

# **SANDNet Weekly Update, August 16, 2002**

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## **Recommended Citation**

SANDNet, "SANDNet Weekly Update, August 16, 2002", SANDNet, August 16, 2002,  
<https://nautilus.org/sandnet/sandnet-weekly-update-august-16-2002/>

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### **Nuclear Issues**

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## 1. Related News and Analysis

T.S. Subramanian's essay in Frontline (India) examines India's nuclear power generation programs. John Cherian's essay (Frontline, India) suggests that Russia may be resisting US pressure on the issue of helping Iran construct its first nuclear reactor.

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## Afghanistan

### 1. Current Situation

At least eleven coalition troops are feared dead in a missile attack in the Gardez area of Paktia province. Balochistan Post (Pakistan) reports that armed gunmen looted a UN office in Ghazni. Twenty-six people were killed in an explosion at a warehouse in eastern Afghanistan. According to Frontier Post (Pakistan) the explosion might have been set off by either the Taliban or al-Qaeda operatives.

["26 die in Jalalabad warehouse explosion"](#)

Frontier Post (Pakistan) reports that "hundreds of kilos of heroin are being manufactured each week by factories recently set up in eastern Afghanistan."

UN officials have criticized Iran for forcing Afghan refugees to return home.

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## India-Pakistan Tensions

### 1. News

In his Independence Day speech, President Pervez Musharraf dismissed India's Kashmir election plan as a farce. In reaction, India's Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee has stated that Pakistan "has resorted to cross-border terrorism to grab Kashmir." An Indian Foreign Office spokesperson called Musharraf's remarks as validating India's concerns that "Pakistan intends to sabotage these elections."

["Flagrant attempts by Pak. to disrupt J&K polls"](#)

["We will counter Pak. designs: New Delhi"](#)

### 2. Analysis

In his article for the daily Hindustan Times, J.N. Dixit calls on India to "monitor Pakistan's relations particularly with Bangladesh and Sri Lanka in the coming months, to see that these equations do not militate against [India's] interests in these countries and relations with China."

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## Pakistan

### 1. Pakistan: Domestic Situation

The government of Pakistan suspects that Lashkar-i-Jhangvi - a violently sectarian and outlawed militant network - was responsible for the two recent attacks on Christians. The Punjab police has claimed that they have arrested 12 terrorists allegedly involved in the attack. The Daily Times (Pakistan) reports that intelligence sources in Pakistan have identified a new militant group Lashkar-e-Omar with suspected links to Al Qaeda network. The daily News (Pakistan) reports the Pakistan's Interior Ministry has warned the provincial governments that banned extremist groups in Pakistan "may create religious frenzy against the government (of Musharraf) to convert the election campaign

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into fight of Islamic forces against alleged anti-Sharia/pro-US government." Meanwhile, the US authorities have shut down the American Center in Islamabad because of security concerns.

["Lashkar-i-Jhangvi blamed for attacks"](#)

["American Centre in Islamabad closed"](#)

Pakistani security forces have reportedly launched a large-scale operation in a tribal northwestern district to hunt down Taliban and al-Qaeda fugitives believed to be hiding in the area. An editorial in Balochistan Post (Pakistan) claims that the polices pursued by President Musharraf are "eroding the authority of Pakistan Government in the tribal areas of the country."

Tariq Rahman (News, Pakistan) argues that repression will not stop the rise of militant Islam in Pakistan. Mubarak Ali, a Pakistani scholar, believes that "day by day Pakistan is becoming more fundamentalist."

The Sindh High Court has accepted Ahmad Omar Saeed Shaikh's appeal against the death sentence awarded to him in the Daniel Pearl kidnapping/murder case by an anti-terrorism court for regular hearing.

["SHC to hear Omar's appeal in Karachi"](#)

Pakistan's second Agosta 90-B class submarine is reportedly ready for launching.

["Agosta ready for trials"](#)

A.G. Noorani (Frontline, India) takes a detailed look at constitutional amendments proposed by President Musharraf.

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## **2. US - Pakistan Relations**

According to a daily News report, US has made the release of \$700 million in aid to Pakistan conditional to its use in non-defense sectors. In his column for the daily News, I. Hassan writes that "never has there ever been such blatant imperial ruler as now under the Emperor Bush."

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## **India**

### **1. India: Domestic Situation**

The three-member Election Commission (EC) - stating that "the wounds of the communal divide following the riots have not yet healed" - has ruled out holding early elections in Gujarat. During its visit to the state, the EC met with the victims of anti-Muslim riots. The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has been putting pressure on the EC to agree to early elections in the state. A daily Hindu editorial criticizes the BJP for "trying rather desperately all kinds of pressure tactics to make the panel settle for an early election." Dionne Bunsha's essay (Frontline, India) examines growing factionalism within the BJP in Gujarat. A report in the daily Indian Express details the stage-management of President Kalam's recent visit to riot effected parts of Ahmedabad.

["Give us a roof, then we will think of votes"](#)

["BJP lashes out at CEC"](#)

["Coercive tactics"](#)

R. Ramaseshan's report (Telegraph, India) indicates that L.K. Advani's power within the BJP is growing. The daily Indian Express reports that "BJP chief M. Venkaiah Naidu has pumped in more fresh, and young, blood into the party." V. Venkatesan (Frontline, India) argues that "in its quest to

appear as a party with a commitment," the BJP has ended up "exposing the contradictions within itself and the coalition it leads at the Centre." Sham Lal (Telegraph, India) believes that the "erosion" of BJP's support base "revealed by a series of reverses in state assembly elections, [has] left it demoralized."

Raja Mohan's essay in the daily Hindu argues that "the security of South Asia has been truly globalised after September 11", making it necessary for India to "publicly articulate" its "conception of peace and its consequences for the region."

["Burying the legacy of Partition"](#)

## **2. US-India Relations**

In his article for the daily Hindu, Achin Vanaik argues that "for all the posturing by India and Pakistan, it is the U.S. that will most successfully manipulate the other two in the triangle that joins all of them."

["Powell's visit"](#)

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## **Kashmir**

### **1. Internal Situation**

The All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC), an umbrella organization of Kashmiri nationalist parties, has indicated its openness to hold talks with the Kashmir Committee, headed by the former Union Law Minister Ram Jethmalani. APHC has also reiterated that it will not participate in the upcoming state elections. A daily Indian Express editorial applauds APHC's decision to talk with the Indian government's Kashmir Committee while warning that violence can derail the process. Muzamil Jaleel (Indian Express) reports that APHC's boycott of the elections has made the victory of the ruling National Conference a foregone conclusion. Meanwhile, there have been reports of more violence in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).

["Hurriyat ready for talks with Jethmalani panel"](#)

["13 killed in Kashmir violence"](#)

The daily Telegraphs has reported that security forces in Kashmir are allegedly tearing up peoples identity cards in order to force them to get new identity cards issued by the Election Commission. Kuldeep Nayar's essay (Indian Express) questions Indian government's timing of the elections and calls for inviting international observers to monitor the process. Amitabh Matto (Hindu) notes the absence of excitement in J&K about the upcoming elections and the possibility of low voter turnout and urges the Indian government to "outline a non-partisan national vision for Jammu and Kashmir" that can excite people in J&K.

["A vision for Kashmir"](#)

### **2. India and Pakistan**

Muzamil Jaleel report in the daily Indian Express notes that President Musharraf's statements on Kashmir were "a clear signal to the Hurriyat ...to further harden its stand on Assembly elections."

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