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Salman Haider for resuming dialogue

By B. Muraidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, NOV. 22. The former Indian Foreign Secretary, Mr. Salman Haider, today emphasised the need for the immediate resumption of a dialogue between India and Pakistan for resolving differences.

Presiding over a session on "security and regional stability" at a seminar on "SAARC in the new millennium" here, Mr. Haider said that India blocking a dialogue bilaterally and multilaterally, whatever the compulsions, had gone too far.

Responding to concern at the adverse impact on the grouping's goals on account of the Indian attitude, he said it was high time the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation was put back on the rails. Mr. Haider concurred with the view that the differences between India and Pakistan should not be allowed to undermine the character of SAARC.

"A dialogue between two neighbouring countries is necessary and when there are differences it is all the more reason for a dialogue. India and Pakistan have gone on long enough without a structure for dialogue," he said. On comments such as "Indian bloody mindedness" by some delegates, Mr. Haider said such characterisation would not help carry forward the peace process.

There should at least be an effort to understand India's position even if it was not appreciated. In a separate statement, the Janata Party president, Dr. Subramanian Swamy, said India should recognise the ground realities in Pakistan and resume dialogue at all fora.

"Gen. (Pervez) Musharraf today is firmly in charge in Pakistan, and the Indian Government ought to recognise that reality and resume dialogue at all fora.

The cancellation on India's in-

sistence of the SAARC summit scheduled to be held in Kathmandu, and the ban on playing cricket were wrong decisions based on knee-jerk reactions and which decisions have not received public approval in India, judged by internet polls conducted by the media", it said.

THE HINDU

23 NOV 2000

Indian attitude damaging SAARC, says Pak. official

By B. Muraidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, NOV. 21. Pakistan is bitter over the actions of India vis-à-vis SAARC, particularly in the last one-year and believes New Delhi's attitude has severely "damaged" the grouping and its goal of economic development and progress through regional cooperation.

An Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Asif Ezdi, made no bones about his country's unhappiness in a paper on "SAARC-Achievements and Impediments- Pakistan's perspective" at a seminar here today.

Organised by the Foundation for Research on International Environment, National Development and Security (FRIENDS) and the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI), the seminar, "SAARC in the new millennium", is being attended by several eminent personalities from South Asia.

The Indian delegation includes the Janata Party president and former Union Minister, Dr. Subramanian Swamy, and the former

Foreign Secretary, Mr. Salman Haider.

On the first day, several speakers talked about the growing perception that India was losing interest in the SAARC and that it did not augur well for South Asian region. Dr. Swamy, who presided over one of the sessions, said that if the countries in the region expected India to shoulder special responsibility, they should be prepared to grant it special privileges.

Mr. Haider said India did not stand to gain anything by losing interest in the grouping but added that New Delhi should not allow the impression of lack of interest in the SAARC to grow.

In his paper, Mr. Ezdi pointed out that a peaceful and stable SAARC had become all the more important in the wake of the nuclear tests of 1998. "In our view, a peaceful and secure environment in the region is of crucial importance for the promotion of economic development.

It is therefore essential that the member-states remove the under-

lying causes of tension in the region in order to foster trust, friendship and good-neighbourly relations".

He complained that India was alone in proposing the postponement of the Kathmandu summit in November 1999 in clear violation of the SAARC charter. India's reasons for seeking the postponement were purely within the domain of Pakistan's internal affairs and therefore extraneous to the Charter provisions.

Fifteen years experience of the SAARC showed that meaningful regional cooperation in economic and social matters could not take place without addressing the political issues that divide the member-countries. A conducive political environment was essential for promotion of effective and harmonious regional cooperation. "In the post-nuclear South Asia, this has acquired even greater urgency. We cannot ignore these realities if we are to evolve an effective cooperative framework in the region," he said.

THE HINDU

22 NOV 2000

A few decisions, some tension at SAARC meet

By Nirupama Subramanian

COLOMBO, NOV. 19. Delegates from India and Pakistan at the "extraordinary" meeting of SAARC senior officials here last week were in a tug-of-war over its purpose and mandate before agreeing that it had been a "useful" opportunity to exchange views on the functioning of the regional body.

The Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, in an interview to *The Hindu*, said he was "optimistic" that as the meeting had gone off "reasonably well, within its limitations", a meeting of the standing committee, comprising Foreign Secretaries of the member-countries, could be held soon.

Mr. Kadirgamar, at whose personal initiative the meeting was held, said that notwithstanding the "prophets of doom", he had found that both India and Pakistan accorded high priority to the concept of South Asian regional cooperation. The three-day meeting concluded earlier this week with tentative dates for various meetings of technical committees of the SAARC.

A Foreign Ministry statement said "firm targets" were set in respect of negotiations on SAPTA, the region's preferential trade agreement, of which a further round is likely next year. It was also decided to carry forward the drafting process for SAFTA, proposed regional free trade agreement, the team for which has met only once so far despite the envisaged deadline of 2001. A meeting will be held next year to take forward the SAARC social charter.

From the official versions, it is difficult to determine whether the meeting achieved its stated purpose of "imparting momentum" to SAARC, ailing since last year for want of political level meetings. The Kathmandu summit last year was put off indefinitely after India objected to General Pervez Musharraf representing Pakistan.

The meeting here reflected the

mutual hostility between the two countries in some measure. Pakistani delegates took the position that the "extraordinary" meeting had no mandate to take decisions, and could hold only "informal consultations" to discuss the possibility of holding the long overdue meetings of the standing committee of foreign secretaries, the council of ministers, and the summit.

They insisted that this view find mention in the document of the meeting, which is an internal paper, somewhat like minutes.

The Indian side was adamant that if this went into the document, so too should its position that the summit could be held once democracy was restored in Pakistan.

Finally, the Pakistani delegates relented, and the meeting concluded by recording that it had been a "useful opportunity for an exchange of views, pending the achievement of unanimity on dates for the next summit which will be held in Kathmandu".

Amidst the bickering, the meeting took no decision on a proposal by the secretary-general, Mr. Nihal Rodrigo, for the early signing of two already-finalised conventions on prevention of trafficking in women and children, and the welfare of the child. The conventions, finalised in Colombo in 1998, were to be signed at the ill-fated Kathmandu summit last year by the heads of the member-states.

The SAARC directorate proposed that as the impasse over the holding of the summit was likely to continue, these conventions could be signed by other representatives of the members at Kathmandu early next year.

While India did not object to this, Pakistan felt the conventions could be signed only by the heads of state. Finally, the conclusion was that this could be decided only at a political level.

THE HINDU

20 NOV 2000

Lanka bid to revive SAARC summit

P. K. Balachandran
Colombo, November 19

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SRI LANKA, which is the current chairman of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), is set to launch a campaign to get India to agree to an early summit of the Heads of Government.

According to The Sunday Times, Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar is to leave for New Delhi and Islamabad soon to revive SAARC at the political level, a programme generally interpreted here as a bid to get New Delhi to agree to a sum-

mit where political issues, especially the India-Pakistan conflict over Kashmir, could be discussed.

India rules out a summit both for now and the immediate, foreseeable, future. It has been forcefully resisting the convening of a summit on the grounds that nothing useful would come out of a summit now or in the foreseeable future. Its argument is that Pakistan will first have to stop propping up cross border terrorism in Kashmir before any meaningful discussions can take place at the summit level.

But the other members of SAARC think that the grouping has to meet at the highest level to sort out basic political questions.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

20 NOV 2000

SAARC opinion-makers' meet next month

14 11
By Hasan Suroor 110-121

LONDON, Nov. 13. Opinion-makers from the SAARC region will meet in Kathmandu early next month, as part of the "track II" efforts, to discuss measures to strengthen cooperation among the member countries, the former Indian Prime Minister, Mr. I.K. Gujral, said here today.

Mr. Gujral, who was on his way home after a visit to the U.S., told Indian correspondents that the meeting was likely to set up a Citizens' Commission for South Asia, which would work as a think-tank.

Apart from him, others who were expected to attend the Kathmandu meet included Dr. Manmohan Singh, Ms. Asma Jehangir and Mr. Moin Qureshi. The Nobel Laureate, Prof. Amartya Sen, had also been invited.

About his U.S. visit, where he was conferred an honorary doctorate at St. Rose University in Albany, New York, Mr. Gujral said he noticed a sea-change in the Americans' attitude towards India.

"India is suddenly at the centre of their thinking which was not the case some years ago".

He said wherever he went, he got the impression that people were impressed by the strength of Indian democracy. This was particularly noticeable on American campuses and the various think-

anks. The "broad American thinking" was in favour of India, he said adding that he was returning home "very elated".

At the United Nations, the Palestine issue dominated the agenda and there was concern over the future of the peace process. India had made its position clear — it wanted the peace process to succeed keeping in mind the rights of the Palestinian people, Mr. Gujral said.

He was happy to note that during his interaction with American academics and intellectuals, the controversies relating to Indo-Pakistan relations did not figure and the emphasis was more on mutual interests.

"I was struck by the interest in Indian scholarship. More and more universities are setting centres for India studies", he said.

The Institute of Strategic Studies in Washington had set up a group of eminent persons to study the impact of ageing on international relations and security and he had been invited to attend its meeting in Zurich in January.

There were concerns about the problems which longevity had thrown up in terms of old-age pension and fall in productivity, he said. India with its large population, comprising a massive youth component, was seen to be an asset in this context.

THE HINDU

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SENIOR OFFICIALS MEET / PLANS APLENTY FOR SAARC

Stress on continued, collective action

By Nirupama Subramanian

COLOMBO, NOV. 13. A meeting of senior officials of the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) began today amid reiterations that the regional grouping, derailed by tensions between India and Pakistan, was alive and full of plans for the future.

The three-day 'extra-ordinary' meeting, called on the initiative of Sri Lanka, is being described as an attempt to inject life into the grouping which has been in limbo since the meeting of SAARC foreign ministers at Nuwara Eliya last March.

The scheduled heads of state summit in Kathmandu last November was postponed indefinitely following India's refusal to engage with the Pakistani leader, General Pervez Musharraf. The last high-level contact between the members was an informal meeting of the foreign ministers on the sidelines of the 1999 UN General Assembly session.

Inaugurating the meeting today, Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister, Mr. Lakshman Kadirgamar, ruled out a summit in the foreseeable future but said he remained 'optimistic' about the future of SAARC, describing the grouping as a 'natural and inevitable' coming together of peoples joined by ancient links.

He said the meeting of the officials would 'impart momentum to areas of agreed cooperation which require some concerted action through an exchange of views involving all member states'.

The SAARC Secretary-General, Mr. Nihal Rodrigo, expressed confidence that 'whatever the vagaries of the political climate in South Asia, the highest level of commitment to regional co-operation and SAARC remains strong'.

'It is on this basic foundation that the meeting of senior officials must discuss and recommend a functional framework for continued,



The Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, Mr. Laksman Kadirgamar, addressing the SAARC senior officials meeting in Colombo on Monday. — Photo: Sriyantha Walpola

even accelerated activity to promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and to contribute to mutual trust and understanding, pending attainment of unanimity on the convening of the next summit in Kathmandu," he said in his introduction.

Mr Kadirgamar, the chairman of the SAARC council of ministers, said recommendations from this meeting would be invaluable to the facilitation of continued collective action.

Sri Lanka and the SAARC secretariat have proposed that this meeting recommend two conventions - on combating trafficking of women and children for prostitution and the promotion of child welfare - which were finalised at the 1998 Colombo Summit and ready to be signed at the jinxed Kathmandu summit,

be adopted early next year. Admitting that the economic integration of South Asia envisaged at the 1997 Male summit would need attention at least at the ministerial level, Mr Kadirgamar said this meeting could propose time-frames for meetings on the SAFTA and SAPTA.

The minister said for the text of the SAFTA treaty to be finalised by the 2001 deadline, a number of issues had been identified for more 'decisive work', including those of the rules of origin, revenue compensation mechanisms and graduated time-frames for accession by individual members.

Mr. Rodrigo said they would push activities that had been constrained or held back for 'want of closer encounters of a practical kind'.

