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Nuclear Issues

1. Pakistan Nuclear Policy

Pakistan Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf said the country's nuclear program could not be rolled back. He said, "I am not a traitor and so there could not be any compromise on the nuclear program."

Pakistan Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar said Pakistan would not be the first to resume testing and was in favor of a no-first-use policy for nuclear weapons.

The Hindu reported that the Urdu-language Jang reported that Pakistan Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar outlined Pakistan's "three-point nuclear doctrine" to the Japanese government during his trip to Japan. The Jang reported that the three aspects were: a moratorium on further testing, keeping the nuclear program at a "middle level," and a ban on the export of nuclear weapons or technology.

2. Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

Pakistan Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf said that he would begin holding meetings next month to begin developing a consensus for signing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Government sources said Musharraf had assured the Debt Reduction and Management Committee that Pakistan would sign the CTBT and therefore become eligible for international assistance.

India

1. Defense Ministry Scandal

The website Tehelka.com released a report alleging corruption in defense deals within the Indian government. K. Subrahmanyam writes in the Times of India that the nature of defense procurements is inherently open to corruption, but reform is resisted by politicians. India's Ministry of Defense and the Army began investigations into alleged corruption with the intent to finish the investigations within a week.

The National Democratic Alliance supported Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee and Defense Minister George Fernandes by rejecting calls for their resignation. However, Fernandes resigned as Indian Minister of Defense on March 15, citing a desire to publicly explain the allegations of bribery. The Dawn reported that Fernandes was forced to resign under the threat of defections from the National Democratic Alliance coalition. The Indian government was threatened as Fernandes and other ministers of the government resigned their posts and the Trinamool Congress, led by Mamata Banerjee, withdrew its support from the NDA coalition. The resignations were accepted by Indian President K.R. Narayanan.

Indian President K.R. Narayanan named External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh to fill the portfolio of Defense Minister, in addition to the portfolio of External Affairs. Singh began as Defense Minister by meeting with the heads of the three Indian military services. George Fernandes supported the appointment of Singh as Defense Minister.

2. India-Pakistan Dialogue

Indian External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh rejected the call for a resumption of talks between India and Pakistan, made by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. Singh said, "We continue to believe and hold that for the dialogue to be successful, a conducive atmosphere for it must be prepared first."

An editorial in The Dawn argued that Indian Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee was being deceptive when made stated that talks on Kashmir would soon occur, because without naming the participants or an agenda, planning can not even begin for talks.

3. India-US Relations

C. Raja Mohan writes in The Hindu that the administration of US President George Bush will bring to the US-India dialogue different assumptions than the Clinton administration on nuclear weapons. Mohan argues that the Bush administration will pursue arms reductions with Russia and rejects the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty as flawed, though its overall policy will be colored by its pursuit of missile defense. Mohan further argues that India could possibly support US calls for missile defense under the condition that these defenses be accompanied by less threatening nuclear postures, deep cuts in nuclear arsenals, extensive consultations among nuclear powers to maintain strategic stability, and the creation of a more effective international regime to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Pakistan

1. Military Hardware

Pakistan Major General Syed Ali Hamid stated that Pakistan's nuclear weapons capabilities demonstrates that Pakistan has the technological capabilities that enable it to sell other weapons systems. However, he said, "Strategic systems such as missiles are not a product that's on sale." Hamid made these statements on the occasion of the launching of a arms fair in Abu Dhabi.

Pakistan Air Chief Marshall Mushaf Ali Mir said that the Pakistan Air Force will acquire F-7 PG aircraft from the PRC as an interim solution to Pakistan's need for advanced fighters.

2. Pakistan-India Dialogue

Pakistan Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf stated that India and Pakistan were close to a solution on Kashmir, and that India would soon come to the negotiating table. He said, "We are nearing a solution as the SAARC has been made effective again." However, he also reiterated that Pakistan had taken steps towards initiating dialogue, including earthquake relief and troop reductions along the Line of Control, but that the "ball is in India's court."

3. Militant Groups

Officials of Pakistan's Interior Ministry agreed to leave alone militant groups operating in Kashmir if they show discretion in raising funds and recruiting. The Times of India stated that this was a retreat from Pakistan's attempt to crackdown on militant group fundraising. This move is reportedly made in response to threats from militant groups that they would escalate sectarian violence already rife in Pakistan.

4. Military Government

Major-General Rashid Qureshi announced that the Pakistani government would open state-run radio and television outlets to opposition politicians to express their views. Nisar Khuhro, a provincial head of the Pakistan People's Party, said, "It is good news but what kind of coverage would the opposition get when there is not freedom of speech allowed on the streets."

Kashmir

1. Kofi Annan Visit

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, having arrived in India from Pakistan, said that during his talks with Pakistani President Rafiq Tarar and Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf that "it was obvious they wanted to prepare the UN to be a third party to assist" in resolving the issue. Kofi Annan stated that he told Pakistan that while the UN was willing, it could not play a role unless India consented. Annan urged both countries to restart talks. He said, "It is the right time for India and Pakistan to resume dialogue."

While in Pakistan, Kofi Annan had stated that the 1948 UN resolution, calling for a self-determination referendum in Kashmir, could not be imposed on either India or Pakistan, which Indian External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh described as an endorsement of India's position on Kashmir.

2. Commentary on the UN Role

An editorial in *The Dawn* by M.P. Bhandara argued the Indian government is aware that if Pakistan stops militants from entering Kashmir it could lead to an open conflict between the militants and the Pakistan army. Bhandara stated that the liberation war becomes less defensible as it becomes more a non-Kashmiri war, and international opinion has turned against the activities of the militants. Bhandara argued in favor of bringing the dispute back to the UN Security Council in order to re-internationalize the issue.

Sonia Jabbar, in an essay in *The Hindu*, argued that the next step for peace in Kashmir is demilitarization. Jabbar called for reducing the number of people with weapons in Kashmir in order to facilitate a return to normal life.

An editorial in the *Times of India* argued that while many in India welcomed Kofi Annan's statement that the 1948 UN resolution should not be implemented, the statement revealed an ignorance in the UN and the media about the Kashmir issue. The editorial argued that Pakistan's claim on Kashmir should have ended with Pakistan's division in 1971, a claim based on Pakistan as the homeland of all Indian Muslims.

Sri Lanka

1. Peace Process

Sri Lankan Constitutional Affairs Minister G.L. Peiris stated that the government would not be limited in talks by the draft Constitution that was rejected by the Parliament in August. The *Times of India* stated that Peiris was responding to criticism by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam of text in the draft concerning the devolution of power, and was meant to facilitate talks with the LTTE.

Afghanistan

1. Afghanistan-Pakistan Relations

Commander of the Taliban forces, Qari Muhaddam Ismael, was reported by the Pakistan military as having told the Pakistan army that it must vacate two posts along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. Ismael warned of consequences should the posts not be abandoned.

"In border row with Pak, Taliban talk tough"

2. Military Hardware

Pakistan's Central Investigation Department announced that two men had been arrested and 56 short-range missiles seized near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. The missiles have a range of 10-12 km and do not require a launcher.

"56 missiles seized on border with Afghanistan"

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