

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2000

SELECTIVE NEIGHBOURLINESS ⁴⁰⁻¹²

A BLATANT DISREGARD for the 'SAARC spirit' is the only discernible meaning of New Delhi's latest refusal to countenance the idea of an early convening of the long-pending eleventh summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. Given the consensus-driven principles of this admittedly uneasy coalition of countries, it is not difficult to stall a summit. The Vajpayee administration has not had to draw upon any reserves of ingenuity to do so. The unfortunate context is New Delhi's unimaginative fixation about avoiding any political or diplomatic engagement (as distinct from purely 'technical talks') with Pakistan, another key SAARC member, at a substantive level. This knee-jerk hostility to the idea of even collateral talks with Islamabad within the collective SAARC framework is much less tenable than the vacuous policy of continuing to view Pakistan with the post-Kargil blinkers on. In extending to the SAARC domain the regressive dynamics of the current India-Pakistan impasse, the Vajpayee administration is making a mockery of the SAARC's principle of neighbourliness.

The charter of the seven-state entity does not admit of a political characterisation of the interactions under its banner. The efforts of some members to add a political dimension to the SAARC have remained just that. So the transparent fallout of New Delhi's present practices of selective neighbourliness is no edifying spectacle of regional cooperation. Complete indeed is New Delhi's burial of the spirit of the old 'Gujral Doctrine' about India's existential reality of having to incrementally engage all its neighbours even if at some differentiated pace.

The latest visit to New Delhi by the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, Mr. Lakshman Ka-

dirgamar, has sustained the momentum in bilateral ties. Significant is India's clarification that its request for the extradition of the leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), Mr. Velupillai Prabhakaran, is not intended to "impede peace and reconciliation in Sri Lanka". While Mr. Kadirgamar must have been pleased with this reaffirmation, the absence of any hint of progress towards an early SAARC summit is certainly no good news for Sri Lanka as the current Chair of the group. Obviously, the Vajpayee administration does not regard as a 'face-saving' precedent the formula that Pakistan had adopted for participation in an earlier SAARC summit that was held in New Delhi. Pakistan was on that occasion represented by its constitutional head of state and not its elected civilian Prime Minister, Ms. Benazir Bhutto.

New Delhi's current position is flawed on other counts too. The unintended message is that India may not always take its membership of multilateral economic associations very seriously. The question is whether India's behaviour as an economic player in regional interactions should be determined by the political imperatives as perceived by its powers-that-be at any given time. Any such view should not be allowed to take hold. On a separate front altogether, New Delhi's present hands-off policy in regard to Pakistan inside the SAARC forum is sometimes projected in the context of India's faith in democracy as a governing principle of statehood. The hint, not officially stated though, is that India will be happy to see the SAARC evolve as a forum of democracy-friendly member-states and that Pakistan is not in that category at the moment. No such philosophical principle can define the SAARC at present.

THE HINDU

20 DEC 2000

Nepal toes India line, blames media

AGENCIES & STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI/KATHMANDU, Dec. 29. — Nepal today said the current spate of violence in Kathmandu was triggered by a "media-fabricated" story and that it would not allow its territory to be used against India.

The Nepalese ambassador said the unrest arising out of alleged anti-Nepal remarks by Hrithik Roshan was a "non-event and non-issue".

"Our commitment will remain and we will not allow Nepal to be used for anti-India activities," Mr Bhekh Bahadur Thapa said. He said Nepal would "take to task" those responsible for the anti-India campaign in Nepal.

The government will give compensation to the families of those killed in the violence and to people whose property had been damaged, Mr Thapa said.

Relative calm returned to Kathmandu today after Left-wing students called off a fifth day of protests as a mark of

respect to King Birendra's birthday — a national holiday in Nepal.

Offices of the pro-India Nepal Sadbhavana Party were set on fire and some vehicles belonging to Indian businessmen damaged this morning. But no major clashes were reported. Workers cleared debris as businesses reopened today.

Nine Left-wing factions, including the Nepal Communist Party-Marxist and Leninist, have urged for the Prime Minister's resignation and called a two-day strike from New Year's day.

Mr KP Bhattarai today said the students were not agitating against India, but were angry because of India's "support" to Mr Koirala.

"They think India is supporting Koirala. That's the reason... They're angry and they have a complaint against India... Do you support a person who hasn't done well..." the former Prime Minister told *Star News*.

Asked whether the ISI was involved

in the violence, Mr Thapa said: "If there is any evidence (of anti-India activities)...from beyond the region, we will take them to task." An inquiry has been ordered.

The disturbances were triggered by "media fabrication (and)...by the time the denial came, people had already taken to the streets," Mr Thapa said.

The clarification could not be telecast as many channels had been shut down by the authorities in fear of more violence.

During the IC-814 hijack, a part of the media spread wrong information in a bid for one-upmanship. "We did not plan the hijack...Our relation should not become sour just because the airport was in Nepal," he said.

The BJP today suspected that those responsible for the IC-814 hijacking of last year were behind the anti-India riots in Nepal.

An anti-India twist was given to a non-issue, even after Hrithik Roshan

and the TV channel disowned the statement, Mr Jana Krishnamurthy said. "Of late, Nepal has become a breeding ground for the ISI. The role of the underworld too can't be ruled out," Mr Bangaru Laxman said in Bhubaneswar.

Flights resume

Indian Airlines operated its flights to Kathmandu from Calcutta, Delhi and Varanasi today, SNS adds from Calcutta.

Flights to Kathmandu are usually full at this time of the year. But several passengers have cancelled their booking after the recent violence. There were only 43 passengers on the flight from Calcutta, 81 from Varanasi and 88 from Delhi today. IA has lost about Rs 30 lakh in the past few days.

Thousands of Indian tourists have been forced to cut short their holidays in Nepal. Despite the low traffic, IA will have to operate flights to bring the stranded passengers home.



Workers on Friday return to a vandalised sweet shop owned by an Indian in Kathmandu. — APIPTI

Centre dodgy on Hurriyat passports

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI/SRINAGAR, Dec. 29. — The Centre today refused to confirm whether it had issued passports to Hurriyat leaders, who said they had no information on the matter.

"We've no information about the government clearing travel documents for four..." Hurriyat leader said today.

An foreign ministry spokesman said: "If and when requests are made for passports, they will perhaps be considered under existing rules."

Some officials had yesterday said the government had decided to "clear" travel documents of four Hurriyat leaders, including Mr Abdul Gani Bhat, after a request by them to visit Pakistan to meet militant groups.

Senior Hurriyat leader, Mr Abdul Gani Lone, today said: "We don't know about it (restoration of travel documents) but came to know about it through the media...We had applied for passports five to seven years ago and action on the documents has been kept in abeyance."

Asked if Hurriyat leaders had made fresh applications for passports, Mr Lone said there was no need to apply afresh as the documents were pending in the external affairs ministry.

The JKLF chairman, Mohd Yaseen Malik, said: "I had applied for a passport in June on medical grounds, but was denied permission."