THE HINDU

14 NOV 2000

Nuclear restraint & risk reduction

By P. R. Chari

IF THE raising of decibels in the numerous seminars being held is any indication, nuclear restraint and nuclear risk reduction are definitely the flavour of the emerging conference season. The United States has taken the lead to highlight the dangers of nuclear war in South Asia. These risks are believed to arise from the continuing proxy war in Kashmir which, in the absence of any dialogue between India and Pakistan, could provide the flashpoint for a conflict with nuclear dimensions. Hence the need for nuclear restraint and risk reduction.

Are such fears irrational? Do they reflect an ingrained cultural prejudice? Does the U.S. truly believe that brown men cannot be trusted with nuclear weapons? The emotional counter-argument has been made in India that Stalin and Mao and Nixon had their fingers on the nuclear trigger, and had acted irrationally, even abnormally, on many occasions; yet no one thought they would launch a nuclear war in a whimsical fashion. Moreover, the U.S. and the Soviet Union were involved in recurrent crises during the nuclear era — the most serious being the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 that brought the world to the edge of a nuclear precipice. Nuclear weapons have not been used after Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It could, therefore, be reasonably surmised that India and Pakistan would muddle along despite periodic alarms.

The contrary argument is, however, possible that if no nuclear conflict occurred during the Cold War, it owed less to rationality and everything to plain good luck, which may not be available in the current impasse between India and Pakistan. More seriously, their capacity for muddling through is questionable on several counts. First, the Indo-Pakistan leadership seems unable to comprehend that nuclear arms comprise an entirely new genre of weaponry in terms of destructiveness and their long-term effects on biological life and the environment. Only such incomprehension could explain the frequency with which the two countries are hurling nuclear threats at each other. Pakistan's Foreign Secretary, Mr. Shamshad Ahmed, warned India during the Kargil War that Islamabad could

There are several nuclear risk reduction measures worth simultaneous pursuit by India and Pakistan at this stage itself when their nuclear capabilities have not yet been deployed.

use "any weapon" to defend the country's territorial integrity. And, following the Pokhran tests, the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, had cautioned that "this decisive step to become a nuclear weapon state has brought a qualitatively new stage in Indo-Pakistan relations, particularly in finding a lasting solution to the Kashmir problem". Both statements reveal a certain casualness which is not exactly reassuring.

Second, the Kargil war proved an exception to many *a priori* dicta regarding nuclear confrontations that have long been accepted by the international community, viz. that democracies do not fight with each other. Pakistan was a democracy when the Kargil war erupted; the military coup was a later event. The other dictum that nuclear weapon states do not conflict directly with each other was also disproved by Kargil. The only other example of a clash between nuclear states took place in 1969 along the Ussuri river between the Soviet Union and China.

Third, India and Pakistan are not talking to each other, which raises the bogey of a conflict between them arising, not out of deliberate choice but due to accident or misperception or inadvertence. Several on-going and new track-II dialogues between concerned persons in India and Pakistan have begun with the hope that their conclusions would encourage moderation by the two decision-making elites. The Indian Government is interested in these track-II efforts; they could throw up innovative ideas, and mitigate international pressures on India to resume negotiations with Pakistan.

The case for exhibiting nuclear restraint and establishing risk reduction measures between India and Pakistan is, therefore, unassailable. What are the measures possible by India in the absence of bilateral dialogue? The most obvious is continuance of its moratorium on nuclear testing and refraining from test-

ing its Agni-II and longer-range missiles. One of the "benchmarks" laid down by the U.S. specifically requires India and Pakistan to "refrain from deploying nuclear weapons or missile systems". India would need to accept, however, that, whilst it might be possessing a deterrent against Pakistan, further missile and nuclear testing would be essential to deploy a deterrent against China; this is unavoidable for deploying the triad of nuclear forces envisaged in the draft nuclear doctrine, and especially to acquire thermodynamic capabilities that are of the essence here. Nuclear restraint, premised on a no-test regime, would also question the logic of the Pokhran tests.

In brief, a difficult judgment has now to be made by India whether to proceed with the logic of the nuclear tests to weaponise and deploy its nuclear capabilities or exhibit nuclear restraint and adopt risk reduction measures. Not weaponising and deploying its nuclear capabilities would be the most credible means to achieve these ends that could be taken unilaterally. Should a political decision be taken, nevertheless, to weaponise and deploy, a margin of restraint and risk reduction would remain if the warheads are not mated with their delivery systems but verifiably kept apart in different locations.

What about Pakistan? It would be relieved of the pressure to respond. It is well aware of the political and economic costs involved in weaponising and deploying its nuclear capabilities, and entering a debilitating nuclear arms race with India; this will not relieve it of upgrading and modernising its conventional forces. What about China? It is more sensitive now to the consequences of its no-longer-surprising transfers of nuclear and missile technology to Pakistan. This has spurred India's nuclear and missile programmes which could affect China's national security adversely; so it would be in

China's own national interests to broaden its rapprochement with India.

There are several nuclear risk reduction measures worth simultaneous pursuit by India and Pakistan at this stage itself when their nuclear capabilities have not yet been deployed. Some are included in the Memorandum of Understanding that accompanied the Lahore Declaration. It contained several confidence-building provisions. These suggestions could be negotiated into agreements.

Most significantly, the MoU envisaged that the two countries would consult each other on "security concepts, and nuclear doctrines, with a view to developing measures for confidence-building in the nuclear and conventional fields, aimed at avoidance of conflict", which requires immediate attention. A very first item on the agenda for these consultations could be the need for deploying tactical nuclear weapons which are really meant for battlefield use; do India and Pakistan need them to acquire war-fighting capabilities? The need for a common language to understand each other's signals, such as the states of alert sounded in a crisis, is of supreme importance to defuse future crises and avoid conflict.

More visible measures could also be pursued such as establishing risk reduction centres manned by mixed groups of officials from both sides to defuse crises before they erupt; according greater transparency to command and control arrangements established, exchanging information on national steps taken to ensure safety and security of nuclear stockpiles, establishment of hotlines between the two Air Forces and the two nuclear establishments, and so on. In the absence of dialogue; however, it is not possible to proceed with these salutary suggestions, this emphasises the imperative need for re-establishing the Indo-Pakistan dialogue to grapple with the nuclear issues that have emerged after the Pokhran-Chagai tests. The absence of dialogue between the two self-styled putative nuclear weapon powers causes major concern to the international community.

(The writer is Director, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, New Delhi).

The Hindustan Times

10/10 A year later 10/10

BY A curious coincidence, the first anniversaries of the Vajpayee Government and the Musharraf regime are taking place almost simultaneously in mid-October. But there the resemblance ends. While Mr Vajpayee is beginning his second year on a new footing, so to say, General Musharraf has had to reiterate, if only for the sake of form, that he will step down once the period allotted to him by the Pakistani judiciary is over. It isn't that Mr Vajpayee's tenure has been free of trouble or that he expects a smooth ride in the future. But despite the occasional problems caused by restive allies obsessed with their state-level politics, there is little doubt that the Prime Minister's present term has been far more secure than his previous one which he had lost by a solitary vote. For one thing, his coalition is numerically more secure and, for another, the opposition to his rule lacks focus.

The reason why Mr Vajpayee has managed his stint better this time is not only that he has no serious challenger to his position at the moment, but also that there is a fair amount of support for his economic and foreign policies. On reforms, for instance, despite the misgivings expressed by both the Left and the Right, all Chief Ministers, including in the states run by the Leftists, have recognised the importance of foreign investment and realised that the old autarkic system is obsolete. In foreign policy, the significance of India being on good terms with both the US and Russia is too obvious to be missed since it underlines a stature which was absent except in the very early days of the Nehruvian period.

If India, then, appears ready to play a role in keeping with its size and importance, Pakistan is seemingly sinking into a quagmire. The coup by the army was only one of the many backward steps it has taken in recent years, the most disturbing of which is the country's retreat into the medieval fundamentalism of the Taliban type. While Pakistan's futile desire to match India's nuclear ambition made it court economic sanctions, the return of the military has ensured its diplomatic isolation. Besides these factors, its harbouring of terrorist elements bent on waging a *jihad* against India has reinforced Pakistan's image as a country where bigots rule both the social and political scene. The result is that any satisfaction on this side of the border over India's stability is undermined by Pakistan's degeneration into a failed State which can have deeply unsettling consequences for the entire region.

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10 OCT 2000

South Asian nuclear dialogue

By V. R. Raghavan

There is urgent need for a South Asian nuclear dialogue. If the Governments of India and Pakistan are unable to find a way out of the impasse, experts on the subject can be encouraged to begin the dialogue.

NATIONS WHICH seek security through nuclear weapons place themselves in the control of a relentless logic. A nation possessing nuclear weapons finds it cannot give them up. It also does not wish the colossal dangers from nuclear weapons to increase. The realisation that nuclear weapons in larger numbers do not provide additional security leads to the inevitable need to negotiate with the adversary about ways to limit the possibilities of a nuclear exchange. The inexorable logic of nuclear weapons rests on the juxtaposition of two contradictory needs. One has to have strong capability to be credible as a nuclear weapons state. One also needs to be seen as a credible, rational and predictable state by the nuclear adversary. That provides stability to nuclear deterrence. It ensures security without the dangers of a calamitous nuclear exchange through fear and misperceptions. Deterrence stability comes not through fears and anxieties but through reassurance. Reassurance is obtained through direct and honest talks with the adversary. It is sustained through mutually-agreed measures which not only reduce fears but also build confidence, about the presence of nuclear weapons with the adversary.

The South Asian nuclear weapons scene, in the two years since the tests of 1998, shows two disturbing trends. The first is linked to the understandable imperative of India and Pakistan to be recognised as nuclear weapon states. The denial of that reality by the major powers has generated pressures in the two countries to go further up on the nuclear ladder. There are demands for further nuclear tests, for thermonuclear and neutron bomb capabilities, and for not joining the CTBT. There is an urge to seek nuclear doctrines which are predicated on punitive second strike capabilities requiring large arsenals. There is a desire for a full spectrum of nuclear infrastructure, without regard to strategic needs or economic capacity. There is ill-informed talk and worse still irresponsible political rhetoric, in both India and Pakistan, about the use of nuclear weapons as instruments of influencing political disputes. This route to nuclear weapons based security is more likely to create a mutually-reinforcing negative spiral of competitive capability acquisition. There

is in it the serious likelihood of a nuclear exchange through misunderstanding or a nuclear accident.

The second disturbing trend in South Asia is of an unwillingness to engage in official talks on nuclear matters. This inflexible attitude in India is part of the larger issue of the undoing of the Lahore initiative by Pakistan and its direct role in the violence let loose in Jammu and Kashmir. In Pakistan, inflexibility is rooted in its insistence on the prior resolution of the J&K issue. A stage is reached where Pakistan seems fixated in its belief that the Kashmir issue is vital for its ideological survival. In both India and Pakistan, the ruling establishments appear unconcerned about the dangers of nuclear uncertainties, remaining unresolved. The risks of nuclear uncertainties, fears and misperceptions being considered unimportant is a serious danger. The two trends of increased demand for nuclear weapons capability and of inflexibility on a nuclear dialogue are potentially hazardous. These dangers can translate into calamities over which neither Government can have complete control. It is not without reason that some analysts in the west give India and Pakistan no more than a decade before a nuclear conflict takes place between them.

