

SANDNet Weekly Update, March 12, 2002

Recommended Citation

SANDNet, "SANDNet Weekly Update, March 12, 2002", SANDNet, March 12, 2002,
<https://nautilus.org/sandnet/sandnet-weekly-update-march-12-2002/>

CONTENTS

March 12, 2002

Volume 3, #9

[Nuclear Issues](#)

1. [Related News and Analysis](#)

[Afghanistan War and Implications](#)

1. [Afghanistan: Current Situation](#)
2. [Humanitarian Crisis](#)

[India-Pakistan Tensions](#)

1. [News](#)
2. [Analysis](#)

[Pakistan](#)

1. [Pakistan: Domestic Situation](#)
2. [China - Pakistan Relations](#)

[India](#)

1. [India: Domestic Situation](#)

[Kashmir](#)

1. [Internal Situation](#)
2. [India and Pakistan](#)

[Sri Lanka](#)

1. [Internal Situation](#)

[Region](#)

1. [News and Analysis](#)

Nuclear Issues

1. Related News and Analysis

Senator Richard Lugar, a ranking Republican on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, believes that nuclear threat reduction measures between the US and Russia can be extended to Pakistan and India. Sophisticated radiation sensors have reportedly been installed at US border positions and key locations around Washington. India tested Akash, a surface to air missile with a 25 km range.

["Law soon on N-threat reduction steps: US"](#)

["US uses sensors amid al-Qaeda nuclear fear"](#)

["Akash test-fired"](#)

Afghanistan War and Implications

1. Afghanistan: Current Situation

Afghan fighters and US troops have been engaged in a fierce battle with al-Qaeda and Taliban soldiers in eastern Afghanistan. The US troops have suffered their highest casualty since the beginning of the war in Afghanistan. There have been reports of splits between Afghan soldiers fighting alongside the US forces. The US forces have now begun to withdraw from the area. According to a report in the daily Frontier Post, Afghan soldiers supporting the US forces are being paid about \$200 a month. In an unrelated event, three Danish and two German soldiers were killed in Kabul when munitions they were defusing exploded. A report by Rahimullah Yusufzai gives a brief background information on Saifur Rahman who is leading the Taliban and al-Qaeda troops in Paktia.

Twenty-three people were reportedly killed in US warplane raids in rural Afghanistan close to the Pakistani border. International Committee of the Red Cross has registered 895 Pakistani nationals imprisoned in Afghanistan.

According to a report in the daily Frontier Post, rival Afghan factions are sliding towards a major conflict in northern Afghanistan. Meanwhile, the whereabouts of former Afghan warlord and Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar remain unknown.

2. Humanitarian Crisis

Afghan refugees living in camps in Iran and Pakistan have started to move back to Afghanistan. Iran hopes to repatriate some 400,000 Afghan refugees this year. The Human Rights Watch (HRW) has, however, warned Afghan refugees against returning to their homes too quickly. Meanwhile, between 300 to 500 Afghan fleeing the US bombardment in eastern provinces have entered Pakistan.

["4,700 DPs cross into Afghanistan"](#)

Many Afghans have reportedly died from various diseases in different parts of the country. According to HRW, the US State Department's annual human rights report on Afghanistan plays down human rights abuses by anti-Taliban forces.

India-Pakistan Tensions

1. News

According to an unconfirmed report in the daily Dawn India has reduced the number of troops on the border with Pakistan. India has rejected various Pakistani offers aimed at reducing tension between the two countries. Pakistan, meanwhile, has acknowledged that it fired on an Indian plane carrying V.K. Bhatia, Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief Western Air Command, that had entered Pakistan airspace at the Line of Control. The plane was hit but landed safely.

["India reduces troops on borders: Advani invited to Islamabad"](#)

["Advani turns down Pak. invitation"](#)

["Ready for extradition treaty with India"](#)

["Air Marshal's plane hit by Pak. fire"](#)

According to various press reports, India's Information and Broadcasting Minister Sushma Swaraj's visit to Pakistan in connection with SAARC Information Ministers' conference has not helped in reducing tensions between the two countries. Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan has urged Pakistan and India to peacefully resolve their differences.

["Pak. must address India's concerns"](#)

2. Analysis

Essays and editorials in Indian and Pakistani press have urged the two countries to peacefully resolve their various disputes. Kunwar Idris essay in the daily Dawn argues that "Pakistan must strive for peace and friendship with India for the sake of the unity of the Muslims of the two countries." Writing in the daily Hindu, K. K. Katyal believes that "Indian Minister's (Sushma Swaraj) visit to Pakistan after the recent escalation could have been put to constructive use."

