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Nuclear Issues

1. Saudi-Pakistani Nuclear Agreement?

A few weeks ago, Arnaud de Borchgrave (United Press International) reported that Saudi Arabia and Pakistan had negotiated a secret nuclear agreement. While a number of South Asian newspapers carried the story, Pakistan continued to deny the accusation. This week, Borchgrave defends against the "predictable deluge of categorical denials from Islamabad" by pointing to a history of Pakistani leaders who "continued [Zia ul-Haq's] tradition of the big lie." Stephen Blank (Asia Times, Hong Kong) considers Pakistan's alleged nukes-for-oil deal with Saudi Arabia, which might consider pursuing secondary nuclear suppliers such as Russia and China.

["Saudi Arabia's nuclear gambit"](#)

2. Pakistan Nuclear Program

During a visit to South Korea, President Musharraf stated that Pakistan is "fully justified in developing our nuclear and missile capability because there was an external threat" though he denied all allegations of aiding North Korea's nuclear program. Pakistan requested the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to end deliberations on an agreement (the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material) that limits the growth of Pakistan's nuclear power generation. Pakistan's UN representative went on to say that "Pakistan has successfully established a strong safety culture in its nuclear activities." The Karachi Nuclear Power Plant (Kanupp) will become operational in January 2004, after several months of reconstruction, though the Pakistan Atomic Energy Agency already declared that the plant had outlived its design.

["Islamabad has strong nuke safety culture, UN told"](#)

["Kanupp to go operational from January"](#)

3. India Nuclear Program

India conducted the fifth test of its anti-ship supersonic cruise missile, BrahMos (range 280km), which was jointly developed by India and Russia. The Russian nuclear chief wants to lift restrictions on the flow of nuclear technologies to India, a sentiment echoed by an Indian representative in the UN General Assembly. An Indian living in the US was arrested for allegedly sending blueprints of specialized valves to a contractor working on a North Korean nuclear plant. India plans to double its nuclear power capacity by 2010, according to a director at the Kalpakkam plant in Tamil Nadu. Firdaus Ahmed (India Together) concludes "that security has not been enhanced by recent developments in the nuclearization of India, no matter what the security establishment would like us to believe."

["First BrahMos launch from a mobile complex"](#)

["Russia for lifting ban on nuclear deals with India"](#)

["Nuclear power capacity of 14 reactors to be enhanced"](#)

["Missing the security target"](#)

4. Related News & Analysis

In an interview in Arms Control Today (US), Mohammed ElBaradei, the IAEA Director-General, states that "rather than just trying to continue treating [India and Pakistan] as pariahs, we need to try and see how we can engage them as partners in an arms control process, maybe not necessarily under or within the framework of the [Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty] but within the framework of a larger arms control process." On the topic of deterrence, Tariq Rehman (Jang, Pakistan) concludes that "nuclear exchanges are not wars; they are the death warrants of humanity." M. Asghar Khan (Dawn, Pakistan) believes that Pakistan would be more secure without nuclear weapons, as it would have a more "manageable" threat to security since "India could not use its nuclear power against Pakistan and would have to rely on its conventional weapons alone."

Afghanistan

1. Afghan Constitution

Afghanistan's draft constitution (link to PDF below) awaits approval from the Loya Jirga, which is scheduled to convene in mid-December. An editorial in the daily Jang (Pakistan) worries that "if the warlords gain a larger than warranted presence in the Jirga, [then] their priority would obviously be to dilute the powers of the presidency and the central government." Amir Taheri (Arab News, Saudi Arabia) observes that the draft constitution misses the opportunity "to make a clean sweep of all the despotic and medieval measures" of the past "because those who composed [the draft] apparently underestimated the capacity of the Afghans to adopt modern ideas of political organization." The daily Hindu (India) opines that the new leaders of Afghanistan "cannot govern themselves so long as a multi-national coalition led by the US has a significant military presence in the country and the capacity to influence the decisions of the central government."

["Afghanistan's new constitution"](#)

A report from Action Aid surveys "what ordinary Afghans think" about the constitution and recommends that, among other reforms, "the strengthening of the Afghan National Army and police force with control over the whole country is seen as a prerequisite for a secure Afghanistan." Tanya Goudsouzian (Gulf News, United Arab Emirates) maintains that "the average Afghan on the street is no longer susceptible to grandiose promises of a brighter post-Taliban future."

