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Nuclear Issues

1. Indian Anti-Nuclear Convention

An anti-nuclear convention took place in New Delhi, with participation by approximately 500 delegates, including fifty from Pakistan. The convention is being sponsored by 110 trade unions and NGOs.

2. India Nuclear Policy

K Subrahmanyam, convener of India's National Security Advisory Board, said that India should have about 150 missile- and bomber-deliverable nuclear weapons in order to have an effective deterrent force against Pakistan and the PRC.

US President Bill Clinton, in a letter to the US Speaker of the House of Representative Dennis Hastert, wrote that India-US relations are unable meet their full potential without further progress on non-proliferation and other regional issues.

Indian police seized three uranium rods and arrested six people who said they acquired the uranium at an auction of materials left over from the dismantling of a hospital ward.

3. Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

B Muralidhar Reddy, writing in The Hindu, reported that Pakistan is getting closer to signing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Reddy stated that various Pakistani government ministries have made statements supporting the treaty. The most recent of which was by State Bank of Pakistan Governor Ishrat Hussain, who said Pakistan was losing \$2 billion annually in financial assistance. Reddy argued that the Musharraf government was wary of antagonizing religious groups on this issue.

India

1. India-PRC Border Talks

An Indian delegation, led by Vijay Gokhale of the External Affairs Ministry, is visiting the PRC for talks to eventually demarcate the Line of Actual Control separating India and the PRC. A senior PRC foreign ministry official has said that the PRC is ready to accelerate negotiations, "as long as both sides follow the principle of mutual understanding and mutual accommodation." The disputed border is divided into an eastern, a middle, and a western sector. The middle sector involves some 20,000 square kilometers and is likely to be discussed first.

VR Raghavan, writing in The Hindu, argues that the current border problems along the undemarcated Line of Actual Control shared with the PRC, in which PRC patrols and civilians visit the border and on occasion cross, is a tactic the PRC uses to later justify a claim upon the territory.

2. India-PRC Economic Relations

Minister of State for Commerce Omar Abdullah met with a PRC delegation to discuss the progress of the PRC's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO), and to discuss arrangements that would temper WTO rules to suit the two countries.

3. Southeast Asia

Speaking in Singapore, Indian President KR Narayanan thanked Singapore for supporting India for membership in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and as a full dialogue member of ASEAN. The

Hindu reported that Narayanan described a recent Indian focus on reengaging Southeast Asia.

External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh held bilateral talks in Vietnam with his Vietnamese counterpart Nguyen Dy Nien to strengthen ties. Nguyen Dy Nien expressed support for Indian membership in both the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) group and the UN Security Council. Vietnamese annual trade with India totals \$115 million, compared to \$2 billion with the PRC, and is balanced largely in India's favor.

External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh addressed the inaugural meeting of the ministerial meeting of the Ganga-Mekong cooperation group, and pledged India's commitment to working with ASEAN on Mekong Basin development programs.

4. India-Turkey Security Ties

Secretary General of the Turkish National Security Council, General Cumhar Asparuk, met with Satish Chandra, head of the Indian National Security Council, to expand India-Turkey ties. Turkey has been a close ally of Pakistan, but India-Pakistan ties are spread partly by concern over the spread of fundamentalism.

5. French Submarine Visit

France's Pearl nuclear submarine arrived in India ahead of the February International Fleet Review for two days of exercises with the Indian Navy. France hopes India will build its Scorpene submarines in India, while Russia hopes India will build the Russian Amur-class submarine.

6. Indian Military

The Indian Defense Ministry is reconsidering its development program for the indigenous Arjun main battle tank. The Arjun has been effectively replaced by acquisition of the Russian T-90 tank.

Pakistan

1. Pakistan Military

The Times of India reported that Pakistan, hoping to break into the international arms export market, will host a four-day arms exhibition entitled "Ideas 2000 Pakistan Arms for Peace." Representatives from 37 countries, including the PRC, Russia, France, and Saudi Arabia, will participate. Pakistan will launch at the convention its Super Mashak aircraft, the Grifo-7 radar and fire control system, as well as tanks and other hardware.

Air Marshal Mushaf Ali Mir has been named Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan's Air Staff, causing resentment within the Pakistani Air Force because five senior officers are being skipped-over.

2. Afghanistan

Ahmed Shah Massod, the Afghani commander fighting the Taliban in northern Afghanistan, said in an interview in the New York Times that the Taliban has made open use of Pakistani regular troops. The New York Times also stated that the Taliban control 90%-95% of Afghanistan. US Undersecretary of State Thomas Pickering stated that both the US and Russia are aware of the Pakistani military's involvement in Afghanistan.

After 30,000 Afghan refugees came into Pakistan in the last month, bringing the total number of Afghan refugees to 1.8-2.1 million persons, Pakistan was reported by the Indian media as closing the border with Afghanistan to refugees. A long drought and continued fighting have driven the refugees into Pakistan, which says it is unable to provide assistance in its own deteriorated economic state.

Taliban Ambassador to Pakistan Mulla Abdul Salam Zaeef asked Pakistan to reopen the border and sought economic assistance for the refugees from the UN. Pakistan has asked the UN to assist with the peaceful return to Afghanistan of the refugees.

Kashmir

1. Military Operations

Indian Defense Minister George Fernandes stated that an additional buildup of Pakistani troops had been noticed near Kutch along the Line of Control. He said Pakistan had a single unit there.

2. Organization of Islamic Conference

The Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) met in Doha. The OIC called on the Muslim world to act decisively against Israel and Pakistan attempted to draw attention to an "India-Israel axis." An OIC contact group, including Pakistan, Turkey, Niger and Saudi Arabia, met to discuss the situation in Kashmir and urged peaceful settlement.

Molvi Omer Farooq and Maulana Abbas Ansari, both senior All-Parties Hurriyat Conference leaders, met with representatives of Islamic states and pushed for peaceful resolution of the Kashmir issue. Other Hurriyat leaders met with officials of the Pakistan High Commission in Islamabad because of recent criticisms by the APHC of Pakistan.

Sri Lanka

1. LTTE Talks

Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga opened the Parliament on Thursday and stated that while military actions against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) would not end, she was ready for talks. Kumaratunga said that Norwegian negotiators had yet to inform her of "certain conditions to be met before the beginning of discussions."

United National Party (UNP) leader Ranil Wickramasinghe expressed disapproval of President Chandrika Kumaratunga's decision to include those possibly responsible for election violence in her cabinet. Wickramasinghe also called on Kumaratunga to discuss constitutional reform proposals before opening talks with the LTTE.

Sri Lankan Army chief Major General Lionel Ballagalle stated that while the government is waiting to hear LTTE conditions for talks from the Norwegian diplomats, there should not be a ceasefire during the negotiations.

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