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# SANDNet Weekly Update, September 23, 2003

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## CONTENTS

**September 23, 2003**

**Volume 4, #15**

### Nuclear Issues

1. Pakistan
2. India
3. IAEA Conference
4. Opinions & Analysis

### Afghanistan

1. News & Reports
2. Afghan-Pakistani Relations
3. Opinions & Analysis

### India-Pakistan Relations

1. News & Reports
2. Opinions & Analysis

### Pakistan

1. Law and Order
2. Opinions & Analysis
3. Military Affairs
4. US-Pakistani Relations

### India

1. Mumbai Blast
2. Sharon's Visit
3. Babri Site Controversy

## **Kashmir**

1. News & Reports
2. All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) Split?
3. Opinions & Analysis

## **Sri Lanka**

1. News & Reports
  2. Opinions & Analysis
- 

## **Nuclear Issues**

### **1. Pakistan**

In an interview with Kommersant, a Russian daily, President Musharraf stated that the danger of a nuclear showdown between India and Pakistan has passed. The daily Nation (Pakistan) welcomes President Musharraf's remarks and adds that "serious attention ought to be paid to setting the political house in order to create internal stability. For we should never lose sight of the reality that wars may be fought with arms but are won with hearts."

### **2. India**

The Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) received approval to build a Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR) at Kalpakkam, near Chennai. Former chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission M.R. Srinivasan (The Hindu, India) recommends a vigilant policy to ensure the PFBR's success. Praful Bidwai (Hindustan Times, India) argues that "fast breeders" are inefficient and dangerous. The Hindustan Times (India) published a letter from the Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace (CNDP) urging the Indian government to work towards denuclearization.

### **3. IAEA Conference**

At a recent International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Conference, the chairman of the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) explained that the "existence of a reliable infrastructure [of Pakistan's] nuclear power plants have encouraged us to acquire another nuclear power plant similar to Chashnupp." Writing in Jang (Pakistan), Zia Iqbal Shahid describes the IAEA's attempts to convince India and Pakistan to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

### **4. Opinions & Analysis**

The daily Hindu (India) criticizes India's Nuclear Command Authority (NCA) for taking the country "another step down the dangerous path of acquiring and assembling weapons of mass destruction..." M.B. Naqvi (Jang, Pakistan) warns India and Pakistan against becoming "greatly impressed by the fact that no war took place."

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## **Afghanistan**

### **1. News & Reports**

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The Afghan authorities arrested a number of Taliban fighters. An unconfirmed report (Jang, Pakistan) claims that pro-Taliban elements in Paktia province have captured four US soldiers.

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) announced that it has repatriated over 300,000 Afghan refugees since the January 1 of this year.

## **2. Afghan-Pakistani Relations**

In an interview with the BBC, President Musharraf accepted that the Taliban may be operating in tribal areas along Pakistan-Afghan border. A senior Pakistani official has denied that any operations against the Taliban or al-Qaeda were taking place in Pakistan's tribal areas. Pakistan and Afghanistan have decided to deploy more troops at their respective borders. Pakistan International Airlines plans to operate three weekly flights between Islamabad and Kabul.

## **3. Opinions & Analysis**

Aijaz Ahmad (Frontline, India) writes that the US and its allies in Afghanistan are "incapable of fighting even a bunch of half-literate mullahs in towns and villages of Afghanistan because, for lack of an alternative leadership, these mullahs have come to embody the national will." B. Raman (Asia Times) examines Pakistan's past and present links with al Qaeda.

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## **India-Pakistan Relations**

### **1. News & Reports**

President Musharraf and other government officials expressed support for resuming cricket games with India. India cleared Pakistan's participation in the first ever Afro-Asian Games to be held in Hyderabad in late October. Indian Foreign Minister Yashwant Sinha announced India's willingness to begin discussion regarding a South Asian Union.

The Indian Express reported that Pakistan's Foreign Minister cancelled his visit to New Delhi after his Indian counterpart, Yashwant Sinha, made comments about the "necessity" of such a trip. The Indian Naval Chief reportedly cancelled his visit to Sri Lanka because the Sri Lankan government failed to inform New Delhi that a senior Pakistani military officer would be in Colombo at the same time. India has asked Britain to withdraw its appointment of a former Pakistani national as a visa officer in the British embassy in New Delhi.

Pakistan's new ambassador to India, Aziz Ahmed, criticizes the slow pace of peace process between India and Pakistan. Aqil Shah (Dawn, Pakistan) analyzes the media and TV propaganda battle and the Pakistani ban on Indian television channels.