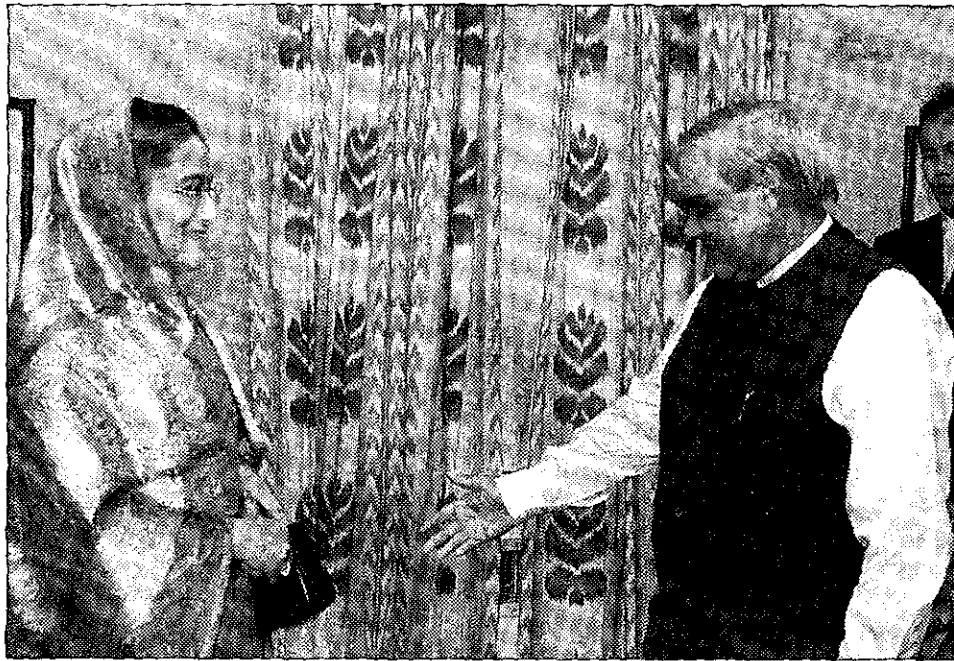
There is an urgent need for a South Asian nuclear dialogue. If the two Governments are unable to find a way out of the impasse, experts on the subject can be encouraged to begin the dialogue. The purpose of the dialogue is more to understand each other's anxieties, complications, technical and operational needs, and political dilemmas on the nuclear weapons issues. The requirement is to use the time before official dialogue commences - as it must before long - to create a higher threshold of clarity on each side's position and its ability to accommodate the other's concerns. Informal and candid dialogue outside the Government channels can assist the two establishments in preparing better for a fruitful outcome from the formal talks. A

the South Asian context. There was an interesting session on the nuclear command and control arrangements. It became clear that there is wide disparity and opacity on the subject in both countries. There was tacit agreement that without transparency on the nuclear decision making processes adopted by both sides, the chances of misunderstanding will remain high. Neither side was fully able to convince the other about the reliability of its command and control arrangements. There was a reference to how far the political leadership can be immune to populist public pressures when a nuclear countdown starts. The question of nuclear deterrence led to issue of who gets deterred. This brought about a better understanding of how the deterrent might really operate in South Asia, which was not a small gain. There was the inevitable reference to China and its relevance in the South Asian nuclear dynamic. There was general agreement that the China-India-Pakistan triangle needs to be squared.

The Delhi dialogue came to some specific conclusions on the measures India and Pakistan can unilaterally take to reduce the risks of a nuclear weapons exchange and of accidents. An experienced diplomat rightly pointed out that this need had been agreed upon by the two countries in the Memorandum of Understanding which was part of the Lahore Declaration. The real question is whether the urgency of the need for nuclear risk reduction should wait until other issues between the two countries are resolved. There was unanimity at the meeting on the urgent need for a South Asian nuclear risk reduction regime. The two Governments should use the informal dialogue process to assess each other's commitment to risk reduction. They should better understand the distance each wishes to travel in search of nuclear stability. While the two Governments would have some difficulty coming down from their positions of high principles, much ground work can be done for them through informal and candid meetings between think-tanks and expert groups. It is therefore to be hoped that having got themselves nuclear weapons, neither Government will remain complacent, about living in a condition of dangerous deterrence instability.

An insightful presentation was made at the meeting by a young analyst on the lessons from the Cold War nuclear experience and how it can or cannot apply in

Dealing with democracy



The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, with his Bangladesh counterpart, Sheikh Hasina, and Pakistan's military ruler, Gen. Pervez Musharraf... neighbours but not yet friends?

A FEW cameos of a shadow-battle of attrition between India and Pakistan came into considerable focus at the latest United Nations millennium summit in New York. But it was Bangladesh which showed that the fault lines in South Asia run deep and across the entire region.

Sri Lanka made hardly any news at the U.N. show, almost confirming why Colombo had been diplomatically relegated by the U.S. President and the Japanese Prime Minister during their separate journeys to South Asia in recent months. This certainly was no sad commentary on the usually high-profile Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, Mr. Lakshman Kadirgamar, who represented his President at the U.N. conference. But the big picture of the region was dismal. No virtual realities of diplomatic gloss could conceal a South Asia in disarray.

In a sense, there was also nothing that Sri Lanka, the current Chair of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), could have done to put its house in order at the U.N. The very notion of a SAARC conclave on the margins of the millennial event had suffered a grievous blow prior to the meeting. The reason was the dim view of Pakistan's militarised polity by India which is increasingly asserting its democratic image in a new global context considered favourable to the politics of pluralism.

Basking in this international environment, the Bangladesh Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, sought at the U.N. Security Council to capitalise on her country's present identity as a democratising polity vis-a-vis its economic prospects based on natural gas potential. As a current non-permanent member of the Security Council, Bangladesh grabbed the opportunity to make its presence felt, and she called for U.N. action against usurpation of power anywhere in its member-states. This, in her view, was a "must" to promote democracy, human rights and economic advancement across the world.

Sheikh Hasina clarified later that she had kept in prime focus her own country's democracy-destructive experiences which had, in the

past, included the assassination of her father. But the Pakistan Chief Executive, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, a military ruler without the cushion of martial law, reacted in a way which, according to some Bangladesh diplomats, surprised them. He "postponed" a meeting which he himself had sought with Sheikh Hasina on the margins of the U.N. extravaganza.

It was quite obvious that Gen. Musharraf would accept none of the aspersions, even if unintended, in the sensitive new context of a pan-South Asia debate on the damning findings of the Hamood-ur-Rehman panel on the role of the Pakistan Army, or at least some of its elements, in Bangladesh prior to its emergence as a sovereign state in 1971. If, however, Sheikh Hasina asserted on reaching home that Bangladesh's ties with Pakistan would not suffer on account of the rumpus over her agenda of democracy, she was banking on the fact that she had actually sounded somewhat neutral in her separate comments on the India-Pakistan imbroglio. On the eve of the U.N. summit, she called for a peaceful ambience for India-Pakistan interactions so that South Asia's primary challenge of poverty could be addressed with the deserving attention.

Time was when the 'Indira Doctrine' was blamed in parts of South Asia for the failure of SAARC to take off as an association for eco-

nomic cooperation. Paraphrased, the doctrine was that India could not remain unconcerned about the domestic events in neighbouring countries that could affect New Delhi's vital interests. The concept was first vaguely visualised at the height of the essentially indigenous campaign for a restoration of democracy in Pakistan in the early 1980s. But the outbreak of the ethnic crisis in Sri Lanka at about the same time lent a greater urgency to the doctrine.

Much later, after the Babri Masjid was demolished in 1992, Bangladesh and Pakistan came together to outline a transparent but unstatuted variant of the 'Indira Doctrine'. The substance of the new thesis was that New Delhi's immediate neighbours, with overwhelming Muslim populations, could not but evince concern as also interest in India's domestic fallout of communal tensions over the Babri Masjid's destruction.

Seen in this contemporary historical context is the evolving new argument about the faith in democracy as a possible defining characteristic for friendly cooperation among the SAARC member-countries in the future. To be sure, neither India nor Sheikh Hasina's Bangladesh has spelt this out in such stark terms in a pan-regional context, but New Delhi's aversion to interacting with Islamabad within the SAARC forum and Dhaka's new support for a globalisation of democracy are pointers which could, if not reversed for whatever real-politik reason, set a doctrine of democracy for a true South Asian spirit.

With or without this new lodestar of democracy, the India-Pakistan equations will continue to determine SAARC's future. If Gen. Musharraf has not impressed the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, with an offer of a bilateral no-war pact and a pledge for South Asian nuclear disarmament, New Delhi knows that Islamabad is not resorting to a proverbial Chinese ploy of 'the empty fortress' or a mere feigning of military strength, as a strategy of security. Nor has Gen. Musharraf unveiled a comprehensive global nuclear disarmament package comparable to Rajiv Gandhi's 'vision' at a previous U.N. forum.

There is an evolving argument about faith in democracy as a possible defining characteristic for cooperation among SAARC countries... But, says P. S. SURYANARAYANA, India-Pakistan equations will continue to determine SAARC's future.

THE HINDU

E67 SEP 21 1999

India, USA snub Pakistan

DESIKAN THIRUNARAYANAPURAM
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON, Sept. 16. — The USA and India yesterday said tensions in South Asia can only be resolved by the region's nations and by peaceful means, thereby once again rejecting Pakistan's attempts to internationalise the Kashmir issue.

In a further rebuke of Pakistan's indirect support to Islamic militants' "jihad" in the contentious territory, India and the USA "stressed the unacceptability of continued violence and bloodshed as a basis for solution to the problems of the region".

A joint statement released by Mr Bill Clinton and Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee

also acknowledged the differences the two countries have over the fall-out of India's 1998 nuclear tests.

India's hesitation to sign the CTBT and the remaining economic sanctions continue to haunt the otherwise improving relations between the two

countries. Mr Clinton has lifted several elements of the sanctions. But on the question of non-proliferation the progress has been slow.

The joint statement says the two countries agree to advance their dialogue on security and non-proliferation, building upon the joint statement signed

during Mr Clinton's visit to India in March.

While they reiterated their commitments to forgo nuclear tests, India reaffirmed that "subject to its supreme national interests", it will continue its voluntary moratorium until the CTBT comes into effect. Pakistan and China have nuclear weapons and New Delhi argues that it needs

a minimum nuclear deter-

rent in such a hostile region. The USA reaffirmed its intention to work for ratification of the CTBT "at the earliest possible date". India, on its part, promised to "continue efforts to develop a broad political

'No change in US stand on Kashmir'

WASHINGTON, Sept. 16.

— In a bid to assuage Indian feelings, the USA has clarified that Mr Bill Clinton's remark that Kashmir was at the "core" of Indo-Pak tensions did not represent any change in the US position on the issue. Mr Bruce Riedel, a senior director in the President's national council for the Near East, and Mr Karl Inderfurth, assistant secretary of state for South Asia, made the clarification.

— PTI

■ Another report on page 10

■ See SNUB: page 10

STATESMAN

SNUB: India confirms commitment not to block CTBT

5-19 (Continued from page 1) *AN*
consensus on the issue ... with the purpose of bringing these discussions to a successful conclusion.

India, as a nuclear-weapon state, is among the group of UN members whose signature is required for the CTBT to come into force. Most other countries have signed it. Pakistan has said it would do so if India did. During the CTBT negotiations in Geneva about three years ago, India was accused of blocking the treaty by refusing to sign it. Friday's joint statement said India "reconfirmed its commitment not to block" the treaty.

The two countries supported a global treaty to halt the production of fissile material for making weapons, and for the earliest possible start of the Geneva negotiations on that treaty.

The statement says India and the USA are targets of continuing terrorism, and expressed their determination to further reinforce bilateral cooperation in this area.

The joint statement said the two leaders reaffirmed the vision of a "closer and qualitatively new relationship between India and the USA in the 21st century".

The two leaders agreed that "the wide-ranging architecture of institutional dialogue" between the two countries provides a broad-based framework to pursue the vision of a new relationship, and expressed satisfaction at the pace and purposefulness of the dialogue at various levels.

In this respect, the statement mentions launch of the Community of Democracies, the high-level coordinating group on bilateral trade, investment and environment, the joint working group on counter-terrorism.

The two leaders agreed that their countries must build upon this new momentum in their relationship to further enhance mutual understanding and deepen cooperation across the full spectrum of political, economic, commercial, scientific, technological, social and international issues.

India's economic reforms and the two countries' complementary strengths and resources provide strong bases for expansion of economic ties, the leaders said.

On the security environment in Asia, the statement said the two leaders recalled "their common desire to work for stability in Asia and beyond" and agreed that the Asian security dialogue that the two countries have initiated will strengthen mutual understanding.

Gore for friendship with India: After the US Republican presidential candidate, Mr George Bush, his rival Democratic party nominee and Vice-President, Mr Al Gore, has assured India of continued support and a lasting friendship, adds PTL.

PM surgery: Mr LK Advani said this evening that the Prime Minister will be operated on for his knee joint problem only after the four-day visit of the Russian President to India beginning on 2 October, adds SNS from New Delhi.

Saarc agreement to boost trade

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, August 4

HT-15

5/8

SAARC countries have finalized a plan of action in order to boost intra and interregional trade which includes harmonization of documentation, procedures and steps to reduce transaction costs across the region.

