

Pakistan's nuclear outlook

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AFTER the IAEA brought to the government's attention references in documents handed over by Iran and Libya about alleged transfer of nuclear technology to them from Pakistan in the past decades, the President of Pakistan had a challenging responsibility to carry out a probe that was credible, and internationally acceptable.

The debriefing of the scientists, including Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan, the "father of Pakistan's atomic bomb" caused widespread anguish since he is revered as a hero who played a key role in developing nuclear deterrence against the threat perceived from India.

The past few days have witnessed dramatic developments, with Dr. Khan admitting personal responsibility for passing nuclear know-how to Iran, Libya and North Korea. Though he stated that he had 'acted in good faith' his assumption of personal responsibility helped clear the government of official involvement. The President was able to personally reassure the international community that Pakistan had never officially followed a policy of sharing nuclear technology with other countries, as it had consistently supported the goals of non-proliferation.

Many feel that this confession was yet another act of service and sacrifice for the nation, since Dr Khan could not have acted without some involvement of other persons, holding high office. The current sce-

nuclear goals of India, which had started its nuclear programme in 1946, and Pakistan. India under Nehru aspired to the role of a great power, and its development of nuclear capability was status-oriented, to bring India at par with the world's great powers. Pakistan did not get round to establishing an atomic energy commission till 1957, with the intention of harnessing nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. Pakistan cooperated closely with IAEA, and when it set up a research reactor at Nilore, and later the nuclear power plant at Karachi in 1969, they were placed under IAEA safeguards.

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over, the US again imposed sanctions on Pakistan over its nuclear programme. When the BJP government in India carried out nuclear tests in May 1998, it adopted a threatening attitude towards Pakistan, till the latter also carried out tests two weeks later.

The major powers were concerned over the entry of two new countries into the nuclear club. The US, in particular, which is the sole superpower since 1990, sent a high-powered delegation to India and Pakistan, to persuade them to adhere to the CTBT and NPT. Both agreed to measures designed to assuage US concerns on non-proliferation, such as a commitment not to transfer nuclear technology to other countries, as well as a moratorium on nuclear tests.

President Bush has followed a policy over nuclear weapons that is designed to acquire total global hegemony. The concept of

Ballistic Missile Defence announced on May 1, 2001, was immediately supported by India, which has also embraced the concept to achieve regional hegemony. It may be recalled that close cooperation has developed between India and Israel, both of which are now strategic partners of the US.

Since the events of 9/11, Bush is heading a war against terror. Pakistan has become an important ally of the US in its region. However, the "war against terror" is targeting mainly Muslim countries. Though the war on Iraq was justified primarily on the basis of the threat from weapons of mass destruction, no such weapons have been found. As Pakistan is the only Muslim country having nuclear capability,

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