### **2. Opinions & Analysis**

Aunohita Mojumdar (Hindu, India) discusses how the relationship between India and Pakistan and their ties with Kabul affect Afghanistan's security and stability and vice versa. A Daily Times (Pakistan) report recounts the recommendations of the Asia Society's Task Force for Washington's policy in South Asia. M.B. Naqvi (Jang, Pakistan) suggests that Pakistan should let India build its arsenal, while Pakistan should abandon its "juvenile macho notions of militarism and foolish extolling of physical bravery" and instead focus on "how much food, shelter, jobs, education and healthcare for its millions of poor it can provide."

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## **Pakistan**

### **1. Law and Order**

Four suspects have been arrested in connection with the shootings at a Quetta mosque, in which over 50 people were killed. Ahmed Raza (OneWorld, UK) describes the negative effects of implementing the Hudood Ordinance. Two essays from Jang (Pakistan) explain the current status of the political impasse over the Legal Framework Order (LFO).

### **2. Opinions & Analysis**

The daily Hindu (India) faults the MMA (Muttahida Majilis-e-Amal, an alliance of six religious parties) for boosting "its prestige by making the military ruler [President Musharraf] treat it with unwarranted seriousness." MMA General Secretary Maulana Fazlur Rehman has accused President Musharraf of selling the "dignity and honor of the nation to America..." In an audio tape released by Qatar's Al-Jazeera, Osama bin Laden's second-in-command, Ayman al-Zawahri, stated that President Musharraf has "sold the Muslims' blood in Afghanistan and handed over the Arab mujahideen to crusader America."

### **3. Military Affairs**

Pakistan is seeking about 20 second-hand F-16 fighters from Belgium to replace its ageing F-7s, A-5s and Mirages. Aircraft fly-bys and other armament displays marked the anniversary of the 1965 clash between India and Pakistan, celebrated on the sixth of September as "National Defense Day." Tariq Rahman (Jang, Pakistan) reconstructs the events up to and on that day, extracting a different set of lessons for Pakistan and its citizens today.

The Chinese People's Liberation Army and the Pakistan Armed Forces signed a defense assistance protocol. Also in cooperation with China, the Pakistan Air Force tested a prototype of its fighter aircraft, designated the "JF-17 Thunder" by Pakistan and the "FC-1 Valiant Dragon" by China.

### **4. US-Pakistani Relations**

President Musharraf is scheduled to meet President Bush in a reception on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly meeting later this month. Nasim Zehra (Jang, Pakistan) argues that what George Bush really seeks from Pakistan is a deployment of Pakistani troops to Iraq, and that Pakistan must avoid "another US jihad against terrorism."

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## **India**

### **1. Mumbai Blast**

The day of the Mumbai bombings, which killed over 50 people, has become known as "Black Monday." Reports vary greatly about the number, affiliation, and identity of the primary suspect(s). Police, however, shot and killed Abdul Rehman Adeed (aka Nasir), a suspected mastermind of the August 25 twin blasts and an alleged operative of the Lashkar-e-Taiba. Police also seized an arms cache during the encounter with Nasir. A bomb scare prompted the evacuation of a 12-story building in Bombay, though no explosives were found.

## **2. Sharon's Visit**

Indian Express notes that Sharon's visit is in no way a radical foreign policy departure for India. The Times of India, however, contends that the invitation to Sharon shows that India "is no longer coy about its relationship with Israel, in fact, it seems to be flaunting it." The daily Hindu (India) argues that despite apparent parallels in a shared battle against terror, "the legitimacy of the Palestinian struggle for self-determination cannot be negated just because extremist elements within the movement frequently resort to repugnant methods."

Talks between Israeli and Indian defense officials centered on import of aircraft mounted radars, co-production of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), and installation of electronic warfare systems. India has assured Israel that it would not transfer any acquired military technology to a third country including Iran. The Israel Space Agency hopes to place its \$15 million telescope onboard India's Geo Stationary Launch Vehicle satellite, scheduled to launch in late 2005.

In the 18-point joint declaration issued at the conclusion of Sharon's visit, Israel expressed its appreciation for "India's religious tolerance and secularism." Amit Baruah (Hindu, India) interviewed the Israeli Deputy Prime Minister, Yosef Lapid, who identified terrorism and threats from "fanatic Islam" as common to both India and Israel. During an interview with the Israeli daily Ha'aretz, PM Vajpayee, when asked to compare Israel's and India's efforts to combat terrorism, stated that the "circumstances under which we are tackling the menace of cross-border terrorism are different from those prevailing in the Middle-East."

