

Post-Pokharan Days: Recalling a Friend

"Notwithstanding Delhi's provocative muscle-flexing, Pakistan's security interests have not been served by matching India show-for-show-plus-one.... The leaders of India and Pakistan have now appropriated to themselves, as others had done before, the power that was God's alone, to kill mountains, make the earth quake, bring the sea to boil, and destroy humanity."

by Pervez Hoodbhoy

lio to the hardline Home Minister who had so enthusiastically overseen the destruction of Babri Mosque, and heating up of a limited but live conflict along the Line of Control.

On the domestic front, a pack of opposition leaders, led first by the Jamaat-Islami, was soon overtaken by Benazir Bhutto. "She seems to have sensed in this national crisis an opportunity to restore her flagging fortunes. I know of few gestures in the ugly repertoire of Pakistani politics as revolting as her demagogic toss of bracelets at Mr. Nawaz Sharif", wrote Eqbal.

The debate stopped abruptly after Chaghai. Eqbal was devastated. "I saw on television a picture more awesome than the familiar mushroom cloud of nuclear explosion. The mountain had turned white. I wondered how much pain had been felt by nature, God's most wondrous creation".

Alas, it was joy, not pain, which made crowds dance that day in the streets of Islamabad and Lahore. Similar orgasmic celebrations had taken place 17 days earlier in Delhi and Bombay. The men of faith were triumphant, although which faith had triumphed was not clear.

Grains of holy radioactive sand from Pokharan, blessed by Lord Shiva, had been sprinkled in temples by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad. In Pakistan the Jamaat-i-Islami transported a cardboard "Islamic Bomb" around the country, while right-wing Urdu magazines like Zindagi wrote about the wondrous miracles of Chaghai.

They told stories of divine intervention that protected the mard-e-momin from poison-spitting snakes as they prepared the nuclear test-site, of four chickens that sufficed to feast a thousand of the faithful after the tests, and of Prophet Mohammed (SM) taking personal charge of protecting the centrifuges of Kahuta.

Now was the time of the Kalams and Khans, the Chidambarams and Mubarikmands. Catapulted into the role of subcontinental heroes, but unknown entities in the world of real science, they basked in adulation pretending to be the Oppenheimers, Tellers, and Bethes. But it was the political leadership that had it even better.

As the Sharifs and Vajpayees strutted and preened themselves before roaring crowds, Eqbal had sober words of warning for them.

"I still believe that, notwithstanding Delhi's provocative muscle-flexing, Pakistan's security interests have not been served by matching India show-for-show-plus-one.... The leaders of India and Pakistan have now appropriated to themselves, as others had done before, the power that was God's alone to kill mountains, make the earth quake, bring the sea to boil, and destroy humanity. I hope that when the muscle flexing and cheering is over they will go on a retreat, and reflect on how they should bear this awesome responsibility."

One wonders if in his prison cell, where he now serves a life-sentence for treason, ex-prime minister Nawaz Sharif does feel

The missile race
1979 India begins to develop the Agni intermediate-range missile
1983 India test fires the Prithvi short-range missile
1989 India tests the Agni
April 1998 Pakistan tests its new Ghauri intermediate-range missile
May 1998 India carries out underground nuclear tests
Pakistan reciprocates

They told stories of divine intervention that protected the mard-e-momin from poison-spitting snakes as they prepared the nuclear test-site, of four chickens that sufficed to feast a thousand of the faithful after the tests, and of Prophet Mohammed (SM) taking personal charge of protecting the centrifuges of Kahuta.

Pre-election Symptoms

by Alif Zabr

INTIMATIONS of pre-election symptoms in Dhaka metropolis are already sending feelers through the political stock exchange, which is gearing to take off (or veer off); dramatized by the well-timed (?) resignation of the Chief Election Commissioner, due to the unhealthy state of the body (as certified by Harvard).

For the political parties, the pre-season is a time for analyses, evaluation, sorting and consolidation; and presenting old wines in new bottles. A colour-coded system is generally followed for such exercises (supposed to be in public interest); more black than white; with the intervening grey areas predominating.

