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Nuclear Issues

1. Russian Proliferation Issues

US State Department spokesman Phillip Reeker related that the US regretted Russia's decision to ship nuclear fuel to India's Tarapur power plants. The US accused Russia of violating nonproliferation agreements and accused India of following a nuclear weapons program. An Indian Foreign Office spokesman stated that the imports were covered under the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards. However, IAEA policies do not permit the export of nuclear materials to India because India does not have all its nuclear sites under the IAEA regime.

Pakistan Foreign Ministry spokesman Mohammed Riaz Khan expressed Pakistan's concern regarding the shipment and expressed hope that the US would pursue the issue further.

2. India Nuclear Sites

The Dawn reported on senior US intelligence sources, which had stated that while India's six nuclear sites were under military control, materials from three of the sites could not be transported because of fear of militant attacks.

India

1. India-US Relations

A panel commissioned by the US-based Asia Society described India as a rising power. The panel asked the US government to revise its policy in recognition of the fact that Indian cooperation is needed to meet US goals of regional stability and nonproliferation. The report stated that the US must play a more active role in reducing India-Pakistan tensions. It also stated that while the US must maintain good relations throughout South Asia, it must recognize India's power predominance over the region's smaller states.

Chairman of the US Senate committee for South Asia, Sam Brownback, said at the Brookings Institution that the US should end all post-Pokhran nuclear test sanctions against India in order to draw closer to face the "common threat from China."

India's External Affairs ministry largely ignored recent statements by US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who recently described India as threatening people in the US, Europe and West Asia. The Times of India reported that his comments were primarily aimed at Russia.

2. International Fleet Review

The navies of 19 foreign countries are providing warships to participate in India's annual International Fleet Review, though Pakistan and the PRC will not be participating.

India used the opportunity of the fleet review to call for joint action by Asian naval powers to combat piracy, weapons trade, and drug trafficking in the region's sea-lanes. The Times of India stated that India resists conducting cooperative patrols with either Pakistan or the PRC. Indian former Foreign Secretary J.N. Dixit warned against cooperative patrols when the participating countries may have conflicting interests.

3. India-Russian Relations

India signed a deal worth US\$650 million to US\$750 million for the purchase and manufacture of 310 Russian T-90 main battle tanks. Russian Deputy Prime Minister Ilya Klebanov said Russia would soon sign a deal to deliver the Admiral Gorshkov aircraft carrier. Klebanov also discussed with Indian Defense Minister George Fernandes the lease of four T-22 bombers.

India and Russia signed an aviation agreement that includes provisions for harmonizing their flight operations and for the joint research and development of civilian aircraft that will ultimately produce 16- and 100-seater airplanes.

4. Pakistani Aircraft

Two Pakistani aircraft crossed the Line of Control, were engaged by Indian ground forces, and forced to return. Indian Army headquarters reported that one of the planes may have been hit and a search was conducted to see if the plane had crashed in Indian territory.

The Dawn reported that such an incident between two nuclear powers would have triggered alarms elsewhere, but in South Asia there is no such urgency. A Pakistani analyst was quoted as saying that there are a couple of intrusions by aircraft of both countries every month.

5. Ceasefire Extension

The Cabinet Committee on National Security, chaired by Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee, made the decision on February 22 to extend the ceasefire for three months. The meeting had been postponed by several days in an attempt to achieve consensus.

Vajpayee had denied that he was in favor of extending the ceasefire, stating that the decision would be made by the CCNS collectively. However, Vajpayee said that the ceasefire "cannot go hand in hand" with ongoing militancy in Jammu and Kashmir. It is expected that the government will decide to extend the ceasefire further.

6. Ceasefire Statements

Syed Salahuddin, chairman of the Muttahida Jihad Council and commander of the Hizbul Mujahideen, stated that India was deploying additional troops, with Air Force cover, to the Rajouri and Poonch areas. He said this was in response to militants in the hills above these areas, and that Indian soldiers have not been observing the ceasefire.

The Dawn reported that Indian Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee was critical of Pakistan for not doing all it could to support the ceasefire. Indian President K.R. Narayanan was similarly critical of Pakistan. However, the article also cited statements by All-Parties Hurriyat Conference leaders that the ceasefire was in place in name only. The Hizbul Mujahideen has also reportedly threatened to target the families of Indian Army soldiers in retaliation for the deaths of civilians.

The Deccan Herald reported that while the BJP is against an extension of the ceasefire, other opposition parties, such as the Lokshakti and Samajwadi, were in favor of extending the ceasefire.

