G.Parthasarathy (Tribune India), however, compares the "bonhomie and back-slapping" witnessed during the delegation's visit to "tranquilizers" that "may make one feel good, [but] they should not divert attention away from hard facts."

["On bumpy road to peace"](#)

3. Opinions and Analysis

The daily Indian Express believes that "there is much merit in taking Musharraf up on his ceasefire offer." Raja Mohan (Hindu, India) also feels that even "if India is convinced that Gen. Musharraf is not sincere, there is no harm in testing his intentions."

["Politics of Indo-Pak. ceasefire"](#)

Pakistani columnist M.B. Naqvi (Deccan Herald, India) feels that "General Musharraf sees the huge size of India, with its resources, as an impediment to stable peace in South Asia." J.N. Dixit (Hindustan Times, India) suggests the "leit motif" of the recent visit of Maulana Fazlur Rehman -- leader the Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA) -- was to "to lay the ground work for increasing their role and ultimately to capture power, if possible."

Pakistan

1. Political News and Analysis

Once again, the MMA and the Alliance for Restoration of Democracy (ARD) have joined hands in parliament to protest the Legal Framework Order (LFO). Meanwhile, President General Pervez Musharraf has categorically refused to give any timeframe or a specific date for leaving the office of the Chief of Army Staff. Mohammad Waseem (Dawn, Pakistan) writes that the mainstream political community has been reduced to the status of "bystanders in the continuing process of a dialogue between the army leadership and the MMA."

["LFO issue reunites MMA, ARD"](#)

["Politics of manipulation"](#)

Asif Ali Zardari, husband of Benazir Bhutto, has been acquitted in the Sajjad Hussain murder case. All the main committees of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) have been dissolved and replaced by a six-member ad hoc committee.

["Asif acquitted of murder charge"](#)

2. Karachi Oil Spill

A salvage team has restarted transferring crude oil from the broken oil tanker Tasman Spirit. The exact extent of the spillage is still not clear. Pakistani authorities, under criticism by different sections of people, have insisted that the spill is not serious. Some experts have suggested that Karachi's main beaches may close for about a year. A daily News (Pakistan) report notes that "MT Tasman Spirit is an ill-reputed company, which is on record for having pleaded guilty in several criminal felonies."

["Oil transfer from ship restarts"](#)

["Karachi faces environmental hazards"](#)

3. Law and Order

Pakistani security forces launched a manhunt for at least three al-Qaeda suspects who escaped after a clash with the police in Peshawar. In the same city, police killed a suspected al-Qaeda operative in a shootout. Pakistan announced the formation of a new force to combat domestic and international terrorism. In Karachi, an anti-terrorism court sentenced to death two members of the banned group, Lashkar-i-Jhangvi.

["Pakistan to raise new anti-terrorism force"](#)

["Two LJ men get death sentence"](#)

4. Social Issues

M V Ramana (Daily Times, Pakistan) notes that "school texts in Pakistan and India have been systematically subverted and end up promoting hatred and intolerance." An editorial in the same paper criticizes the government for not giving enough attention to "honor killings" in Pakistan.

5. Military Affairs

The Chief of the Air Staff, Kaleem Saadat, has indicated that Pakistan is seeking "appropriate Chinese replacement of its existing F-16 jet fighters." He also noted that the first Pakistan-made (with Chinese help) jet fighter is almost ready for test flight.

6. Foreign Relations

Farrukh Saleem (News, Pakistan) argues that "India has over time managed to institutionalise her support in Congress. Pakistan's support, on the other hand, continues to be event-dependent, event-driven and time-bound." The MMA has issued a fatwa (decree) stating that "any Muslim soldier killed while fighting against the Iraqi people would be dying as an infidel." The US has signed a \$115.7 million grant to improve Pakistani health services.

India

1. Political News and Analysis

As expected, the Vajpayee Government defeated -- by a margin of 312 to 186 votes -- the Opposition's motion of no-confidence, which has generated heated parliamentary debates. The daily Hindu (India) notes that a nine-point indictment of the Government by Sonia Gandhi, the leader of the opposition, however, remained mostly unanswered. Colin Gonsalves (Indian Express) notes that a uniform civil code will impact both Hindu and Muslim laws as they are "practiced today and eliminate discrimination against" both Hindu and Muslim women. S. Simhadri (Deccan Herald, India) argues that all "major political parties, except those of the oppressed castes, subtly oppose empowerment of the Other Backward Class (OBC)." Sreeram Chaulia (Asia Times) reviews historian Bipan Chandra new book 'In the Name of Democracy.'

["Govt. defeats no-confidence motion by a big margin"](#)

["Sonia indicts Govt., Advani rebuts charges"](#)

["Govt., Opposition trade charges"](#)

["Indian democracy imperiled"](#)

2. Religion and Politics

The Senior Superintendent Policy of Faizabad has accused Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani and other top BJP and VHP leaders of instigating a Hindu mob to demolish the Babri masjid in Ayodhya on December 6, 1992. Similar charges were levied earlier by six kar sevaks who had participated in the demolition of the mosque. Swami Agnivesh (Indian Express, India) writes that "Hindutva is pseudo-Hinduism and derives inspiration from Hitler, Mussolini."

S. Muralidharan (Frontline, India) writes that intervention by the Supreme Court "in the Best Bakery and other Gujarat riot cases on a petition by the National Human Rights Commission has raised the hopes of the victims, who have been terrorised into silence, of a fair trial." Another report in the same magazine describes some of atrocities committed during the Gujarat riots.

3. Law and Order

Insurgents in Tripura killed 30 People in attacks.

["Tripura toll up"](#)

4. Military Affairs

The daily Hindustan Times reports that because of various problems, Akash -- India's short-range missile -- is likely to shelved. Final trials of Akash are slated for June 2004. The daily Deccan Herald (India) reports that India is developing unmanned underwater communication vehicles (UUCVs) for anti-submarine warfare. According to the daily Indian Express, India is seeking 10 nuclear-capable Mirage-2000-5s from Qatar. Pakistan is also interested in getting the same fighters.

A.G. Noorani (Hindustan Times, India) argues that India's Defense Minister George Fernandes's refusal to show the Central Vigilance Commission's (CVC) report on defense deals to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) "is a flagrant denial of Parliament's right to know." V. R. Raghavan (Hindu, India) writes that "a selective approach to national security issues and the use of secrecy as a reason to deny information has done enough damage to everyone's security interests."
["Parliament and military secrecy"](#)

5. Foreign Affairs

In discussing the recent face-off between Indian and Chinese patrols in the Asaphila area in Arunachal Pradesh, V. P. Malik, India's former Chief of Army Staff, suggests that "several journalists and political leaders in and outside Parliament overreacted on this incident."
"The face-off at Asaphila"

6. Misc Reports

The daily Indian Express (India) interviewed friends of Hemant Lakhani, who was arrested on charges of smuggling missiles into the US. Also in that daily, S. Ramanujan and M. Wajihuddin report on Mumbai's madaris (religious schools).

Kashmir

1. Political News

Violence claimed more lives Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).

["Two killed, 46 injured in J&K blasts"](#)

["12 killed in Kashmir violence"](#)

Syed Ali Geelani has been "relieved" as the head of Jama'at-e-Islami's political wing, and from all other duties. Praveen Swami (Frontline, India) reports that a "showdown now seems near inevitable in the separatist All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC)."

2. Other News

People in J&K have been eagerly lining up to get cell phones that have recently been allowed to operate in the state. David Devadas (Tribune, India) reports on the growing drug abuse in J&K.

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