

# SANDNet Weekly Update, May 1, 2001

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## India

## **1. India-Bangladesh Relations**

India's Border Security Forces (BSF) criticized Bangladesh's Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) forces for using force to resolve a matter under political discussion by India and Bangladesh, referring to the BDR takeover of the Pyrdiwah village on the Indian side of their shared border.

Chief Minister of the India state of Assam, Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, stated that he received assurances from Home Minister L.K. Advani that the border would be strengthened to prevent a recurrence of the incident. Border Security Force (BSF) Deputy Inspector General S. Basumatari reported that India had put its troops on maximum alert following a build-up of forces by the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR). BDR Major Mahbubul Alam denied that there was any increase in BDR troops along the border. An Indian External Affairs Ministry also denied through a spokesman that there had been a buildup of Indian troops along the border. A BSF official stated that tensions were caused by the high number of "adverse possessions" along the border, such as where territory switches sides of the border as rivers changed course.

A spokesman in the Indian ministry of External Affairs stated that both India and Bangladesh should allow the appropriate institutional mechanisms created to cope with such a problem to do so. The spokesman said there should be a reduction in tensions through dialogue.

India's Border Security Forces (BSF) reported that demarcation of the India-Bangladesh border had stopped because Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) forces stated that they were unable to guarantee the safety of Indian survey personnel. The BSF also stated that fencing operations would be stalled. The Times of India reports that villagers who may be displaced to the Bangladesh side of the border by fencing have sought to stall fence construction. Bangladeshi border guards accused Indian Border Security Forces of arresting two Bangladeshi nationals on charges of spying and then beating them up. BSF reported arresting 56 Bangladeshi nationals for trying to cross into Pakistan from Kashmir.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Shiekh Hasina will meet with Indian leaders to discuss the border incident. India's Foreign Office proposed by note to the Bangladesh High Commission that Bangladesh send a team of officials to India to discuss finalization of their shared border. The note also welcomed Hasina's visit as soon as was feasible.

## **2. Satellite Launch**

The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) reported that the GSAT-1 experimental satellite put into orbit by the GSLV-D1 rocket last week did not reach a perfect geosynchronous orbit and is low on fuel. The ISRO stated that the satellite would drift 13 degrees per day and would be out of sight of the control facility by the end of the month, though other sources said that this statement was speculative.

Frontline Magazine carried a feature article on the satellite launch which included an in-depth description of the launch and a chronology of space program milestones.

## **3. India-Russia Military Deals**

Russia's Splyav reported that India and Algeria will buy its 90R anti-submarine missiles, for use on the RBU-6000 anti-submarine systems they will also buy from Russia.

Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov is scheduled to arrive in India for consultations with the Indian government. The Hindu is reporting that this visit will occur shortly after anticipated statements by US President George W. Bush on US plans for missile defense. C. Raja Mohan writes that US missile defense plans will be a matter for Ivanov's discussions in India.

## **4. US Sanctions**

Indian Minister of External Affairs and of Defense, Jaswant Singh, stated that he considered US sanctions against India, imposed after the 1998 nuclear tests, to be lifted. He explained, "I went there having the distinction of being the defense minister of India. It was clearly established that if you have military-to-military contact it can be nothing else (but lifting of military sanctions)."

## **5. India-Kashmir Dialogue**

Praveen Swami writes in Frontline Magazine that the ceasefire implemented by Indian Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee is dead, but that the appointment of K.C. Pant marks a new strategy by the Indian government. Swami states that so far, Pant has met with former leaders in the militant movement, but neither the focus of those talks nor the goal of speaking with these former officials is clear. Swami states that the Islamic far Right has generated support, which tends to be pro-Pakistan, partly as a result of violence against Muslims by Indian security forces but also because of growing violence against Muslims throughout India. Swami argues that violence will increase this summer as operations by the Indian military resume in Kashmir.

## **6. India-Pakistan Relations**

India's Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry will lead a business delegation to Pakistan next month to speak with businessmen there about ways to increase India-Pakistan trade volume. This effort comes as part of the overall effort to rebuild Track II diplomacy, which faltered after the 1999 Kargil incident.