Mamata-Cong tie-up is fine with us: BJP

BHUBANESWAR, Dec. 29. — The BJP is not against a *maha-jot* between the Trinamul and Congress in West Bengal, Mr Bangaru Laxman said today.

The BJP has no problems making a "one-time exception" for West Bengal, which has to be treated differently as it has been under LF rule for 24 years and people want a change, he said.

The BJP's national executive, which meets in Delhi on 4-5 January, will work out a strategy for the Assembly polls in West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry and Kerala.

At a public meeting here today, Mr Laxman admitted that farmers across the country are not getting the minimum support price for their yield. But he said the Centre is bound by a deal the previous Congress government signed with the WTO till March, 2001. — SN



Vishwanathan Anand and Mr KR Narayanan with the World Chess Trophy (Fide) in New Delhi on Friday. Looking on is Anand's wife, Aruna. — APIPTI

1971 hijacker surrenders

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, Dec. 29. — Hashim Qureshi, the man who hijacked an Indian Airlines plane to Pakistan in 1971, returned to India today after 30 years of exile. Srinagar-born Qureshi (47), founder-member of JKLF in 1982, was arrested after four hours of drama at Delhi airport.

He flew into the capital by a Scandinavian Airlines flight from Copenhagen and surrendered to the immigration authorities, who handed him over to Delhi police later.

"I have come here to support Mr Vajpayee's peace initiative," Qureshi shouted to reporters at Patiala House courts. "We want the end of oppression and bloodshed in Kashmir, whoever be the victim." In the same breath, he said: "We want an independent Kashmir and that's why I am here."

The metropolitan magistrate, Mr Gulshan Kumar, remanded him to judicial custody till 11 January. A team of J&K police will arrive here shortly to take Qureshi into custody.

Hashim Qureshi hit international headlines when he hijacked an IA Srinagar-Jammu flight. The Fokker Friendship was later blown up at the Lahore airport after all the passengers alighted.

Qureshi was arrested today on charges police drew up in 1971 after the hijack, that include illegal confinement and sedition. There was no law against hijacking then.

Qureshi and six others were given 19-year jail terms by a Pakistani court for the hijack. The Pakistan Supreme Court released him after he had spent nine years and three months in jails and torture cells. After his release in 1980, Qureshi went on a self-imposed exile, first to the UK and then to the Netherlands where he spent the past 14 years.

Once a hardline Pakistan supporter, Qureshi asked Kashmiris to change their thinking in view of the current world situation and exhorted the "independence-loving" people of PoK to launch a "formidable struggle" for freedom from "occupational forces".

During the Kargil war, he had attacked Islamabad for sending troops inside Indian territory. Qureshi has repeatedly attacked the ISI and refused several offers by the agency to help it. In his book *Kashmir — The Unveiling of Truth*, Qureshi said he sensed threats to his life from the ISI. He has repeatedly warned the JKLF leaders not to play into the hands of Pakistani military authority and their Intelligence outfit.

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THE STATESMAN

30 DEC 2000

Indians in Nepal backlash

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE & PTI

INDORE/DEHRA DUN, Dec. 30. — The recent spate of anti-India violence in Nepal set off a backlash in parts of India as members of the Congress-affiliated NSUI stalled the screening of *Champion* — a film starring Nepal-born Manisha Koirala — in Indore today.

College students in Pithoragarh, Uttaranchal, blocked the Jhoola Ghat bridge on Mahakali river, which connects the region to Baitari district of Nepal, for two hours yesterday. Their aim: to prevent people of Nepal from entering Indian territory.

The students, supporters of Sangh parivar, staged a dharna, demanding a ban on all anti-India outfits, including Pakistan's ISI, active in Nepal.

In Dehra Dun, police lathi-charged students of the DAV Post-Graduate College when they tried to demonstrate against Hrithik Roshan's alleged anti-Nepal remarks.

The Nepali Chhatra Sabha marched to the secretariat and



Indians in Nepal march in Kathmandu on Saturday to protest against the violence unleashed on them. — AP/PTI

police headquarters. The students, mostly Indians with roots in Nepal, wanted to submit a memorandum to the chief minister.

But police stopped them, saying they could not risk a dis-

ruption in law and order during Id celebrations.

Flights to Nepal: Indian Airlines operated all flights from Delhi, Calcutta and Varanasi today, UNI adds from Delhi.

Babari a BJP failure: Advani

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, Dec. 30. — Mr LK Advani today said he had "no doubt" that the demolition of the disputed structure in Ayodhya was "a terrible mistake" and a failure of the BJP and Sangh Parivar leadership.

He said he had described 6 December, 1992, as the "saddest day of my life" in an article in a national newspaper a few days after the demolition.

The RSS always teaches its members to be disciplined, but the discipline broke down even as he, Ms Uma Bharati, Mr Pramod Mahajan and Mr Ashok Singhal tried to stop the kar sevaks. Some people may have gone to Ayodhya "determined" to demolish the structure, Mr Advani told *Star News*.

Even the RSS chief had, at that time, condemned the demolition and described it as being against the ethos of the Sangh, he said.

THE STATESMAN

31 DEC 1992

4/1-10

Street logic

THE GRADUAL degeneration of street demonstrations by Nepalese students in Kathmandu over what probably was no more than a rumour into a full-throated anti-India campaign, confirms that the Hrithik episode was methodically used to provoke public anger. Clearly, there are 'vested interests' involved behind this round of inflammatory populism. When Hrithik Roshan was 'misquoted' and the alleged remarks were shown to be baseless, the agitators turned their ire against anything that was Indian, leading to outright vandalism. In fact, when the agitators seemed to run out of logic, they blamed India for 'defaming' Nepal on the issue of ISI operatives in the kingdom. There is a method in this madness. Besides, the Nepalese Government now suspects a 'conspiracy' whose sole intention is to spoil the kingdom's relations with its southern neighbour.

The Left and ultra-Left elements in Nepal have been traditional India-baiters. Now that Sino-India relations have shown a marked improvement, the Chinese angle to the Indo-Nepalese equation has been promptly replaced by the ISI factor. It is amazing that sections of the agitators have actually justified the ISI presence in their country. Instead, they have accused India of exerting 'pressure' on a sovereign nation. Certainly, this indicates a deeper conspiracy behind the violent anti-India outburst.

The shocking aspect of these developments has been the element of surprise. Prime Minister G.P. Koirala has ordered an enquiry to identify the minds behind the mischief. This may have been partly necessitated by the opposition he is facing within his own party over his Government's failure in maintaining basic law and order. What is clear is that while the Hrithik episode has been used as a triggering device, there have been substantial ground-level preparation in building the anti-India mood. It is no use blaming the ISI for what has happened. They probably are doing what they are supposed to do. But it should have been possible for the Indian external intelligence and diplomatic apparatus to anticipate these developments so that precautionary measures could have been quickly initiated. The failure in not doing so represents the more disturbing aspect of the violence in Nepal. This calls for a closer and intelligent scrutiny of the camouflaged political currents in Nepal, before yet another chauvinist agitation suddenly breaks out over a rumour and a non-event.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

30 DEC 2000

Govt says Nepal violence was aimed at whipping up anti-India sentiment

NEW DELHI: India on Friday said that the outbreak of violence in Kathmandu, triggered by remarks attributed to film star Hrithik Roshan—which were, in fact, never made—was clearly designed to “whip up negative sentiments” against this country even as the Nepalese government publicly denounced the incident.