In the mixed areas, the shadow-fighting is subtle; which are normally decided with spice and venom by the opponents, for the benefit of the people. The parties excel in hyperbolic presentations; while discretion is thrown to the kalbaischakis; and the major parties take to the one-eyed stance of the Cyclops. One is reminded of the college text book story 'The Selfish Giant'.

To touch certain areas is taboo; while in the other areas baits are dangled to entice the voters (old or potential), and powerful groups or lobbies (bureaucracy, CBAs).

To form some idea, here are some examples of the do's and

don'ts.

- The academia is a sacred place, and practically untouchable, if the going is good; and a battlefield, to get a foothold. The front offices of the student cadres enjoy the boosted inflationary market, resulting in more session jams. Education becomes a casualty, and even the High Court seemingly become alarmed ("Why inducing students to politics should not be declared a crime: HC show-cause", DS front-page, May 11). One observer (DS, same issue) likened the situation to educational harakiri.

- Iron becomes tempered steel after passing through the baptism of fire. The conscientious objector might be wondering about the prematurity of the noble exercise right within the world of the academia during the formative phase of student-life. Practising short-cuts becomes a philosophy of life; the latest offspring being mass open cheating during examinations, backed by powerful god-fathers (in the one-eyed watch).

- The new culture of bureaucratic manhas (political platforms) is driving out the principle of neutrality in the civil service. Today this institution stands damaged and divided - and no hard feeling, is the indirect verdict of the political leaders. One moment's gain brings about a lifetime of repentance. Who care? - The mobility of the political leaders in the acrobatic art of changing floors is - perhaps - to suit the people's will! Flexibility has no meaning in the absence of boundary conditions. The spirit soars - there is no upper limit. Spirit and substance: "What's matter? Never mind." "What's mind? No matter."

- Forget about solving the traffic jams in Dhaka; the cycle rickshaws have the right to pedal; the 2-stroke autorickshaws the right to belch smoke. As for the political smoke-screens, this is a 'standard practice', isn't it? - Are the SOEs a liability? Coming wage hikes for public sector workers (DS front-page news, May 11). Footnote: government borrowing heavily from the banks for recurring expenditure.

- Are the freedom fighters also colour-coded? No comment.

- Administrative and Judiciary reforms: left for the next regime.

- De-centralization: first the political centre must be strong enough to develop the necessary political will for the unpredictable flight of capital (pun intended).

The diagnosis is a fruitless exercise, repeated many times. It is boring to be repetitive.

NPT Conference

How Far will They be True to Their Commitment?