Jyoti Malhotra (Indian Express) writes about Arab world's reaction to Sharon's India visit. Praful Bidwai (Jang, Pakistan) argues that Pakistan does not need to establish relations with Israel to counterbalance India's military and diplomatic advantage over Pakistan. In the same paper, Burhanuddin Hasan maintains that Pakistan should evolve a strategy to protect its national interests and accept the geopolitical reality of the Indo-Israeli nexus.

## **3. Babri Site Controversy**

Asghar Ali Engineer (Deccan Herald, India) argues that the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) report, used to justify the existence of a temple at the demolished Babri Masjid site, is subject to difference interpretations and cannot be treated as authentic evidence. The Rashtriya Swyam Sewak Sangh (RSS) Chief has asked Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani to leverage the ASI report to push for legislation allowing the construction of a Babri temple. The Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) will hold a rally with a similar goal of persuading BJP officials. According to Pradeep Kaushal (Indian Express), when asked why the VHP should not take the initiative, President Ashok Singhal replied, "Why can't [the politicians] build a consensus on [the Babri] temple? It is their responsibility."

## **4. Military Affairs**

India and the US began their largest joint exercises to date in Ladakh. Saikat Datta (Indian Express) discusses the impact of joint exercises on India's Special Forces, and its ability to operate in small teams. The daily Hindu reports that India is keen to acquire 10 Orion fighter planes to replace its ageing fleet of Russian IL-38 and TU-142 M reconnaissance aircraft. India has reportedly turned down a renewed US request for deployment of troops to Iraq.

Essays by Sajid Ali Khan and Stephen Blank (Asia Times) discuss the ramifications of the formation of an "Asian NATO."

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## **Kashmir**

### **1. News & Reports**

Seven civilians were killed as suspected militants set off a car bomb in Srinagar, while 13 others, including militants, died in separate incidents. Several high-ranking militants were killed in internecine violence or by police. Muzamil Jaleel (Indian Express) reports on a state police official's illegal acquisition of arms in Srinagar.

Militants wearing police uniforms gunned down Kuka Parrey (also known as Mohammad Yosuf), a pioneer in Kashmir's first counter-insurgency campaign and chairman of the Jammu Kashmir Awami League. Two militant outfits, Jaish-e-Mohammed and the lesser-known al-Nasreen, have claimed responsibility for the assassination. Praveen Swami (Hindu, India) recalls Parrey's role as an informant in "India's forgotten army."

### **2. All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) Split?**

The Jamaat-e-Islami leader, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, took over as the chairman of the rebel faction of the All Party Hurriyat Conference supported by 12 members of the general council. Most major separatist politicians, ranging from Sajjad Lone to Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, support the centrist leadership of the APHC chairman, Maulvi Abbas Ansari. Many armed groups, ranging from the Hizb-ul-Mujaheddin to al-Umar and the Lashkar-e-Taiba, have thrown their weight behind Syed Ali Shah Geelani.

The daily Hindu believes that the breakup and formation of a parallel APHC is of enormous political importance. According to Sudha Ramachandran (Asia Times, Hong Kong), "Ansari's undoing appears to be a statement he made on August 10 in which he said that he wished to travel to Pakistan to persuade armed Islamist groups to lay down the gun." Some observers feel that the split in the conference will break the Kashmir freedom movement.

### **3. Opinions & Analysis**

The daily Hindu examines the resignation of J&K Agriculture Minister Abdul Aziz Zargar for alleged links with terrorists, and its implications for security in local politics and the peace process. According to Mubashir Zaidi (Dawn, Pakistan), a recent Pakistani intelligence report chronicles banned militant outfits regrouping under different names.

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## **Sri Lanka**

### **1. News & Reports**

Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister Vidar Helgesen and Norway's special envoy Erik Solheim made a three-day visit to Sri Lanka to discuss plans for reviving face-to-face talks between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The Norwegian delegation is hopeful that the stalled peace talks may resume after mid-October. The LTTE has stated that it will help ensure freedom of movement for truce monitors in areas under its control. The LTTE is also expected to release a power-sharing proposal. There have been reports of heightened tensions between the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) and the LTTE.

Shamindra Ferdinando (Island, Sri Lanka) notes growing conflict between People's Liberation Front (JVP), which is opposed to the peace process and Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLVP). There have also been reports of cracks in the coalition government in Colombo.

## **2. Opinions & Analysis**

The Daily Mirror (Sri Lanka) suggests that the allegations about LTTE's war preparations should be investigated in a "scientific" and "rational" manner. An anonymous writer for the Island (Sri Lanka) argues that peace with LTTE is not possible.

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