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CONTENTS
May 03, 2002
Volume 3, #16

Nuclear Issues

1. Related News and Analysis

Afghanistan

1. Current Situation

India-Pakistan Tensions

1. News
2. Analysis

Pakistan

1. Pakistan: Domestic Situation

India

1. India: Domestic Situation

Kashmir

1. Internal Situation

Regional News

1. Sri Lanka
2. Nepal
3. Philippines
4. Central Asia

5. Region - General

Nuclear Issues

1. Related News and Analysis

The Indian cabinet has approved placing the country's nuclear arsenal under the new Strategic Nuclear Command. Pakistan has expressed concern over the recent testing of Brahmos missile by India. Six persons were killed when fire broke out at the High Energy Materials Research Laboratory in Pune, India.
"Brahmos test-fired"
"6 killed in DRDO lab fire"

In his essay for the Daily News, M V Ramana argues that "joint action on the part of the international community" needed for strengthening the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty "may not be forthcoming."

P. S. Suryanarayana's essay in the daily Hindu argues that the "Bush administration is consciously extending the theory of war to cover every peacetime move of America's potential and actual enemies."
"America's nuclear hit-list"

Afghanistan

1. Current Situation

At least 115 people were killed or injured in factional violence in the eastern Paktia province. Former Afghan King Zahir Shah is reportedly trying to diffuse the situation in the province. There have also been reports of skirmishes between troops allied to warlord Muhammad Atta and Abdul Rashid Dostum in the district of Shogarah. Franklin Hagenbeck, the US General commanding ground forces in Afghanistan, has warned the warlords not to threaten Karzai's government. The Daily Times published a wide-ranging interview with Afghan Deputy Defense Minister Abdul Rashid Dostum.
"Zahir's bid to end Paktia bloodshed"

Rockets or mortars were reportedly fired at an airfield in the eastern city of Khost. Meanwhile, the British and US troops have launched a large operation against suspected hideouts of al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters in eastern Afghanistan. According to a US military spokesman, Australian Special Forces, backed by US troops, killed four al-Qaeda fighters near the Afghan-Pakistan border. Tribal elders of North Waziristan Agency along Pakistan-Afghan border have demanded the immediate removal of all American troops from the area. There have been reports of attempted missile attacks in the area.
"US troops on move near border"
"Missile attack at college building"

According to a report in the Daily Times officials of the US FBI Financial Wing are in Pakistan in an

attempt to trace al-Qaeda's financial channels.

India-Pakistan Tensions

1. News

President Pervez Musharraf has ruled out the possibility of any unilateral withdrawal of troops in the standoff with India. According to Minister for Finance Shaukat Aziz, the troop deployment is causing an overrun in Pakistan's defense spending. Indian troops and air force have begun a scheduled military exercise near the Pakistan border.
"Indian army begins exercise near border"

2. Analysis

Indian columnist K.K. Katyal believes that de-escalation along India-Pakistan border "does not seem to be on the cards." Writing for the daily Hindu, Raja Mohan argues that unless the Indian government develops strategic alternatives in its stand off with Pakistan, "the military situation on the border is likely to end up in a humiliating political defeat."
"Indo-Pak. de-escalation: a tall order"
"Between war and surrender"

Pakistan

1. Pakistan: Domestic Situation

According to official results, President Pervez Musharraf has won the referendum that allows for his continuation as president for the next five years. Reports in newspapers and by Pakistan's Human Rights Commission have alleged large-scale irregularities in the conduct of the referendum. Meanwhile, President Musharraf has declared that, like the referendum, the age limit of voters for the October elections will be reduced from 21 to 18 years. The Daily Times reports that the government may disqualify large number of political leaders from contesting the October general elections.
"Voters' age-limit reduced to 18"

Commentators writing in the Pakistani press have been highly critical of the referendum.
"The emperor's new clothes"

A strike call by the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) to protest the killing of two of its leaders led to large-scale disturbances and violence in Karachi. The government has called out army and paramilitary forces to control the situation.
"Army called out to maintain law and order"

The often-delayed hearing of the Daniel Pearl murder case has been shifted from Karachi to Hyderabad due to security concerns.
"Hearing of Pearl case put off"
"Hearing of Pearl case fixed for tomorrow"

Khalid Ahmed of the Daily Times reviews news and analysis appearing in Pakistan's Urdu press.

The International Monetary Fund and World Bank have suggested cutting defense spending to 3.3% of GDP by the year 2003-04.

India

1. India: Domestic Situation

A motion sponsored by the opposition parties to censure Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's government over its handling of violence in Gujarat failed to win in the Lower House of the Parliament. The vote on the motion in the Upper House of the Parliament is scheduled for the next week. The Indian government has accepted the opposition's demand that the central government should intervene in Gujarat as the political turmoil caused by the riots continues. There have been reports of continuing sporadic communal violence in Gujarat and some of the riot victims are reportedly moving out of the state. A recent Human Rights Watch report has accused Gujarat government officials and police of "extensive participation" in the riots.
"Centre agrees to intervene in Gujarat"
"Violence spreads to Saurashtra"
"Riot victims leaving Gujarat?"
"A massive cover-up"

Writing in the daily Hindu, Rajeev Dhavan states that "Gujarat is Indian democracy's toughest test. So far, we have failed."
"Beyond Parliament"

Peter Piot, chief of UNAIDS, has stated that in a few years India will have the largest number of people in the world infected with HIV/AIDS.

The Indian army plans to raise another artillery division.

Chinmaya R. Gharekhan's essay in the daily Hindu argues that India needs to be "pragmatic, calculating, almost cynical" in the conduct of its foreign policy.
"Living with the new world order"

Kashmir

1. Internal Situation

Political unrest and violence has continued in Jammu and Kashmir. Mirwaiz Omar Farooq, a senior leader of the All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) has stated that his group is willing to discuss many different proposals with the Indian government. APHC has rejected talks with the ruling National Conference and the Congress, calling these parties 'pro India." Saleem Hashmi, spokesman for the militant Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, believes that armed struggle and peace talks could go side by side.
"12 fighters killed in Valley"
"10 killed in Valley"
"15 gunned down in Valley"

"APHC has 30 proposals to resolve Kashmir issue"

Regional News

1. Sri Lanka

The Sri Lankan navy suspects that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) may be trying to smuggle weapons into the country. P. Sahadevan's essay in the daily Deccan Herald states that "it is difficult to believe that the LTTE will become easily amenable to any reasonable compromise peace deal." V. Suryanarayan article in Frontline, an Indian magazine, attempts to assess LTTE's commitment to the peace process. Ram Manikkalingam's article posits three seniors that can emerge from the ceasefire agreement - war, peace and no war-no peace. He argues that, of the three, the peace scenario the "least plausible."

2. Nepal

Nepali political parties have called upon Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba to start negotiations with the Maoist rebels as the violent fight between the Maoist rebels and the Filipino security forces continues.
"Deuba's house torched"

3. Philippines

Writing for the Frontline magazine, Walden Bello argues that "the US-aided hunt for Abu Sayyaf is merely an excuse that enables the U.S. to establish and expand a military presence in the region."

4. Central Asia

Two articles by Ahmed Rashid in the Far Eastern Economic Review examine the current political situation in Central Asia republics.

5. Region - General

The daily Hindu published an interview with the US National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice that focuses on South Asia.
"There can be no cause that is served by terror"

Imtiaz Alam's essay in the daily Hindu argues that "the rise of militant trends in every Muslim society has its own context" that needs to be "understood and evaluated."
"Is Islam really jehadi?"

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