SANDNet Weekly Update, August 12, 2003

Recommended Citation

SANDNet, "SANDNet Weekly Update, August 12, 2003", SANDNet, August 12, 2003,
https://nautilus.org/sandnet/sandnet-weekly-update-august-12-2003/

CONTENTS
August 12, 2003
Volume 4, #12

Nuclear Issues

1. Radiation Leak at Kalpakkam
2. Other News and Opinions

Afghanistan

1. Current Situation

India-Pakistan Relations

1. Indian Delegation Visit
2. Analysis

Pakistan

1. News
2. Opinions and Analysis
3. Foreign Affairs

India

1. India: Domestic Situation
2. Military Matters
3. Foreign Affairs

Kashmir

1. Internal Situation

Nuclear Issues

1. Radiation Leak at Kalpakkam

The Indian nuclear establishment has admitted that six people were exposed to radiation at the Kalpakkam reprocessing plant in January due to "human error." The daily Hindustan Times urges the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) to take safety issues more seriously. About 20 NGOs under the banner of ''Movement Against Uranium Project'' are planning a demonstration against proposed mining of uranium deposits in a remote village in Andhra Pradesh.
"Barc admits radiation error"

2. Other News and Opinions

The Nation, a conservative Pakistani daily, notes US efforts to develop 'mini nukes' and urges the Pakistani government to "think of the dangers of the new weaponry to its [Pakistan's] own underground strategic facilities by shedding such thoughts that its complete capitulation to the USA might save it from becoming a target." The Daily Times (Pakistan) reports that India plans to build a lighter, longer range, version of its ballistic missile Agni.

J. Sri Raman (The Tribune, India) reviews 'Prisoners of Nuclear Dreams, a collection of essays edited by M.V. Ramana and C. Rammanohar Reddy.
"India's nuclear dream and Iraq's nightmare"

Afghanistan

1. Current Situation

The UN has suspended road missions across much of southern Afghanistan following a series of attacks that killed and injured a number of people. Afghan President Hamid Karzai has stripped Ismail Khan, a powerful warlord, of his post as the military commander of western Afghanistan. The daily Dawn (Pakistan) reports that a close associate of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar has been arrested. A Taliban spokesman was quoted in the daily News (Pakistan) as stating that "attacks against government installations would be stepped up and spread to all of northern Afghanistan in the coming days and weeks." The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (Nato) has taken command of peacekeepers in Afghanistan.
"Afghan clashes, bomb blast leave 61 dead"
"Nato takes over ISAF command in Kabul"

The daily Dawn reports that "Afghanistan wants Islamabad to extend sufficient financial support and facilities, much the same way New Delhi has offered to Kabul, to get in return a fair treatment." Pakistan, Afghanistan and the US have agreed to establish a three-way hotline to improve communications among senior representatives of the three countries.
"Kabul seeks more financial support"

India-Pakistan Relations

1. Indian Delegation Visit

A two-day conference organized by the South Asian Free Media Association (SAFMA) called for an uninterrupted, composite and meaningful dialogue at all levels between the governments and the people of India and Pakistan. Individuals from at least 15 political parties of India having representation in the parliament attended the conference. In a message read at the conference, the Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee called the event a "forceful reiteration of the popular desire in both our countries for a normal, peaceful, friendly and cooperative relationship." President Pervez Musharraf told the delegation that Pakistan wants to "encourage a ceasefire also but there has to be reciprocity from India in the form of stopping atrocities, ongoing military operations, human rights violations, releasing all political prisoners and allowing them to travel abroad freely, including to Pakistan." India did not find anything new in Musharraf's statement.
"Nothing new, says India"

Speaking at a seminar in Islamabad, President Musharraf stated that "peace [between India and Pakistan] must be maintained through balance of power and through no-win situation created by the strategy of deterrence followed by Pakistan."

