

# SANDNet Weekly Update, August 3, 2000

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### India

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## **1. Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty**

PK Iyegnar, former chairman of the Indian Atomic Energy Commission, told a workshop at the Security and Political Risk Analysis (SAPRA) think-tank that India could not develop a nuclear weaponization program on the basis of one hydrogen bomb test. He said that India should not sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty until it had conducted more tests and had established the reliability of its command and control systems.

## **2. Indian Military**

An editorial in Pakistan's The Tribune argued that India's struggle for military manpower is a result of alienation of the Sikh peasantry after Operation Blue Star and "the systematic degradation of the prestige of the soldier." An editorial in the Times of India reported that Pakistani columnist Altaf Gauhar had said that Pakistan started all the wars on the assumption that India could not militarily match Pakistan. The editorial argued that India had yet to learn from the experience at Kargil, where there was a lack of "pro-active and anticipatory assessment of the likely threats and timely preparations to counter it."

## **3. Foreign Relations: Japan, US**

Japan's Ambassador to India Hiroshi Hirabayashi indicated that Japan, while it would not deviate from its opposition to nuclear proliferation, would seek to expand its political and economic relations with India. Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori is expected to visit India from August 21-26.

The government of India officially announced that Prime Minister AB Vajpayee will meet with US President Bill Clinton during a trip to Washington DC from September 15-17. He will also visit New York and San Francisco. Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh met with US Secretary of State Madeline Albright at the ASEAN Regional Forum to discuss Vajpayee's trip to the US.

## **3. Foreign Relations: PRC, Russia**

An editorial in the Times of India argued that while the PRC will continue to support Pakistan, the PRC finds Pakistan's obsession with the Kashmir issue to be problematic. It further argued that the visit of PRC Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan is indicative of developing ties between the PRC and India, partly a result of their shared interest in "the sustainability and sustenance of multi-ethnic, multicultural, multi-religious and multilingual states." The PRC's annual meeting of its top leadership in Beidaihe, which meets every August to plan its economic and political strategies for the year, was reported by The Hindu as having Sino-Indian relations as an important issue.

India joined the PRC and Russia in criticizing the US for destabilizing regional security and weakening arms control efforts through its proposed National and Theater Missile Defense (NMD, TMD) programs.

Indian Defense Minister George Fernandes announced that India and Russia had agreed to set up a defense minister-level joint commission to foster military ties.

## **4. Foreign Relations: Other**

Indian Minister for Commerce and Industry Omar Abdullah and the Syrian Deputy Prime Minister signed agreements for trade promotion and cooperation in a range of science and technology areas.

Speaking at the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh warned that

the overthrow of a multiethnic regime in Fiji threatened peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific. Singh was to conduct bilateral meetings with many of the member states.

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## **Pakistan**

### **1. Overview**

Former Prime Minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif survived a threat to his leadership of the Pakistan Muslim League (PML) after he agreed to dialogue with the Musharraf government. This was demanded by rebel groups, which had been seeking to replace Sharif and pursue a more conciliatory approach to relations with the government.

Pakistani Brigadier Randir Singh said, "The Pakistani army, which was involved in the proxy war, has taken direct control of ISI and terrorist outfits operating in the Valley." He said control over militancy in the Kashmir Valley "had slipped away... for some time," and control was regained to re-establish secessionism in Kashmir.

### **2. ASEAN Regional Forum**

Pakistan was denied membership in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) because there was no consensus on the proposal. ASEAN Chairman Surin Pitsuwan said that consensus on admitting the DPRK had occurred before a moratorium on new members had been agreed to. A senior official in the Indian Foreign Office said that India is not in favor of Pakistan joining ARF.

### **2. Foreign Relations: PRC, Britain**

PRC Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan assured Pakistan that their bilateral relationship would not be affected by any changes in the PRC-India relationship. During Tang's visit, Pakistan is expected to seek the PRC's support for a plebiscite in both Pakistan- and India-administered Kashmir to determine the status of the Kashmir.

British Foreign Office Minister Peter Hain, referring to a possible arms embargo against Pakistan, reported to the British House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee that, "there is no formal arms embargo, and there is no de facto informal one either." He said that considerations of being undercut by arms manufacturers in other countries impacted the decision to approve some export licenses.

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## **Kashmir**

### **1. Hizbul Mujahideen Ceasefire Offer**

The pro-Pakistan militant Hizbul Mujahideen announced a unilateral ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir. Abdul Majid Dar, apparent commander of the Hizbul, made this announcement and said that the Hizbul would support the All-Party Hurriyat Conference in dialogue with India. Dar called on India to respond in kind and said the only condition was that security forces not kill militants or harass citizens. Supreme Commander of the Hizbul Mujahideen Syed Salahuddin confirmed the offer and said the offensive operations against India would continue if India did not respond positively within a few days. He also acknowledged that the local Mujahideen groups may have their own

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views on the offer, suggesting the offer was premature. According to a participant in a meeting of the Jamaat-i-Islami, Jamaat-i-Islami Amir Qazi Husain Ahmad, who the participant said was the supreme commander of the Hizbul Mujahideen movement, was reported as having said that it was inconceivable that such a decision was made without him. Supreme Commander of the Hizbul Mujahideen Syed Salahuddin said on Thursday that the offer would be revoked if India insisted on holding talks only within the context of the constitution.

