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Nuclear Issues

1. Correction

Editorial note: In SANDNet Weekly Update Volume 2 #8, we misidentified the territoriality of nuclear sites. The report should have stated that these nuclear sites were Pakistani.

2. Russian Nuclear Fuel

Alexander Alekseyev, a Russian Foreign Ministry department director, stated that Russia would continue to supply nuclear fuel to India's Tarapur power reactors despite US protests. He stated that Russia has "not violated any of our obligations" under the Nuclear Suppliers Group guidelines. The US has criticized Russia because, while the Tarapur plants are under IAEA purview, other plants are not officially safeguarded, and thus the transfer represents a proliferation risk. An Indian Foreign Office spokesman attempted to allay US concerns, stating that "India has consistently and impeccably observed those [IAEA] safeguards."

Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman Riaz Khan stated Pakistan's opposition to Russia's supplying nuclear fuel to Indian power plants. Khan said that this transfer would help India's nuclear weapons program while Pakistan suffered tight restrictions on its nuclear program.

3. Pakistan Nuclear Submarine

Pakistan Navy public spokesman Roshan Khayal confirmed an earlier statement by Deputy Chief of Naval Staff Rear Admiral Afzal Tahir, in which Tahir said that Pakistan would equip its submarines with nuclear missiles. The Times of India stated that while both India and Pakistan have nuclear weapons, it is not believed that either has deployed nuclear weapons or developed warheads for their missile systems.

4. India-Pakistan Nuclear Talks

The Dawn reported that the Pakistan Foreign Office director stated that stability in South Asia could be best assured by bilateral talks between India and Pakistan to determine the credible minimum nuclear deterrent needed. The director stated that Pakistan was ready to sign reciprocal agreements to not deploy ballistic missiles, to not weaponize nuclear missile systems, and to not develop anti-missile systems. These and other nuclear risk-reduction confidence building (CBMs) measures were discussed at a conference on non-military CBMs held last week.

5. India Missile Program

The Times of India reported that Indian Defense Minister George Fernandes stated that the Agni II missile has begun limited production and will be inducted into the Indian Army during the next year.

India

1. Ceasefire Extension

At a meeting last Wednesday of the Indian government's Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), it

was decided to extend the unilateral ceasefire in Kashmir until the end of May. Indian Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee also warned militant groups that India did not have infinite patience for those advocating violence. The Dawn reported that real test of the ceasefire will come with the spring thaw in Kashmir, when militants will have an easier time moving about.

The Dawn reported that US Congressmen Joseph Pitts and Jim McDermott had asked India to extend the ceasefire and to issue travel documents to members of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference.

2. Security Forces Perspective on Ceasefire

The Commander of the Indian Army's 57 Mountain Division, Major General Iqbal Singh, stated that military forces in Manipur would suspend counter-insurgency operations there for 15 days for the Holi festival.

A soldier in Jawan stated that the ceasefire has emboldened militant groups to further violence. He said, "This is entirely the result of the ceasefire. They ... are no longer scared of being flushed out by us."

3. Government Talks with Kashmiri Groups

The Dawn reported that Indian Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee proposed that his government meet with the All Parties Hurriyat Conference and other groups to discuss Jammu and Kashmir. The Dawn argues that this is an effort by Vajpayee to find a means to resume talks with Pakistan, and argues that this may be initiated by resumption of SAARC.

4. Regional Institutions

An editorial in the Times of India argued that the current maritime challenge in the Indian Ocean are not superpower rivalries, but that of keeping the sea-lanes open from piracy and illegal arms traffic. The editorial states that India is using the recent international fleet review to present an image of itself as an important regional maritime power.

India agreed to a meeting of the standing committee of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) after a meeting between Indian Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee and Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga. India had previously sought to postpone indefinitely political-level talks that would involve Pakistan until Pakistan agreed to abandon cross-border terrorism. The Dawn reported that SAARC will meet again in May, after not meeting since the 1999 Kargil incident.