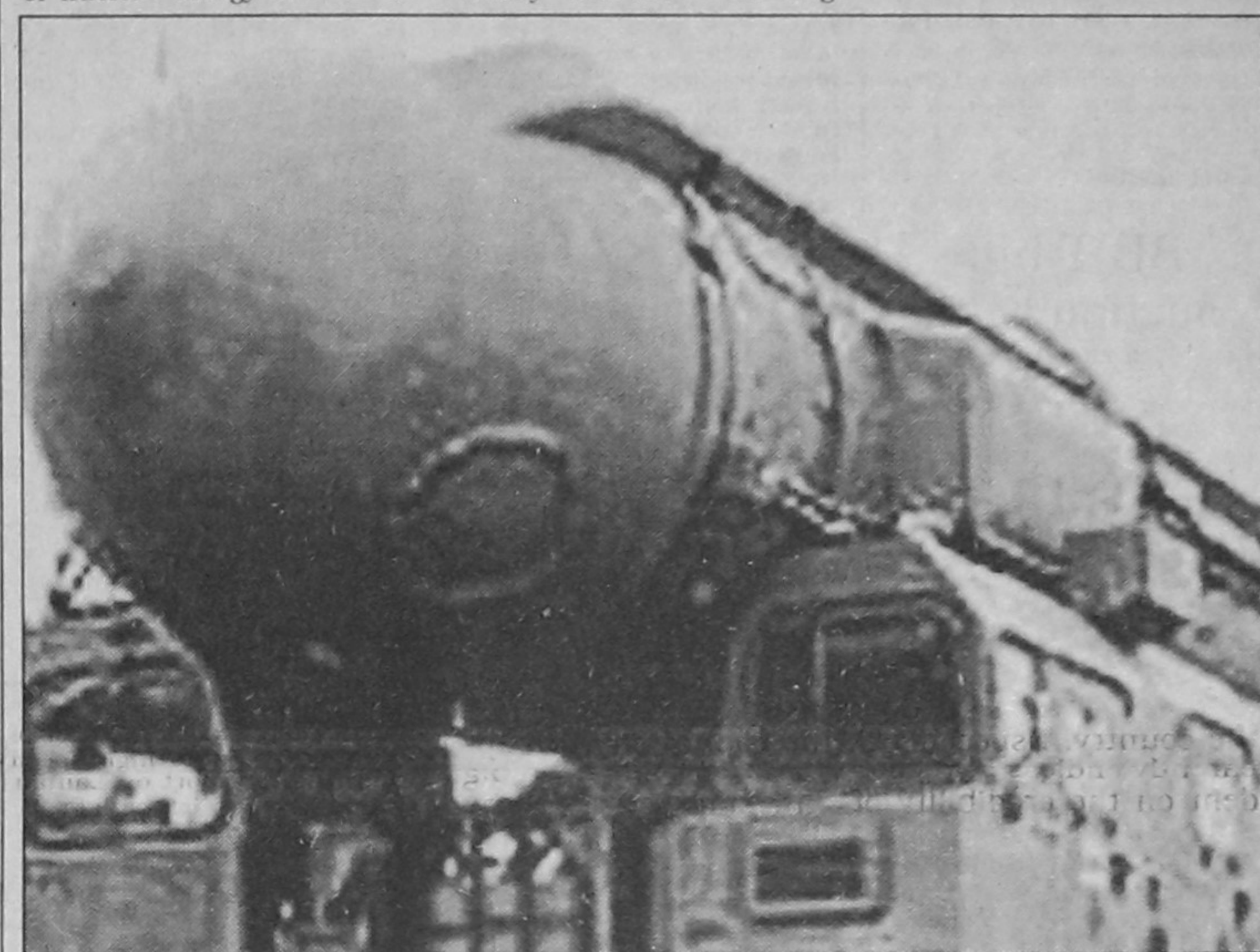
by Ekram Kabir

A month-long Review Conference on Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) concluded in New York on May 19. The five nuclear-weapons states, America, Russia, Britain, France and China reaffirmed their "unequivocal commitment" to the ultimate goal to scrap their stockpiles of nuclear weapons. But they did not provide any timetable. The non-nuclear states dismissed their statement as "a lame attempt to excuse the inexcusable: the failure of the nuclear-weapons states to take meaningful action on disarmament."

The NPT signatories, numbering 187, took a decision in 1995 to review the progress by April 2000. The treaty entered into force on March 5, 1970, and was hailed as a central pillar of global security. In broad terms, it constitutes an agreement of non-nuclear states to forgo nuclear weapons, to put peaceful nuclear facilities under the international safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and to promote technical cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and, to ex-

ever, revolved in at the conference was the performance of the big five. They have squandered, non-colour states believe, the opportunity offered by the end of the cold war for the complete dismantling of the nuclear arsenals. The US helped Israel in acquiring nuclear weapons. France helped build Israel's plutonium-producing reactor, outside of international controls, many years ago. Even earlier, the former Soviet Union gave China blueprints of a plant to produce weapons-grade enriched uranium, apart from supplying a whole range of facilities for nuclear research and development. There is a long list of examples which proves the five nuclear-weapons states were never really honest about arms control. They encouraged nuclearisation in other countries as a result of their own disagreements. For example, Russia still has a major disagreement with the US that concerns the 1972 ABM treaty on anti-ballistic missile systems, which Washington wants to revise in order to develop its proposed National Missile Defence system (NMD). If the latter does develop NMD, it would decisively bury any notion of nuclear parity between Moscow and Washington. And that may lead Russia to