2. Analysis

M.H. Askari (Dawn, Pakistan) writes that "achieving a real breakthrough in India-Pakistan ties requires not just a determined political initiative, but unprecedented bureaucratic imagination and public support." The daily Telegraph (India) believes that there are "still no signs that stability in bilateral relations can be sustained over the long term." Imtiaz Alam (News, Pakistan) outlines various steps that may improve India-Pakistan relations. Discussing the visit of the Indian delegations, Mubashir Hasan (Dawn, Pakistan) notes that "apparently the two governments were agreed on discouraging the members of the two parliaments to be a party, in any independent way, to contribute to the process of peace making."
"Slow pace of peace efforts"
"Still fragile"
"A hazy vision of peace"

Pakistan

1. News

The Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) has accused the government of sabotaging the dialogues over the controversial Legal Framework Order (LFO). MMA is also unhappy with the appointment of Owais Ghani as Balochistan's new governor.
"MMA slams Balochistan governor's appointment"

The daily News and the Daily Times carried contradictory reports on the issue of General Musharraf staying on as the Chief of the Army Staff. The daily Dawn reports that the Corp Commanders of the Pakistan Army support Musharraf's decision to give no time frame for the removal of his military uniform. Ahmed Hassan (Dawn) reports that the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Q is "fraught with serious internal differences on the question of party constitution's violation." The daily Dawn also reported that President Musharraf is not satisfied with the performance of some federal ministers.
"Commanders back COAS on uniform"
"President not happy with some ministers"

The US authorities charged a Pakistani, Uzair Piracha, with conspiring to provide money and assistance to al Qaeda. The daily News reports that Piracha's father has also been detained in Karachi. Pakistan has declared Al Rasheed Trust 'an organization suspected of terrorism'. The notification followed a Sindh High Court verdict defreezing the Trust accounts because only the federal government, and not the State Bank of Pakistan, had the authority to classify the organization. The Newsline magazine (Pakistan) published an interview with a sectarian terrorist.

A large oil spill from a grounded oil tanker is threatening Karachi's coast.

The Ukrainian Foreign Minister has stated that his country has stopped supplying military hardware to Pakistan.

2. Opinions and Analysis

Mani Shankar Aiyar (Telegraph, India) suggests that "the mullah-military axis" might be breaking in Pakistan. Najam Sethi, editor of the Friday Times (Pakistan) argues that "the historic Military-Mullah Alliance (MMA) [is]alive and kicking," and President Musharraf "is buying short-term tactical stability at the expense of longer-term strategic instability."
"Cracks in the Axis"
"Musharraf has a vision for tomorrow, a mirage for today"

Masooda Bano (News, Pakistan) argues that an expected additional $300 million of annual assistance from the World Bank will not help the poor, add to the national debt and allow "the top elites" to make "hey out of these loans and aid..."

3. Foreign Affairs

The daily News notes that the "question of Pakistan recognising Israel has once again surfaced after it received a cold reception last time," and writes that "this time, the attempt is devoid of any beneficial outcome." Mian Aziz ul Haq Qureshi (Nation, Pakistan) argues that Israel is "a threat to all nations." The Daily Times (Pakistan) suggests that Pakistan needs to recognize Israel to balance growing India-Israeli-US relations. Pakistani government has sharply criticized Israel's planned sale of Phalcon airborne radar system to India.

Two Pakistani soldiers were killed and three other went missing as US gunship helicopters attacked Pakistani posts at the Pak-Afghan border. The daily News writes that "the trigger happy US soldiers will not hesitate should they in their sweep operations run into a detail of Pakistan soldiers on patrol on our side of the border." The daily Nation suggests that the source of American "GIs' trigger-happiness" is that they "represent a government that believes in pre-emptive military assaults and feels no qualms about murdering even civilians."

The daily Nation urges the Pakistan government not to trust the Americans and develop "a close and multifaceted relationship with Beijing." Syed Mohammad Tariq Pirzada (Nation, Pakistan) argues that Pakistan should develop a "comprehensive strategic partnership" with Iran and China.