5. India-PRC Relations

The Times of India reported that the PRC is feeling increasingly constrained by the strengthening relationship between India, the US and Japan. The article cited a Beijing Review article as saying that former US President Bill Clinton targeted US policy on India to "make use of that country to guard against China."

6. Pakistani Airspace Intrusion

An Indian External Affairs Ministry spokesman rejected Pakistan's denials that its planes had not violated Indian airspace last week. Two Pakistan Army "Mushak" trainers had reportedly crossed into Indian airspace on February 20, Indian ground artillery opened fire and damaged one of the planes, and both planes returned across the Line of Control.

Pakistan

1. Pakistan-US Relations

A three-member team of US Congressmen met with Pakistan Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf to discuss bilateral issues and to visit the Line of Control and several refugee camps.

2. Afghanistan

Syed Mazhar Ali Shah, Pakistan's Secretary of Home and Tribal Affairs, stated that Pakistan intended to close the Nasir Bagh camp, which currently serves 100,000 Afghans. Shah said that the refugees could go to other camps or return to Afghanistan.

3. Militant Groups

Pakistan Interior Minister Moinuddin Haider stated that it was the policy of the Pakistani government that it supports jehad in Kashmir and has never called for its end. Haider stated that jehad was an indigenous movement.

4. Pakistan-India Relations

Pakistan military spokesman Major General Rashid Qureshi asked the US to pressure India to hold talks with Pakistan because the extension has not changed circumstances on the ground.

Pakistan Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf stated that while recent statements by Indian Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee indicated he was prepared to reconsider India's stance on Pakistan, but that "these words have so far not been followed by deeds so far." A Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman stated that the ceasefire extension was an attempt by India to mislead the world by maligning the Kashmiri movement and repeating old allegations against Pakistan.

Kashmir

1. Ceasefire Extension

The Times of India reported that many of the restrictions imposed upon Kashmiri group leaders had been lifted, though clashes with security forces continue. Protests had erupted after several people had died while in custody of security forces and others had been shot while protesting.

Spokesmen for the Harkatul Mujahideen and the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba rejected the ceasefire extension, stating that there has been no ceasefire on the ground in Kashmir, and they called for continued violence against Indian forces. Syed Salahuddin, leader of the Hizbul Mujahideen in Pakistan, also criticized the ceasefire as "worthless" and pressed India for assurances on the "core issue" of Kashmir. However, the All Parties Hurriyat Conference praised the ceasefire extension, and said that it hoped the ceasefire was aimed at the initiation of dialogue to solve the Kashmir issue.

In an essay in the Times of India, Aunohita Mojumdar states that in Kashmir there is uncertainty as to which parties are covered by the ceasefire because of the large number of armed groups operating in Kashmir and in the vicinity of the Line of Control. Mojumdar states that Kashmiris support the peace initiative but are increasingly distrustful of the Indian government's gestures. In a separate article, Mojumdar writes that while the ceasefire had led to a calm in Jammu and Kashmir, the recent custodial deaths and the firing upon demonstrators have inflamed villager's sympathies for the plight of militant groups.

2. India-Pakistan Relations

B. Muralidhar Reddy wrote in The Hindu that despite the closure of Track I talks between India and Pakistan, Track II talks have proved a strong point of contact between the two countries. Reddy also reports that "Track III" contacts, such as visits by public personalities, is also helpful.

Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front chairman Amanullah Khan and 87 other leaders from Pakistan-administered Kashmir are seeking clearance visas from the Indian government to attend a Jammu conference, entitled "J&K: In search of peace and solution." The Hindu reports that this request puts India in a difficult situation, similar to that of the request by the All Parties Hurriyat Conference for passports to visit Pakistan.

Sri Lanka

1. LTTE Ceasefire

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) extended their unilateral ceasefire and stated that they would engage in peace talks with the Sri Lankan government if it reciprocated on the ceasefire, a demand that the Sri Lankan government has so far rejected.

2. Government Talks

During her visit to India, Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga raised the possibility of talks with the LTTE despite tension over the ceasefire issue.

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