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India

1. Overview

A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, principal scientific advisor to the Indian government, stated that India could design and develop strategic missile and nuclear systems for national security and technological development.

India began construction of its first indigenously produced stealth warships. The new Indian Navy ships will be smaller than the Delhi-class destroyers and will be armed for offensive and defensive missions.

India put on hold its decision to support a meeting by the foreign secretaries of the member states of the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation. The Sri Lankan government had requested the summit meeting, but Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh stated that they would only proceed with meetings by the technical committees.

2. Ceasefire in Kashmir

Indian Defense Minister George Fernandes stated that the Indian government was not reconsidering the ceasefire, despite continuing violence in Jammu and Kashmir.

Home Minister L.K. Advani indicated that the Parliament, at the end of its winter session, was likely to consider an extension of the ceasefire. Advani stated there had been a marked reduction in infiltration and terrorism in the region, but ruled out tripartite talks with Pakistan. The decision will be made by the Cabinet Committee on Security.

Home Minister L.K. Advani stated the Indian government's intention to consolidate the peace initiative. He also indicated that if there was a significant reduction in violence in Jammu and Kashmir, India would consider talks with Pakistan, but not tripartite talks on the Kashmir issue.

3. Potential for India-Pakistan Dialogue

Indian Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee stated that there was "some peace" along the Line of Control, and that India was ready for talks with Pakistan, but that violence in Jammu and Kashmir must first end. He said, "We are ready for talks but violence, terrorism and killings must stop." He indicated that official talks with Pakistan might be soon in light of Pakistan's imposed restraint along the border.

4. India-EU Relations

Indian Defense Minister George Fernandes and British Secretary of State for Defense Geoffrey Hoon announced that India and the UK had finalized a deal for the UK to provide the Indian Air Force with Hawk Advanced Jet Trainers. They would not state how many Hawks were included in the deal.

A senior European Commission official stated that the visit by European Union (EU) External Affairs Minister Chris Patten to India in January will focus on wide-ranging issues in EU-India relations.

5. India-Russia Nuclear Trade

Russian Atomic Energy Minister Yevgeny Adamov stated that he could not rule out that Russia would leave the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT) to expand nuclear cooperation with India. Adamov cited a PRC reactor built in Pakistan despite the NPT regime being in force. Russia, because of its membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group, is under restrictions for supplying nuclear-related equipment and technologies when the recipient country has refused to place its nuclear programs under the oversight of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

6. US Election

An opinion article in the Times of India argues that US President-elect George W. Bush's appointments so far, including Colin Powell for Secretary of State and Condoleezza Rice for National Security Advisor, will be good for India and possibly bad for Pakistan and the PRC. The article states that while non-proliferation will be important to the US, the pressure to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty is off.

The Hindu published an essay by Anupam Srivastava, Director, and Seema Gahlaut, Associate Director, of the South Asia Program of the Center for International Trade and Security at the University of Georgia. They argue that the US will likely lessen pressure on the non-proliferation dialogue if India can present a case for its elevation as a strategic power. They also argue that the US will likely improve bilateral ties with India, just as the US will do with Russia, Japan, and Korea, to

Pakistan

1. Pakistani Economy

The Asian Development Bank approved two packages of loans to Pakistan, two for a total of US\$150 million to support the micro-finance sector, and one for US\$350 million to support the energy sector.

2. Pakistan-India Trade

Pakistan Minister of State for Power Jayawanti Mehta stated that Pakistan has 300 megawatts of power available for export to India, which could possibly be increased to 600 megawatts.

3. Foreign Relations: Bangladesh, UK

Bangladesh expelled Pakistani diplomat Irfanur Rahman Raja, after comments by the diplomat caused days of street protests. Raja claimed only 26,000 people had been killed in the 1971 war by Pakistanis, while Bangladesh claims Pakistanis killed 3 million people.

British Foreign and Commonwealth Office Minister Peter Hain stated that Pakistan must stop supporting cross-border violence and terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir in order to create a better climate for dialogue.

4. Military Government

The Times of India cited a report by Fakhar-ur-Rahman in the Pakistani daily Frontier Post that stated that Pakistan Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf would take over as President of Pakistan and introduce a presidential form of government. The new government would take ministers from the Pakistan Muslim League and have a caretaker Prime Minister. The Times of India states that analysts see Musharraf as attempting to civilianize his rule through the Muslim League, as military rulers have done in the past in Pakistan.

According to The Hindu, Jasaarat, a daily run by the Jamaat-e-Islami, reported that half the generals of the Pakistani military command have "turned against" Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf. The Hindu cites this report as evidence of the strain in the relationship between the Jamaat-e-Islami and Musharraf since the Hizbul Mujahideen declared a ceasefire in July.

