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CONTENTS
January 18, 2002
Volume 3, #3

Nuclear Issues

1. News and Analysis

Afghanistan War and Implications

1. Afghanistan: Current Situation
2. Afghanistan: Reconstruction
3. Humanitarian Crisis
4. Pakistan
5. Regional Developments
6. General Assessments

India-Pakistan Tensions

1. News
2. Analysis

Pakistan

1. Pakistan: Domestic Situation
2. US-Pakistan Relations

India

1. India: Domestic Situation
2. US-India Relations

Kashmir

1. Internal Situation
2. India and Pakistan

Nuclear Issues

1. News and Analysis
India's Defense Minister George Fernandes has reiterated that his country is committed to the doctrine of 'no first use' of nuclear weapons.
"Uncalled for concerns: Fernandes"

Afghanistan War and Implications

1. Afghanistan: Current Situation
Media reports indicate poor law and order situation in Kabul and other areas. Two World Food Program (WFP) trucks carrying emergency food supplies in northern Afghanistan were robbed at gunpoint. Drug traffickers moving heroin from Afghanistan to Europe via Pakistan reportedly possess sophisticated weapons including surface to air missiles. The interim Afghan government has set a deadline for the handover of illegal weapons in Kandahar.

According to Mullah Naqibullah, a veteran Afghan guerrilla leader, Mullah Omar was offered amnesty in return for a peaceful surrender. Naqibullah maintains that Hamid Karzai, the leader of Afghanistan's interim government, directed the deal.

The Zhawar camps in Khost, Afghanistan, recently came under heavy bombing by US warplanes. These camps were built with US assistance during the war against the Soviet Union. The US Marines have reportedly established a checkpoint in Spin Boldak area and have launched a de-weaponization campaign in neighboring villages.
"US forces begin clean-up drive in Spin Boldak"

2. Afghanistan: Reconstruction
According to a UN official, only $3 million of the promised $17 million for the Start Up Fund has been received so far. The fund was established following last month's Bonn meeting. Ahmed Fawzi, a spokesman for U.N. Afghanistan envoy Lakhdar Brahimi, has appealed to the international community to "stop talking and start delivering help."

3. Humanitarian Crisis
Despite appeals by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), Pakistan has refused to change its policy of not allowing any more new Afghan refugees into the country. There are approximately 13,000 Afghans stranded on Pakistan-Afghan border near Chaman, Pakistan. Of these 13,000 Afghans, the Pakistan government has allowed about 600 "vulnerable" Afghans to cross into Pakistan. UNHCR has also moved over 100,000 Afghan refugees living in squatter settlements to refugee camps. Over 35,000 Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan returned home in the last two weeks. Cold weather is causing greater hardships for refugees.
"35,000 refugees return home"

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson has asked the US authorities to respect the human rights of Afghan prisoners. Her appeal followed the transfer of prisoners from Afghanistan to the US military base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. In its "2002 World Report" Human

Rights Watch (HRW) warns that the 'war against terrorism' is undercutting efforts to build broad support for human rights.

4. Pakistan
According to a report in the daily News, Pakistan, the bombing of Zhawar town and its surrounding areas in eastern Afghanistan has forced Pakistanis living close to the border to leave their homes. 58 Pakistani Taliban are reportedly been held at a remote prison in upper Panjshir valley in northern Afghanistan.
"58 Pakistani Taliban held in Hindu Kush prison"

5. Regional Developments
John Gershman's essay in the Asia Times, and a report in the daily News, Pakistan, examines the US military's involvement in the Philippines.

6. General Assessments
Indian writer and scholar Achen Vanaik writes that "what is extraordinary (about the 'war on terrorism') is not that the U.S. should seek to selectively define who the terrorists are, and what terrorism is... But that this has met with so little resistance." He goes on to outlines the basic features of what he calls the "Pax Americana."
"Building a world empire - I"
"Building a world empire - II"

