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Nuclear Issues

1. India Nuclear Program

Indian Minister of Atomic Energy Vasundhara Raje stated that the five May, 1998, nuclear tests provided sufficient data to construct an effective deterrent force. Raje said the current program is based on weapons systems up to 200 kilotons in yield, using fission, boosted fission, and two-stage thermonuclear designs.

2. Nuclear List Exchange

India and Pakistan exchanged lists of their nuclear sites as part of an annual practice following an agreement signed by the two countries prohibiting attacks on each other's nuclear installations. The first lists were exchanged in January, 1992, and have been exchanged every year since.

India

1. Trilateral Relations: India, Russia & the PRC

Indian External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh ruled out a strategic triangle for India with Russia and the PRC. Singh stated that India was against creating "adversarial power blocks."

2. Domestic Security Issues

Sources in the Indian Navy have stated that the Navy is seeking to terminate its responsibility for coastal security. The sources said that the Navy was tasked as a coastal police force for about seven years, and is recommending that a separate paramilitary marine force be created to fulfill coastal policing needs.

The Lashkar-e-Taba claimed responsibility for an attack upon India's historic Red Fort. The Red Fort garrisons 1,000 soldiers of the Rajputana Rifle battalion, but part is open during the daytime for tourists. The fort, which served as a residence for the Mughal emperors prior to the 17th century, was closed to the public after the attack.

3. Ceasefire Extension

Indian Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee stated that the Ramazan ceasefire would be extended by one month and would be reexamined again after January 26. Vajpayee also said that India would begin "exploratory steps" towards talks with Pakistan.

Indian Home Minister L.K. Advani stated that talks with groups in Jammu and Kashmir would include many besides the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference. Advani said that these talks did not rule out the possibility of talks with Pakistan once an assessment of Pakistan's behavior during the ceasefire had been completed. Rashtriya Swayamasevak Sangh (RSS) national spokesman M.G. Vaidya stated that the RSS was urging the Indian government to initiate talks with Pakistan on Kashmir, but said that India should speak with Kashmiri militant groups first.

An editorial in the Times of India argued that the Red Fort attack logically indicates that there will be a fresh series of terrorist offensives by militant groups designed to upset the peace process. The editorial was also critical of lax domestic security precautions.

Pakistan

1. Troop Withdrawal

Pakistan announced a unilateral cut in troops along the Line of Control, according to a government

statement. Pakistan's Inter-Service Public Relations (ISPR) bureau released a statements which said, "this is a follow up of the policy of exercising maximum restraint along the...Line of Actual Control." The statement also said that the withdrawal had already begun and expressed hope that India would reciprocate. A spokesman said that UN Observers, deployed along the Line of Control, had not been asked to monitor the troop movements.

An Indian Foreign Office spokesman said that India "will welcome any steps that leads to real de-escalation and the reduction of tensions," but said that the defense ministry would comment only after a complete evaluation of the situation had been completed.

2. "Maximum Restraint" Pledge

A Times of India article by Dwarika Prasad Sharma stated that while border firing has nearly stopped, infiltrations by Pakistani militants across the international border indicates that Pakistan intends to observe "maximum restraint" only along the Line of Control, which excludes the internationally accepted border in Jammu.

3. Dialogue Prospects

Pakistan Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf stated that India's unilateral ceasefire offer was a half-measure that fails to address settlement of the Kashmir issue, and stated that India would eventually agree to talks with Pakistan. Pakistan Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar stated that Pakistan would not insist on participating in talks on the Kashmir issue in the initial stage. Sattar said that India could first hold talks with the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference.

M. Ziauddin argues in The Dawn that Pakistan's acknowledgement of the role of the Kashmiris in solving the Kashmir issue is a positive development because previously Pakistan viewed the issue as only a bilateral India-Pakistan issue. Ziauddin referred to Pakistan's proposal that there be bilateral talks between India and the APHC and between Pakistan and the APHC prior to trilateral talks.

Kashmir

1. Overview of Ceasefire

An editorial in the Times of India argued that India's extension of the ceasefire was a foreseeable move to create an environment conducive to talks. However, the editorial puts much of the responsibility upon Pakistan to follow through on the peace initiative and warns Pakistan that the US under President-elect George W. Bush will be less forgiving.

2. Ceasefire: Militant Groups

Responding to Indian Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee's extension of the unilateral ceasefire, Abdul Gani Lone of the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference, chief Gulam Mohammad Bhat of the Jamaat--Islami, and negotiator Fazal Haq Qureshi for the Hizbul Mujahideen stated independently that they welcomed the extension of the ceasefire, but that it needed to move towards a resolution of the Kashmir issue.

Hizbul Mujahideen commander in Kashmir Abdul Majid Dar stated the Hizbul's full cooperation with the ceasefire initiative. Other Hizbul sources indicated the Hizbul's support for a peaceful resolution to the issue.

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah expressed doubt that talks between India and the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference would lead to tangible results. Abdullah also challenged the APHC to participate in the upcoming elections.

All seven members of the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference's executive council stated their intention to not abandon the "freedom movement" and welcomed the extension of the ceasefire.

3. APHC Visit to Pakistan

The All-Parties Hurriyat Conference announced that the primary purpose of sending a team to Pakistan is to consult with the Pakistani and militant groups leadership on the composition of the final team to enter talks with the Indian government. The APHC is hopeful that the Indian government will provide them with travel documents for the trip.

All-Parties Hurriyat Conference chairman Abdul Gani Bhat said that the APHC was not seeking to fulfill the role of mediator between Pakistan and India, because "we are a party to the dispute and no party can pass as a mediator."

Former Jamaat-e-Islami chairman Syed Ali Shah Geelani, who had opposed the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference visit to Pakistan, said he was ready to visit Pakistan to assist efforts at resolving the Kashmir issue. Leadership of the Jamaat said that Geelani should be included as part of the APHC team seeking to visit Pakistan. Jamaat leader Amir Qazi Hussain Ahmad said, "the intended visit of the Hurriyat Conference to Pakistan for talks would serve no purpose without the inclusion of Geelani." Geelani was reported also as having in the past ruled out as solutions for Kashmir autonomy within India and turning the Line of Control into a permanent border.

Sri Lanka

1. LTTE Ceasefire Offer

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam official website stated that the LTTE had ordered its troops to observe a one-month unilateral ceasefire beginning December 24, 2000 at midnight. The ceasefire is a "goodwill measure to facilitate the peace process." The Sri Lankan government has rejected the ceasefire, citing a 1995 ceasefire that the LTTE broke.

2. Military Actions

The Times of India reported fresh casualties as the Sri Lankan Army renewed its offensive in Jaffna, with 76 reported dead within hours of the LTTE's announced ceasefire.

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