Retired Lieutenant General Talat Masood wrote in an opinion essay in The Dawn that the pardon of deposed Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is a setback for the accountability process. Masood questions the military government's commitment to democracy. He argues that it is in the best interest of the parties and the military to avoid confrontation while restoring democracy, though the attitude of the people is ambivalent.

5. Sharif Exile

A Saudi Arabia government official stated that deposed Prime Minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif's status as a guest of Saudi Arabia means that Sharif will not participate in any political activities. Acting president of the Pakistan Muslim League Javed Hashmi stated that there was no restriction from the Saudi government on contacting people in Pakistan to provide them with direction.

Aitzaz Ahsen, a Pakistani barrister, stated that the constitution of Pakistan has no provisions for the exile of a citizen. Ahsen stated that because Nawaz Sharif has been pardoned, there would be no punishment if he returned.

The Pakistani government will not make public the apology tendered by former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, reportedly at the request of the Saudi government. Pakistan Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf stated that the pardon itself was at the request of Saudi Arabia.

The Times of India covered a report by the UK Sunday Telegraph, which reported that the Pakistani government had traced assets worth US\$6 million to former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, significantly less than the US\$6 billion he has been accused of concealing. Hussain Haqqani, a Pakistani political advisor, stated that Sharif was released to defuse tensions and to allow the government to better trace the concealed money once Sharif resumes spending it.

The Pakistani Cabinet was not informed of the pardon and exile until after it had been approved, but the Cabinet later endorsed the decision.

6. Commentary on Sharif Pardon/Exile

An opinion essay in The Dawn by Mohammad Malick argued that both former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and the government of Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf lost moral ground as a result of the pardon.

Former Prime Minister of Pakistan Benazir Bhutto stated that Nawaz Sharif was freed to please India and to facilitate dialogue over Kashmir

The Dawn reported that the Indian media was suspicious of the pardon granted to Nawaz Sharif and that the media viewed the pardon as self-serving for the Pakistani government. It also reported that

the Indian media viewed the decision as affecting Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf's legitimacy.

7. Pakistan-US Relations

Pakistan's Economic Affairs Division announced that Pakistan will lose another Rs2.8 billion (about US\$50 million) on the import of agricultural products from the US under the F-16 account deal.

8. Pakistan-PRC Relations

The PRC has asked Pakistan to reconsider its canceling of PRC deep-sea fishing licenses in Pakistani territorial waters. The PRC has offered to sign a long-term fisheries agreement.

Kashmir

1. India-Pakistan Relations

India repatriated seven Pakistanis and Pakistan repatriated two Indians who had been imprisoned for spying or inadvertent border crossings. The exchange took place at the Wagha checkpoint.

India and Pakistan have reconnected a hotline between their armies at the director general level.

2. Ceasefire Overview

Indian Army chief General S. Padmanabhan stated that firing along the Line of Control was almost nil under the ceasefire, adding that the Pakistani army was sticking to its pledge to exercise maximum restraint along the border.

Many of the security bunkers belonging to the Border Security Forces and the Central Reserve Police Force will be removed or relocated to reduce the inconvenience to Kashmiri people and to increase their sense of normalcy.

Kashmiri leader Shabir Ahmad Shah, president of the Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party, said India should involve Pakistan in any talks on Kashmir.

3. Commentary on Ceasefire

An opinion article in The Dawn by Iqbal Akhund on the ceasefire argues that India's rejection of tripartite talks have dampened hopes that a solution to the Kashmir issue may be at hand. Akhund reviews Indian and Pakistani perspectives on solutions to the Kashmir issue and questions the future of India-Pakistan relations if a solution to Kashmir can't be found.

An editorial in The Dawn argues that the apparent logical conclusion to draw when India speaks of reduced violence along the Line of Control and an extension of the ceasefire is talks with Pakistan, but Indian Home Minister L.K. Advani has rejected tripartite talks. The editorial concludes that the Indian government must clearly relate its expectations as to the nature, scope, and conditions for talks for there to be progress.

Harish Khare writes in The Hindu that Indian Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee will be unable to achieve a breakthrough on the Kashmir issue without developing a domestic consensus on the issue. Khare argues that if Kashmir is an integral part of India, there is no need to negotiate either with Pakistan or with Kashmiri "leaders." Khare further states that the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference must admit

they are not the sole representative of the Kashmiris, but that it is up to the Indian government to draw the APHC into talks.

4. All-Parties Hurriyat Conference

The All-Parties Hurriyat Conference executive committee scheduled a meeting to discuss the Indian ceasefire, as there are divisions within the group over this issue. A rift has been growing since the Hizbul Mujahideen ceasefire between Abdul Ghani Lone, who was recently critical of the role of militant groups in solving the Kashmir, and Syed Ali Shah Geelani, who argues that a Kashmir solution can only be under the UN or through tripartite talks. Abdul Gani Bhat, APHC chairman, indicated that a purpose of the meeting was to enforce discipline among the membership in their public statements on issues on which the APHC holds an official position.