embark on a new cold war. Presently, these cold-war rivals alone possess an estimated 20,000 or more warheads. Recently Russia's ratification to START-II has been globally acclaimed. But is that enough for global arms control? START-II treaty is going to force some difficult questions. It will take the Russian and US nuclear arsenals down to some 3,000 to 3,500 warheads respectively. This certainly is a new dimension, but how low can the US and Russia go? At what point would the other declared nuclear-weapons states have to join in the same type of negotiations regarding reducing arms? And if arsenals are reduced to what some might see as a minimum, is there any chance of moving towards the complete elimination of this category of weapons? Perhaps not. Because in 1945 when atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the world had less than 10 such bombs - all with the US. In the '80s the total number of nuclear weapons was about 70,000, mostly with the US and the erstwhile USSR. In some 35 years, there was a 7,000-fold increase in the global nuclear destructive capability! No other human activity has led to such a massive build-up in so short a time. Have these countries - particularly the US which claims that it has tirelessly worked for global peace for the past 50 years or so - were ever asked how much of resources was wasted on building the enormous arsenal of nuclear weapons, missiles, submarines, aircraft, etc? Now they would have to spend additional sums of money for dismantling the nuclear weapons. And of course there will be new funding for developing new types of weapons.



pedite nuclear disarmament.

The NPT regime rests upon a simple bargain. In return for giving up any desire to develop nuclear weapons, countries are afforded access to civil nuclear technology. Nuclear installations are inspected and the whole regime is intended to prevent other countries from becoming nuclear-weapons states. Of the 187 signatories, 182 do not have nuclear weapons; among the big five, the US, the former Soviet Union and the UK were original signatories to the NPT. China and France joined it in 1992. Only four countries - Cuba, Israel, India and Pakistan - have declined to sign the NPT. Cuba has no nuclear weapons programme but its refusal to sign the NPT is related to the continuing American military presence at the Guantanamo base on its soil. Israel, India and Pakistan fall in a category of their own as none of them is likely to give up nuclear weapons and there is very little the NPT can do about it.

If interference is any guide, actually no serious efforts will be taken by these states to make any progress towards nuclear disarmament as required by the NPT. The centrality of the nuclear weapons in the security system of the major powers has increased since the indefinite extension of the treaty in 1995. This may well bring out in light the dualities in the policies of the major powers.

