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Nuclear Issues

1. Pakistan Nuclear Safety

Pakistan's military spokesman Major General Rashid Qureshi told reporters that "there is no question of anyone attacking or coming close" to Pakistan's nuclear assets.

United States government officials have refuted Seymour Hersh's story in the New Yorker magazine that a special United States' military unit is training with Israeli commandos to remove Pakistan's nuclear weapons in case of a coup against President Pervez Musharraf.

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar has reiterated that "stringent measures have been taken to minimise the risks of accidental, unintentional or unauthorised launch."

Secretary of State Colin Powell has indicated that the United States would be willing to help improve security of nuclear installations in Pakistan.

The International Atomic Energy Agency warned that Pakistan could become a source of hardware for terrorists planning to build a nuclear device.

2. Related News

The Afghan ambassador in Islamabad Abdul Salam Zaeef has denied reports that Osama bin Laden may have nuclear arms.

Two Pakistani nuclear scientists, Sultan Bashir Mahmood and Majid Chaudhry, were arrested by Pakistan's security agencies.

Praful Bidwai, an Indian scholar and journalist, discusses nuclear dangers in South Asia.

Afghanistan War and Implications

1. Afghanistan: Current Situation

Taliban Foreign Minister Wakil Ahmed Mutawakil denied that splits are emerging in the Taliban.

2. Afghanistan: Future Prospects

United Nations Secretary-General's Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi told a press conference in Islamabad that the U.N. is "not forming a government" in Afghanistan.

The Turkish government has announced its decision to deploy Special Forces troops in Afghanistan.

A report in Asia Times suggested that Russia's vocal support of the Northern Alliance is not always matched by its actions.

3. Refugee Crisis

Pakistani government officials have denied reports that Pakistan authorities had suspended the admission and registration of Afghan refugees through Chaman.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has reported that "Pakistan has in principle agreed to accept new Afghan refugees."

4. Pakistan

The Taliban government has confirmed that a group of three hundred armed Pakistani youth has been allowed to enter Afghanistan.

5. U.S. Role

US heavy B-52 bombers have started bombing Taliban positions near Kabul.

6. General Assessments

Writer and Journalist Ahmed Rashid argues that defections from the Taliban should not be taken as a sign that the regime will crumble easily.

Mohsen Makhmalbaf, a well-known Iranian filmmaker, notes his impressions of Afghanistan. Makhmalbaf traveled extensively in Afghanistan between 1988 and 2001 and has made two movies about the country.

Writer Marcus Moench examines emerging geo-political realignments in South and Central Asia.

7. Anthrax Incidents

Both Pakistan and India have reported cases of Anthrax infection.

Pakistan

1. Pakistan Domestic Situation

The Chairman of Pak-Afghan Defence Council, an alliance of pro-Taliban political and religious parties, warned the Pakistani government of "strong resistance and civil disobedience if it does not review its Afghan policy."

The Pakistan government took various measures to counter growing political dissent in the country.

Armed tribesmen have agreed to open the strategic Karakorum Highway after blockading the road for ten days. At the same time, the tribesmen gave a one-week deadline to the Pakistani government to change its pro-US policy.

In a statement broadcasted on Qatar's satellite television Al-Jazeera, Osama bin Laden called on Muslims in Pakistan to "confront the crusade against Islam."

Mohsin Hamid, a Pakistani novelist, explains why Pakistanis feel abandoned by the West.

Columnist Ayaz Amir writes about the "the bankruptcy of Pakistani politics" and argues that Pakistan has "entered into a Faustian pact with the United States, handing over not just our air bases for use against the helpless people of Afghanistan but also the tattered remnants of our national pride."

2. India-Pakistan Relations

India claimed that Pakistan had moved additional troops to areas facing Akhnoor in Jammu and Kashmir and Ganganagar in the Rajasthan sectors.

India

1. India Domestic Situation

All Opposition members of the Uttar Pradesh State Assembly have resigned, demanding the dissolution of the House and early elections.

Jana Krishnamurthy, chief of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), has warned that Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee can be replaced "if necessary."

A Pakistani military spokesman has voiced concern over what appeared to be "disparity and disconnect" between the Indian Government and the Army.

2. Pakistan-India Relations

U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld may visit Pakistan and India in early November. Meanwhile, there have been reports of increased tensions between India and Pakistan.

Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee has ruled out talks with Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf. However, there have been reports of a possible meeting between the two leaders in Kathmandu, Nepal, at a forum of South Asian leaders in early January.

Kashmir

1. Internal Situation

A top Indian military commander reported that 20 Muslim militants were killed in a battle.

2. India and Pakistan

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee warned Pakistan "not to harbour any illusion that it would ever be able to dismember Kashmir from India." Meanwhile, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell again urged India and Pakistan to take great care to avoid a "flare up" over Kashmir.

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