Reports of the involvement of Pakistan's ISI in the unsavoury episode have gained credence with the operations said to have been fuelled by a business magnate, allegedly engaged in drug trafficking and fake currency activities, at the behest of the agency.

Responding to questions, an external affairs ministry spokesman said the incidents were “clearly designed to whip up negative sentiments” against India.

In a press communique issued in Kathmandu, the Nepalese council of ministers said, “The unleashing of violence leading to attacks and vandalising inside the houses and business centres, which is likely to harm social harmony in a multi-lingual and multi-ethnic country like ours, is contemptible.”

For the first time, the Nepalese government conceded that Hrithik's remarks were “unsubstantiated” and the unbridled spread of violence did not befit national dignity.

The council of ministers appealed to all responsible political parties and to civil society to guard against “misleading propaganda and a conspiracy”.

The MEA spokesman said here the situation in Nepal on Friday was “relatively normal”, with no major incidents of violence.

Businesses reopened in Kathmandu after three days of rioting and general strikes. Hundreds of people lined the streets leading to the royal palace to greet King Birendra on his 56th birthday. The government closed schools and offices for the day to celebrate the king's birthday.

Meanwhile, the Indian Airlines operated flights from all three sectors to Nepal where normalcy returned after three days of rioting and strike. (Agencies)

Hurriyat leaders still await their passports

The Times of India News Service
NEW DELHI: Even as Hurriyat leaders claimed that they were still to receive their travel documents, reportedly okayed by the Centre, sources in the government said that those who had applied for them had already been cleared.

An official said that in principle, the administration had never had any objections to anyone travelling abroad. However, there were certain formalities involved which had to be gone through—in some cases, passports had been impounded as legal cases were pending against some leaders.

The All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) had, at its meeting, decided that some of its executive members would visit Pakistan to discuss the ongoing ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir with militant groups. Following the decision, the government had apparently got into action and the Prime Minister's Office had asked the nodal ministries (home and external affairs) to take a fresh look at the requests already pending for renewal or clearance of passports.

According to sources, the government has decided to restore the

impounded passports of four of the seven Hurriyat leaders, including chairman Abdul Gani Bhat, following a request by them to visit Pakistan to speak to militant groups.

Two other Hurriyat leaders have been allowed to travel to Pakistan. However, the passport of former chairman Syed Ali Shah Geelani has not been restored on the ground that he had never sought any renewal of his documents. When asked what the government would do in case he applied for a fresh passport, the source said it would have to go through proper scrutiny as per the existing procedure.

Senior APHC leader Abdul Gani Lone has claimed that they had all applied for passports almost five years ago and action on the documents had been kept in abeyance.

The APHC, at its last executive council meeting at Srinagar, had welcomed the extension of a unilateral ceasefire by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and had sought the Centre's permission to send a delegation to Pakistan on January 15 to hold talks with the leaders of several militant organisations.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

30 DEC 2000

1470 Bhutan's dilemma 29/12

IN A span of 50 days, over 80 innocent lives have been lost in mindless violence indulged in by ULFA and Bodo extremists. This sudden spurt of violence has been directed against Bihari migrant labourers, non-Assamese businessmen — and now Bhutanese nationals. Apparently, it is intended to demonstrate the extremist groups' ability to hit where it hurts. Despite their gradual marginalisation, these militant outfits are still capable of causing large-scale violence. Now that they are feeling the heat of the army and police operations, they have begun to target migrant workers and those engaged in business in the state. Such campaigns have the objective of creating a sense of insecurity and helplessness among these communities while nursing the chauvinist constituencies.

The Bhutan Government responding to Indian concerns had taken some strong measures to flush out the extremists from their hide-outs in Bhutan. As a result, these militants have now begun to retaliate. Thimpu has suggested that the attacks may be the handiwork of the Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT), which is currently engaged in negotiations with the Centre. The Assam Government, however, believes that it is the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) which is behind the violence. Bodo extremist groups have proved to be hard to crack. Unlike the ULFA, their support base is still largely intact. The moderate Bodo groups — like the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) — have done well to condemn the barbaric incidents. It is possible that such violence is intended to create mistrust and misunderstanding between India and Bhutan.

The Prafulla Mahanta Government has criticised Bhutan for blaming the BLT for violence. Rather than indulging in the blame game, it will be better for the Assam Government to tone up the administrative and security apparatus in the state. The increase in violence reflects poorly on the state Government's handling of the ULFA and Bodo problems. This may have the effect of posing a dilemma for the Bhutan Government. The Centre must ensure that the continuing violence does not create strains in Indo-Bhutan ties. The Bhutan Government should be helped to continue its campaign to flush out the militants hiding in its territory.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

29 DEC 2000

11-10 Mission Terror 29/12

The violence in Nepal triggered by rumours of a remark that actor Hrithik Roshan never made is an unmistakable pointer to the spreading tentacles of the Mumbai underworld and its potential for mischief within India and abroad. The spark was a students' skirmish in Chitvan in Nepal. It sent rumours flying thick and fast that Hrithik had said something disparaging about Nepal. A dubious publication sensationalised the canard while, at the same time, a network linked to the paper took Indian television channels off the air. This ensured that the damage was done and the denials blacked out. But why Hrithik? Obviously because Roshan Jr is the reigning star and a heart-throb. If he could be blackmailed and terrorised into acting in films financed by underworld kingpins such as Dawood Ibrahim and Chhota Shakeel, the inflow into their coffers would be many times what they can expect to get from petty extortion rackets. Now, the Roshans not only refuse to play ball, but Hrithik's father Rakesh has the gall to lodge a police complaint. Rakesh dares to do this even after they have tried to kill him — in January 2000 — and as a result Shakeel's accomplice Nazim Rizvi is arrested by the Mumbai police on December 13. For the underworld, the police crackdown is a danger they most certainly cannot afford and hence the terror tactics against the father and son.