The agreement also envisages simplification, alignment and harmonization of trade and transport documents to be introduced in all member countries, mostly on internationally accepted standards and tools.

This major agreement is expected to enhance share of international trade from the region, attract foreign direct investment, augment foreign exchange earnings and vitalize the domestic economy in member countries.

Briefing newsmen after signing of agreement between member-nations, Commerce Secretary Prabir Sengupta said country level national trade and transportation facilitation committees will be set up shortly which will act as focal points for enhancing trade in the region.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

5 AUG 2000

India forces cancellation of SAARC meeting

By K.K. Katyal

NEW DELHI, AUG. 16. The customary meeting of the SAARC Foreign Ministers, held every year in New York on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly session, will not take place this time. It has become a casualty of the developments in South Asia in the wake of the coup in Pakistan.

This is primarily because of the stand taken by India against political-level contacts within the SAARC framework, involving participation of representatives of the military regime in Islamabad. It was on this very ground that the SAARC summit, due some time ago, could not be held — India had objected to the presence of a military ruler, responsible for the dismissal of a democratic Government.

Under the SAARC charter, decisions regarding the summit, as indeed on other matters, have to be taken with the consent of all member-nations. A meeting of the Foreign Ministers, too, requires everybody's assent. In any case, there is no point in arranging such discussions in the absence of any one member — India at that.

The question of the Foreign Ministers' meeting has been the subject of exchanges between India, Sri Lanka, which is the current chairman of the grouping, and other member nations in the last few weeks. The discussions were initiated on the assumption that the Indian objection may not operate with regard to a conclave

at a lower level (of Foreign Ministers), especially when such a meeting was held last year even in the wake of the Kargil conflict.

New Delhi, however, struck to the earlier position against political-level contacts, restricting the SAARC business to experts and technical hands. Such contacts have not been interrupted so far and have covered important subjects in the areas of agriculture, environment and technical cooperation. The progress with regard to the South Asian Preferential Trade Area, too, has been maintained but the advance towards the next and ambitious programme — creation of the free trade area — has slowed down, even halted.

New Delhi justifies its stand on the plea that the participation of a coup leader or his representative would give respectability to the military regime, and the dismissal of a democratically-elected Government may look less appalling. Most SAARC members, however, do not share this view.

The cancellation of the SAARC summit and other decisions by New Delhi against any business with the military regime had caused sharp reactions in Islamabad, as was evident from the public utterances of the Chief Executive, Gen. Pervez Musharraf. In a question-answer session with visiting Indian journalists last month, he called for revision of the SAARC's charter to remove what was perceived as brakes in its functioning and for expansion of the scope of the grouping.

THE HINDU

17 AUG 2000

Dialogue with Pakistan

India Must Take the Initiative

By K SUBRAHMANYAM

11-10
THERE are expectations that President Bill Clinton will try and persuade Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee to enter into a dialogue with Pakistan when the latter visits the US in September. Since General Pervez Musharraf will be in New York for the millennium summit of the UN, the pressure will be on to hold a meeting at that time.

On August 11-12, 2000, the Centre for International Security and Cooperation (CISAC) of Stanford University, USA, organised a seminar on "Nuclear safety and security in South Asia" in Bangkok. The US participants included former defence secretary William Perry, Professor Scott Sagan, former US ambassador to Pakistan, Thomas Simons, Professor Sumit Ganguly, Kent L Biringer from Sandia Corporation and Mr Lewis Dunn. The Pakistani delegation included Lt General (retd) Talat Masood, Professor Zafar Iqbal Cheema, Professor Rifat Hussein, and a serving brigadier from the National Strategic Command Centre, Feroze Hassan Khan who deals with arms control issues.

The Indian participants were Ambassador Shanker Bajpai, Air Chief Marshal (retd) S K Mehra, Lt General Raghavan (retd), A Gopalakrishnan, formerly chairman of the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board, Prof Amitabh Mattoo and this writer. The subjects covered were nuclear weapons safety and security, deterrence in theory and practice in South Asia, nuclear decision-making in South Asia, arms control verification technology, confidence-building measures and last, lessons learnt and future course of action.

The Americans highlighted their cold war experiences, the risks involved in operating nuclear arsenals, especially the dynamics of confrontational situations. They urged the slowing down and cessation of arsenal build-up, de-alerting of weapons, non-deployment and continuing institutionalised dialogue between India and Pakistan. Both the US and Pakistan were not prepared to accept that the Indian no-first-use policy encompassed many of the measures that were being advocated. While the Indian side argued that no-first-use was a policy aimed at exercising deterrence, the scenarios of the US and Pakistan were modelled on western strategic thinking. The Americans emphasised the risks of unauthorised and accidental uses. At the end of the seminar, it was suggested that the Americans should enumerate all the risks they have come across in

the last 55 years of the nuclear era and the remedial steps they had adopted to reduce and eliminate those risks.

Both the Indians and Pakistanis pointed out that the American concerns and anxiety about South Asia's nuclear situation were not reflected in the American denial of technology cooperation with both India and Pakistan on safety and security measures -- especially those that involved interaction among scientists and sale of equipment related to nuclear safety. There was no satisfactory explanation on why the US and western nations opposed the UN resolution on de-alerting nuclear weapons. Nor was there any agreement that the best way of preventing nuclear weapons being used and eliminating to a large extent risks of unauthorised and accidental use was to declare that use and threat of use of nuclear weapons was a crime against humanity.

21/8
on the Kashmir issue and Siachen, there was no vigorous defence of the Kargil intrusion. The Pakistanis argued that Kargil should be left behind and the Indo-Pakistan dialogue resumed, not only on the nuclear issue but on all political issues.

The Indian participants pointed out that Kargil had destroyed the credibility of the Pakistani regime, particularly the military and since the Indian prime minister went to Lahore taking significant political risks, this time appropriate conditions must be created to restart the dialogue, the onus for which was on Pakistan. While the Americans accepted the Indian grievance on Kargil destroying mutual confidence, they felt that the nuclear risks were so serious that India should agree to a dialogue on nuclear confidence-building with Pakistan without any conditions. While it was not the contention of any Indian that there should not be any resumption of dialogue, no impression should be created that the nuclear issue could be used to strike bargains or to blackmail.

It was clear that the rationale of the Indian no-first-use strategy had not been understood by the Pakistani and western strategic communities. Undoubtedly, they have a vested interest in fighting the no-first-use strategy since its acceptance will build up enormous pressures on NATO and particularly the US to adopt the same strategy. The Germans and Canadians tried hard to persuade the US to accept the no-first-use strategy but the US and other nuclear weapon powers are not willing to start the process of delegitimising nuclear weapons. This continued emphasis on the legitimacy of nuclear weapons poses the greatest nuclear threat to the world since all other risks like unauthorised and accidental use etc. arise from this. The most liberal of Americans are yet to decondition themselves out of their acceptance of nuclear weapons as a legitimate instrument of policy and security.

It would be in India's interest for the government to not only finalise its nuclear doctrine early but also to come out with a strategic policy statement on the rationale of the no-first-use strategy. Second, the Indian leadership should get ready to start an early dialogue on the nuclear issue with Pakistan without linking it to other political issues. Perhaps India's offer to initiate a dialogue on nuclear issues at the expert level before Mr Vajpayee goes to Washington may help to relieve a lot of avoidable pressure on him.

IN BRIEF

- At a recent conference, India asserted that the no-first-use policy is meant to exercise deterrence
- Pakistan and India feel that the situation in South Asia is not as unstable as the US tends to think
- Pakistan would prefer to leave Kargil behind and restart a broad-based dialogue
- India needs to finalise its nuclear doctrine and then engage Pakistan in talks

While the Americans tended to consider the nuclear situation in South Asia as potentially risky, the Pakistanis felt it was not as unstable as the Americans tended to think. According to the Pakistanis, the risk lay in not settling the Kashmir issue. The Indian side felt that the situation was stabler than what the other two sides assessed and Kashmir was only a symptom of a deeper malaise -- the two-nation theory, which needed to be addressed.

There was general agreement on all sides that there was no alternative to resuming the dialogue on the nuclear issue. The Indian side pointed out that such a dialogue was envisaged in the Lahore process but was wrecked by the Kargil intrusion. While the Kargil intrusion was sought to be explained by one or two Pakistani participants as the result of the frustration of Pakistanis

THE TIMES OF INDIA

21 AUG 2000

THE DERAILED SAARC

South Asia
HD-12

AT A TIME when the political processes in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) have been derailed, the business leaders from the region have held a summit in Bangalore. They see the advantages, the problems and the compulsions for greater regional cooperation or even integration, to take on the challenge of globalisation. The ultimate goal might be a South Asian economic union, but the more immediate necessity would be to get in place a Regional Free Trade Area called SAFTA. Unfortunately, because the political process has come to a grinding halt, there are no chances of SAFTA materialising in the near future. Even the Preferential Trade Arrangement (SAPTA) has not been completely implemented as discussions could not crystallise in a politically surcharged environment.

Only a few days earlier, India ruled out a routine meeting of SAARC Foreign Ministers in New York next month, on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly. This has been a regular meeting point for the Ministers to discuss both regional and international developments, besides working on the regional road map. With the military coup in Pakistan last October, India virtually halted the SAARC process. The regional Summit was the first casualty and now New Delhi has taken the position that political-level meetings cannot take place with a military regime in Islamabad. This is an unfortunate development that can hurt both India and the region. Even if the summit has to be put on hold for a couple of years, it makes little sense to abandon all political exchanges or consultations in the regional framework. By confining SAARC activities to the official level, perhaps till democracy is restored in Pakistan, India will only make sure that no key decisions are taken and SAARC as a regional trade bloc will remain stunted and irrelevant.

When all the regional associations are trying

to speed up the process of integration ahead of the WTO deadlines, South Asia will be left far behind in the race. As the SAARC Secretary-General, Mr. Nihal Rodrigo, has said, a collective approach would ensure a degree of protection for regional interests in the face of other global collective entities. The Karnataka Chief Minister, Mr. S. M. Krishna, went a step further to call for a strong political will for regional economic union. It is not as though the political leadership of the seven South Asian countries does not know this. But India and Pakistan must realise that they are holding the process of regional cooperation and integration to ransom. Islamabad must realise that its already collapsing economy needs resuscitation at least at the regional level before it can rebound to face globalisation. New Delhi too must accept that there can be no SAARC or SAFTA without Pakistan and bilateral arrangements cannot be an effective alternative to a regional free trade area.

If India and Pakistan cannot sort out their mess in time, the other member-states of SAARC and the business community in the region must step up the pressure to make them see reason. Without the two 'big boys' in South Asia, SAARC cannot move forward and the other five countries may be further marginalised in the process of globalisation. Together, they must influence New Delhi and Islamabad to keep their bilateral problems aside and move ahead with the SAARC process. After 15 years, this infant remains malnourished, perhaps disoriented. Unless it can move ahead swiftly, it cannot emerge as the regional voice of South Asia in a global platform. The business leaders, who have called for enhanced intra-SAARC trade, must now start influencing their political leadership to hasten regional integration and a free trade area. If they cannot face regional competition, they will be swept away in the flood of global competition. That is the real danger ahead.

THE HINDU

22 AUG 2000

22 AUG 2000

Building bridges in South Asia

By K. K. Katyal

THE SOUTH Asia persona may well acquire an additional dimension if the new non-governmental human rights organisation, which has just come into being, achieves its objectives. It was set up at the Neerwana resort to foster the South Asian identity by promoting the shared ideals of democracy, peace, human rights and secularism while acknowledging the features of diversity. This is significant for at least two reasons — one, for the tasks it has set itself and, two, for the push it may give to regional approaches and regional thinking. This at a time when the formal mechanism, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, has downgraded itself. As the former Prime Minister, Mr. I. K. Gujral, who presided over the founding conference, noted, it would be another bridge connecting the peoples of the region.

There were several non-official moves in the past, concerning the region and the none-too-happy India-Pakistan relationship which registered some advance — quite an achievement in the face of heavy odds. All that was, however, interrupted by the Kargil conflict. What happens between these two countries holds the key to the developments in the region and, as such, the track-II processes involving them are important both in bilateral and regional contexts.

