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Nuclear Issues

1. Related News and Analysis

US nuclear regulators have resumed cooperation with India over nuclear safety issues. Eight nuclear power plants are under construction across India. The Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) also plans to build two more nuclear power plants at Chashma and Karachi.

["US, India resume nuclear cooperation"](#)

V.R. Raghavan (Telegraph, India) writes that "giving the Pakistani military the opportunity to indulge in nuclear threats only helps its [Pakistan's] conflict agendas." Mushahid Hussain (Nation, Pakistan) believes that international concern about Pakistan's nuclear weapons are "politically motivated to maintain pressure on Pakistan." Michael Krepon (Daily Times) argues that "the doctrine of "massive" retaliation may look good on paper but signalling a holocaust just invites one." Akmal Hussain (Daily Times) suggests that the logic of nuclear deterrence does not work in South Asia.

["Nuclear doublespeak"](#)

Kamal Narang (Hindu) reviews a new collection of essays titled Prisoners of the Nuclear Dream, and edited by M.V. Ramana and C. Rammanohar Reddy.

Afghanistan

1. Current News

Reports indicate continued factional fighting and attacks on US forces in Afghanistan. In a meeting with President Karzai, the US military defended its recent bombing campaign as "self-defence". The US military has indicated that it would keep the same number of troops in Afghanistan even if war broke out in Iraq. Some aid organizations have stopped their work in parts of southern Afghanistan due to security concerns. According to a UN report, "it will take [Afghanistan] at least a decade to achieve basic capacity for natural disaster management."

The US has designated Pakhtoon warlord Gulbadeen Hekmatyar as a "global terrorist", linking him to Osama bin Laden and the deposed Taliban. The Daily Times reports that Iran has quietly ordered the family of Gulbaddin Hekmatyar to leave the country. A.B.S. Jafri (Dawn, Pakistan) writes that Hekmatyar "is the same opportunist Afghan whom the United States virtually worshipped because he was their man in the fight against the 'Evil Empire'". The Daily Times notes that "the entry of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and his militia into the post-Taliban war in Afghanistan" has initiated a new phase of trouble that will complicate matters for Pakistan as the so-called "frontline" state."

["US designates Hekmatyar as a terrorist"](#)

["Yesterday's friends, today's foes"](#)

2. Analysis

John Cherian's essay (Frontline, India) notes that "Afghanistan has made little progress in terms of economic development and law and order, with little of the promised aid materialising and warlords continuing to control much of the country."

India-Pakistan Tensions

1. News

Speaking at the 13th summit conference of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) President Musharraf asked the NAM countries to support the struggle of "the oppressed people of Kashmir and Palestine." Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee, also present at the NAM summit, characterized Musharraf's remarks as a "mask" for his "territorial designs" on India. The daily Indian Express believes that "Musharraf's magnificent Kashmir obsession is one reason why Indo-Pak ties are going nowhere." Meanwhile, India and Pakistan have drastically reduced the number of visas they issue to each other's nationals.

["Pakistan, India slash visas"](#)

2. Analysis

Imtiaz Alam (News, Pakistan) urges the Pakistani government to completely stop cross border infiltration and take a series of unilateral measures as a part of a "peace offensive." M.B. Naqvi (News) also argues that Pakistan should "adopt a positive and proactive policy of normality and engagement." Kuldip Nayar (Indian Express) suggests that "it suits the governments in New Delhi and Islamabad to sustain bilateral estrangement."

Pakistan

1. Domestic Situation - News

The Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid-i-Azam (PML-QA) has emerged as the single largest party in Pakistan's Senate elections. The daily Dawn reports that 15 new members will be added to the federal cabinet in near future. Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA) has stated that it will continue its opposition to the controversial Legal Framework Order (LFO).

["Federal cabinet expansion soon"](#)

["MMA won't change stand on LFO"](#)

Terrorists killed nine Shia Muslims in front of a mosque in Karachi. The Daily Times writes that the government has failed to curb religious terrorism in the country. Army was reportedly called in the northern town of Gilgit - the hometown of seven of the nine murdered men - to prevent further violence.

["Nine shot dead in Karachi"](#)

Pakistan Air Force chief Air Chief Marshal Mushaf Ali Mir, his wife and 16 others were killed when their plane crashed in the northern part of Pakistan. There have been rumors that the plane crash might have resulted from the testing of a new aircraft jamming technology by US forces in the region.

["PAF chief killed in air crash"](#)

The Daily Times believes that the lack of large demonstrations against possible US attack on Iraq indicates that "Pakistan's internal disorder is at such a high point even today that any disciplined demonstration of collective protest remains out of the question." Hussain Haqqani (Indian Express), however, suggests that "masses in the Muslim world consider protest futile." Frahan Bokhari (News)

writes that "the quiet of today at best can only be construed as the eerie silence ahead of the storm as the Iraq debate heats up across some of Pakistan's poorest homes." The Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA) has announced plans to stage two countrywide "million marches" on March 2 and 9 to show its solidarity with the Iraqi people. According to an unconfirmed report, the Pakistani Federal Cabinet is seeking to introduce laws to empower the government to jail any political and religious leader for five years if he gives a call for strike in the country.