## **2. Responses to Ceasefire Offer**

India expressed cautious welcome at the ceasefire, stating it would watch the situation. An Indian government official said, "Even if the outcome cannot violate the constitution, this does not mean we will only talk with those who swear by the document." The Indian government's offer is somewhat contradictory, but indicates increased flexibility in its approach to talks.

In response to the ceasefire offer by the Hizbul Mujahideen, the Indian army has been ordered by its commanders to suspend all operations against Islamic militants in the Kashmir for the first time in eleven years. Lieutenant General JR Mukherjee said, "I have instructed all field commanders to suspend operations against the Hizbul Mujahideen. However, our operations against other [militant groups] will continue." Other militant groups vowed to continue their attacks. The army said that the Hizbul Mujahideen represent 800 of the 1500 active militants in Jammu and Kashmir.

A Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman said that Pakistan recognized the All-Party Hurriyat conference as the representative of the Kashmiri people and would therefore be guided by its response to the ceasefire declaration by the Hizbul Mujahideen. The Hizbul Mujahideen was expelled, because of its ceasefire declaration, from the Mutihadda Jehadi Council, a body comprising representatives from sixteen militant groups active in the Kashmir. The English-daily The News carried an editorial which said, "the offer is the first sign of flexibility from a mainstream group."

Other Pakistan-based militant groups criticized the Hizbul Mujahideen ceasefire offer as a being "not the Hizbul Mujahideen's announcement but of some so-called commanders who have been bought by India." These groups include the Jamiatul Mujahideen, Tehrikul Mujahideen Jammu and Kashmir, and the Al-Badr Mujahideen. They promised to continue their struggle for the liberation of Kashmir. The ex-militant Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) also criticized the announcement as poorly planned and ill-timed.

The All-Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) chairman Abdul Ghani Bhat said, "The call for ceasefire made by the Hizbul Mujahideen is a step towards peace." He further said, "The situation is still hazy. ... I have read in newspapers that India has welcomed the ceasefire. But, if Pakistan does not, it will not succeed. Pakistan is yet to respond." The APHC executive council later met and concluded that the Hizbul offer was "hasty," would "create confusion among the people," and "creates hurdles in the settlement of the Kashmir problem." The APHC was reported as saying that it would welcome talks between the Indian government and the Hizbul as long as the APHC was not marginalized in the process.

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah asked all other militant groups to follow the Hizbul Mujahideen and declare a ceasefire. Nine other militant groups have rejected the ceasefire, putting into doubt any foreseeable success.

## **3. Commentary on the Ceasefire Offer**

An article by KK Katyal in The Hindu argues that the ceasefire offer by the Hizbul Mujahideen creates real reasons for hope in India. One reason is that it is the largest indigenous militant group, and its offer signals possible "disenchantment of the Kashmiris with the terroristic

adventures of outside elements." However, there is uncertainty as the process could easily be derailed by other militant groups. An editorial in The Dawn acknowledged that this offer may not actually lead the issue forward, but argued that it does "put the onus on India to come up with a matching response," which will be difficult compared to rejecting the autonomy resolution.

An editorial in the Times of India argued that it is important to speculate on the US role in recent events as there have been too many developments recently for them to be unconnected and it is not unlikely that Pakistan is being forced to stop supporting militants in Jammu and Kashmir as a precondition to an economic bailout by the West. Another editorial in the Times of India contemplated whether the offer was indicative of a divide in the militancy between "'locals' who favor a political movement that can accommodate negotiations and peace ... and the 'foreign' outfits dedicated to pan-Islamism and violent jihad." The editorial also offers four premises that must be accepted by the Indian government for dialogue to proceed.

#### **4. Autonomy**

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah reiterated that the onus is upon the central government to move forward on autonomy, and reiterated that any talks would have to be within the context of the constitution. He said the National Conference would continue to support the NDA government of Prime Minister AB Vajpayee as long as the door for discussion on autonomy for Jammu and Kashmir was open. Union Minister Chaman Lal Gupta reiterated that the cabinet stood by its rejection of the autonomy resolution, and reported that Vajpayee assured the cabinet that no talks would be held on autonomy for Jammu and Kashmir.

Former Foreign Secretary Muchkund Dubey argued in an editorial that the "Kashmiri sees the Indian state arrayed against him at every step," but if an autonomy package had been worked out "the emotional integration of Kashmiris with the rest of the country would have begun."

#### **5. Military Actions**

Militants and Indian security forces continued to clash in Jammu and Kashmir, with at least four Indian soldiers and 16 militants killed.

#### **6. India-Pakistan Dialogue**

Pakistan Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf suggested an agreement between Pakistan and India to prevent war, and said he would hand over power to a civilian government by 2002.

The Indo-Pakistan People's Forum for Peace and Democracy arranged a meeting of intellectuals and former diplomats of India and Pakistan.

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### **Sri Lanka**

#### **1. Draft Constitution**

The opposition UNP party stated that it would not support the current reforms of the constitution if they were presented to Parliament in their current form, arguing there was opposition by Buddhists and the Tamil parties. Science and Technology Minister Battie Weerakoon said that the government would not make public the draft constitution until it was presented to Parliament on August 4. President Chandrika Kumaratunga is attempting to gather support for the draft from the other parties, including using rallies in Colombo.

## **2. Foreign Relations: Britain**

The government of Sri Lanka has asked the British government to ban the LTTE's offices there under the new Terrorism Bill. The LTTE uses the office for fundraising and public relations, and the British government has until now said the LTTE is not breaking any British laws.

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