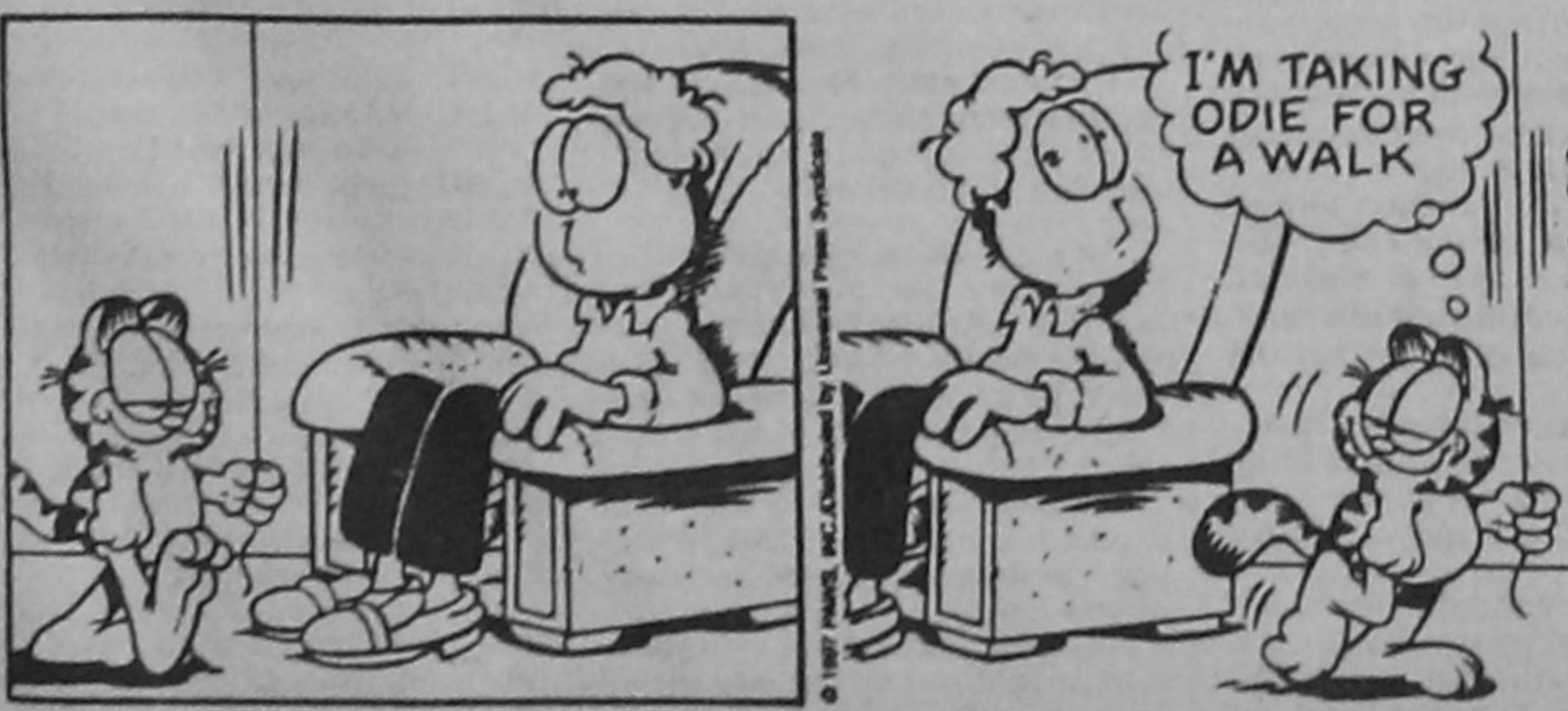
"Although the big five would never admit openly, one of the main reasons for the double standards is the status symbol attached with the possession of the nuclear weapons. The reality is that nuclear-weapons states have more clout in the international system just because they have nuclear weapons. They form a club of their own for which the club members think that they are taken more seriously worldwide. They also respect each other more, their defence establishments as well

stockpiling of weapons among the big five. Neither India nor Pakistan can join the treaty as a non-nuclear weapons state. Since they cannot be admitted within the present framework and since there is no possibility of the treaty being amended to accommodate them, the question arises about their status as both of them in reality possess nuclear weapons. What could be the possible status for them?

Explains Dr. Iftekharuzzaman: "It is impossible to determine a particular status of India and Pakistan in the context of NPT. After their tests they have assumed a self-acclaimed position of nuclear-weapons states posing a formidable new challenge to the non-proliferation regime. The dilemma is that the parties to the NPT cannot ignore emergence of new nuclear weapons states, while it is also impossible to open the treaty for renegotiation, and increase the number of the nuclear-weapons states from five to seven or more. One possible way forward in the present context is that India and Pakistan freeze their nuclear programmes at current levels without progressing towards weaponisation or deployment for an agreed period, while during this agreed period the five nuclear-weapons states come up with a specific action plan on a phased timetable for universal nuclear disarmament. More than what they seem to have agreed to do at the NPT Review Conference such commitment must indicate a clear roadmap towards global nuclear disarmament. In the interim period leading to achieving the zero level, while India and Pakistan cannot be clearly recognised as nuclear-weapons states under the existing framework of NPT, they could be persuaded to sign a protocol under which they would commit to the obligations of the NPT, including safeguards and export controls."

The main questions, how-

Garfield @



by Jim Davis