2. News & Reports

Afghan authorities have lost control of at least seven districts in the troubled southeastern province of Zabul, where Taliban fighters claim to have killed nine Afghan soldiers. A situation update from the World Food Report details the security status of each province and the distribution of food relief (or lack thereof). A bomb went off outside a humanitarian NGO in Kabul, though there were no casualties. A Romanian soldier was killed by unknown gunmen.

In Asia Times, (Hong Kong) Sudha Ramachandran examines the fractured power distribution among the warlords. Ilene Prusher (Christian Science Monitor, US) details President Hamid Karzai's attempts to install new governors in five northern provinces, though Qayoum Babbak (Institute for War and Peace Reporting, UK) doubts that Karzai has the authority to neutralize and incorporate the various factions. Dawn reports that Karzai is still negotiating with the recently-released Wakil Ahmed Muttawakil, the Taliban's former foreign minister, to force Pakistan to pressure its former Taliban allies to join the Karzai administration. The Institute for War and Peace Reporting (UK) claims that the current government has expelled thousands of young women from school for being married.

["Afghan allies turn enemies"](#)

["Muttawakil's release to 'boost' Karzai"](#)

Japan offered US \$5.9 million to support land mine-clearing operations.

3. United Nations (UN) Involvement

A car bomb blew up outside the UN office in Kandahar, wounding one person and slightly damaging the building. No group or individual has claimed responsibility. A UN Security Council (UNSC) mission visited Afghanistan and reported that "the conditions necessary for a credible national political process are not yet in place - national reconciliation requires greater focus; political parties need time to develop; national institutions must undergo reform and the power of the factional leaders must be diminished" (a link to the UNSC progress report is below). Factional leaders reassured the envoy that they would support the Karzai government.

4. US Involvement

In an audiotape delivered to Jang (Pakistan), Yunis Khalis, leader of a faction of the Hezb-i Islami and former mujahideen leader, declared that "Muslims all over the world are required to fight the invading infidels and refrain from befriending or assisting them," referring to the presence of US forces. Shortly thereafter, Khalis went into hiding.

In a report for the Guardian (UK), Jonathan Steele asserts that US attempts to consolidate power in a central government are undermined by its own policy: "in victory, the Americans behaved as though they were in the warlords' debt, rather than the other way round." US forces began "Operation Mountain Resolve" in the eastern provinces bordering Pakistan. Bradley Graham (Washington Post, US) analyzes the cost disparity in US operations: with about 14.5 times as many troops in Iraq as in Afghanistan, the US spends \$4.4 billion dollar in Iraq and \$1 billion in Afghanistan.

India-Pakistan Tensions

1. News & Reports

The Pakistani Information Minister invited Indian Prime Minister (PM) Vajpayee to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit. A spokesperson for the Pakistani Foreign Office said that "we can't sit idly by as India presses ahead with an aggressive military build up that targets Pakistan...We must maintain our credible deterrent, a strategic balance." During a trip to South Korea, President Musharraf reiterated Pakistan's commitment to matching India's arms build-up.

2. Opinions & Analysis

In an opinion piece, Prem Shankar Jha (Hindustan Times, India) argues that civil society is "ahead" of the state in perceiving the threat of the subcontinent turning into "a seething cauldron of failed States and a giant breeding ground for international terrorism." In Frontline (India), B. Muralidhar Reddy posits that Pakistan's packaging of confidence-building measures (CBMs) juxtaposed with India's "step-by-step" approach alters the nature of the dispute. The Los Angeles Times (republished by the Daily Times, Pakistan) states that India's proposals are a "good starting point," but "hotlines and other communication methods should be mandatory when next-door adversaries possess nuclear weapons."

Ajai Sahni writes in the South Asia Intelligence Review that the current peace initiatives are "doomed to inevitable failure...because [the process] does not reflect the realities of the ground, or any radical shift in the fundamental positions." Sahni asserts that Pakistan will use this forum "to focus attention on what it calls the 'core issue' of Kashmir" which makes the negotiations "no more than a charade." Masud Akhtar Shaikh (Jang, Pakistan) calls the latest developments "a cleverly designed Indian ruse meant to throw dust into the eyes of the world in general and of Pakistan in particular so that India could carry on playing its dilatory game on Kashmir for another few years." Najam Sethi (Indian Express, India) faults the past decade of India-Pakistan "verbal gymnastics" for complicating the process: "What is stopping India from unilaterally restoring the rail, bus, air and diplomatic links it unilaterally cut off in 2001? What is stopping Pakistan from granting [Most-Favored Nation] status to India when India granted it to Pakistan many years ago? Is this time for rigid cost-benefit analysis or for generous give and take?"