Speakers at the Neerwana meet, especially those from India and Pakistan, repeatedly drew attention to their having taken the initiative despite their governmental attitude, running contrary as it does to loud professions. In India every single government since Partition — not excluding the present BJP-led coalition — called for strengthening of people-to-people contacts, for specific steps to facilitate their movement from one country to the other, exchanges in art, culture and literature, expansion of trade and easier flow of information and circulation of newspapers and journals. Such a commitment should normally lead New Delhi to encourage the initiatives of the type undertaken now. But why the perception to the contrary? Why is it seen as frowning upon non-official moves to promote contacts between the two peoples? Has it

It will be unrealistic to expect miracles from the new, non-governmental South Asia human rights organisation... On their part, the people need to change their mindset and refrain from dismissive reactions.

something to do with the official policy of not doing business with the present military regime? The SAARC was now in limbo as a result of India's action seeking postponement of the scheduled summit last year because of the demise of democracy in one of the member-countries. There may be some merit in India's position on the military coup in Islamabad but was it right in causing a slowdown of the SAARC processes? New Delhi could not have been oblivious of the consequence of its action for regional cooperation but, obviously, ignored it. Hence the perception that it would not take kindly to non-official efforts to promote contacts.

In Pakistan, virtually all governments were lukewarm to the idea of promoting contacts between the peoples, in fostering cooperation at the non-official level. This conscious policy of erecting walls was defended on the ground of preserving Pakistan's identity and not letting it be diluted by invasions in cultural and other areas from across the border. There was another rationale for the hesitant approach — the "core issue", Kashmir, had to be resolved first. In the absence of a solution, the Pakistanis, so goes the argument, should not be expected to think of cooperation in any "peripheral" area, be it trade, cultural exchange or information-related matter. The military ruler, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, did call for talks with India "at any place, any level, any time" but that was meant mainly for addressing the Kashmir issue. Cooperation in other areas and at non-official levels was the farthest from his mind. Hence the "despite the government" formulation by the Pakistani representatives.

The policies of the governments notwithstanding, the track-II processes have come to stay. In the past, non-official efforts helped to clarify the issues and attitudes which had contributed to adversarial relations between India and Pakistan. The back-channel diplomacy before and after the bus journey to La-

ves, there are many socio-cultural diversities in the region, and even within its different countries. But South Asia has a distinct identity. The people inhabiting the states there are bound by many ties — historical, political, economic and cultural. They share many laws, customs and social values. They also need to have a joint approach to many issues of common concern in relation to the rest of the world. Many human rights issues — peace, rule of law, cross-border migration, prisoners' rights, citizenship issues, etc. — demand bilateral and regional solutions.

However, it will be unrealistic to expect miracles from the latest initiative or, for that matter, from the decision of the media representatives to work for joint action programmes at the regional level. Given the distrust and deep-seated suspicions, it is hard to convince the people of the credibility of the proposed joint steps or of the effort put in. They would weigh any such move in the light of the prevailing — and highly unpleasant — situations. It is all the more important for the organisers of the initiatives to first formulate sound action plans and then seriously work for their implementation. A failure on any of these counts would add to cynicism and do more harm than good. On their part, the people need to change their mindset and refrain from dismissive, derisive reactions.

There are other dangers. In India, every regional initiative on human rights will be seen in the light of the charges of violations against the security forces in Jammu and Kashmir. "This is a trap to arraign India, Beware," they may say. In Pakistan, the religious fundamentalists, already on the warpath against the NGOs, may pick up some points from the Neerwana agenda to level all manner of charges — seeing sellout of cherished interests, a conspiracy against the ideological foundation of the state. There will be no scope for such misgivings if human rights are not seen in narrow terms but are viewed as encompassing the rights of the poor, of the deprived, the victims of disease and illiteracy. A collective approach to tackle these problems will be good in itself — and good for the region. It may generate beneficial influences and be of help in solving intractable problems.

Pakistan's N-capabilities are far superior, say U.S. officials

By Ramesh Chandran
The Times of India News Service

WASHINGTON: After the embarrassments of May 1998 when the Pokhran-II nuclear tests caught the U.S. intelligence agencies off the guard, South Asia has been under an unwavering focus of American military and intelligence agencies.

In this period, they have now reassessed earlier estimates of India and Pakistan's nuclear capabilities. In a dramatic re-evaluation, U.S. officials told a television news channel that Pakistan's nuclear arsenal is vastly superior to that of India's with up to "five times the nuclear warheads" and far more accurate and effective delivery systems.

Quoting intelligence sources and diplomats, NBC News reported that their original estimates had been that Pakistan was estimated to have 10 and 15 nuclear weapons in its arsenal while India had between 25 and 100. However, 24 months later they have altered these estimates and suggest they may have overstated India's "homegrown" arsenal and understated Pakistan's programme which had been beefed up with "generous Chinese assistance".

One official made a startling comment to the network that Pakistan is more likely to have "those numbers than the Indians" (25 to 100 warheads). What several of the officials, unidentified mostly, told the network is that the crucial element in the revised scenario is the question of delivering nuclear payloads in which Islamabad is said to be far more advanced than New Delhi, especially concerning ballistic missiles.

One voice of authority quoted was Marine Corps General Anthony Zinni of the U.S. central command who is familiar with the region and who has met with Pakistan's military commanders, in-

cluding Gen Pervez Musharraf. His comments seemed to suggest that longtime assumptions that India had the edge in South Asia's strategic balance was questionable at best. "Don't assume that the Pakistan nuclear capability is inferior to the Indians," he said.

The nub of the NBC story citing various intelligence analysts and officials was that both India and Pakistan have nuclear capability but the latter is far better prepared. A recent U.S. defence department analysis of India's capability and readiness, quoted by the network, suggests that New Delhi is now "aware of its shortcomings" and is

HOME TRUTHS

- Pak has five times more N-warheads than India
- India's capabilities overrated
- India is aware of its shortcomings

seeking to address the problem. It refers to the minimum deterrent force "comprised of a triad of nuclear delivery systems—air, mobile land-based launches and sea-based platforms" and adds, "the air component of its triad is the only one that may be in place already." The report maintains that India may have a "handful of nuclear bombs"—maybe about five—and its delivery systems needed to launch them is "seriously lagging".

The document quoted by NBC also apparently states that India has no nuclear capable missiles and fewer aircraft capable of delivering nuclear payloads than Pakistan. New Delhi has twice tested the intermediate range Agni missile "which might eventually provide the basis of a nuclear missile force."

However, several analysts quoted in the programme maintain that 'Agni' will not be fielded with nu-

clear warheads for another 10 years! Besides India appears to only "have begun work" on missile warhead and on the miniaturisation of weapons—two critical hurdles to the actual use of weapons. On the other hand, U.S. have altered their estimates on Pakistan's capabilities whose missile and air delivery systems are now ready "if something happens".

Islamabad's F-16s and its French Mirage fighter bombers, according to these analysts, are "superior at penetrating enemy airspace" than India's "Soviet-designed MiGs and Sukhois". Crucially, Pakistan is now estimated to possess 30 nuclear capable missiles—the Chinese-made M-11 short-range missiles and its Pakistani variant the Tarmuk as well as the North Korean Nodong intermediate range missile, which the Pakistanis call the Ghauri.

One underlying theme of the report is the grave "hair-trigger" concerns in Washington of a possible nuclear exchange in which "150 million Indians and Pakistanis could perish"—three times the number of people who died in World War II. Gen Zinni is quoted as saying: "Kargil scared both sides. It escalated with mobilisation on different fronts—tit for tat."

He argued that the U.S. intervened in the nick of time during Kargil. Although Washington might not exert influence on the "daily level of fighting," it did hold some sway in terms of escalation since neither side "really wants an all out war."

Meanwhile, the Pakistani ambassador in Washington Malecha Lodhi, in a speech to the Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars, warned that her country was left with no other options but to build a "nuclear force" as India embarks on a huge conventional arms build-up.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

9 JUN 2000

SAARC writers for word power to break barriers

By Our Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI, APRIL 30. Authors and poets from the "seven sister" countries bonded by the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) today vowed to use the power of the word to ensure the barbed fences at the borders were not extended to the hearts.

The commitment was made part of the New Delhi Declaration, adopted by the participants at the valedictory session of the three-day SAARC Writers Conference, which offered writers and poets of the region a platform for interaction and understanding.

Recognising the special role such a conclave can play in ushering in peace and social justice in the region, the Declaration made

LD-18
but a strong case for the Conference becoming an annual event to be followed by regular exchange of views.

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Tuned as the writers are to the realities of the modern age, they favoured a more intensive use of the Internet by starting a website to give writers their due share of recognition so that they are more widely read. The Declaration has called for a machinery for regular exchange of views on creative writings and harnessing creative writing to work for peace in the region. "This can be achieved through writer exchange programmes, writers of all seven SAARC countries visiting the neighbouring countries for exchange of views, writers-in-residence programmes, and interactions with creative writing faculties in

universities." Since the Academy of Fine Arts and Literature took upon itself the initiative of hosting the first ever SAARC Writers Conference, the writers were of the view that it should make efforts to keep alive the continuous process of cultural dialogue.

"The Academy should follow up this conference with an ongoing programme to ensure the smooth and unhindered flow of literature — particularly contemporary writings — from one country to the other especially through creative translations and publishing of anthologies of outstanding contemporary writings."

Neither the Declaration nor the organisers gave no indication of where the second Conference would be held.

1 MAY 2000

Delhi buys time as US hits Pak with terror rap

OUR BUREAU

New Delhi, April 30: Armed with a US state department report blaming Pakistan for harbouring terrorists, India today tilted the talks see-saw battle back in its favour and stuck to its conditions to resume dialogue.

The US report, made public by *The New York Times*, has for the first time identified South Asia as a crucial hub of international terrorism, accusing Pakistan and especially Afghanistan of providing safe haven and support to international terrorist groups.

However, the report stopped short of adding Pakistan to the terror black list. The US conceded that Islamabad's record badly needs improvement, but added that "it is a friendly state that is trying to tackle the problem".

The disclosure of the report comes close on the heels of an appeal by US under-secretary of state Thomas Pickering to India to restart talks and a day after Pakistan's junta leader, Pervez Musharraf, repeated his desire to meet Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee in a "neutral" West Asian country.

The two statements had raised eyebrows in New Delhi, which had been insisting that talks would be resumed only after "concrete evidence" of a cessation of cross-border terrorism.

Pickering is scheduled to visit the sub-continent next month and it was felt that he was testing the waters to make the resumption of talks the cornerstone of his tour.

However, buoyed by the state department report, Delhi slipped back into the post-Clinton visit high ground, questioning the sincerity of Musharraf's offer made during an interview to CNN.

This afternoon, national security adviser Brajesh Mishra told reporters in Patiala that the question of a dialogue with Musharraf and his regime did not arise because he had gone on record ques-

tioning the Simla Agreement.

Foreign ministry officials insisted that unless Pakistan agrees to talk on cross-border terrorism before Kashmir, there was no scope for a meeting ground.

In the same interview, the officials pointed out, Musharraf had hinted at possible involvement of Indian forces in the massacre of Sikhs in Anantnag during Clinton's visit. The design, he suggested, was to impress upon Clinton the severity of terror strikes.

However, diplomats conceded that India will have to find a way to resume talks, either direct or through Track II, before Vajpayee pays a return visit to Washington in September.

In its 107-page report, the state department was severely critical of Pakistan, saying that while it has arrested and extradited several terrorists, it has refused to end support for groups that train terrorists in neighbouring Afghanistan and in Pakistan itself, and has declined to close "certain Pakistani religious schools that serve as conduits for terrorism".

It said there are also "credible reports" that Pakistan continues to support militant groups like Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, which had one of its leaders freed from an Indian prison in exchange for hostages taken during the Indian Airlines hijack.

Informed of the state department report, Zamir Akram, the deputy chief of mission at Pakistan's embassy in Washington, vigorously denied that his country was supporting or tolerating terrorism.

Washington, he asserted, had refused to present evidence to support such charges. "If they have evidence, they should share it with us," Akram said.

"We are more of a target and victim of terrorism than the US has even been. We need to jointly fight against terrorism. Charges like this simply get our backs up," he added.