However, it is not Hrithik alone who is the target. He is merely the symbol that must be used to terrorise the entire film world. The message must go that if police protection makes their physical elimination difficult, there are other ways of destroying them. The mafiosi's calculation is evidently intended to make the industry to drop the Roshans like a hot potato. In this, the dons can count on the patronage of Islamabad, and certainly the support of ISI. After all, it is more than apparent that those who masterminded last year's hijack from Kathmandu did so from their base in Karachi. As for other casualties — Indians in Nepal, relations between Indians and Nepalese and India-Nepal diplomatic ties, it is without doubt a case of frenzy feeding on frenzy. The riots have come in handy for all those who have their own agendas against India. While it might be of academic interest that gangland is developing its own foreign policy, Nepal should take better note of the fact that it can be as much a victim of this kind of terrorism as India; and that the Mumbai underworld is no respecter of national boundaries. Kathmandu needs to be more alert to the machinations of anti-Indian forces, particularly the ISI-gangster nexus, in the interests of its own security. Fortunately, the violence in Nepal has not created any diplomatic strains. Kathmandu has been generous with assurances about the safety and security of Indians and their property in response to New Delhi's concern conveyed by foreign secretary Lalit Mansingh. This is a reactive response. What New Delhi and Kathmandu need to work towards is closer consultation and coordination to combat terrorism as a common threat. When it comes to Bollywood, the villains have to be reckoned with, and not only in India.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

29 DEC 2000

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STRIKE STILLS LIFE IN KATHMANDU

Nepal protests snowball into no-trust motion

HD-1
28/12
KATHMANDU, DEC. 28. Anti-Hrithik Roshan protests took a serious political turn today with half of 113 ruling Nepalese Congress MPs revolting against the Prime Minister, Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala, filing a no-confidence motion against him in the party.

"We were compelled to file the motion seeking Mr. Koirala's ouster to prevent the country from plunging into a crisis and save the country, democracy and restore peace and security," Mr. Sher Bahadur Deuba, leader of the dissident group, told reporters after 57 rebel MPs appended their signature to the motion.

The dissidents are believed to be one MP short in their campaign against the Prime Minister who has been in the office since March. The party, which has a majority in the 205-member Lower House of Parliament, is expected to call a meeting of MPs within 15 days to settle the leadership is-



Armed police on guard in Kathmandu on Thursday during the general strike. — AP

sue. The revolt came as a general strike called by left-wing student groups paralysed life in the Nepalese capital today with schools, colleges, businesses shut down

for the second day today. Kathmandu was nearly deserted, with only a few people on the streets.

The row began on Tuesday, when rumours swept through Nepalese towns bordering India claiming that Hrithik Roshan told a television interviewer that he hated Nepal and its people. The 26-year-old actor, however, denied making such remarks and these were carried in today's media reports. — AP

Channel's denial

According to UNI, the Star Plus television channel denied that actor Hrithik Roshan had made any remarks against Nepal or its people. "Star Plus wishes to state that at no point of time in the programme — 'Rendezvous with Simi Garewal' — was any remark made either on Nepal or its people by Hrithik or Simi Garewal," a spokesperson of the channel said in Mumbai. The interview was telecast on December 6.

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Panel to probe violence: Page 13

PM calls up Koirala

By Our Special Correspondent

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DEC. 28. The Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, today called up his Nepali counterpart, Mr. G.P. Koirala, to convey serious concern at the outbreak of violence directed particularly at Indians and their establishments in Nepal, and has urged him to take firm steps to put an end to it.

According to an official bulletin issued by the Prime Minister's Office, Mr. Koirala told him that the incidents appeared to be part of a conspiracy aimed at harming

the traditionally close bonds of friendship between the two countries. He also informed Mr. Vajpayee, who is vacationing in Kumarakom, of the Commission set up by the Nepal Government to probe the origins of the violence and find out whether it had any external dimension. Mr. Koirala added that no Indian was killed and no untoward incident had taken place today.

Mr. Vajpayee also conveyed condolence at the tragic death of four Nepali citizens in the riots.

India, Russia sign Sukhoi deal

By Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW, DEC. 28. India and Russia today signed their biggest yet defence deal for licensed production of the Sukhoi-30MKI fighter jets, the Itar-Tass news agency reported.

The deal, worth over \$3 billion, was signed at the SU manufacturing IAP0 plant in Irkutsk, Siberia, by a high-level Indian delegation led by the Additional Secretary of Defence (Production), Mr. Dharendra Singh, and the Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. Chairman, Mr. Krishna Das Nair. It provides for the production of 140 SU-30MKI long-range multi-role jets at the HAL over the next 17 years. The in-depth licence envisions full transfer of the SU-30MKI technology, including the world's first thrust-vectoring engine.

Russian defence industry sources said SU-30MKI

technology transfer was manifestation of close strategic partnership between India and Russia. Although Moscow has also proclaimed strategic partnership with Beijing, it has not granted China licence for the production of SU-30 jets, confining itself to the sale of 60 planes, the sources said. Moreover, Russia has refused to equip the China-bound planes with an advanced radar for ground-attack capability.

Initially the more sophisticated high-tech components of the SU-30MKI are also expected to be supplied to the HAL from Russia, a defence expert said. It is hard to estimate the share of Russian-supplied components for the SU-30MKI, said Mr. Konstantin Makienko of the Centre for Strategic Analysis. But they are likely to include the AI-31PF engine, Russian-made avionics and some parts of the fuselage that require high-tech processing.

THE HINDU

29 DEC 2000

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2000

HD-12
FRAGILE NEIGHBOURLINESS 29/12

THE ASTONISHING SPECTACLE of the latest anti-India rioting in Nepal over unproven rumours of some alleged derogatory remarks by a rising Hindi film actor, Mr. Hrithik Roshan, does expose (as little else may) the utter fragility of the ordinary relationship between the two culturally-kindred countries. With a general strike reportedly paralysing Kathmandu on Thursday in the wake of two days of mob frenzy and fatalities in the police action aimed at quelling it, the emergent new crisis in bilateral ties calls for concerted efforts at statesmanship. Outwardly, the current unrest may indeed seem to be more vandalistic than anti-Indian in political scope. Yet the diplomatic reverberations have already been felt. Theories are gaining ground in sections of New Delhi's officialdom that the anti-India hysteria of this magnitude over a perceived non-issue could have been whipped up in Nepal only by some malevolent external forces inimical to India's stakes in fraternal ties with the Himalayan kingdom. Not surprisingly, Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) wing is the prime suspect in the eyes of the Indian security agencies monitoring the events in Nepal. The danger now is that New Delhi's bilateral dealings with Kathmandu may fall victim to a perception of Nepal emerging, if unchecked by its own authorities, as a playground for the ISI's suspected anti-India agenda. Any such denouement in the short-run will mark a clear reversal of the 'gains' made during the visit to India by the Nepalese Prime Minister, Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala, last August.

Nepal's geographical location as a natural 'buffer' state (not necessarily in a political sense) between India and China has long been a consideration in the often skewed diplomatic equation between New Delhi and Kathmandu. The conventional diplomatic wisdom is that Nepal can truly affirm its sovereignty and gain the goodwill of both India and China only by keeping each of them guessing about Kathmandu's political proximity to the other. Despite the 1950

Indo-Nepalese treaty, which bound the two countries to a special relationship, New Delhi had in the past grappled with dilemmas regarding the extent of Kathmandu's suspected penchant for playing the so-called China card. China will conceivably remain a factor in Indo-Nepal ties. Yet, New Delhi's more recent concerns have had much to do with Pakistan's alleged ability to utilise Nepal as a presumptive 'soft-state' to bring India under a greater threat of terrorism. The suspected ISI-organised smuggling of huge quantities of RDX explosives into India through Nepal in 1998 marked the first major security-related analysis of this kind in New Delhi's officialdom. The brazen hijacking of an Indian Airlines plane from Kathmandu to Kandahar a year ago raised these concerns in New Delhi to the state of a critical foreign policy challenge.

