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Nuclear Issues

1. News & Analysis

An Indian official confirmed the leakage of radiation at the power station at Kalpakkam Reprocessing Plant (KARP). B. Bhattacharjee, director of the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), told the newspaper Outlook (India): "This is the worst accident in radiation exposure in the history of nuclear India." The Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB), however, denied any link between the radiation leakage and the reported high incidence of polydactyly (a condition in which children are born with extra fingers or toes). An opinion piece by NM Sampath Kumar (South Asia Tribune, US) states that a "team of unbiased nuclear experts under IAEA must get the mandate to inspect, cap, and roll back the nuclear program."

In response to the KARP crisis, the Daily Times (Pakistan) observes that "the bombs in South Asia are a phantom weapon for the masses whose consequences are kept a secret from them." In an opinion piece in the same paper, M.V. Ramana examines the growth of the military-industrial complexes in India and Pakistan in the context Russia and the US' legacy of the Cold War. "The sooner they are stopped," Ramana writes, "the better."

India-Pakistan Relations

1. News

Pakistan announced its willingness to resume suspended air links. US Secretary of State Colin Powell expressed optimism in the two countries' commitment to dialogue. A two and a half year-old Pakistani girl suffering from a heart ailment, and who (along with her family) had been waiting for bus service to resume, successfully received the surgery she was waiting for, and became a symbol of hope and peace between the two countries. A young Pakistani boy accidentally wandered into the Indian side of the border and has been detained by the Indian Border Security Force.
"No `healing touch' for this Pak. boy?"

2. Analysis

Chief of the hardline Pakistani political group Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (and leader of the opposition Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal), Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman, surprised domestic and foreign critics with a visit to India, where he actively met with Indian political and religious leaders. Fazal-ur-Rehman was quoted as saying "Kashmiris won't get our guns forever." Sultan Shahin writes in the Asia Times (Hong Kong) that Fazal-ur-Rehman "shocked the country, not by his fundamentalist rhetoric - that would have been expected - but by a peace blitzkrieg."
"India sits up and listens"

Jasjit Singh (Indian Express, India) discusses the security risks involved with proposed overland gas pipelines through Pakistan.

Afghanistan

1. News

More people died in various attacks as security situation in Afghanistan remains poor. A spokesman for Afghanistan's deputy defense minister, Abdul Rashid Dostum, has called for an overhaul of the state army, and added that existing force is deeply politicized. Meanwhile, the heads of the main military factions controlling northern Afghanistan met with the government in Kabul for talks aimed at improving regional security.

2. Afghan-Pakistani Border Tensions

Afghan President Hamid Karzai asked Pakistan to "avoid acts of aggression against Afghanistan" and stop "attacks across the border by extremists..." According to Afghan state media, Karzai has invited Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf to visit Kabul. Pakistan has frequently accused India of disrupting its ties with Afghanistan through its diplomatic missions in Afghan cities. Author Ahmed Rashid, however, holds Pakistan responsible for failing to develop good relations with Afghanistan. Meanwhile, the US has reportedly decided to immediately release three fixed-wing aircraft to Pakistan for security operations on the Pak-Afghan border.

Pakistan

1. Domestic News

Balochistan police seized a large cache of heavy arms and ammunition in Quetta. Mohammad Shehzad (OneWorld South Asia, UK) tracks the continued growth of the "jihad industry" in Pakistan. Shamim-ur-Rahman (Dawn, Pakistan) discusses the "strange marriage of convenience" between extreme religious elements and the military - trading political expediency and appearance of authority for tolerating fundamentalist forces. Another piece by Mohammad Shehzad examines a recently enacted law to widen the scope of contempt laws, which "only furthers the impression that Pakistan's army-judiciary nexus is going full tilt to gag all opposition."
"Military, mullah and mohajir"

2. Analysis

A Daily Times' (Pakistan) editorial criticizes the Pakistani government for following a policy that not only "served to create the problem of rightwing religious militancy but continues to hamper any attempts by the government to address it even in the changed geopolitical configuration." Husain Haqqani (Indian Express, India) claims that "one reason Pakistan is in such a mess today is that in the pursuit of an illusory international status, Pakistan's government has neglected domestic and regional affairs." Aasim Sajjad Akhtar (Himal Nepal) argues that "the real problem facing South Asia is not our supposedly obsolete and warped perception of the world, but rather neo-colonialism." Ramtanu Maitra (Asia Times, Hong Kong) believes that it is no longer a question of "if", but "when" Pakistan will recognize Israel.
"The time's ripe for Pakistan and Israel"

3. Military

The Pakistani military will reportedly begin using unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) in the coming months. China hosted a second round of defense talks with Pakistan.