["Cold-shouldering peace"](#)

["An opportunity missed"](#)

Pakistan

1. Pakistan: Domestic Situation

According to a report in the daily Dawn, Pakistan has formally conveyed its decision to the US that Ahmed Omar Saeed Shaikh, the prime suspect in Daniel Pearl kidnapping case will be tried in Pakistan. There have been speculations that elements of Pakistan military intelligence (ISI) have been involved in the Daniel Pearl case. The US Secretary of State Colin Powell, however, has stated that there is no evidence of ISI involvement in the kidnapping and murder of Daniel Pearl. The Pakistan government has announced that it "will not take any further action against those activists of the banned groups who were arrested but had no criminal charges or having no FIR registered against them." All Pakistani newspapers also carried a New York Times report that elements of the terror network may be trying to regroup in remote sanctuaries in Pakistan near the Afghan border.

["Omar not being extradited"](#)

["Is Musharraf spooked by his spy agency?"](#)

["Al Qaeda trying to regroup in Pakistan"](#)

In an essay for Himal magazine, Aqil Shah argues that President Musharraf's "pro-West, anti-mullah

stance" is a way for him to "keep Pakistani democracy at bay." Ahsan Iqbal's essay in the daily Dawn also believes that the current Pakistani government is not interested in instituting democracy in the country. Writing for the daily Dawn, Roedad Khan argues that many Muslims "genuinely believe that the war on terrorism is simply a euphemism for extending US control in the Islamic world."

2. China - Pakistan Relations

Pakistan and China have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on military cooperation in the defense production sectors.

"Pakistan, China ink MoU on defense cooperation"

India

1. India: Domestic Situation

Over 600 people have been killed in the communal violence in Gujarat, India. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) has given mixed signals about whether or not it will abide by the court ruling on holding of puja at Ayodhya. India's Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee has stated that the proposed "symbolic puja" by the VHP on March 15 at Ayodhya would be allowed only if allowed by the Supreme Court. Indian opposition leaders have accused the Gujarat government of "criminal negligence if not connivance" in the Gujarat killings. In his essay for the daily Hindu, Harish Khare accuses the Gujarat government and its Chief Minister Narendra Modi of supporting the rioters. Home Minister L.K. Advani has rejected the Opposition's demand for his resignation and the removal of Gujarat Chief Minister. Meanwhile, K.G. Shah, a retired judge of the Gujarat High Court, has been appointed to head an inquiry into the Godhra train carnage and the subsequent violence.

["We won't accept court verdict: Nyas"](#)

["VHP's U-turn: we will abide by court verdict"](#)

["Govt. will abide by SC directive on puja: PM"](#)

["Opposition accuses Gujarat Govt. of 'abject failure'"](#)

["The guilty men of Ahmedabad"](#)

["Probe panel appointed"](#)

Indian and Pakistani newspapers have strongly condemned the communal violence in Gujarat.

["After Gujarat what?"](#)

["Ayodhya solutions"](#)

["Genocide in the land of Gandhi"](#)

Sultan Shahin's article in Asia Times looks at novelist Arundhati Roy's long fight against the building of big dams in India.

["India's goddess of small dams"](#)

India's Home Minister L. K. Advani has introduced a Bill in the Lok Sabha that aims to replace the controversial Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (Poto).

["Bill to replace Poto tabled"](#)

Writing for the daily News, Kamal Matinuddin believes that recent increase in India's defense budget will have major impact on Pakistan's security.

A report in the daily News suggests that the "breakthrough in US-India military relations" is "more hype than substance."

Kashmir

1. Internal Situation

Political unrest and violence in Jammu and Kashmir was reported in Pakistani and Indian newspapers. A report by Sudha Ramachandran of Asia Times examines Dukhtaran-e-Millat (Daughters of the Faith), an all women Kashmiri separatist group. According to a report in the daily News, various Kashmiri militant groups organized under the umbrella of United Jihad Council have begun restructuring their organizations. Meanwhile, the Chief Election Commissioner J.M. Lyngdoh has ruled out early Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir.

["Women lift the veil on Kashmir struggle"](#)

["CEC rules out early polls in J&K"](#)

2. India and Pakistan

In his essay for the daily Dawn, Khalid Mahmud examines the implications of President Musharraf's crackdown on Jihadi groups in Pakistan for the political future of Kashmir.

["Outgrowing jihadi culture"](#)

Sri Lanka

1. Internal Situation

An essay in Himal magazines examines the process that led to the signing of Norwegian brokered ceasefire accord between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). According to a report in the daily Hindu, LTTE has begun a program of mobilization in areas outside its control to project itself as a mass movement. In an official statement, US warned the LTTE not to "jeopardize" the ceasefire accord. In response, LTTE has stated that it is "sincerely and seriously committed" to peace. Nirupama Subramanian's report from an eastern town of Batticaloa suggests that the accord has "brought no peace of mind" to the residents of the town. Meanwhile, four people were killed when a grenade exploded at an election rally of the ruling National United Front.

["LTTE begins mass mobilization"](#)

["Fear stalks Batticaloa"](#)

["Rally attacked"](#)

Region

1. News and Analysis

Writer P. S. Suryanarayana believes that the US would be "asking for strategic assistance, not political alliances, in South Asia."

["The US agenda in South Asia"](#)

The World Health Organization (WHO) has expressed concern about the impact of hazardous environments on region's children under the age of five.

["Asia's unhealthy environments harm children the most"](#)

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