The Indian Express (India) encourages both countries to repair sporting ties since all that people "seek is quality cricket and audiences with big enough hearts to embrace victory as well as defeat." Gautam Adhikari (Times of India) considers altering the perception -- particularly in the US -- of India and Pakistan as simply a "hyphenated" entity (Indo-Pak), though he notes that "thinking Indians are aware of the extreme danger of a Pakistan falling apart."

Pakistan

1. Law & Order

UPI published the letter that drew the ire of President Musharraf's regime and led to the arrest of Javed Hashmi, who faces sedition charges for trying to include the letter in the parliamentary record. Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz), which Hashmi leads, continued to protest his detainment. M.B. Naqvi (Jang, Pakistan) argues that whether or not Hashmi's arrest signals a new phase of restricting the press, the Musharraf regime must take responsibility for its undemocratic source of authority: "Either [the Army] should not take power, or get ready to suffer the slings and arrows from the opposition."

Imtiaz Alam (Jang, Pakistan) explains how the deadlock of the Legal Framework Order (LFO) has created an institutional crisis for various branches: "the prime minister has to be the chief executive, but he remains non-functional causing paralysis of...the executive branch." He continues that the PM has neither "any room to maneuver nor any control over his own party." In the same paper, Nasim Zehra makes the case that Musharraf is responsible for "bridging of the civil-military divide" by rising above "traditional and institutional ways of dealing with the political opposition."

2. Analysis & Opinions

The Pakistani Foreign Minister, Khurshid Mahmood Kasuri, expressed the need for stronger ties with the US since "certain active and important lobbies in America work against Pakistan." Seema Sirohi (Asia Times, Hong Kong), writes that on the issue of attaching conditions to US aid to Pakistan, Republican members of the US Congress "stonewalled" attempts to scrutinize the veracity of Pakistan's role in the War on Terror. US forces have deployed more troops in the province of Kunar. Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal leaders accused the US of trying to destabilize Pakistan.

["Pakistan squarely behind US shield"](#)

["US trying to destabilize Pakistan, Iran: MMA"](#)

Ishtiaq Ahmed (Daily Times, Pakistan) discusses Pakistan's denial of the right of return for nearly 250,000 Bihari Muslims in Bangladeshi refugee camps. These refugees are treated poorly on account of loyalty to Pakistan and refusal to accept Bangladeshi citizenship.

3. Pak-Afghan Border

The cabinet of the province of Baluchistan agreed to strengthen its intelligence network to more effectively crack down on terrorism. In Quetta (a city in Baluchistan), police seized a large cache of arms and drugs and detained 150 Afghans suspected of militant linkages. Authorities arrested two tribal elders who visited Afghanistan during military operations in South Waziristan Agency. "Those found hobnobbing with the Afghan authorities with a view to harm Pakistan's interest would be made accountable," said a police official. The Afghan Foreign Minister stated that the threat of terrorism "has to be eliminated with... the meaningful cooperation of Pakistan."

In a 3-part piece "The Forbidden Frontier," reporter Juliette Terzieff (San Francisco Chronicle, US) examines the Pak-Afghan border up close, sharing her experience with the militant outfit Jaish--Mohammed (JeM) and from inside a Taliban village.

["The Pashtun revere tribal honor -- and back it up with rifles"](#)

["Alliances, loyalties rule in Pakistan border area"](#)

["Pakistani tribesmen stay fundamentally faithful to Taliban"](#)

4. Sino-Pakistani Relations

Anil Joseph (Indian Express, India) reports that during Musharraf's visit to Beijing, China avoided taking sides on the Kashmir issue, marking a shift towards pragmatism in Chinese foreign policy. Writing an opinion piece in the daily Nation (Pakistan), Eas Bokhari highlights the "burgeoning" Sino-Pakistani military relationship by detailing major mutual transfers of weapons and technology. The Daily Times (Pakistan) considers the change in the Sino-Pakistani dynamic in light of the flow of illegal goods and people across borders, Pakistan's attitude to Uighurs (Chinese Muslims), and Chinese assistance for Pakistan's nuclear program.

5. Foreign Affairs

Pakistan alleges that MI-5, the British intelligence agency, tried to bug its London embassy, though

the British Home Secretary reportedly did not sanction the plan. Pakistan has requested an inquiry. The daily Jang (Pakistan) concludes that the alleged bugging reveals that "the screaming need is to reassess internal security" and "replace the culture of misplaced trust with the hawk-eyed vigilance needed to protect national secrets."

