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Nuclear Issues

1. Related News and Analysis

Eighty-six countries with missile and space launchers capabilities, including Pakistan and India, have agreed to continue deliberations aimed at developing an international instrument to govern the ballistic missile proliferation.

Afghanistan

1. Current Situation
At least one US service member and two Afghan soldiers were killed in a battle with fighters reportedly belonging to the Taliban and al- Qaeda in the eastern Paktia province of Afghanistan. Unknown attackers fired two rockets towards the coalition base in Kandahar. Local Afghan leaders have criticized the Afghan interim government's plans to develop a national army. In another development, Afghan warlord Gulbadin Hekmatyar has reportedly left Iran for Afghanistan.

During his visit to Iran, the interim leader of Afghanistan Hamid Karzai stated that he would like the region to become a "focus of beauty, friendship and cooperation." An essay in Asia Times examines the difficulties Hamid Karzai faces as he tries to develop friendly relations with Pakistan, India and Iran.
"Karzai seeks close relations with Iran"
"Karzai negotiates diplomatic minefield"

2. Humanitarian Crisis

With growing signs of instability in Afghanistan, the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) has called for international troops to be deployed in northern Afghanistan to protect minorities. According to a report in Asia Times, the misery of Afghan refugees transferred from the infamous Jallozai camp to new sites is "far from over." UNHCR has also voiced its concern over the deportation of some 750 Afghans from Dubai back to Afghanistan.
"Conflict over, but many refugees still 'lost'"

Atlanta based Center for Disease Control and Prevention has reported that 4 out of every 10 women living in 12 Afghan settlements in Pakistan died of maternal causes. According to a report in the daily Frontier Post, villagers in remotes Afghan villages expect little relief from the on-going drought.

3. General Assessments

Writing for the al-Ahram weekly, Iffat Malik reports that "Afghanistan is slowly but surely descending into chaos."

India-Pakistan Tensions

1. News

Pakistani and Indian armies continue to be fully deployed on the border.

2. Analysis

An essay in the daily Hindu criticizes Prime Minister Vajpayee for "locking" himself "in a posture of incremental militarism by ratcheting up his rhetoric." An article in Frontline, an Indian magazine, believes that "India and Pakistan are rapidly moving towards the deployment of nuclear weapons - with potentially disastrous consequences." Eijaz Ahmad's essay in the same magazine argues that the Indian government's "perception of war as an option" is based on a misreading of current global strategic situation.

Pakistan

1. Pakistan: Domestic Situation

There has been another round of reshuffling at the top level of the Pakistan army.

Ten Shia Muslims were killed when a Shiite mosque was attacked. Two recently outlawed sectarian Sunni groups - Lashkar-i-Jhangvi and Sipah- i-Sahaba of Pakistan - are believed to be responsible for the attack. Nadeem Iqbal's essay in the Asia Times argues that religious extremist in Pakistan are far from being eliminated. Daily News, Pakistan, reports that the government is unlikely to appeal a court ruling that blocked induction of armed forces officers into the Anti- Terrorism Courts.
"Pakistan lacks legal clout to curb violence"

Pakistani columnist M.B. Naqvi believes that President Musharraf's political restructuring are designed to keep him in power beyond October 2002 general elections.

UN Drug Control Programme official Thomas Zeiend has stated that Pakistan has one of the highest opiate addition rates in the world. Pakistani health authorities have placed more than 100 people under quarantine on the suspicion of carrying the highly contagious Congo virus.
"Pakistan has one of the highest opiate addiction rates: UN"
"Congo fever spreads its deadly reach in Pakistan"

Pakistani court has recorded the confessional statement of another person accused in the US journalist Daniel Pearl's abduction and murder case. Meanwhile, it is not clear if Sheikh Omar - the alleged mastermind behind Pearl's murder - will be extradited to the US or not.
"Another accused records statement: Daniel Pearl case"
"Omar to be tried first in Pakistan, says official"

2. US - Pakistan Relations

The US has handed over to Pakistan a draft memorandum of understanding to formalize and extend cooperation between the two countries to curb international terrorism and terrorist networks.

India

1. India: Domestic Situation

Fifty-seven people were killed and many injured when a train carrying Hindu pilgrims returning from Ayodhya was attacked and set on fire in Gujarat. About 400 Muslims have so far been killed in the ensuing communal violence in the state of Gujarat and elsewhere. Ayodhya is the site of the sixteenth century Babri mosque that was destroyed by Hindu militants in December 1992. Militant Hindu parties have since been trying to construct a Ram temple in Ayodhya. The violence has created a political crisis in the country. The Gujarat government is being blamed for not doing enough to prevent the riots. Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), the main force behind the drive to build a temple has so far given mixed signals whether or not it would help in diffusing the crisis. The killings of both Hindu pilgrims and innocent Muslims have been strongly condemned by media in India and Pakistan.

A report in the daily Hindustan Times examines recently announced Indian national budget. The Indian Supreme Court has stayed the implementation of the controversial National Curriculum Framework for Secondary Education. In his column for the daily Hindu, Kuldip Nayar writes that in the name of development, the government is pushing native tribal population of India out from the "land they have lived on for generations."

A two-part essay by scholars working at the Center for International Development, Harvard University, explores the links between geography and regional growth in India.

Kashmir

1. Internal Situation

The delay in handing over of bodies of two Hizbul Mujahideen militants evoked large-scale public protests in various towns of Baramulla district of Kashmir. The Election Commission, following allegations by the BJP and Congress that the ruling National Conference has rigged the polls, has put results of the Jammu-Poonch Lok Sabha seat, elections that were held on February 21 on hold. Praveen Swami's essay in Frontline, and Indian magazine, offers an analysis of the current situation in Kashmir.

2. India and Pakistan

A two-part essay by C. Rasmmanohar Reddy for the daily Hindu, India, suggest that while it is not clear if President Musharraf's government will be curb and control Pakistani jihadi groups involved in Kashmir, Pakistani people, however, are generally "Kashmir weary and keen on peace with India."

Regional News

1. Sri Lanka

There have reportedly been some disagreements between Sri Lankan president Chandrika Kumaratunga and her Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe over the recently signed truce between Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Sri Lankan government.

Writing for the daily Hindu, Jayadeva Uyangoda argues that with a "non- cooperative parliamentary Opposition, no ruling party can handle the ethnic conflict" in Sri Lanka Sudha Ramachandran's essay in Asia Times explores future prospects of the success of the on going peace process.

"Sri Lanka: One step at a time"

2. Nepal

Rita Manchanda's essay in Frontline examines the current political situation in Nepal and argues that "an extension of the Emergency and an exclusively militarist option, without an accompanying political or developmental strategy, can only strengthen the Maoist challenge."

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