While Mr. Koirala's visit to New Delhi seemed to have nearly placed the bilateral ties back on course, the latest anti-India rage should serve as a new warning against complacency. The political psyche of Nepal as a land-locked country is rooted in its clamour for a logistically less arduous transit-corridor to the sealanes through India. This aspect has been reasonably addressed by India over time after a diplomatic brinkmanship by both sides during Rajiv Gandhi's prime ministership. Two other sensitive issues remain to be sorted out. Nepal seeks to retain the benefits of its 1950 treaty with India sans the perceived "unequal" provisions thereof. There can be no doubt that this question should be resolved to mutual satisfaction. It appeared during Mr. Koirala's recent tour of India that the two sides wished to move forward on this front. The issue of clearing doubts over the exact 'alignment' of the boundary at the China-Nepal-India trijunction is being studied by a committee set up by New Delhi and Kathmandu. The question is whether China, too, will be associated with this process as reportedly indicated by some Nepalese officials.

THE HINDU

29 DEC 2000

Atal tells shaky Koirala to rein in rioters

OUR BUREAU AND AGENCIES

Dec. 28: Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee today intervened in the Hrithik Roshan controversy and asked Nepal to take firm steps to contain the flare-up which threatened to dislodge the G.P. Koirala government.

A revolt rocked the Nepal government as 56 of its members sought a "no-confidence" motion, citing "breakdown" in law and order. The rebels of the ruling Nepali Congress Party, which

has 113 members in the 205-seat lower House, are demanding a new leader.

A rebellion was brewing within the party for some time. The rage against Hrithik has come in handy for the dissidents, who are just one short of the required votes to oust Koirala.

Vajpayee, who is holidaying in Kerala, spoke to Koirala over telephone and voiced concern over the violence directed at Indians and their establishments.

A statement issued by the PMO said Koirala told Vajpayee

that the outbreak appeared to be part of a conspiracy aimed at harming Indo-Nepal ties. Koirala added that a panel had been set up to probe the incident.

Delhi, too, hinted at a plot but did not name anyone. However, in private, officials said the violence was masterminded by the fugitive don, Dawood Ibrahim, to disrupt the bilateral relations which were being put back on track after the plane hijack last year.

A nationwide bandh left Nepal's capital, where thousands of Indian tourists are stranded,

paralysed. The organisers of the strike said it was not intended at Hrithik but at Nepal police for gunning down four protesters on Tuesday.

Kathmandu was tense with Left-wing students, who accused Hrithik of defaming Nepal and its people, continuing their protest. However, the situation had improved from that on the past two days when rampaging mobs targeted Indian shops.

Hrithik had yesterday denied the comments and sought proof of the mysterious interview being

quoted by the protesters.

In Delhi, foreign ministry spokesman R.S. Jassal blamed "forces inimical to Indo-Nepal relations" for the violence. He said the protests were based on a "fabricated story", mentioning that Hrithik has denied the comments attributed to him.

On whether the ISI was involved, Jassal said: "It (the violence) is clearly something which is orchestrated by elements inimical to Indo-Nepal relations." He said Indian television channels carrying a denial by the actor

were blocked in Kathmandu.

Dawood and his associates, the main backers of a powerful media group in Nepal, used the platform to foment the protests, officials in Delhi said. In an interview to Reuters yesterday, Hrithik had hinted at the involvement of the mafia.

This morning the Nepalese charge d'affaires, M.K. Bhattarai, was summoned to South Block. Meera Shankar, joint secretary (North) of the Indian foreign ministry, reiterated Delhi's concern. Indian foreign secretary Lalit

Mansingh had called up his Nepalese counterpart Narain Shamsher Rana last evening.

Indian Airlines operated an almost empty A-300 flight today to Kathmandu as no passenger wanted to board the plane. For the second day, the airline had to cancel its Varanasi-Kathmandu-Varanasi flight.

A Calcutta-based organisation, the All-India Nepalese Bhasha Sangram Parishad, said it would file a defamatory suit against Hrithik for his alleged remarks.

Anti-Hrithik riots turn anti-Indian

Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, December 27

ANTI-HRITHIK ROSHAN demonstrators today once again took over the streets of this ancient city, attacking the police, vehicles, shops and business establishments, mostly owned by the people of Indian origin.

This, despite the Koirala Government's appeal for peace and the Bollywood star's denial of having ever made any offending remarks on Nepal and the Nepalese people. Five pro-Left students' unions have called a kingdom-wide general strike tomorrow.

Fearing attacks, officials and employees of the Indian embassy refrained from using vehicles with diplomatic numbers.

The embassy, in a statement, expressed concern "about rumours being spread by elements inimical to the warm and cordial Indo-Nepal relations and the age-old ties between the two countries." It also reiterated Hrithik's denial.

On the other hand, Deputy Prime Minister R C Poudyal asked

all parties and students' unions to maintain calm and not to do anything that will go against Nepal's interests. Radio Nepal highlighted Hrithik's denial as Indian media has not been able to reach the

Apologise? For what?

No way, says Hrithik

PERTURBED OVER continuing violence in Kathmandu over his alleged anti-Nepal remarks, Hrithik Roshan on Wednesday denied having made them and said there was no question of tendering apology. "I challenge anyone to produce evidence or transcript of the interview from any TV channel in the world where I supposed to have made the derogatory remarks."

PTI, Mumbai

Nepalese population. All Indian TV channels are off the air here since yesterday.

The riot police chased away unruly protesters, who tried to break open and damage shops on

New Road and Khichapokhari, which had been closed since morning. A Jajodia, a foreign goods shop-owner, was desperately trying to rescue his family from his shop when it came under attack.

The demonstrators, mostly belonging to various Left factions, vented their ire on the police mainly for yesterday's firing, which cost four lives by midnight. They shouted "Hang Hrithik, hang Home Minister" and "Down with Indian hegemony" as they pelted stones on the police and vehicles. They blocked roads all over the city by burning tyres. Two vehicles were set on fire on Ring Road.

The police and Indian diplomats received a lot of complaints of harassment of Indian nationals by the protesters, who burnt Hrithik's effigies at several places in the kingdom.

Parliamentarian G N Singh, who heads the Nepal Sadbhavana Party (an organisation of the Nepalese of Indian origin), said, "If whatever Hrithik has said is true, we'll condemn him. But we want the Government to stop the attacks."

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

278 DEC 2000

Violence continues in Nepal

KATHMANDU, DEC. 27. Protests over alleged anti-Nepal comments by film actor, Hrithik Roshan, shut down the Nepalese capital today, a day after police shot and killed four persons while trying to rein in a rampaging mob.