Ahmad Rashid Malik (Nation, Pakistan) details the various agreements inked during Musharraf's visit to South Korea, including an agreement to jointly pursue petroleum exploration and production. The Korea Herald (South Korea) noted that Musharraf seemed "more intent on strengthening economic cooperation with South Korea rather than discussing political or security issues."

["Pakistan, S. Korea sign gas, oil pact: Musharraf calls for joint collaboration"](#)

India

1. Communal Violence in Gujarat

Three persons were killed and 40 injured when a former municipal councilor allegedly opened fire on a mob after a local cricket match turned violent. Police imposed a curfew on the town. A few days later in a city nearby, when a rumor spread about the killing of a Muslim by a Hindu (the majority community in Gujarat), one person was burnt alive, another was stoned to death, and five were stabbed. Nandini Oza (Deccan Herald, India) observes that "nothing special appears to have been done to gauge" the first incident from causing a flare-up in the surrounding areas.

["Three killed, 40 injured in Gujarat violence"](#)

An Amnesty International report (link below) concludes that Gujarati police have been abusing the laws designed to detain suspected terrorists, to arrest an undisclosed number of Muslim men.

["Illegal detention of Muslims in Gujarat: Amnesty"](#)

2. Political Situation in Andhra Pradesh

Two political parties, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), prepare for early polls. The Hindu (India) projects that the race will be close against incumbent Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, who escaped an assassination bid by the People's War Group (PWG) earlier this year.

["Andhra Pradesh In Election Mode"](#)

A People's War member turned up dead, as he was discovered to be working for the police. The PWG ruled out talks with the Andhra central government. Sumanta Banerjee (Economic and Political Weekly, India) writes that the Naxalite movement, and groups such as the PWG, must realize the consequences of its guerrilla warfare against the state and of not politicizing its movement: the Naxalites have been "reduced to an insignificant force in the current Indian political scenario and lack any decisive power to change the balance of forces in favor of any revolutionary transformation of our society."

["Top naxal killed for `covert operations'"](#)

["People's War rules out talks with A.P. Govt."](#)

3. Law & Order

Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) leader Ashok Singhal reminded the BJP not to forget the "Hindu agenda" and said the RSS "will not boycott any party. But the Hindu community will boycott the party which does not work for them." An Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) leader expressed fear

over the "Christianization" of India, claiming that "missionaries want to convert Jharkhand into Nagaland and Mizoram where Hindus have been reduced to a minority." Prabhakar Sinari (Indian Express, India) argues that the RSS, in league with the BJP, is "trying to take belated credit for [the liberation of Goa] in which its role was, at best, marginal."

The Tamil Nadu Legislature sentenced the publisher, editor, and other senior members of the daily Hindu for "breach of privilege" for articles and an editorial about Chief Minister Jayalalitha Jayaram's government. The Supreme Court later stayed the arrest warrants. Various journalists' unions and media people condemned the action as "undemocratic" and "a big attack on the freedom of the press." The Hindu comments that the "latest developments reinforce the longstanding demand within the media that legislative privileges should be codified."

["Supreme Court stays arrest of The Hindu Editor, five others"](#)

["Journalists condemn T.N. Assembly action"](#)

["Press freedom vs its adversaries"](#)

4. Military Affairs

Huma Siddiqui (Financial Express, India) details India's growing maritime power and its efforts to police "virtually the entire Indian Ocean." India has conducted joint naval exercises with the US, Russia, Japan, Australia, Indonesia, Singapore, Britain, France, Iran, and Oman. Jasjit Singh (Indian Express, India) argues that India needs to augment its air force to counter China's growing advantage in the sky; Singh posits that "credible defense, in fact, is the best insurance for friendly relations that both countries need." The IAF will replace its MiG-21, MiG-23 and MiG-27 fighter fleets with 20 new squadrons (about 400 aircrafts), estimated to cost between US \$20 and 25 billion. A new survey found that people were discouraged from joining the Indian Air Force (IAF) due to the high number of accidents involving MiG-21 fighter jets.

Reports conflict over the status and possibility of an Indian deal to acquire the Russian aircraft carrier "Admiral Gorshkov." One report asserted that the purchase would be finalized during PM Vajpayee's visit to Russia, but near the end of his trip, other news reports deemed the purchase "unlikely," citing unnamed Indian officials. The Russian Ambassador to India stated that continuing price negotiations were delaying the deal's conclusion: "Prime Ministers and Presidents don't negotiate prices," he said.

