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Nuclear Issues

1. Related News and Analysis

P.T. Padmanabhan's essay examines issues and concerns related to the proposals by three state governments of India to lease the mining rights for monazite-ilmenite to private parties and urges a "through debate on all aspects with regard to the release of radioactive elements, storage and safety of wastes, and impact on the environment."

According to a former Indian ambassador to the US Naresh Chandra, the US "virtually pleaded" with Pakistan to not conduct its 1998 nuclear tests.

M.V. Ramana (Daily Times, Pakistan) argues that "given the likelihood of false alarms, India and Pakistan should not go in for enormously complex, expensive and ultimately failure prone early warning systems; they should not deploy their nuclear weapons on missiles that can be launched at short notice." Shaukat Qadir, a retired Pakistan army brigadier, argues that "once we accept that neither of the two countries wants a nuclear exchange, the real concern is a nuclear war through accidental or unauthorised use, or because of misperceptions."

Afghanistan

1. Current News

Pakistani newspapers reported fighting between Afghan warlords as well as attempted attacks on US bases in the country. The US forces are reportedly using specially trained dogs to track perpetrators of rocket and bomb attacks on or near US bases. President Hamid Karzai's governments has sacked more than a dozen senior Afghan officials belonging to "unruly factions" within the Karzai government. Some humanitarian organizations working in northern Afghanistan have warned that they would stop distributing aid among Afghan people if the security of their workers is not assured.
"12 Afghan officials sacked"

Human Rights Watch's recent report "All Our Hopes Are Crushed: Violence and Repression in Western Afghanistan" documents widespread abuses by the military, police and intelligence services under the command of Ismail Khan, the governor of Herat.

The daily Frontier Post (Pakistan) reports that the US led war on terror may have "inadvertently" helped restore narcotics production to the level that preceded the Taliban's ban on poppy cultivation in 2000. The UN's Special Representative for Afghanistan Lakhdar Brahimi believes that it will "take the best part of a decade before opium production is eradicated."

Campaign Against Al-Qaeda

1. News and Analysis

According to Indonesia's police chief the self-confessed al Qaeda operative who implicated militant Indonesian leader Abu Bakar Bashir in a series of church bombings is a Pakistani national. Two Pakistanis and an Indian-born American, who used Hong Kong as a venue to negotiate the purchase of four Stinger missiles for al Qaeda, were arrested following a sting operation by FBI agents. According to a Financial Times' (London) report, quoted in the Pakistani press, Iranian security forces have detained at least one of Osama Bin Laden's sons along with several hundred people suspected of having links to the Al Qaeda organization.
"3 held in HK for buying missiles for Al Qaeda"

Syed Saleem Shahzad (Asia Times) suggests that "bin Laden's jihad against the US has to a large extent been hijacked by local Muslim groups, who are now the ones perpetuating the waves of terror." Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad believes that Osama bin Ladin "may have succeeded beyond his dreams."
"Al-Qaeda's new warriors"

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is reportedly seeking to install the Transaction Tracking Server (TTS) at various Pakistani airports.

A spokesman for Philippines President Gloria Arroyo has stated that al-Qaeda does not have any permanent cells in the country. India's deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani has accused Bangladesh of sheltering al-Qaeda operatives.
"Advani in terror cry at Dhaka"

India-Pakistan Tensions

1. News

According to an Indian defense spokesman, Indian troops, after being withdrawn from the border with Pakistan, have started to return to their barracks. According to the US State Department spokesman Richard Boucher, the incursion of Pakistan based militants into Kashmir has "went back somewhat but not to the level that they had been prior to the commitments made by the Pakistani government." India's Army chief General Sundarajan Padmanabhan has stated that incursions of militants into Kashmir has dropped by fifty percent from its 2001 level.
"Incursions have increased: US"

Jyoti Malhotra (Indian Express) criticizes the Indian government for not confirming its participation in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit scheduled to be held in Pakistan from Jan 11-13. The daily News (Pakistan) reports that India has demanded that Pakistan should grant India the Most Favored Nation (MFN) status in exchange for Prime Minister Vajpayee's visit to Pakistan to attend the SAARC summit.
"SAARC dates in Pak: All say yes, India holds out"

2. Analysis

Michael Krepon's essay in the Daily Times (Pakistan) suggests that in the absence of a dialogue between India and Pakistan, the "situation in South Asia remains ripe for misjudgments in the event of another flashpoint." C. Raja Mohan (Hindu) believes that "merely parroting the mantra that there

will be no talks until cross-border terrorism ends will put India increasingly on the diplomatic defensive."
"Reviving Indo-Pak. talks"

A.G. Noorani reviews General Raghavan's book "Siachen: Conflict Without End" for the Frontline magazine.

Pakistan

1. October Elections

The Election Commission of Pakistan has announced the results of the contest for the 60 reserved seats for women in the National Assembly (NA). Pakistan Muslim League (Q) with 118 members has the most seats in the NA. However, the NA session initially called for on November 8th has been postponed as intense political negotiations between various parties continues without any clear sign of what combination of parties will form the civilian government. The holding of Senate elections has also been postponed. The daily News writes that the delay in the opening session of the NA "amount to obstructing the return of democracy and civilian rule."
"National Assembly party position"
"NA session put off by a week: No new date fixed"

Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman, chosen by the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) as the possible next prime minister, has stated that the Pakistani people do not want US forces in the country. Ansar Abbasi reports on his interview with Qazi Hussain Ahmed, the Amir of Jamaat-e-Islami and the central leader of the MMA. Rahimullah Yusufzai's article in the daily News describes the emerging MMA government in Pakistan's North West Frontier Province where the MMA enjoys an outright majority.