The Nepalese Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Ram Chandra Poudel, appealed over national television and radio for calm. "The Government is ready and willing to get into dialogue with all political parties and student groups to resolve the situation and bring back peace," Mr. Poudel said.

The protesters have called for a general strike tomorrow.

Representatives of the main Opposition, United Marxist-Leninist Communist party of Nepal, met the Prime Minister, Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala, and sought Mr. Poudel's resignation. Mr. Poudel is also the Interior Security Minister.

The rioting spread to the capital today. Public transportation was halted and police, firefighters and ambulances crowded the smoke-filled streets trying to put out tire and tree fires.

Indian businesses were vandalised and windows at the State Bank of India were smashed as thousands of demonstrators took to the streets shouting slogans against Roshan and India.

None of the demonstrators in Kathmandu today could confirm which station had aired the interview with Roshan or that they knew anyone who had actually seen the show.

The Indian embassy said in a statement that it was "deeply distressed at the violence and the loss of lives resulting from the spread of baseless rumours".

Indian Airlines flight operations on the Indo-Nepal sector were hit, with the airline unable to operate a flight to the Himalayan Kingdom. — AP, PTI

India suspects ISI involvement

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 27. Security officials monitoring the anti-India protests in Nepal suspect the hand of the Pakistani agency, Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), in the tendentious stir, sparked by the alleged anti-Nepal remarks made by Hrithik.

The official view is that the film star is a private citizen and whether he made the remarks or not were not a matter of interest to the Government. Privately, there is unhappiness that the agitation has been allowed to acquire an anti-India character.



Nepalese students burning tyres in Kathmandu protesting the alleged remarks of Hindi actor Hrithik Roshan. — AP

There is a sense of bafflement on the origin of the presumed remarks. The Ministry of External Affairs simply released a press note issued by the Embassy in Kathmandu, clarifying that as far as could be determined, the film star had not made any derogatory remarks. Internal security experts are not surprised that a protest of this kind has been cranked up. Hrithik has become a key figure in the emerging divide in the Bollywood-underworld connections,

and it is natural that the vastly-networked underworld would want to drag his name in a trumped-up controversy.

Those who keep track of the ISI activities in Nepal believe it has penetrated frontal organisations of the Left, some of which are in the forefront of the anti-Hrithik, anti-India agitation. Intelligence sources believe that these frontal organisations have allowed themselves to be used to print and distribute fake Indian currency.

Security officials have been unhappy for long over the nature of cooperation from the Nepalese authorities, even after the Kathmandu-Kandahar hijacking of the Indian Airlines flight last year. It is the assumption here that the Pakistani embassy in Kathmandu is the hub of ISI activities.

The Indian expression of concern has been given mere lip service, as far as New Delhi is concerned. In fact, the Nepalese authorities have invariably given the very correct but unhelpful answer: "Bring us the pinpointed information and we will move against the ISI."

Attempts to set up a joint working group of security experts have not taken off. Home Ministry officials are hoping that once a new security team is put in place in Kathmandu, it would be possible to have another round of dialogue at the Home Secretary level.

I have great love for Nepal: Hrithik

MUMBAI, DEC. 27. Perturbed over the continuing violence in Kathmandu over his alleged anti-Nepal remarks, Hrithik Roshan today reiterated that he had not given any interview to any TV channel against the Nepalese people and said there was no question of any apology.

"I challenge anyone to produce evidence or transcript of the interview from any channel in the world where I am supposed to have made the derogatory remarks," the annoyed actor said.

"I offer my heartfelt sympathies and condolences to the families of the innocent people, who have become victims of a dangerous game being perpe-



trated against me by some vested interests," he said.

"I sincerely reiterate that I

have great love and respect for Nepal and its people as I have for my own people and those in other parts of the world who have made me what I am today."

The actor said he wanted to convey to the people of Nepal that recorded tapes of the six interviews he had given from January 1 till date were available and it would be his responsibility to produce the same to any organisation in that country. "The most-trusted people in my house are all from Nepal." Hrithik told Star News that 50-year old, Mr. Prem Singh Negi, a Nepali, "brought me up like his son. He is still around. My chef is Nepalese. He travels with me wherever I go." — PTI

Nepal minister calls for Hrithik's apology

Indian embassy denies star made anti-Nepal remarks *I have never said a single word against Nepal: Hrithik*

By A Staff Reporter

KATHMANDU: Even as Left wing students continued their protest for the third day on Wednesday against the allegedly anti-Nepal remarks made by filmstar Hrithik Roshan, communication minister Jaya Prakasha Gupta appealed to all cinemas to stop screening his films until he "publicly apologised".

In a bid to assuage the angry fans, the Indian embassy here took the unusual step of coming out with a two-page press release, clarifying that Hrithik had not made any disparaging remarks about Nepal as alleged in a section of the Nepalese media.

While Left wing students brought traffic to a halt on Wednesday, home ministry officials confirmed that four people had been killed on Wednesday and 30 others, including a policeman, injured when the police opened fire on a mob which had attacked a cinema screening a Hrithik Roshan film.

Leftwing student sources put the number of casualties at more than over 120.

The students, organised by the Leftist All-Nepal National Free Students' Union, have demanded a ban on Hrithik's films. They have also threatened to "bury Hrithik alive" if he ever visits Nepal. This came even as the state-run radio, television and some major newspapers carried Hrithik's clarification that he had never made any derogatory remarks against Nepal.

In the backdrop of continuing violence, the Indian mission said it was concerned at the rumours being spread by elements inimical to the warm and cordial Indo-Nepal relations and the age-old ties between the people of the two countries.

"The embassy of India seeks the cooperation of the print and visual media in Nepal to make known to the people of Nepal that Hrithik Roshan has not made any disparaging remarks about Nepal as alleged in some earlier reports," it said.

The mission said it was deeply distressed at the violence and the loss of lives resulting from the spread of baseless rumours.

The release also said Star Plus, which had telecast the interview of Hrithik by Simi Grewal, has denied that any such remarks were broadcast on their channel. (AFP)

MUMBAI: Thoroughly baffled about a controversy not of his making, top film star Hrithik Roshan on Wednesday categorically denied having made any remarks whatsoever on Nepal and its people.

The 26-year-old actor also expressed remorse for the fatal shooting by the police on the Kathmandu streets of two students who were among the 5,000-strong crowd protesting against the "non-existent" remarks alleged to have been made to a TV channel.

On being contacted at his Juhu home, where the security has been beefed up, Hrithik said, "I have absolutely no idea about what could have sparked the incident. At first, when I read the news in a Mumbai daily paper which had reported that the people of Nepal were furious about my remarks, I thought it was a baseless rumour which would die a natural death. But then, unfortunately, matters escalated—with tragic consequences."