India-Pakistan Tensions

1. News
US Secretary of State Colin Powell has asked Pakistan and India to start a dialogue to resolve outstanding issues. He, however, added that it is up to India to make the decision. Colin Powell is visiting South Asia in an attempt to diffuse border tensions between India and Pakistan. The Pakistan government has indicated that it might hand over non-Pakistani criminals and terrorists in the list of 20 whose extradition India has demanded. The Indian government has reportedly supplied additional evidence against the 20 alleged terrorists that it wants extradited from Pakistan. Reports indicate that the situation on the India-Pakistan border is becoming less tense.
"US asks India to hold talks on all issues"

The Indian government welcomed Pakistan's decision to suppress militant Islamic groups involved in violent activities in Kashmir. External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh has suggested that India would consider direct talks with Pakistan only after the Pakistan government has taken conrete actions against militant Islamic groups. Earlier in the week, Pakistani and Indian officials exchanged threats. Pakistan reportedly moved some of its short-range missiles closer to its border with India.
"Match words with action, India tells Pak."
"Navy is always ready"
"We are prepared: Army chief"

A report in the daily News, Pakistan, describes the effects of troop mobilization by India and Pakistan on the population living near the India-Pakistan border.

2. Analysis
In a wide-ranging interview with Tehelk.com, an Indian internet magazine, historian Mushirul Hasan expressed his belief that Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf is genuinely trying to "reverse the fundamentalist agenda."

Writing for the daily Dawn, Pakistan, M.H.Askari suggests that India's 'wait and see' reaction to President Pervez Musharraf's crackdown on Islamic militants is prompted by the compulsions of India's domestic politics.
"This game of wait-and-see?"

Pakistan

1. Pakistan: Domestic Situation
In a speech televised live both in India and Pakistan, President Pervez Musharraf announced a wide-ranging crack down on five militant Islamic groups. Political parties in Pakistan had mixed response to the President's speech. The Pakistan police has shut down the offices and arrested the leaders of the five banned groups. Over 1,900 members of militant religious groups have been arrested so far.
"Lashkar, Jaish, TJP, TNSM & SSP banned; ST under watch"

According to a report in the daily News, Pakistan, supporters of the five banned militant groups have moved underground.

A government building in Islamabad, Pakistan, that housed offices of several federal ministries, including the Home Ministry, was completely destroyed in a fire. There have been speculations that the fire might have destroyed, among other government papers, records on extremist religious groups kept by the Home Ministry. According to Syed Saleem Shahzad of the Asia Times, the fire "sends a very strong message of just what the reform process in Pakistan can expect."
"Confidential record of militant groups not destroyed in fire"

Uwe Parpart, editor of the Asia Times, believes that Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf "wants to transform Pakistan into a modern secular and prosperous state."

Writing for the Far Eastern Economic Review, journalist and author Ahmad Rashid reports on President Musharraf's crack down on militant Islamic groups.

Muzaffar Iqbal, a freelance journalist, argues that reforming religious schools is not enough; rather the whole education system of Pakistan needs to be reformed. In his essay for the daily Dawn, Pakistan, Shahid Javed Burki suggests various steps to improve education in Pakistan.
"Saving education sector"

The Pakistan government has announced basic changes in the country's electoral system.
"Next polls on basis of joint electorate"

2. US-Pakistan Relations
The US military is reportedly trying to reduce its presence at air bases in Pakistan.

India

1. India: Domestic Situation
According to Power Minister Suresh Prabhu, the power sector in India has "reached a do or die situation and it needs to be rapidly and systematically restructured to make it commercially viable."

2. US-India Relations

The US and India have signed an agreement under which the two countries would protect technology secrets in any weapons deal between them.
"US, India move to resume arms transfers"

Kashmir

1. Internal Situation
Newspaper reports on violence in Kashmir.
"16 killed in Kashmir violence"
"Two Dutch among 14 killed in Valley"

All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) has accused Indian military of violating the human rights of Kashmiris.

2. India and Pakistan
Essays in various newspapers and magazines argue that Pakistan's crack down on the militants it has supported in the fight for Kashmir would not solve the Kashmir Problem. Rather, the Indian government will now have to take political steps to find a peaceful solution to the Kashmir issue.
"Shaping peace in Kashmir, unilaterally"
"Kashmir beyond terrorism"
"Ensure free and fair polls in J&K"

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Nautilus Institute
608 San Miguel Ave., Berkeley, CA 94707-1535 | Phone: (510) 423-0372 | Email: nautilus@nautilus.org