India

1. Domestic News

In regards to the aftermath of the communal violence (and its residue) in Gujarat, Harsh Mander writes in the Times of India that complacency has transformed the lack of justice into a "counterfeit peace." Dionne Bunsha (Frontline, India) investigates the surprising trend of police, and now, witnesses, vindicating accused criminals in the Best Bakery murder case.

Praveen Togadia, a leader of the militant Vishwa Hindu Parishad, is reportedly planning to distribute tridents (or "trishuls") throughout the state of Karnataka. The Central Bureau of Investigation dropped charges of criminal conspiracy in Ayodhya's Babri Mosque demolition case against BJP leaders and senior members. Writing in the daily Hindu (India), Imtiaz Ahmad questions the role of leaders of the Muslim community in untangling the Ayodhya dispute.
"Muslims and the democratic process"

A World Bank Report warned of India's unstable economic situation.

2. US-India Relations

India refused to send troops to support US efforts in Iraq. V.R. Krishna Iyer (The Hindu, India) applaudes India's decision and writes that sending Indian troops to Iraq "would have amounted to abetting the arrogant invasion of a sovereign country..."
"India rules out its troops for Iraq "
"Not our war"

The US proposed advancing the annual Defence Policy Group (DPG) meeting ahead to early August. Sultan Shahin (Asia Times, Hong Kong) chronicles the "leaked" Pentagon report that highlights India's willingness to support US military endeavors. The daily Hindu (India) quotes a Chinese news source to suggest that the Pentagon is planning an Asian version of NATO, with India as the main player, as a counter balance to China and Russia.
"India: The games the Pentagon plays"

3. Military

India plans to purchase six Scorpion submarines from France and is considering the purchase of eight P-3 Orion surveillance aircraft to aid its maritime reconnaissance fleet. Stephen Blank (Asia Times, Hong Kong) examines the consequences of Israel replacing Russia as India's largest arms supplier. J.C. Malik (Indian Express, India) considers the competition among global aircraft firms for the Indian market.
"Indian defense policy in major transition"

Jammu & Kashmir (J&K)

1. News

Many people were killed in continued violence in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). Chief Commander of the Hizbul Mujahideen (HM), Syed Salahuddin, was quoted in Hindustan Times (India) as saying that if the international community "does not take steps to rescue us from India's state terrorism and

there is no let-up in killing of children, molestation of women, looting and arson of properties, the Hizbul Mujahideen will be compelled to shortly launch fidayeen [suicide] attacks at large scale."

The all Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) elected Moulvi Abbas Ansari as a its new chairman to replace Prof. Abdul Gani Bhat. Syed Ali Shah Geelani, head of the Jamaat-e-Islami, abstained from participation. The Indian Government's interlocutor on Kashmir, N.N. Vohra, is scheduled to visit Ladakh in early August in an effort to explore methods of restoring peace in J&K. Muzamil Jaleel (Indian Express, India) reports on a village where the local Muslim community helped the Hindus in building of a temple.

2. Analysis

The implications of Moulvi Abbas Ansari's election as the chairman of APHC was the subject of numerous articles. David Devadas (Gulf News, United Arab Emirates) traces the legacy that Ansari must consider in his new position. Mufti Islah (Indian Express, India) discusses Ansari's handling of Geelani's opposition and general debasement of the APHC, while Sudha Ramachandran (Asia Times, Hong Kong) considers the implications of electing a Shi'ite cleric, for the first time in the APHC's ten-year history.
"Kashmir: A Shi'ite voice in the wilderness"

Khalid Hasan (Daily Times, Pakistan) gives a rundown of the Kashmir Conference, held in Washington, DC and its disappointing outcome. Essays by Ashok Malik and Muzamil Jaleel (Indian Express) examine the implications of the Omar Abdullah choice to break the National Conference's long-standing alliance with the ruling National Democratic Alliance. An editorial in the same paper states that the "Hurriyat needs to make itself more relevant to the politics and people of J&K."

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