The violent incident in Nepal, in the course of which a theatre showing a Hrithik film was attacked, was incited by a media report claiming that the actor had told a TV channel correspondent that "the country and the people he hated the most are Nepal and the Nepalese".

Hrithik emphasised that he had not given any such interview. "In fact, I have only done six TV interviews in my life," he told *The Times of India*, adding, "The first one was for *Star News* around January 25 following the attempt on the life of my father (Rakesh Roshan). Then there was an interview for *Good Morning India* on the launch of Subhash Ghai's film *Yaadein*, besides interviews for the promos of my films *Fiza* and *Mission Kashmir*. I also appeared on Simi Grewal's show. And I have been interviewed for Karan Thapar's *Face to Face* which is scheduled for telecast in the first week of January.

"All the videotapes of the interviews can be cross-checked. I have never ever said a single word on Nepal and its people," he asserted. "In fact, ever since my schooldays, I have longed to visit Kathmandu for a holiday. I love Nepal and its people as much as I love India and its people."

► Two of Roshans' staffers are from Nepal, Page 7



Hrithik Roshan

MISSION KATHMANDU

- Students continue protest for third day
- Stir hits IA operations
- Indian mission seeks media help to end controversy

THE TIMES OF INDIA

28 DEC 2003

Two Hrithik protesters killed in Nepal

ASSOCIATED PRESS

KATHMANDU, Dec. 26. — Police shot dead two protesters as thousands of Left-wing Nepalese students today clashed with cops, blocked traffic and ransacked a movie theatre to protest remarks allegedly by Hrithik Roshan against Nepal.

Roshan allegedly told a television channel on 14 December that the country and people he hated the most were Nepal and the Nepalese.

Policemen first fired in the air to avert an arson at a theatre screening "Mission Kashmir" starring Hrithik Roshan. But they shot dead two students after they were attacked with stones, a police officer said.

Nearly 5,000 students from at least half a dozen colleges in Kathmandu protested on campuses and then poured into streets, blocking traffic for at least two hours.

In Mumbai, Roshan denied he had made the comment. "I have never given a TV interview to any channel stating that I dislike Nepal and its people. It is a figment of imagination of some vested interests. It is really astonishing that people can stoop down to such mischievous deeds to tarnish my image" Roshan told PTI earlier today.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

27 DEC 2007

Bhutan claims proof of BLT role in killings

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

Guwahati, Dec. 25: The Bhutan government today reiterated its claim that it has "concrete evidence" to prove Bodo Liberation Tigers' involvement in the recent attacks on Bhutanese people in Assam.

Thimpu's "re-affirmation" of the claim came a day after the "pro-talk" Bodo Liberation Tigers categorically denied that it had anything to do with the attack on Bhutanese nationals and blamed the rival National Democratic Front of Boroland for the violence.

The state government also endorsed the BLT denial saying the banned National Liberation Front of Boroland was carrying out the attacks as a "pressure tactic".

So far, 14 Bhutanese nationals have been killed and many injured in a series of attacks by militants in various parts of the state. Two vehicles, belonging to Bhutanese officials, were also set ablaze.

Reacting to the BLT denial, Thinlay Penzor, councillor at the Royal Bhutanese embassy in Delhi, said the "Royal Bhutan government and Royal Bhutan police have concrete evidence to prove BLT's involvement.

"We have nothing more to say ... BLT's involvement has been proved beyond doubt", he added.

Bhutan also dismissed the

state government's claim that the December 21 attack took place inside the Himalayan kingdom and the bodies of the 10 Bhutanese killed in the violence were dumped inside the Indian territory by NDFB rebels. Thimpu claimed that the killings took place inside the Indian territory.

Kinley Dorji, editor of Bhutan's state-owned newspaper *Kuensel*, told **The Telegraph** from Thimpu that the "police have definite information about the BLT's hand in the killings".

However, chief minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta today gave a clean chit to the BLT once again and blamed the Bhutan government for "sheltering NDFB militants, which has now boomeranged on the kingdom.

"The Bhutan government has no alternative but defend the NDFB because it has been sheltering the militants. The emboldened NDFB is now resorting to arm-twisting to stop the kingdom from taking any steps to evict its cadre from the camps in Bhutan," Mahanta told newsmen during an informal chat here this evening.

Mahanta's ire against Bhutan stems from the fact that despite its "promise" to use force to drive out the Uifa and NDFB rebels from their jungle camps in the kingdom, the Bhutan government has not done anything in this regard so far.

THE TELEGRAPH

25 DEC 2000

26 DEC 2000

Bhutan lobs back body-dumping barb

OUR BUREAU

Guwahati, Dec. 23: Bhutan today locked horns with the Assam government over the killing of 10 Bhutanese citizens on Thursday, refuting chief minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta's claim that the incident had taken place inside the Himalayan kingdom and the bodies later dumped in Indian territory.

Thimphu also dismissed the state government's claims of the National Democratic Front of Boroland's involvement in the killing of its citizens and insisted that the massacres have been perpetrated by the Bodo Liberation Tigers even as Mahanta squarely

blamed the kingdom for allowing matters to come to such a pass.

Mahanta told **The Telegraph** here this morning that the killing of Bhutanese people was a result of the continued presence of NDFB rebels in the Himalayan kingdom. "It is very easy for the militants to cross over to Indian territory, commit crimes and then go back to their camps in the jungles of Bhutan," Mahanta said, as he shifted the blame to the neighbouring country for not taking any action against the rebels.

The chief minister also claimed that the killing of 10 people in Barpeta district on Thursday "took place inside Bhutan, after which the militants dumped

the bodies in Indian territory." Lobbying the ball back to Bhutan's court, he said: "In view of this, the Bhutan government should take steps to protect its own citizens."

However, Thimlay Penzor, councillor at the Royal Bhutanese embassy in New Delhi, differed with the state government over the site of Thursday's incident, claiming that the 10 persons were killed inside Indian territory. He also rubbished the state government's claim that the banned NDFB was behind the killings and said "Bhutan police have definite information and concrete proof that all these attacks were carried out by the Bodo Liberation Tigers."

Penzor said Bhutan has lodged a formal complaint with New Delhi over the killings and also asked the Union government to safeguard the lives and property of its citizens.

The Bhutan government's claim added a new dimension to the incidents of the last few days as it indirectly hinted that the pro-talks BLT may have been used by "certain forces" to target the Bhutanese people and thereby prompt Bhutan to initiate steps for evicting the NDFB and Ulfar rebels from the Himalayan kingdom.

So far, 14 Bhutanese people, including a teenage girl, have been killed in the spate of attacks on the people of the kingdom since

Thursday. Nearly 20 others have been injured.

Mahanta said the NDFB was targeting Bhutanese citizens "to put pressure on the royal government not to take any steps against its cadre staying in camps inside the kingdom." Asked about the other attacks on Bhutanese citizens, Mahanta said "they took place just near the international border." But he felt that Bhutan was making matters worse by not taking any steps to drive out the NDFB and Ulfar rebels who have set up well-stocked camps in the jungles in southern Bhutan, close to the Indian border.