["Why the Muslim Street is quiet"](#)

Aijazz Ahmed's (Asia Times) two-part essay examines religious parties and politics in Pakistan.

["Pakistan's wonderlands with little wonder"](#)

["In Pakistan, sermons and signals"](#)

India

1. India: Domestic Situation

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP)-sponsored Dharam Sansad (a congregation of sadhus and sants) has announced plans for a nation-wide agitation in support of the construction of a Ram temple at Ayodhya where the 16th century Babri Masjid was destroyed by Hindu fundamentalists about ten years ago. Purinmas Tripathi (Frontline) writes that with another round of elections, "the Sangh Parivar queers the pitch on Ayodhya yet again." Prime Minister Vajpayee recently stated that "we want to build the Ram Temple at Ayodhya. We are confident that it will be proved by historical evidence that there existed a temple." The Supreme Court has agreed to hear the dispute in March. Essays by Rajeev Dhavan (Hindu) and Manoj Mitta (Indian Express) examine the legal battles and issues around Ayodhya.

["Dharam Sansad plans agitation for Ram temple"](#)

["We are for temple, says PM "](#)

["SC fixes March 6 for hearing on Ayodhya"](#)

["Auctioning Ayodhya"](#)

Amid much controversy, A portrait of Veer Savarkar - an ideologue of the right wing Hindu Mahasabha and sometimes accused of complicity in the murder of Mahatma Gandhi - was installed in Indian Parliament's Central Hall.

["BJP crows as Savarkar moves into House"](#)

Harsh Mander (Hindustan Times) writes about continuing episodes of anti-minority violence in Gujarat. Rohit Bhan (Indian Express) reports that there are still no clear answers as to who set fire to the train that killed 59 people and led to the killing of thousands of Muslims in Gujarat.

["No answers, only questions"](#)

K.K. Katyal (Hindu) believes that "the Opposition is in for the long haul if it is to pose an effective challenge to the ruling coalition, both in regard to the agenda and the tactical approach." Senior political leaders, social activists and some NGOs have formed the People's Integration Council, a citizens' body that aims at fighting the divisive elements in the country.

["Strategy for change"](#)

The daily News (Pakistan) reported that Lockheed Martin has offered India F-16 fighter jets to replace its fleet of Soviet-built MiG-21.

2. Foreign Relations

The Daily Times reported that Israel has asked India to invest \$100 million in the development of Arrow II weapon system. Rahul Bedi (Frontline) details India's military relationship with Israel, the second largest arms supplier to India.

Kashmir

1. News

Six months after coming into existence, the Kashmir Committee (KC) headed by former Union Law Minister Ram Jethmalani has suspended its agenda of talks with separatists in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). According to the convener of the KC, the committee was "only helping the government, which unfortunately continued to undermine our efforts." The Daily Times believes that the KC failed "because the very premise on which India's efforts to address Kashmir are based is faulty." More people were killed in violence in J&K. According to state figures, 3,744 people, many of them teenagers, are unaccounted for in J&K. The Special Operation Group (SOG), which earned notoriety on account of extortions and other atrocities in the Valley, has been disbanded.

["Eight killed in Valley"](#)

["Seven killed in Valley"](#)

Muzamil Jaleel (Indian Express) writes that the current state government "is not averse to initiating a dialogue with separatists but such a measure will not fit in the BJP's politics."

2. Analysis

Sudha Ramachandran (Asia Times) writes that if a Kashmiri "is cynical today, it is because he feels betrayed by not just India or Pakistan or the US, but by his own leaders." Moonis Ahmar (News) argues that "instead of state and security centric approach, the two sides [India and Pakistan] need to pursue a policy which takes into account the interests of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

["The tragedy of changed perceptions"](#)

Regional News

1. Sri Lanka

Frances Bulathasinghala's essay (Himal, Nepal) looks at how the 14-month ceasefire has changed the lives of Tamils in the north and east Sri Lanka. Neerja Chowdhury (Indian Express) notes that "there is cautious optimism in the region as people seem committed to a political solution."

["The uphill road to peace"](#)

2. Nepal

The leaders of Nepal's Maoist rebels have accused the government of dragging its feet on the peace process and warned that the guerrillas still had "political will" despite a month-old ceasefire. Suman Pradhan (Asia Times) writes that "Nepalis are become impatient and want to see the initial peace and stability that the truce brought become a lasting, permanent one." Essays by Pushar Gautam (Himal, Nepal) and Rita Manchanda (Frontline, India) offer background information and detailed analysis of the issues involved in the current peace process in Nepal.

["Impatience rising after Nepal truce"](#)

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