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## **Pakistan**

### **1. Military Government**

Pakistan's Supreme Court ruled that several provisions of the military government's anti-corruption ordinance were contrary to law, in what the Times of India is describing as the second recent blow by the court to Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf and reports that dozens of politicians and senior bureaucrats have been imprisoned under the ordinances. The Supreme Court stated that people should not be held in remand for more than 15 days and neither could they be disqualified from public office for more than ten years.

Police in Pakistan reported that they had arrested over 300 pro-democracy opposition activists ahead of an anti-government May Day rally. Opposition sources stated that more than 500 had been detained.

### **2. Missile Proliferation**

US Central Intelligence Agency Deputy Director John McLaughlin stated in a speech that the DPRK's continuing supply of ballistic missiles and missile technology to countries such as Pakistan continues to be a threat to regional security.

### **3. Terrorism**

In an annual report on global terrorism, the US Department of State reported that terrorism against the US is shifting in its origins from the Middle East to South Asia. The report states that Afghanistan's Taliban provides a safe haven for terrorists and that Pakistan continues to support the

Taliban with materiel, intelligence and personnel. The report also accused Pakistan of continuing to support militancy in Kashmir.

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## **Kashmir**

### **1. Overview**

Balraj Puri argues in Frontline Magazine that, despite the number of initiatives in play to deal with the Kashmir issue, there will be no lasting peace in Kashmir unless the system is altered to democratically accommodate the diverse ethnic and religious perspectives in the area.

### **2. India-Pakistan Relations**

News media in Pakistan and India are reporting that it is likely that the two countries' foreign ministers will meet and talk on the sidelines of the upcoming SAARC meeting in Sri Lanka. A spokesman for the Indian Ministry of External Affairs said, "Separate meetings of foreign secretaries during SAARC standing committee meetings are not unusual."

### **3. India-Kashmir Talks**

The executive council of the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference stated that the Indian government should allow its delegation to visit Pakistan and extend an invitation to talks to Pakistan. The APHC stated that only talks that included Pakistan and the APHC, as the legitimate representative of the Kashmiri people, could result in a lasting solution to the Kashmir issue. Maulvi Abbas Ansari, a member of the APHC executive council, said, "[K.C.] Pant's letter suggests that the Kashmir issue is one of law and order and not a political dispute involving the will of the Kashmiri people."

Sant Kumar Sharma reports in the Times of India that political leaders in Jammu and Kashmir are disappointed in the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference's decision to not participate in the talks offered by K.C. Pant. Several Jammu and Kashmir state leaders encouraged the APHC to reconsider their decision.

Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party leader Shabir Ahmad Shah stated that he would discuss with "500 prominent people" for two days the central government's offer of talks and take their suggestions. Shah said his party does not want to reject India's offer outright and will formulate a full response.

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## **Sri Lanka**

### **1. Peace Process Overview**

An essay in Frontline Magazine by V. Suryanarayan argues that The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam's (LTTE) peace initiative was only an attempt to rebuild international support, and that India's experiences show that Sri Lanka can negotiate with the LTTE without lifting a ban on the group.

Nirupama Subramanian writes in The Hindu that the LTTE's decision to not extend its unilateral ceasefire has led to criticism of the Sri Lankan government for not reciprocating with its own goodwill gesture while the ceasefire was in place. P. Sravanamuttu of the Center for Policy Alternatives in Colombo stated that the government was mistaken if it "hoped to bomb the LTTE to

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the table."

The Sri Lankan government criticized the LTTE for interrupting the peace process by ending its unilateral ceasefire. The government appealed to the LTTE "not to squander, yet again, a valuable opportunity for peace."

## **2. Recent Conflicts**

Sri Lankan Army spokesman Brigadier Snathi Karunaratne stated that the military had launched an offensive to retake Elephant Pass in the Jaffna peninsula. Another military commander said that security forces were bracing themselves for increased LTTE activity with the group's withdrawal of their unilateral ceasefire.

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