["Russia, China should team up with trilateral forum"](#)

5. Indo-Central Asian Relations

Despite an Indian Express (India) report that India has overhauled and established an air base at Ayni, Tajikistan - the only foreign military base outside the subcontinent (Sri Lanka) -- officials from both countries insist that there is no deployment of Indian military personnel. C. Raja Mohan (Hindu, India) writes that during PM Vajpayee's upcoming visit to Tajikistan, he might see that "Tajikistan could serve the same function as the Pamir Knot [a point at which four mountain ranges meet] - the fulcrum of regional geopolitics." During a visit to Uzbekistan, Indian External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha stated that "Central Asia is our immediate strategic neighborhood."

["India's `Pamir Knot'"](#)

Defense Minister George Fernandes visited Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to discuss defense collaboration and energy security (e.g. building a navy able to protect Caspian Sea oil installations). In addition to an interview with a Kyrgyz minister on the topic of energy cooperation, the Financial Express (India) believes that Kyrgyzstan's proposed direct transmission of power to India via China may lessen "India's electricity woes."

6. Foreign Affairs

K.K. Katyal discusses the economic and political success of the trilateral "India, Brazil and South Africa Dialogue Forum" (IBSA). In his speech, PM Vajpayee cites IBSA and the India-China-Russia tripartite discussions as evidence that India needs to break the "Cold War mentality" and create defense strategies that "naturally reflect our concerns, extending well beyond the geographical confines of south Asia."

["Three is company"](#)

India's Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) (also known as the ONGC Videsh Limited or OVL) recently acquired a share of a Sudanese oil project and is reportedly considering selling shares to shore up revenues. K. S. R. Menon (Daily Star, Lebanon) explores the geopolitical implications of the ONGC's attempt to penetrate the West Asian oil market, particularly in Iran and possibly in Syria. India is the eighth largest consumer of oil in the world.

Govt considering selling stakes in IOC, ONGC

Anand Kumar (Indian Express, India) notes Bangladesh's rejection of an Indian proposal for joint patrolling of the 4100 km-long, highly porous common border and suggests that "the export of manpower, both legal and illegal appears to be part of Bangladesh foreign policy."

Jammu & Kashmir (J&K)

1. Political Affairs

Within the span of a week, suspected militants killed two members of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), Ghulam Mohammad Ganai and Ghulam Rasool Wagoora. The PDP came to power in state elections exactly a year ago, with party leader Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, elected as J&K's Chief Minister, promising to wind down the 14-year anti-Indian insurgency through a "healing touch" policy. Muzamil Jaleel (Indian Express, India) compares Sayeed's election promises with his administration's results, concluding that with a "year of mixed results behind him, Mufti cannot do much himself to change the perception of his government." The Indian Express believes that, despite Sayeed's dependence on the Indian central government in the cooling of India-Pakistan tensions, "every bit of progress toward normalcy within the state is a force-multiplier in the war against terrorism." "PDP leader among six killed in J&K"

["PDP leader shot dead"](#)

2. Talks with Indian Central Government

In response to Deputy PM L.K. Advani's comments for a show of "sincerity," leader of the moderate faction of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), Mohammed Abbas Ansari, replied that the Center "needs to qualify the sincerity test because it has never initiated a dialogue with sincerity." Ansari later stated that talks must be tripartite, i.e. involving Pakistan -- contrary to Ansari's earlier stance of just engaging India. Writing in Frontline (India), Praveen Swami discusses the lack of consensus about how to handle negotiations with the Center among the separatist movement (between the two APHC factions in particular) and even in the J&K government. Neerja Chowdhury (Indian Express, India) is hopeful of the future since "the last year has seen all players in J&K take steps beyond their rigidly held positions."

3. Security Situation

Violence continued in J&K, with security forces shooting two members of the militant outfit Tehreek

ul-Mujahideen (TuM). Suspected militants killed several civilians in a number of separate incidents involving remote-controlled and improvised explosive devices. Sixteen people, including two police personnel, were injured when militants attacked a Special Operations Group (SOG) camp with grenades.

Security forces have been put on high alert after receiving intelligence about a potential attack on a major highway, to snap supply lines. The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) will replace the Border Security Force (BSF) in carrying out counter-insurgency efforts in J&K. Muzamil Jaleel (Indian Express, India) reports on one village's frustration at the Indian Army's abusive behavior in taking its civilians for investigation into linkages with militants. Shruba Mukherjee (Deccan Herald, India) chronicles Pandits (Kashmiri Hindus) unwillingness to return without guarantees of their own security and freedom of expression.