India

1. India: Domestic Situation

The Vajpayee Government has cleared a Bill banning cow slaughter. Additionally, the government has set up a Group of Ministers (GoM) on reservation for the economically backward classes among

the forward castes and has also granted full Statehood for Delhi. All of these steps are being seen as "election-oriented" steps. The Indian Express writes that "in the name of the cow, development issues are being given the go-by once again." J.N. Dixit (Indian Express) and Saeed Naqvi (Indian Express) report on last month's brainstorming session of the Congress Party.
"GoM to study quota for poor among forward castes"
"No beef in this law"
"The Shimla consensus"

The daily Hindu reported on the legal battle over the Best Bakery communal riot case (in Gujarat) in which all the 21 accused were acquitted for "want of evidences." The key witness in the Best bakery case, Zahira Sheikh, is seeking retrial of the case at any place outside Gujarat.
"Gujarat Govt. moves HC in bakery case"
"SC notice to Centre, Gujarat on NHRC plea"
"Zahira moves SC"

The Deputy Prime Minister of India, L.K. Advani stated that his government will not try to bring in a legislation for the construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya, adding that "we are not ready to sacrifice the Government" over the temple issue. Mahant Nritya Gopal Das, the new chief of the Ramjanmabhoomi Nyas, has stated that "we owe it to the Hindu samaj to fulfil its wish (for a temple) ... through an understanding with our Muslim brothers. They know that the mosque is no more, what's left is the Ramjanmabhoomi. Therefore, it's better that they offer us the land treating us as elder brothers while we should treat them as our younger brothers.''
"Govt cannot be sacrificed for Bill on Ayodhya: Advani"
"I am not the VHP's bonded labourer"

Shabana Azmi (Deccan Herald) examines the statistics on domestic violence in India and writes that "all other freedoms lose their shine and become meaningless unless all individuals are ensured a life without fear."

Writing about the controversial issue of a uniform civil code, B.G.Verghese (Hindu) argues that "a secular India needs a uniform civil code," but the "bogey that a uniform civil code necessarily entails the repeal of personal laws needs to be laid to rest." A report in the daily Hindu examines the 1985 Shah Bano case that started the debate over the uniform civil code.
"Who's afraid of a uniform civil code?"
"The Shah Bano legacy"
The Indian Supreme Court has ruled that government employees have no "fundamental, legal, moral or equitable right" to go on strike even for a just cause.
"Govt. staff cannot go on strike even for a just cause: SC"

2. Military Matters

A. K. Goel, inspector general, air safety, Indian Air Force, finds it "unfair that the sobriquet of ''Flying Coffin'' has been conferred" on Indian MIG 21s. A US team is scheduled to visit New Delhi next month to discuss the details of the possible sale of P-3 maritime patrol aircraft to India. Nayyar Zaidi (News, Pakistan) reports that "Indians are not really thrilled by the level and scope of high-tech cooperation."
"Don't shoot down IAF over the MiG myths"
"US team to visit India next month"

The Indian Defense Minister, George Fernandes, has ruled out handing over the Central Vigilance Commission's (CVC) report on defense deals to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of Parliament.
"CVC report top secret, says Fernandes"

3. Foreign Affairs

Brahma Chellaney (Hindustan Times) criticizes Prime Minister Vajpayee for failing "to capitalise on the boost provided by India's new nuclear State status," and acting in ways that erodes "the country's self-esteem."

Brain Cloughley (Daily Times) argues that a minor border disagreement between Indian and Chinese patrols in Arunachal Pradesh might have "set back Sino-Indian rapprochement considerably."

Kashmir

1. Internal Situation

Violence continued to claim more lives in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). The daily Indian Express (India) reported that "the Army's ambitious plans to raise more Rashtriya Rifles (RR) battalions in Jammu and Kashmir has run into a wall of fiscal discipline and the Centre's efforts to back Chief Minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed." Zia Iqbal Shahid (News, Pakistan) reports that the European Union has expressed reservations about the Indian plan of building fences along the 740-kilometre Line of Control (LoC).
"Nine die in Kashmir violence"
"Militants hit crowded Lal Chowk, kill 2 BSF jawans"
"Mufti touch, funds halt RR expansion plan"

Praveen Swami (Hindu, India) writes that the "real tragedy in Kishtwar is the failure of the political establishment to affirm that the carnage there distinguishes little between Hindu and Muslim." Kuldip Nayar (Indian Express) believes that Vajpayee "would be surprised how easy it would be to silence the guns if he were to talk to all parties in Kashmir." Writing for the Defence Journal (Pakistan), Muhammad Irshad suggests that India cannot be trusted to respect any treaties with Pakistan.
"Crossing the Bhacchi Bridge"
"The Chenab divide of Kashmir"

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