The All-Parties Hurriyat Conference, at the conclusion of the executive meeting, released a statement supporting India's unilateral ceasefire. A spokesman said that the APHC "reiterated its stand that the Hurriyat will take part in any meaningful and result-oriented political process aimed at resolving the Kashmir issue permanently." The statement said, "The Hurriyat leaders are of the opinion that they have been given a chance to initiate talks with militant leaders, besides the governments of India and Pakistan so that a process for... dialogue...is started." Other reports indicated that there was discussion of a recent interview given by Syed Ali Shah Geelani.

India Today and other sources reported on physical clashes between All-Parties Hurriyat Conference members after the executive committee meeting. India Today reported that the "clear message" is the complete division between the pro-Pakistani and pro-independence elements of the umbrella organization. The APHC postponed for several days a follow-up meeting in anticipating of public statements by Indian Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee that the ceasefire would be extended beyond ramazan.

An Indian government official stated that three All-Parties Hurriyat Conference leaders, including Abdul Gani Lone, have travel documents that permit them to go to Pakistan, but stated that the APHC was not acceptable as a peace broker. The official stated that the APHC may not want to go to Pakistan because the APHC and Pakistan do not agree on the issue. The Times of India reported that the Indian government was pleased by the APHC's statement on the ceasefire and were considering issuing travel documents to Hurriyat leaders.

5. Other Militant Groups

Leaders of the Jamaat-e-Islami (JEI) on both sides of the Line of Control scheduled a meeting in Saudi Arabia to discuss their future strategy. Reports stated that JEI chief G.M. Bhat, Pakistan-based Hizbul Mijahideen commander Syed Salahuddin, and Jammu and Kashmir commander of the Hizbul, Abdul Majid Dar, who had declared the Hizbul ceasefire in July, would participate in the meeting. Hizbul spokesman Salim Hasmi later denied that Salahuddin was going to Saudi Arabia. In the context of this meeting, a likely trip by Indian External Affairs Minister Jaswan Singh to Saudi Arabia, and former Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's exile to Saudi Arabia, The Hindu reports that Saudi Arabia may be playing a significant role in the resolution of Kashmir and India-Pakistan relations.

The Hizbul Mujahideen, the Lashkar-e-Taiba, and the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen groups stated their intent to continue attacks against Indian forces in Kashmir.

6. Recent Violence

Media consensus appears to be that while acts of militant violence are still occurring in Jammu and Kashmir, the situation seems calmer between India and Pakistan under the ceasefire.

Sri Lanka

1. SAARC

Sri Lanka has increased pressure to get the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) back on track. Meetings of the regional association were postponed at India's request after the military coup in Pakistan and subsequent border clashes between India and Pakistan.

2. Sri Lanka-India Relations

India has agreed to release 56 Sri Lankan fisherman, who had been detained for fishing in Indian waters.

3. UK Position on Tamils

British Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Minister Peter Hain stated that there was international support for self-determination for Sri Lanka's Tamil minority. Sri Lanka Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar was highly critical of Hain's statement.

4. Government-LTTE Talks

Sri Lanka Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar offered the government's acceptance of talks with the Liberation Tigers Tamil Eelam (LTTE), but stated that the war would continue in the eventuality talks begin. Kadirgamar said, "There will be no de-escalation at the outset of talks." Moderate Tamil parties urged both the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE to enter talks without preconditions. However, Tamil United Liberation Front leader V. Anandasangari said, "By saying no to a ceasefire before the talks, the government should not give the LTTE an opportunity to back out." Kadirgamar did create some optimism when he indicated that if unilateral confidence building measures can facilitate dialogue, then the Sri Lankan government would consider them.

The LTTE rejected the Sri Lankan government's offer of immediate peace talks. The LTTE has sought a cooling in the war, and stated that "peace talks without a stable cease-fire do not succeed."

Government ministers stated that they were not informed of the government's offer to conduct talks with the LTTE. Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickremanayake was challenged by the cabinet over this issue, but said that it was the prerogative of President Chandrika Kumaratunga to handle the peace process as she saw fit.

Afghanistan

1. Sanctions Regime

Pakistan has stated that despite its opposition to UN sanctions against Afghanistan, it will abide by the resolution. PRC Ambassador to Pakistan Lu Shulin led a delegation to discuss the likely UN sanctions with Taliban leader Mulla Mohammad Omar.

Taliban Information Minister Qudratullah Jamal asked US President-elect George W. Bush to not support an increased UN sanctions regime against Afghanistan. Jamal said, "We expect Bush not to pursue the policy of the Clinton administration which has created a gap between the Afghans and the American people."

The UN Security Council resolution to increase sanctions against Afghanistan, proposed by the US and Russia, has met opposition by the PRC and Malaysia. The US and Russia are seeking to force Afghanistan to comply with UN Resolution 1267, which asked Afghanistan to hand over suspected terrorist Osama bin Laden for trial.

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