4. Opinions & Reports

Expatriate Kashmiri separatist amalgam, International Kashmir Alliance (IKA), accused Pakistan of playing "politics" on India's proposal of starting the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service by attaching the condition of United Nations (UN) involvement. Ahmad Naeem Khan (OneWorld South Asia, UK) reports on Pakistan's plan to present a UN resolution that distinguishes between "freedom struggle" and "terrorist" movement.

In the hopes of attracting more tourism to Dal Lake, the government have created a Wireless Fidelity (WiFi) hotspot, where travelers can be online, wirelessly, at all times. A Kashmiri-born American doctor pledged to set up a cardiology hospital in J&K.

Sri Lanka

1. News, Reports, & Editorials

President Kumaratunga and Prime Minister Wickremesinghe held a meeting to resolve the ongoing political crisis. It was their first meeting since President Kumaratunga took over three ministries and prorogued the Parliament last week. The daily Hindu (India) suggests that Wickremesinghe's government's "adventurist move to impeach, first, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and, then, the President herself", precipitated the crisis. V.S. Sambandan (Hindu, India) argues that "Kumaratunga's actions are the culmination of a political showdown in the making since the UNF [United National Front] won a Parliamentary majority in the 2001 elections. An Agence France-Presse (AFP) report states that the "Sri Lankan President's plan to oust her arch-rival prime minister through a constitutional maneuver may have backfired and caused new rifts within her ranks." The daily Times of India, however, notes that that Sri Lankan media has been supportive of the President. A BBC report summarizes some of the issues involved in the current crisis.

["Sri Lanka in Crisis Again"](#)

["Sri Lanka: uncertainty over issues of governance"](#)

2. Opinions & Analysis

V. Suryanarayan (Frontline, India) believes that the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) proposals are intended to pave the way for the immediate establishment of a de facto Tamil Eelam. Mani Shankar Aiyar (Indian Express) writes that "deep strategic concerns" flowing from the peace process guided Kumaratunga's decision to impose 'near' emergency in the country. Lakshman Gunasekera (Observer, Sri Lanka) worries that Sinhala ultra-nationalist groups opposed to the peace

process "may begin to go beyond civil agitation and resort to physical violence." The full text of the Tamil proposals is posted at the LTTE website.

Bhutan

1. Political Violence

Marcus Dam (Hindu, India) reports that there may be some validity to concerns that the Kamtapur Liberation Organization (KLO) - an extremist outfit demanding a separate Kamtapur homeland carved out of some areas of north Bengal - is in league with the ULFA of Assam and is jointly running training camps in the hills of Bhutan. The daily Telegraph (India) reports that Bhutanese Prime Minister Lyonpo Thinley traveled to Kalikhola area of the Himalayan kingdom to persuade leaders of the ULFA, the National Democratic Front of Boroland (NDFB) and the Kamtapur Liberation Organization (KLO) to close their camps. Another report in the same newspaper describes different routes used by rebels to enter India from Bhutan.

["Upsurge in militancy on Bengal-Bhutan border"](#)

2. Refugee Issue

Nepali newspapers report that Bhutan might take back some of the 100,000 ethnically Nepal refugee claiming Bhutanese nationality who have been living in The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) run camps in eastern Nepal after being forced out of Bhutan. India has indicated that it will be willing to help in the repatriation process. According to Bhutanese human rights activist Tek Nath Riza, India's "help is very necessary to resolve the problem." Nepal News reports that "in the refugee camps of east Nepal, it is apparent that most Bhutanese are skeptical about the 'major breakthrough'".

Other Regional News

1. Philippines

There were reports of demonstrations in Manila after the Supreme Court and House of Representatives foiled an attempt by opposition congressmen to impeach Supreme Court Chief Justice Hilario Davide. Davide is often blamed for legitimizing the removal of Estrada from power in a popular military-backed uprising in 2001 that installed former vice-president Arroyo as president. President Arroyo is reportedly trying to head off a second impeachment complaint against Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr.

2. Nepal

At least 33 people, including seven members of the security forces and a civilian, were reportedly killed in a fresh outbreak of clashes with Maoist rebels. There were reports, later denied by the Nepalese government, of attempted bomb attack on the palace of Nepal's Crown Prince Paras. P. Chidambaram (Indian Express) argues that it is in India's interest to extend political and economic help to Nepal.

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