

# SANDNet Weekly Update, May 10, 2002

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## **Nuclear Issues**

### **1. Related News and Analysis**

India is reportedly planning to conduct more tests of BrahMos, its supersonic cruise missile. According to a report in the Daily Times, Pakistani military will conduct its own missile tests within the next ten days. V.R. Raghavan's essay in the daily Hindu argues that "nuclear weapons have already proved incapable of conferring great power status on India."

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## **Afghanistan**

### **1. Current Situation**

Human Rights Watch has warned that factional fighting is threatening the process for the selection of Afghanistan's new government. The daily Dawn reports that a rocket hit an uninhabited area near a US Special Forces base in eastern Afghanistan. Warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar reportedly escaped a missile fired from a Predator drone aircraft. Coalition forces searching for Osama bin Laden dug up 23 graves in a cemetery in Afghanistan and took DNA samples from the corpses. Afghan warlord General Abdul Rashid Dostum has announced plans to free 400 Pakistani prisoners suspected of involvement with the Taliban. Two Afghans found guilty of killing three people including Meena Kishwar Kamal, one of the founding leaders of Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA), were executed in Pakistan. The daily News reports that some 40,000 Afghan refugees stranded in no man's land at Afghan-Pakistan border near Chaman may return to their homes.

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## **India-Pakistan Tensions**

### **1. News**

Indian government believes that there is no decline in cross-border infiltration in Jammu and Kashmir. The US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, however, believes that cross-border infiltration has gone down. The Indian army reportedly destroyed two explosive-laden vehicles of the Pakistani army.

### **2. Analysis**

Commentator Raja Mohan believes that the "only credible option for India is to simultaneously signal its readiness go to war to end cross-border terrorism and a willingness to seriously negotiate on Kashmir." In an article for the daily Hindu, K.K. Katyal finds it difficult "not to be pessimistic about the course of India-Pakistan relations in the near future."

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## **Pakistan**

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## **1. Pakistan: Domestic Situation**

Fourteen people, including 11 French nationals, were killed in Karachi when a suicide bomber drove into a Pakistan Navy bus and exploded some incendiary device. The Pakistani police have so far arrested more than 100 people in connection with its investigations of the bombing. The Pakistan government has not ruled out the possibility of Al Qaeda's involvement in the bombing and warned of more attacks. Kamran Khan's report in the daily News, however, suggests that an unidentified Pakistani group planned the attack. Pepe Escobar's essay in Asia Times suggests that various different parties could have carried out the attack.

According to a report in the Daily Times, the US and its allied forces are planning to extend their operations to the entire length of the Afghan-Pakistan border. Reports indicate that tribal leaders are unhappy at the presence of foreign troops and have warned of "bloodshed" in the area. The Daily Times reports that a check post of the US-led coalition forces was burnt while a rocket hit a building housing US agents. An editorial in the daily Balochistan Post states that the current government is "plunging Pakistan into fire to serve the interests of others." An essay in the Daily Times argues that "the US and the ISAF are not pitched against Al Qaeda or their pathetic friends, the Taliban, but against the tribes."

Former Chief Justice of Pakistan Sajjad Ali Shad's essay in the daily Dawn gives a thumbnail history of military's involvement in the country's politics.

Khalid Ahmed reviews reports appearing in Pakistan's Urdu press.

President Pervez Musharraf has stated that he is considering creating a constitutional role for the army in the future political setup. Six pro-government political parties have formed a new alliance to contest general elections in October.

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## **India**

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

More people have been killed in the continuing communal violence in Gujarat. Dionne Bunsha's essay in Frontline looks at the dire condition of Muslim families now living in relief camps. Another essay in the same magazine examines the anti-Muslim hate campaign launched by extremist Hindu parties. The Indian government has reacted strongly to international condemnation of religious violence and has stated that India will "not be spoken to from any position of assumed superiority or morality." Writer J. N. Dixit argues that instead of reacting negatively to international concern, the government should have neutralized the "criticism by appropriate policy decisions and actions." Valson Thampu's essay in the daily Hindu argues that Gujarat violence is criminalizing Indian society.

The daily Hindustan Times published an interview with Ram Paswan, the only Union Cabinet Minister to resign over the Gujarat violence.

According to a report in the daily Hindustan Times, India may have no option but to continue flying its ageing Russian-designed MiG-21 jets for at least another decade. A report in the daily Hindu examines the changes in India's defense purchases process.

The Frontline magazine published a profile of Justice B.N. Kirpal, the incoming Chief Justice of India.

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

US Special Forces from the Pacific Command have started arriving in Agra for the two-week long joint exercises with Indian para-commandoes.

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## **Kashmir**

### **1. Internal Situation**

Newspapers reported continued political unrest and violence in Jammu and Kashmir. The Indian government extended the judicial remand of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front leader Yasin Malik. Shiv Sena activists also manhandled Malik when he was taken for a hospital check-up. Six people were hurt when Indian police fired teargas to disperse crowds protesting the attack on Yasin Malik.

A. G. Noorani reviews two books on Kashmir by Alastair Lamb and C. Dasgupta.

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

Hizbul Mujahideen, one of the largest groups engaged in military operations in Kashmir, has expelled three senior commanders including its former military commander in Kashmir Majid Dar. Sudha Ramachandran believes that if the Indian government moves "cautiously, it can draw Dar's faction to participate in the elections."

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## **Regional News**

### **1. Burma**

According to Bertil Lintner of the Far Eastern Economic Review, the release of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi may not lead to "substantial political change any time soon."

### **2. Nepal**

Many security personnel and Maoist insurgents were killed in the continuing war in Nepal. Rita Manchanda's essay in Frontline, an Indian magazine, gives some background and details of the civil war in Nepal.

### **3. Iran**

Iran is reportedly developing Shahab-4, a missile with a 2,000 km range.

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