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Nuclear Issues

1. Related News and Analysis

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Mian Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri has stated that Pakistan has no intention of signing the CTBT (comprehensive test ban treaty). T.S. Subramanian (Frontline) reports on the first sea-based launch of India's supersonic cruise missile that carries only conventional warheads. Amitabh Pal (Daily Times) finds that Indians and Pakistanis have an "unconcerned attitude .. regarding the probability of a nuclear holocaust on the subcontinent." Manpreet Sethi (Indian Express) believes that "India must forcefully highlight the nuisance value of North Korean nuclear brinkmanship."
"Pakistan not to sign CTBT, NA told"

Afghanistan

1. Current News

The US military has reportedly expanded its search of fugitive Taliban leaders. Herve Bar (Daily Times) writes that the "shadow of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar [recently designated by the US as a "global terrorist"] is omnipresent on the plains of the eastern Afghan province in Kunar and its capital Asadabad." According to the daily News, the Taliban have claimed responsibility for a series of recent attacks across Afghanistan. The Daily Times reports the emergence of renegade warlord Padsha Khan from "an apparent hibernation." According to US military spokesman Colonel Roger King, loud noises from muzzle-loading muskets used by Afghans to hunt ducks has been confusing the US military.

Pakistan, Afghanistan and the UNHCR are set to sign an agreement for annual voluntary repatriation of 600,000 Afghan refugees from Pakistan.

Campaign Against Al-Qaeda

1. Arrest of Khalid Muhammad

Balochistan Home Minister Sanaullah Zehri has claimed that two sons of Osama bin Laden have been arrested in southeastern Afghanistan. Pakistani, as well as the US, government officials have disputed the statement. Pakistan has handed Khalid Muhammad Shaikh over to the US. Khalid Sheikh Muhammad is the biggest catch in the global hunt for Al Qaeda suspects. The daily Dawn reports that documents, CDs and a computer recovered after Muhammad's arrest indicate that Osama bin Laden may be alive. The Daily Times reports that the FBI and Pakistani law-enforcement agencies raided and took some documents from a medical NGO in Pakistan. Ansar Abbasi (News) writes that Pakistan has violated its own laws in handing 440 alleged al-Qaeda members to US.
"Khalid's arrest; Osama alive?"

Syed Saleem Shahzad (Daily Times) takes note of previous claims of Khalid Muhammad's arrest or death and writes that "no one has the final word on whether Khalid is dead, was captured earlier, or is still free." B. Raman (Asia Times) feels that Muhammad's case is "getting more and more complex and mystifying."
"Khalid: A test for US credibility"
"Khalid capture: Truths and half truths"

Two old reports from September 2002 provide some background to the arrest of Khalid Muhammad.
"A chilling inheritance of terror"
Ahmed Quddus, a Pakistani captured along with Muhammad, has been placed in Pakistani police custody. Quddus is the son of a local leader of the Jamaat-e-Islami women wing. Jamaat-e-Islami has denied any links with arrested suspected terrorists. The Daily Times reports that the FBI has tightened its vigilance around leaders of the religious parties, including the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) members of National and Provincial Assemblies. The daily News reports the detention by the Pakistani authorities of Adil Quddus, a Major in the Pakistan army and supposedly a relative of Ahmed Quddus.
"Quddus given in police custody"

2. Other News

Iran has denied reports that it gave shelter to four of Osama bin Laden's wives and more than 12 of his children. US have dropped more leaflets along the southern Afghan-Pakistani border offering rewards for the capture of Osama bin Laden's deputy Ayman al-Zawahri.

India-Pakistan Tensions

1. News and Opinions

US Secretary of State Colin Powell has stated that his country "will continue to do everything [it] can to get a dialogue started" between India and Pakistan. Mushahid Hussain (Nation, Pakistan) believes that Pakistan should abandon its "tit for tat approach" to India and "reach out to those segments of Indian civil society and the political forces who oppose the BJP's bigotry."

Pakistan

1. Domestic News

The National Assembly session was adjourned till Monday (March 10) due to the combined opposition in the House over the inclusion of the Legal Framework Order (LFO) in the 1973 Constitution. Shakil Shaikh (News) believes that the government and the opposition parliamentary parties are heading towards a protracted deadlock over the LFO. Imtiaz Alam (News) notes that the "legitimacy of the Parliament in public eyes and from the standpoint of fairness of the electoral process remains doubtful."