THE TELEGRAPH

27 MAY 2002

'LTTE threat to peace in S Asia'

Russia calls for global effort to fight terrorism

P K Balachandran
Colombo, May 6

HT-12 7/5

RUSSIA ON Friday said that the LTTE was a real threat to the security of the South Asian region and called upon the international community to band together to fight terrorism, which it stressed, was a global phenomenon.

A statement issued by the Russian Foreign Ministry in Moscow and obtained by *The Hindustan Times*, said that Russia had received with "concern" the aggravation of the situation in Sri Lanka by the military activities of the LTTE. "In Moscow it has been noted that prolonged armed conflict in Sri Lanka and the accompanying extremism and terrorism not only create a real threat to the security and territorial integrity of this country, but are also a destabilising factor in the general context of the rather difficult situation in South Asia."

"The Russian side views with understanding the Sri Lankan government's steps for the resolution of the conflict. We are convinced that today it is impossible to suppress the wave of terrorism which has spread to many countries of the world, without pooling the efforts of all the states in countering this common evil."

In the background of explicit pledges, especially from Russia and Israel, the performance of the Sri

Lankan troops has improved on the ground. Kilai, on the Jaffna lagoon, is still with the security forces and the LTTE's bid to move forward from Palai or Nagarkovil has been stalled.

The suspension of talk on evacuation from Jaffna has also stirred the will to stay put and fight, diplomatic sources said.

Informed sources now do not expect Jaffna to fall. They also say that heavens would not fall if Jaffna fell.

'India too willing': Key sections of the Sri Lankan leadership are aware that India too has offered to contribute to the effort to secure

Concern over ties with Israel

THE SRI Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC), a key partner in the ruling Peoples' Alliance, has expressed "deep concern" about the government's decision to re-establish diplomatic relations with Israel in the context of that country's "past role in the ethnic conflict". But there seems to be little or no chance of the SLMC's walking out of the government on this issue.

HTC, Colombo

peace. Mr. Wickremesinghe, for example, pointed to the fourth and the last point in Mr. Jaswant Singh's statement on May 3, which said: "It is India's hope that the peace sought by all Sri Lankans will soon return to a country that is a close and friendly neighbour. India is ready to contribute to making that hope a reality."

Asked what might happen to the Norwegian effort to facilitate, in case India came on board, Mr. Wickremesinghe said that India could well supplement the Norwegian effort. But observers wondered if India would not insist on playing solo in a matter like this. However, diplomats feel that a dialogue or even a ceasefire does not seem likely now because the LTTE thinks that it is on a winning streak and the Sri Lankans too, of late, have begun to feel that they can dislodge the LTTE.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 7 MAY 2002

Marine security network to be set up in South Asia

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, May 8. — The first steps are on towards formation of a regional network to take on piracy in the South-east and South Asian seas. Sixteen coast guard agencies have reached a pact on sharing information and coordinated action, against pirates and in responding to SOS calls from ships.

A recent meeting in Tokyo took note of piracy and armed robberies involving merchant vessels. India was represented by the Coast Guard director general and the director general of shipping.

Since instances of piracy went far beyond the jurisdiction of any single state, coordinated responses should be ensured at the earliest. The agencies that adopted a framework of action represented the administrations of Brunei, Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, South Korea, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

The agencies have decided to identify operational contact points to transmit information about ships under or apprehending pirate attacks and pass on details.

Each state is to boost its own law enforcement activities at sea, and have agreed to render immediate assistance to ships under attack. They have also decided to take action to intercept or seize vessels suspected to have been hijacked or involved in piracy.

Since such action may sometimes take place in areas beyond the jurisdiction of a particular state, the agencies will consult each other through diplomatic channels so that the legal technicalities do not frustrate the efforts of the law enforcement units.

While as of now no plans have been firmed up for joint action or a preventive action, those possibilities would be explored on the basis of experience gained from the cooperative responses to situations. There was also a certain agreement on the need for upgrading the training and technology available to each agency. Japan is to explore the scope for providing support to such upgrades.

The 16 agencies have also decided to hold regular meetings to give more teeth and specific expression to the broad agreements that were reached at Tokyo. During that meet there was high praise for the action by the Indian Coast Guard and Navy in detecting and seizing the hijacked MV Alondra Rainbow last year.

Though there are no reports of pirates or armed robbers operating off Indian ports, there is increasing evidence of such activities now stretching out westward of the waters around Indonesia and the Malacca Straits. Indian authorities now suspect that some of the cargo taken by pirates is being off-loaded at small ports on the Indian coastline.

THE STATESMAN

- 9 MAY 200

A South Asian Force Join Hands to End Lankan Crisis

By JAWID LAIQ

WITH the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) all set to partition Sri Lanka along ethnic lines and establish a separate state by force of arms, the unity and integrity of India and of every other South Asian state could be affected in the long term. South Asian governments cannot stand by idly and let an outlawed group vivisection one of the member states of SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation).

Jaffna's 5,00,000 Tamil civilians, trapped between the vicious assaults of the LTTE and the Sri Lankan army, are in dire need of protection. If Jaffna falls to the LTTE, President Chandrika Kumaratunga's relatively level-headed leadership could be overcome by hardline pressures from Sinhalese hotheads to crack down on Tamils living outside northern Sri Lanka, further aggravating the ethnic conflict.

Global Ranking

Despite Sri Lanka's abject failure to resolve its domestic Sinhalese-Tamil confrontation over the last 17 years (which was encouraged in the early 1980s by Indira Gandhi's reckless assistance to Sri Lankan Tamil separatist groups), Sri Lanka can by no measure be dismissed as a failed state which should be left to suffer its fate. Despite its cruel internal war, Sri Lanka remains the only South Asian state which has been able to provide its 18 million people, both Sinhalese and Tamil, with a wide spectrum of human welfare benefits. Sri Lanka's standards of social welfare are far ahead of the rest of South Asia, with the exception of the Maldives.

Sri Lanka stands at 90 in the global ranking of 174 countries in last year's UN Human Development Index, compared to India at 132, Pakistan at 138, Nepal at 144, Bhutan at 45 and Bangladesh at 150. Sri Lanka's average life expectancy at birth is 73 years, compared to India's 63 years and Pakistan's 64 years. Sri Lanka's adult literacy percentage rate is 91, while India's is 54 and Pakistan's is 41. In the women's empowerment index, Sri Lanka ranks 80 while India ranks 95 and Pakistan 101. Sri Lanka must be saved by its South Asian neighbours.

Sri Lanka's current internal security situation is clearly desperate and its government has sought external intervention. India alone cannot intervene through the des-

perate remedy of sending its armed forces once again to confront the LTTE on the battlefield after its bitter experience in 1987-90. India cannot also be the sole external participant in any forceful move to resolve the complex ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. In this hazardous scenario, New Delhi cannot react in an ad hoc and impulsive manner to the fast moving daily developments in Sri Lanka. It must act with cool foresight and imagination to save Sri Lanka from its disastrous predicament. As any prudent and experienced insurance broker would envisage, we must seek to spread the risk liability and widen the medical insurance cover for the threatened life condition faced by Sri Lanka.

We must immediately launch a serious initiative to rally all the members of SAARC in a joint mission to halt the fighting for a start to be followed by negotiations to find a political solution. This can only be done by a show of overwhelming military force. The armed forces of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Pakistan along with our own forces should be inducted into Sri Lanka under the banner of a South Asia Arbitration Force (SAAF) to cleanse northern Sri Lanka of violence. The Maldives can also contribute a couple of patrol boats from its marine police force as a token of participation in SAAF.

SAAF would be more palatable as an intervention force to Sinhalese political groups and to the LTTE leadership than a solely Indian military mission. It should be made clear to our own Tamil DMK, MDMK and PMK parties that SAAF's basic mission would be to establish a cease-fire. SAAF would be explicitly forbidden from participating in any action to suppress the legitimate aspirations of Sri Lanka's Tamils, so long as these aspirations remain within the constitutional bounds of the Sri Lankan state. SAAF's induction would preclude extra-regional powers like the United States, China and Israel from gaining a possible military toehold in Sri Lanka and, more significantly, would pre-empt Pakistan from independently establishing a military presence on the island.

Nepalese Battalion

Pakistan is reported to have already dispatched a shipload of multi-barrel rocket launchers, rockets and small arms to Sri Lanka which is seeking emergency military assistance from all and sundry, Pakistani

army officers to train Sri Lankan soldiers in the use of these weapons are likely to follow. These Pakistani personnel will be free to carry out their own agenda if they are left unsupervised. Under the umbrella of SAAF, they would have to function under the orders of a multinational command.

As Sri Lanka has ancient Buddhist ties and very cordial relations with Nepal, it would be diplomatically appropriate for a Nepalese general or lieutenant-general to be the overall commander of SAAF. Many Nepalese officers have served as colonels commanding Nepalese battalions which have operated as part of UN forces in places like Lebanon. Some of the colonels have attained the rank of lieutenant-general. One among them would be best suited to command SAAF. To assist him, the operational commander could be an Indian major-general as India would be expected to provide the largest component of SAAF. To maintain the delicate balance within SAAF, the deputy operational chief could be a Pakistani brigadier.

Beyond Kashmir

During the past decade, Indian and Pakistan units have served fairly amicably together under the UN in far-flung areas of the globe, including Somalia, Angola and Cambodia. Bangladeshi contingents have also served alongside Indian and Pakistani units under UN command. There is no reason why they cannot cooperate in Sri Lanka which is on their doorstep. A small bonus for India would be that any Pakistani brigade or battalion withdrawn from duty in its home country would mean a slight depletion in the Pakistani force levels on India's borders.

A joint military operation in Sri Lanka could be the first practical lesson in cooperation for SAARC which at the moment is the world's most moribund regional organisation. NATO forces have intervened in Bosnia and Kosovo, Russian and CIS forces in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, and West African ECOMOG forces in Liberia and Sierra Leone. SAAF could bring SAARC to life and, hopefully, may even break the logjam in Indo-Pakistan relations if General Musharraf's tactically fertile mind can be persuaded to look beyond his Kashmir obsession.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

17 MAY 2001

S. Asian meet on human development

By Our Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI, MAY 18. A four-day conference of South Asian countries on 'Legacy of Mahbub-ul-Haq - Human Development' will begin here on Friday. Organised by the Institute of Social Sciences, the conference will stress the need to defuse conflicts and tensions in the region by creating public opinion in favour of developmental issues.

The conference has been designed to encourage intensive interaction on various aspects of human development.

"It will seek to constitute a mechanism to monitor, report and evaluate the human development policies of the South Asian Governments as well as to encourage civil society initiatives in setting the development agenda," said Dr. George Matthew, director of the Institute of Social Sciences, at a press conference here today.

The conference will also come up with a 'Delhi Declaration' setting out its objective and strategies.

19 MAY 2000

Early Saarc summit unlikely

INDIA ABROAD NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, May 24. — The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, which went into hibernation after strains in India-Pakistan relations last year spilled over into the regional grouping, is unlikely to hold its postponed summit in the near future.

"Not only the summit, but even the ministerial and foreign secretary-level meetings are still a long way off because India is still unwilling to sit down with Pakistan," a senior Saarc official said.

But he said the various Saarc technical committees which too had not met for some time are to be reactivated shortly.

A technical committee dealing with the social sector is to meet in Sri Lanka shortly and this will be followed by meetings of other technical committees dealing with issues like health, education and human resources development.

The official said though most member countries were unhappy when India refused to take part in the summit scheduled to be held in Kathmandu in November, necessitating its indefinite postponement, most had since understood New Delhi's position.

"Even after Kargil, India was willing to take part in the summit, but after October its stand became rigid," the official said, referring to the 12 October 12 coup in Islamabad.

Senior Indian officials said Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee could not be expected to sit with Gen. Pervez Musharraf, known to be the brain behind the Kargil intrusion.

Gen. Musharraf, they noted, is seen as a "wrecker of peace" with a deep sense of enmity towards India.

THE STATESMAN

25 MAY 2001

Kashmir issue affects region's growth: Clinton

1014 By Sridhar Krishnaswami HV-11

WASHINGTON, APRIL 15. The U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, has reiterated that if the conflict over Kashmir was resolved between India and Pakistan, there was no limit to the potential of South Asia. Speaking at a fund-raising function in Atlanta — where the audience included a number of Pakistani Americans and several Sikhs — he said the region was being kept back from the modern world "by this ancient tension".