Khurram Dastgir Khan's two-part essay in the daily News examines the relationship between religion and the state in Pakistan and argues that "the jihad culture has acquired a financial and spiritual momentum that will be difficult for any future Pakistani government to curtail."

2. Other News

The arrest of Dr. Amir Aziz on charges of suspected links to al-Qaeda has resulted in number of protest demonstrations in Pakistan. The Daily Times reports that the US authorities want to have the sole custody of the suspect.

Pakistani authorities have reportedly placed Hafiz Mohammed Saeed, the detained former leader of Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, under house arrest for three more months.

F. S. Aijazuddin reports on the annual gathering of over a million and a half members of the Tablighi Jamaat, a non-militant organization dedicated to seeking new converts and spreading Islam.
"The experience at Raiwind"

The International Monetary Fund wants Pakistan to continue its economic reforms while suggesting "further sustained improvements in governance and the delivery of social services."
"IMF wants new govt to retain reforms pace: Cut in defence budget sought"

India

1. India: Domestic Situation

In a confrontational interview (in two parts) with Tavleen Singh (Indian Express) Pravin Togadia, general secretary of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) expressed his opinions on communalism in India. Rajiv Shukla (Indian Express) writes that Pravin Togadia has "sacrificed every sense of decency and decorum just to stay in the headlines."
"If Godhra continues, then naturally people will react"
"You call us fundamentalists, we are actually reformists"
"Why Isn't Anyone Muzzling Togadia?"

Essays by Praful Bidwai (News, Pakistan), Sukumar Muralidharan (Frontline) and Kuldip Nayar (Dawn, Pakistan) examine the impact and implications of the growing tension between various Hindu political parties.
"The puppets and the puppeteers"

Anil Sharma (Asia Times) reports on India's efforts to increase armaments export. The daily Dawn reports that India and Israel have agreed to jointly market Indian-built advance light helicopters. Lietenunt General Nirmal Chand Vij is scheduled to take over as the Chief of the Army Staff on December 31, 2002.
"Indian drive to increase arms exports"
"Vij, next Army chief"

Two alleged members of the Pakistan-based militant Lashkar-e-Taiba were shot dead by personnel of the Special Cell of Delhi police in the underground parking lot of a shopping center in Delhi. An eyewitness to the shoot-out, however, has claimed that the "two men were unarmed and were shot dead by the police.''
"Lashkar militants shot dead in Delhi shopping mall"
"Protection sought for `encounter' witness"

The daily Indian Express reports that the "admission by the United States that in 1965 it released Aedes aegypti mosquitoes on a Pacific island as part of its biological warfare test programme has, according to scientists, vindicated the Indian Government's decision to close down a similar US-sponsored mosquito project .. in the early '70s."
"India's stand vindicated as US owns up bio war tests"

2. India - Foreign Relations

J.N. Dixit (Telegraph, India) writes that India's Minister for Foreign Affairs Yashwant Sinha "has initiated a process of reviving both multilateral and bilateral cooperation in south Asia."
"Yashwant Sinha"

Kashmir

1. Elections

A nine-member council of ministers headed by People's Democratic Party (PDP) chief Mufti Muhammad Sayeed was sworn in at a ceremony in Srinagar. The ceremony was preceded by violence, including a grenade attack on Mufti's residence. Chief Minister Mufti has asked the Indian

government to start a dialogue with Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) elected representatives and those who did not participate in the elections as well as the militants. The new J&K government has released two terrorists who have been in prison for over 10 years. Muzamil Jaleel reports on the uncertainty facing the members of J&K Police's Special Operations Group - known and feared for its brutality - after Chief Minister Mufti stated his intentions to scrap the 3,000-man outfit. Praveen Swami (Frontline, India) gives a brief background history of the new Chief Minister.
"Mufti wants dialogue with all J&K groups"
"After the fear in J&K, the loathing"

Balraj Puri (Frontline, India) argues that a "significant outcome of the Assembly elections is the emergence of the secular identity of Jammu." Navnita Chadha Behera (daily Hindu) writes that the poor performance of Hindu nationalist parties in J&K polls shows that "attempts to superimpose the communal divide are not only part of a divisive agenda but also bound to flounder. Kashmir has once again proved to be the Sangh Parivar's Waterloo."
"Kashmir: Sangh Parivar's Waterloo"

Muzamil Jaleel (Indian Express) notes the many promises made by the new J&K government and suggests that if Mufti "fails to begin converting these dreams into reality in the next six months, there will be no buyers left in Kashmir." Humra Quraishi (Indian Express) writes that "giving the people here back their dignity will have to be Mufti's first task."
"Will there be less of the boot in J&K?"

Three senior leaders of pro-independence Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) have left the party to form a new group.

Regional News

1. Sri Lanka

G H Peiris (Indian Express) examines the on-going peace talks between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Sri Lankan government and notes that the "ghosts of the past and the present are never too far away." V.S. Sambandan (Frontline) notes the "sense of elation" at the success of the second round of negotiations in Thailand between the two former antagonists.
"War, peace and worry"

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