There was a large anti Iraq war rally in Pakistan's largest city of Karachi. The Muttahida Majlis---Amal (MMA), an alliance of six religious parties, organized the rally. Kamal Matinuddin (News) examines why 'ummah' (Islamic community) has "remained mute" in the face of an impending war on Iraq.

The indigenously produced Hatf-IV (Shaheen-I) medium-range ballistic missile has been formally handed over to Pakistan army's Strategic Force Command.
"Hatf-IV handed over to army"

2. US - Pakistan Relations

Pakistan has reportedly conveyed its concern to the US government about the likely sale of US-made Arrow missiles by Israel to India. Farhan Bokhari (News) believes that a war on Iraq will "pose a considerable challenge for General Musharraf's future."

India

1. Domestic Situation

The Congress Party has ousted the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Himachal Pradesh, a predominantly Hindu State. The daily Hindu writes that the Congress' victory in the state elections shows that voters have rejected the "communal and sectarian" politics of the BJP. BJP leaders have vowed to "avenge" their defeat in "Delhi, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh" when these states go to polls later this year.'' Wasbir Hussain (Hindu) writes that election results in the states of Tripura, Nagaland and Meghalaya "could well be turbulent."
"Cong. wrests Himachal, Left retains Tripura"
"Gains for the congress"
"The Northeast after the polls"

A local High Court has ordered the Archaeological Survey of India to undertake excavation at the disputed site in Ayodhya to ascertain whether a temple existed at the place where the Babri Masjid once stood. The daily Hindu writes that "the BJP is once again turning to its core Hindutva issues for its political goals." Anil Nauriya (Hindu) is sharply critical of the placement of a portrait of V.D. Sarvarkar - a person "clearly implicated in the Gandhi murder case" - in the Central Hall of Parliament. A.G. Noorani's essay (Hindustan Times) provides a brief outline of Sarvarkar's political views. Dionne Bunsha (Frontline) reports on the condition of victims of anti-Muslim violence in Gujarat that took place a year ago.
"ASI ordered to take up excavation at disputed site"
"Stirring a poisonous brew"
"Portrait as mirror"

A.G. Noorani (Frontline) reviews 'The Charisma of Direct Action: Power, Politics and the Shiv Sena' by Julia M. Eckert.

India has announced its new budget. The daily Hindu called the budget "a pragmatic one, which combines a modest fiscal package for more rapid growth with sector-specific concessions and incentives." A report submitted to the Indian Supreme court indicates that various food-related poverty alleviation schemes have performed poorly.
"Singh presents growth-seeking budget"
"A cautious budget"

Kuldip Nayar's essay (Hindu) raises concern about the "high incidence of extra-judicial killings."
"Preventing killings"

Kashmir

1. Domestic News

The governing People's Democratic Party (PDP) has retained the Pampore seat in the by-election to the Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) Assembly. Sudha Ramachandran's essay (Asia Times) describes how people of J&K have learned to cope with long years of unrest and violence. Bharat Bhushan (Telegraph, India) writes that it "is remarkable .. that at a time when anti-Pakistan sentiment seems to be finding easy acceptance in India, Pakistanis have the courage to speak up for building good relations with their most important neighbour."
"PDP retains Pampore"
"The unsung heroes"
"Voices break Kashmir barrier"

Regional News

1. Sri Lanka

V.S. Sambandan (Frontline) examines the issue of about 150,000 stateless Tamils of Indian origin in Sri Lanka. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Tamil Tiger rebels have reached an agreement on an 'action plan' to restore normalcy in the lives of Sri Lankan children of the North-East region affected by the prolonged armed conflict.

2. Nepal

The daily News reports that both the government and the Maoist rebels are waiting for the release of prisoners before starting negotiations. Nepalese Prime Minister Lokendra Bahadur Chand has stated that he does want to exclude political parties from the peace process.

3. Philippines

Philippines Defense chief Angelo Reyes has stated that he has been reassured that US troops in the Philippines would not participate in combat. The Abu Sayyaf claimed responsibility for the bombing in Davao City that killed 21 people and injured 134 others. The Philippine government rejected the claim and indicated that Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) could be behind the blast. The Manila Times published the draft of the peace agreement with the MILF, as proposed by the Philippine government. Marco Garrido (Asia Times) gives a brief history of the Muslim insurgencies in the country.
"The evolution of Philippine Muslim insurgency"

Phar Kim Beng (Asia Times) writes that the airport bombing in Davao City has "resurrected the fear of Islamic militancy in Southeast Asia."
"Why thugs can hijack 'jihad'"

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