"The situation in Kashmir is interesting from an American point of view for the following reason. Indian Americans and Pakistani Americans, of the 200 ethnic groups that exist in America today, rank in the top 10 in per capita income and education.

Obviously if the difficulties over Kashmir could be resolved, people from South Asia

would explode. There is literally no limit to the potential of the life that could be had there," Mr. Clinton said at the fund-raising luncheon organised for the Democratic member in Congress, Ms. Cynthia McKinney, on Friday.

"But they are sort of kept back from the modern world by this ancient tension — or at least the tension that grew out of the founding of the nations of India and Pakistan. I say that to make this point only — I'm basically, you know, a very optimistic person. And I always have been, and I remain so today," he said.

The President had referred to his trip to South Asia on many occasions, especially on the different facets of his visit to India. On Friday he again referred to the warm reception he received in a village in Rajasthan. "... You may have seen the pictures on television of me dancing with the village women and they were

pelting me with flowers. It's better than other things I could be pelted with," he said amid laughter.

The President soon turned to another incident during his trip to India — the massacre of Sikhs in Kashmir. "The most heartbreaking thing that happened on my trip to the Indian sub-continent is that 35 Sikhs were murdered in Kashmir. And I'm sure they were murdered because I was there. Those people lost their lives because I went to India and Pakistan," the President said.

"And the people who don't want their turmoil to be eased used my trip there as a pretext to highlight the difficulties. And somebody, we don't know who, killed 35 perfectly innocent people — who, I might add, had never before been targeted in all the conflicts in Kashmir," Mr. Clinton said.

16 APR 2001

India lukewarm to Dhaka offer

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, April 21

INDIA HAS cold-shouldered the Bangladeshi proposal to hold the SAARC Summit that was due to be held between November 26 and 28 last year at Kathmandu.

An External Affairs spokesman said here today that India is for continuing with the meetings of the various SAARC technical committees and official-level talks but is against the idea of having a summit at this stage.

Bangladesh, along with India and Bhutan, had opposed the convening of the SAARC Summit on the grounds that the October 12 military coup in Pakistan had created an atmosphere of "concern and disquiet" in the South Asian region. Subsequently, Sri Lanka, which is presently in the SAARC chair, announced the indefinite postponement of the summit which could have been the first time the Indian and Pakistani Prime Ministers assembled on the same forum since the Kargil war.

Sri Lanka along with Pakistan and Nepal were initially opposed to the idea of a postponement. But a technicality tilted the situation in India's favour. SAARC works by consensus that was remote with the forum divided over the coup question. Pakistan's military chief executive, General Pervez Musharraf, had made it clear that he was eager to interact with his fellow South Asian leaders.

With Bangladesh departing from its earlier position,

Dhaka has sent out the significant, even if familiar, message that smaller partners in the SAARC have had enough of the

impasse created by a stand-off between India and Pakistan. As founder of the SAARC, it has been Bangladesh's consistent position that the two big partners should wrap up their problems and keep the summit process going, keeping in mind the economic benefits that could accrue from regional co-operation.

The three-nation summit in Dhaka in January 1998 had produced visions of not just free trade, but also better infrastructure linkages.

SAARC Summit

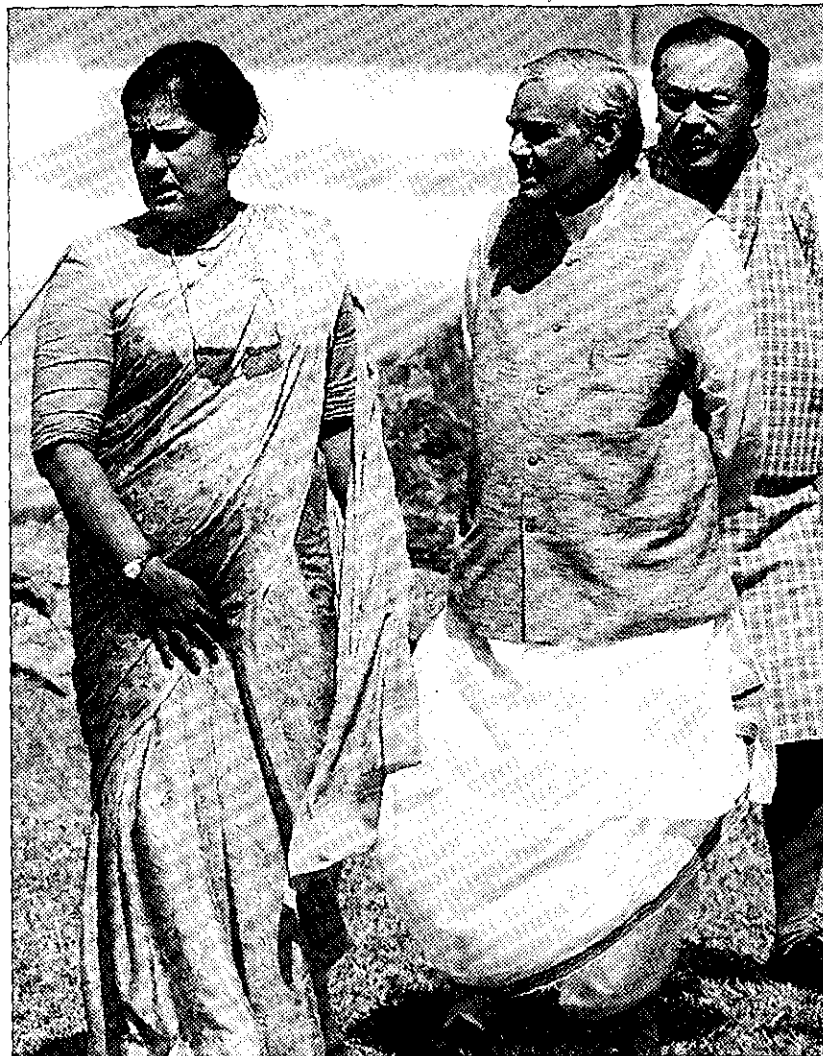
THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

22 APR 2000

Is SAARC the answer?

MANI TALK

MANI SHANKAR AIYAR



Wind in new sails

South Asia is a distinctive civilizational entity and, therefore, at that level, the logical basis for a south Asian regional identity. But at virtually every other level, south Asian cooperation is programmed to self-destruct, as most recently evidenced by the A.B. Vajpayee government allowing its childish quest for revenge to sabotage the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation summit.

The negative India-Pakistan bilateral relationship sooner or later leeches almost all moves for meaningful south Asian cooperation. And India's overwhelming pre-dominance makes India an uncomfortable partner for many of our smaller south Asian neighbours.

That is why a good 20 years after General Zia-ur-Rahman mooted the idea of SAARC, and all of 15 years after SAARC as a vehicle for regional cooperation was officially launched, SAARC remains a paper pussy-cat. South Asian regional cooperation is mired in grandiose dreams and trivial achievements, every summit being turned into a nightmare obstacle race, no interaction between parliamentary or people's representatives, not even a sense of genuine regional identity or shared common interests, let alone cooperation for internal or external security.

Regional economic cooperation is almost non-existent, whatever economic relations there are being primarily bilateral, not regional, in nature. No wonder south Asian regional cooperation has not penetrated public awareness in any of the six SAARC member states.

Is there a way out? Yes, perhaps, if we were to recognize that India and her neighbours do not belong to south Asia alone; most south Asian states, arguably all of them, belong to several other regions too. Moreover,

the potential for trans-south Asian regional cooperation is considerably more than the promise of intra-south Asian or even sub-regional south Asia cooperation.

The single most significant sphere for re-conceiving regional cooperation, in terms other than the classically south Asian, is in the sphere which impinges most decisively on the lives of our people and our prospects for economic growth-energy.

In an important speech back in 1996 — the Lovraj Kumar memorial lecture — former petroleum secretary, Vijay Kelkar (now our executive

director at the World Bank), delivered himself of an aphorism which should be written in letters of gold above Race Course Road, the prime minister's residence. He said natural gas would be to the 21st century what petroleum had been to the 20th.

The world's largest reservoirs of natural gas are in the immediate vicinity of India. However,

the only significant south Asian deposit is in Bangladesh. All the other underground natural gas lakes are north and west of the Hindukush, in central Asia (specifically, Turkmenistan) and in an arc through the Persian Gulf region from Iran to Qatar and Oman.

Yet, both central Asia and the Persian Gulf have become virtually no-go areas for us owing to the constricted vision of India's foreign policy. Turkmenistan gas can be accessed only through Afghanistan and Pakistan. We have no relations at all with the former and the worst possible relations with the latter.

And we are yet to come to diplomatic terms with the fact that Iranian or Persian Gulf gas can be accessed only via a pipeline through Pakistan. Alas, our Pakistan paranoia effectively seals that off. So with electricity. The only surplus available for the power-starved north of India is from Pak-

istan. Procrastination let that opportunity start slipping on economic grounds: politics has given it the quietus.

Natural gas from central and west Asia is, however, of hardly any import to the east or northeast of the country.

There, the great white hope is the hydro-electric potential of one of the most water-rich regions of the world.

That potential can be harnessed only by bringing in China, since the Brahmaputra rises as the Tsang-po in Tibet and flows a thousand kilometres

through China before turning south through Arunachal Pradesh to arrive in Assam as the Brahmaputra.

Further downstream, the Brahmaputra becomes linked to the basins of the Barak (Meghna) and the Ganga, the Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna basins (including the crucial Teesta tributary) being shared by no less than five countries — Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India and Nepal (to name them in alphabetical order).

Viewed in the larger economic perspective, it would also be necessary to incorporate Myanmar in promoting cooperative development in the region, the opening of the World War II "Burma Road" to south China being an indispensable element in creating a hexagon of growth, with Calcutta, Chittagong, Akyab and Yangon (Rangoon) as the principal ports. If this were done, the northeast of India, at present the poorest and most backward corner of the country, would perform its own little "Asian miracle", thus also building the vital economic and geographical link to the Association for South East Asian Nations.

Yet, India is so wary of bringing even Bhutan and Nepal into water-sharing, water-augmentation and water-resource development arrangements with Bangladesh that the mere mention of China is likely to kill any further consideration of the issue. It would bode us well to remember that the European Coal and Steel Community, precursor to the European Union, would not have kicked off were it not for the joint presence of France and Germany as the giant countervailing powers within this community of unequals.

So also, it is not until China is brought in as a countervailing power to the disproportionate size and influence of India that regional cooperation in southern Asia, involving as it does so many unequal but sovereign politi-

cal entities, has any prospect of translating into meaningful cooperation.

For coastal Bangladesh and eastern coastal India, stretching through the Sunderbans of West Bengal to Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, as also the Andaman and Nicobar islands, and further south to Tamil-majority Jaffna and the east coast of Sri Lanka, SAARC is remote to the point of irrelevancy. But a Bay of Bengal community would link this long stretch — among the poorest regions of south Asia — with the fast-growing ASEAN eastern littoral states of Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and the western islands of the Indonesian archipelago, notably Sumatra. Inexplicably, a Bay of Bengal community has never been even envisaged.

For western coastal India — Gujarat to Kerala — and down to Sri Lanka and the Maldives, it is the Indian Ocean Rim that holds the highest promise of regional cooperation. But here too we are so busy keeping Pakistan out that the IOR community is being killed in the womb.

We are thus stuck with a region — south Asia — which is riddled with dispute and holds little potential for complementarities, while not even looking at the scope for trans-south Asian regional cooperation that has an economic — as distinct from a purely civilizational — character. Worse, Vajpayee and Jaswant Singh are so obsessed with avenging themselves on Pakistan that they can hardly be expected to display the imagination or vision required to pursue these alternative courses of regional cooperation.

But perhaps while we wait for the breaking of a less mottled daw (the phrase is not mine but Fe Ahmed Faiz's), we can start thinking of ways in which cooperation, not confrontation, becomes the leitmotif of our foreign policy.