7. Ceasefire Commentary

An editorial in the Times of India stated that recent acts of violence are creating pressure against further extension of the ceasefire in the media and among security services. The editorial argues that three months is not sufficient a time span to gather the Kashmiri population against terrorism and states that international pressure on Pakistan to contain militancy is growing.

Ashwani Talwar writes in the Times of India that the biggest current threats to Indian Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee's peace initiative are the street protests in response to excessive force by police forces.

An editorial in the Times of India argues that the ceasefire is in danger of losing direction, especially after security forces fired into a protest. The editorial further argues that the ceasefire is but the first step in a peace process, and that the Indian government must begin to make permanent plans to move forward.

Siddharth Varadarajan writes in the Times of India that the CCNS meeting to determine the fate of the ceasefire has been postponed, and that institutional battle lines have been drawn with the Prime Minister's Office, the Research and Analysis Wing, and the Army leadership in favor of an extension and the Home Ministry and intelligence agencies in favor of ending the ceasefire.

8. India-PRC Relations

Bhartendu Kumar Singh discusses for the Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies in New Delhi the India-PRC relationship, specifically within the context of India's quest for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. Singh argues that the PRC is interested in dominating India in South Asia and remaining as the greatest representative of the third world, both of which India could challenge if given the opportunity.

Pakistan

1. Defense Budget

The cabinet of Pakistan Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf's government decided, following the suggestion of the Debt Reduction and Management Committee, that Pakistan would hold its defense budget at a constant level for the next year. Pakistan is attempting to keep up its debt repayment schedule for the US\$35 billion foreign debt it holds.

2. Military Hardware

The Pakistan Navy will test fire the medium-range anti-ship SM-39 Exocet missile next month, possibly from its Agosta 90-B submarine. A senior Pakistan Navy official said this test was to correct the "strategic balance" in the region.

When Pakistan Air Force Chief Mushaf Ali Mir visits the PRC soon, it is expected that the two countries will sign an agreement to jointly produce the Super 7 FC-1 fighter jet.

3. Pakistani Militants

Pakistan shut down four Kashmiri militant groups, for collecting funds in the name of jihad, as part of an overall policy of cracking down on militant groups in Pakistan. A Pakistani official stated that the four groups had not been asked to close their offices in order to curtail their activities, but for

administrative reasons.

Kashmir

1. Militant Groups

The All-Parties Hurriyat Conference attempted to constrain the debate over Kashmir by informing former APHC chairman Syed Ali Shah Gilani that the Kashmir issue is a political and not religious one. The Times of India stated that this position was pro-peace but would anger pro-Pakistani militants. Senior APHC leader Yaseen Malik also stated that their purpose in intending to visit Pakistan was to convert the unilateral ceasefire into a multilateral one. Malik also expressed confidence at convincing hard-line militant groups to accept the ceasefire.

Senior APHC leader Syed Ali Shah Gilani termed India's unilateral ceasefire a "mirage." Gilani said the ceasefire was "a cover to continue innocent killing in Jammu and Kashmir." The Lashkar-e-Taiba was also critical of the ceasefire, calling the periodic extensions a fraud.

2. Ceasefire Statements

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah stated that he had reservations about the ceasefire, expressing concern over continuing violence, but also stated that he favored its extension.

3. Recent Violence

Indian soldiers fired upon people mourning at the burial of a young man who had died in police custody the previous day. Seven of the demonstrators were killed in this shooting, and 26 injured, sparking further protests, violence, and a strike by the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference.

The Indian Army admitted two days later that its troops had opened fire, and opened fire. The Hizbul Mujahideen threatened to target the families of Indian troops in retaliation for the civilians recently killed by Indian security forces north of Srinagar.

Sri Lanka

1. Defense Financing

Pakistan has offered Sri Lanka a US\$20 million loan for the purchase of military hardware. Sri Lanka was able to halt the advances of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) though the induction of new military equipment.

Taliban

1. UN Office Closure

Following a US decision to close the Taliban's office in New York, the Taliban ordered the UN Special Mission in Afghanistan (UNSMA) to close its office in Kabul, but did not mention the other UNSMA offices in Afghanistan. The US condemned this move as shortsighted.

2. Osama Bin Laden

The Dawn quoted a high-level official in the Taliban as stating that the Taliban was ready to send Osama Bin Laden to Saudi Arabia to face terrorism charges. The Dawn later reported that Taliban supreme leader Mulla Mohammad Omar had denied offering to hand Osama Bin Laden for trial.

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