Regional economic cooperation is almost non-existent, whatever economic relations there are being primarily bilateral. No wonder SAARC has not penetrated public awareness

Vajpayee and Jaswant Singh are so obsessed with avenging themselves on Pakistan that they cannot display the imagination required to pursue regional cooperation

A time to be silent

HTF 15
A/S

THE ISSUE of whether or not to include Pakistan in his South Asia trip this month must surely rank as one of the most delicate and high-stake calculations President Bill Clinton has had to confront in his extensive experience of executive decision making. There are perils and pitfalls regardless of what he decides. Think tank and media analysts have been having a field day laying out the pros and cons of the two alternatives. Batteries of senior inter-agency officials have been brainstorming in the White House, trying to calculate the odds for and against various formulations in a situation in which there will inevitably be some damage. But the bottomline, as President Harry Truman had declared, is that "the buck stops here" (in the Oval Office). After all, advisors have pushed their individual agendas and Mr Clinton has to take the ultimate decision.

Pakistan has been exercising all its diplomatic, political and lobbying skills to persuade Mr Clinton of the wisdom of touching down in Islamabad, even for a few hours. Islamabad has indeed been getting increasingly desperate. Rightly or wrongly, Gen. Pervez Musharraf believes that a Clinton visit will provide a semblance of legitimacy to his military regime. The General also fears that a snub by the US President would worsen the international opprobrium triggered by the military take-over.

One of the alarmist lobbying ploys that Pakistan used, both with the Clinton administration and on Capitol Hill, was to warn that the massive slight involved in Mr Clinton giving Islamabad a wide berth and going over to India for five days of friendly pomp and pageantry would enrage fundamentalist groups so greatly that they might go on an intensified rampage in Kashmir which, in turn, could result in full-scale hostilities between India and Pakistan. The argument is patently specious for two reasons: First, the fundamentalist forces cannot conduct their operations in Kashmir without logistic and other support from the regular Pakistani army; second, Gen. Musharraf's real fear is not that irate fundamentalists might trigger a full-fledged cross-border war, but that their anger at a Clinton snub might be directed against his own regime, leading to his own downfall.

N. C. MENON on Clinton's visit to the subcontinent

In the midst of all this mindless activity by Pakistan, as well as the clearly wrenching debate within the White House, India might well be tempted to join the fray and push an agenda opposing a Clinton visit to Islamabad. That would be a grave error tactically. It would also go against India's long-term interests. For instance, one of India's longstanding grouses has been at the proclivity of various US administrations to club New Delhi and Islamabad together in America's South Asia policy. The practice of being "even handed" between the two subcontinental neighbours has unfortunately come to an end at least at top policy levels, although some officials do continue sporadically to exhibit it.

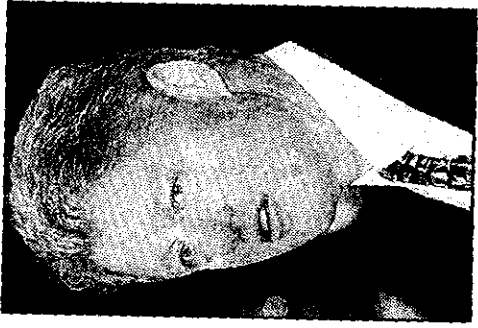
India has always claimed that it is in a different and much larger league than Pakistan and should be treated commensurately. To protest now that including Pakistan in the Clinton visit will not be palatable to the Indian public is to push the very line that India has so far opposed — bracketing India and Pakistan in the US calculus.

America, like India, has its own global interests. Where Mr Clinton chooses to visit is purely America's business. What India should be concerned with is the way Indo-American relations evolve, hopefully in mutually beneficial directions. The Clinton visit has the potential to bring about that desirable end. And that is what India should be concentrating on. In any case, despite what Gen. Musharraf might perceive to be the signals from a Clinton visit, their impact is bound to be evanescent. Unless Pakistan puts its house in order by curbing fundamentalist excess, introducing fiscal discipline, and improving the lot of its long-suffering people, its downward slide into a failed state will continue, Clinton visit or no Clinton visit. India can and must protest when third party

mediation is mooted for the Kashmir dispute; it must raise its voice against dozens of its institutions, organisations and companies being unjustifiably put on an ill-advised Entities List; it must point out to the US the error of its ways when it demands that India open up its economy ever more and, at the same time, denies it the technology that would make it possible.

There is a time to protest, and a time to remain silent. A possible Clinton visit to Pakistan is an issue on which silence for India will be golden — and a whole lot more dignified. Even if Mr Clinton does go to Pakistan, the contrast between the two visits would be vindication enough of India's stand and its stature.

Securitywise, Mr Clinton's stay in New Delhi and the other cities he will visit will be a breeze, not only because American advance teams have visited the sites, but also because they have already tied up coordination with an experienced and professional Indian security apparatus. But if Mr Clinton decides to land in Islamabad at the last moment, there might not be sufficient time for advance visits or security coordination drills. And much worse, by all accounts, the US Secret Service is said to have grave concerns about Mr Clinton's safety in Pakistan because it feels that Pakistani security services have been heavily infiltrated by fundamentalist, anti-American militants. There is also justifiable concern that Osama bin Laden, the Saudi-born millionaire-terrorist, might utilise the proximity of Pakistan to his Afghan hide-out to try a terrorist attack on the US President. After all, bin Laden was a legendary hero to the Afghan mujaheddin groups battling Soviet occupation, the same groups that had been armed by the CIA with Stinger missiles which wrought such havoc and has-



tened a Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. A number of Stingers are still unaccounted for, although the CIA made a not-too-successful bid to buy them back at fancy prices. A couple of the missiles strategically located could mean disaster for Air Force One coming in to land at Islamabad. The presidential aircraft no doubt would be equipped with counter-measures, but the Secret Service is likely to have nightmares at the very thought of what could go wrong.

In India, Mr Clinton is almost certain to sign agreements in the economic field as well as in science and technology. Much will be made of the burgeoning cooperation between the two nations in combating global terrorism and the corollary of narco-trafficking. In contrast, what Mr Clinton achieves in Islamabad is more than likely to be a disappointment because Gen. Musharraf will not be able to give him what he wants: a rapid return to democratic rule, a crackdown on fundamentalist elements, and a reining in of terrorist assaults from Pakistani territory into India. Any move towards restoring civilian rule will pit Gen. Musharraf against the military establishment which traditionally has had a low opinion of civilian governments.

Fundamentalist groups in Pakistan are now far too powerful as effective rabble rousers for any regime to confront them directly. Especially after the incendiary rhetoric that Gen. Musharraf unleashed in Muzaffarabad about never giving up support for the Kashmir struggle, he cannot even think of reining in mujaheddin forays into Kashmir except at his own peril.

Even if Mr Clinton makes a brief visit to Islamabad, he will still attract flak in Pakistan for what will be considered an unwilling afterthought, which many will consider a worse affront than a non-visit. A Clinton visit to Pakistan will be far less than a bed of roses. In fact, it is likely to range between uncomfortable and abrasive. All that India has to do under the circumstances is to be gracious and hospitable to the honoured guest.

The memories and the aftermath of the visit will inevitably mould US policy towards the subcontinent and ensure that the architecture of bilateral relations will evolve in India's favour.

Clinton to don mantle of peace messiah on South Asia tour

By Ramesh Chandran
The Times of India News Service

WASHINGTON: President Bill Clinton is headed for South Asia as a messiah of peace to spread the "message of restraint and dialogue", the U.S. administration has revealed. Shouldering a responsibility to both his country and the world, he wants to do his bit to prevent a flare-up in the subcontinent since tensions between India and Pakistan have reached a flashpoint. Indeed, in his opinion the situation is more grim than it was in 1971 when the two countries went to war which led to the dismemberment of Pakistan and the birth of Bangladesh.

The President's decision to make a stopover in Islamabad hasn't been an easy one. It apparently came after weeks of fierce debate within the administration, between terrorism specialists who believed Mr Clinton would be at risk, and those who felt it was politically imperative to engage Pakistan's military rulers.

The fact that Mr Clinton will not mediate on Kashmir — much as Islamabad's military brass may want it — was repeatedly stressed by White House and state department spokespersons. Both dismissed the notion that the stopover would confer legitimacy

on Gen Musharaff's regime.

But wouldn't Mr Clinton's Islamabad stopover have an adverse reaction in India? State department spokesman James Rubin had an answer to that. The U.S. has the ability to play a role in the region, like it did last summer at the height of the Kargil crisis. "This was welcomed by the Indian government which saw it in their interest to have the kind of communication between the US and the leader in Pakistan," he said.

Since administration officials kept repeating that Pakistan was a "friend", Mr Rubin was asked if such a friendship was not a Cold War phenomenon and whether he could cite any recent acts of Pakistan which could be interpreted as "friendly" to the United States.

Though Mr Rubin singled out cooperation in counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics between the two countries, he reiterated the theme of keeping the "channels of communication" open with Pakistan, something which may prove invaluable during any future Kargil.

However, administration sources concede privately there has been virtually zero progress on the three issues Washington had put up to Islamabad — a timetable for the restoration of civilian rule, progress on non-proliferation issues, and terrorism.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

10 MAR 2000

Defence issues may dominate Clinton's visit to Dhaka

DHAKA: The issue of defence co-operation between Dhaka and Washington will figure during U.S. President Bill Clinton's visit to Bangladesh on March 20, a newspaper reported on Monday.

The report on Humanitarian Assistance Need Assessment and the Status of Forces Agreement will also be discussed, leading English daily *Daily Star* reported on Monday, quoting reliable sources. Talks between Mr Clinton and prime minister Sheikh Hasina will also focus on training programmes for the Bangladesh military and joint military exercises between the two countries, the daily said quoting the sources.

The U.S. side is expected to insist Bangladesh purchase more military hardware from Washington.

There has been considerable concern over Dhaka's earlier rejection of SOFA and purchase of military equipment from Russia and China. There has also been considerable increase in equipment purchase from India in recent times, the sources were quoted as saying.

Bangladesh had earlier in July 1988 communicated to the U.S. that it did not want to sign SOFA with the U.S. government. This provision will allow movement of American military personnel in emergencies on the Bangladesh soil without travel documents. The U.S. defence department had also undertaken an assessment study for preparing a five-year plan for providing possible humanitarian and disaster assistance to Bangladesh in times of need. (PTI)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

14 MAR 2000

Osama threat on Bangla trip

FROM BOB DROGIN

Washington, March 23: Several terrorist groups have directed threats at President Clinton in connection with his week-long visit to South Asia, including an assassination plot directly linked to accused terrorist leader Osama Bin Laden, officials here said Wednesday.

On Monday, the Secret Service abruptly cancelled Clinton's scheduled trip to Joypura, a village in rural Bangladesh, after intelligence indicated that Islamic zealots were planning to fire a shoulder-launched missile at the President's helicopter, officials said. Several hundred villagers instead were bussed to the US Embassy in Dhaka, the capital, to meet with Clinton.

"We were watching this for several weeks," said a senior administration official who declined to be identified. "Then we picked up something specific last weekend, and the Secret Service said, 'That's it.' They were already sweating."

The Joypura threat highlights the potential danger Clinton faces as he travels this week in a region that is home to some of the world's most active and dangerous terrorist groups. Several harbour distinct grudges against the President, according to US officials.

"Clearly there are higher security concerns on this trip," the administration official acknowledged. "No question about it."

The Bangladesh episode also marks another worrisome round in America's grim cat-and-mouse game with Bin Laden, the Saudi fugitive who faces US charges for allegedly masterminding the 1998 bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania that killed 224 people. It was at least the second plot by Bin Laden to assassinate Clinton, US officials said.

It was not immediately clear if the plot in Bangladesh was hatched by Harkat Jihad, an extremist group financed by Bin Laden. The group first drew attention in January, when three members allegedly tried to kill a leading Bangladeshi poet because of his liberal beliefs. At least 18 Harkat members were arrested or detained in the attack.

US officials said Bin Laden supports other groups in Bangladesh. They trace the connection to the 1980s, when many Bangladeshis joined him in the struggle to oust the Soviet military from Afghanistan. The link between many of today's terrorists, especially those allegedly backed by Bin Laden, is the extremist ideology and religious beliefs forged during the Afghan war.

White House aides declined to discuss security practices. "We're always queasy when it comes to talking about that," said one national security aide in Clinton's entourage.

LOS ANGELES TIMES/
WASHINGTON POST NEWS SERVICE

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