He was, however, quick to add that the state government was

ready to provide security to Bhutanese vehicles and citizens provided they gave prior information of their travel plans. Regarding Bhutan's decision to stop plying of its vehicles in Assam till "proper security arrangements are made," Mahanta said it would only affect Bhutan adversely.

In a faxed press note, the Royal Bhutanese embassy gave specific details of the incidents and said two of its citizens have been "missing" since Wednesday although state police feigned ignorance about them.

The Bhutanese version of Thursday's incident was also totally different from what the Assam police said yesterday.

THE TELEGRAPH

24 DEC 2000

Bhutan rules out UN role to evict Ulfa

New Delhi, Oct. 31: Bhutanese King Jigme Singye Wangchuk has ruled out the possibility of United Nations intervention to evict anti-India rebels who have established camps in the mountain kingdom.

The issue of requesting UN help to force rebels of the United Liberation Front of Asom and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland out of their bases in Bhutan was raised at a recent meeting between the king and representatives of the Haa district that borders Tibet, *DATA* Kunesel the kingdom's state-owned newspaper reported in its latest issue.

The Ulfa and NDFB, which are fighting for the creation of independent homelands, have some 17-20 camps in Bhutan, say officials. The

U kingdom's National Assembly recently resolved, under pressure from the Indian government, to use military force as a last option to evict the rebels.

King Wangchuk told the leaders of Haa province that Bhutan should not seek outside help for dealing with its internal security issues. "Our people should understand that the UN security forces will not come to Bhutan to resolve our problem and that we should not depend on others to help us remove security threats to our nation," *over his neck* Kunesel quoted King Wangchuk as saying.

He said the government would do all it could to find a peaceful solution to the Ulfa-NDFB problem. "Although the talks have not been

fruitful so far we are still pursuing the process of dialogue," he said.

The Bhutan government has held two rounds of talks with the Ulfa and one round with the NDFB. The rebel leaders were told during these talks that their continued presence has posed a serious threat to Bhutan's security and they had to leave Bhutanese territory.

Home minister Thinley Gyamtsho, who accompanied King Wangchuk to Haa, briefed the local leaders about the decisions made by the 78th session of the kingdom's National Assembly to deal with the Ulfa-NDFB problem.

Mr Gyamtsho said the government had adopted a four-point course of action. This included holding talks with the rebels. (IANS)

THE ASIAN AGE

1 NOV 2000

'Bhutan unable to deal with N-E ultras'

Suman Layak
Calcutta, November 29

THE BHUTANESE security forces are ill-equipped to deal with ULFA and Bodo militants who have set up camps in the forests along the India-Bhutan border, said former Bhutan foreign minister Lyonpo Dawa Tsering.

Speaking to *The Hindustan Times*, Tsering said that unlike the Bhutan Army, the terrorist groups were armed to the teeth with sophisticated weapons. "Our Government is negotiating with these groups and are asking them to leave our forests. However, the forests are so dense that it is difficult to deal with them," he said.

The militants are not only flaunting their guns to silence the Bhutanese troops but also have a well-stocked coffer to ensure their stay in Bhutan. The purse is filled up time to time from extortions and kidnapping operations. Execution is the answer for cases where the victims are not able to pay up.

Tsreing said that social and political violence has the tendency to spill across borders and need to be taken care of. However, he said that the militants have not yet bothered the Bhutanese people.

He was in Calcutta to attend a conference organised by a private sector initiative of the sub-region, including eastern India, Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh. Tsreing has recently quit Government service and is now busy with his real estate business.

"With none of the smaller countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation having borders other than with India, it is difficult to find a common interest. The sub-region is a much more compact grouping," he said. "The Saarc has come to a standstill. I have been involved with it since its beginning and today I am disillusioned."

The man who has spent decades in Government service said that governments only create impediments for businesses. But business groups will have to deal with such "impediments", he said adding that sub-regional countries should unite to assess their water resources in view of the global warming threat to the region.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

NOV 29 1997

Maoist troublemakers

THE INDIA-NEPAL talks on the water resources shared by the two countries must concentrate on ending the uncertainty caused by Nepali Maoist groups in the border areas. A week ago, they had threatened to blow up the Laxmanpur-Rapti barrage and the adjoining dam on the pretext that these would inundate 60 villages in Nepal. In an attempt to whip up local sentiment, these groups had even raised the familiar bogey that the upcoming structures impinged on Nepalese 'sovereignty'. Their charges flew in the face of the fact that the barrage was located eight km downstream from the Nepalese border. As such, there was little chance of the backflow reaching across the Nepalese border. *Allo HG-12*

The barrage is expected to conserve water through the lean season while the Rapti link canal is designed to serve as an efflux bund, which should have straightaway set any misgivings at rest. India had also given assurances during Prime Minister G.P. Koirala's recent visit to New Delhi that any dam construction inside Indian territory would not affect the villages on the Nepalese side. In the circumstances, it would seem that any issue would do for the Maoist groups so long as it could be used to create apprehension among people living in the Nepalese border villages.

The current talks are expected to tackle a whole range of issues including flood control, indiscriminate felling of trees and the impact of deforestation on the Himalayan eco-system. Rather than focus on them, which are causing large scale damage and loss of economic opportunities to both the countries, the Maoist groups have prepared an agenda which will benefit no one, except perhaps those involved in poaching and illegal timber trade.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

4 OCT 2000

Saffron map makes Nepal Opp see red

INDIA ABROAD NEWS SERVICE

KATHMANDU, Oct. 14. — The opposition party in Nepal, the United Marxist Leninist has come out strongly against the depiction of Nepal as part of "Greater India" in a recent RSS publication.

On the 75th anniversary of the RSS, the group's Marathi language weekly, Vivek, had published a booklet, Amritpath, in which a map of "Greater India" depicted Nepal as its part.

UML spokesman Mr Pradip Nepal in a statement said: "A group closely associated with the ruling BJP in India has attacked Nepali sovereignty and integrity by including Nepal as part of India in its publication and the UML vehemently denounces such a move."

In Nepal, several organisations are believed to be closely associated with the RSS. They include the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Nepal Hindu Sangathan, Pashupati Sikchya Prachar Samiti and Sewadham. Voices are also being raised here against the working of such organisations.

The RSS maintained in Amritpath that the map was only a "cultural one".

It is, however, being viewed in Nepal as a "deliberate attempt" to challenge Nepali sovereignty.

Mr Jhala Nath Khanal, UML's international department chief told IANS: "It is an expansionist thought to include a member of the United Nations and a country that was independent even before India got independence, in its map."

The Nepali people are against such a move and the groups concerned should restrict such publications."

Indian embassy officials in Kathmandu refused to comment saying it was a political issue. "We cannot comment on it right now," an official at the embassy told IANS.

A Nepal foreign ministry official said they would spell out the government's stand by Sunday.

**Indian in
electoral
college for
US poll**

THE STATESMAN

15 OCT 2000

Nepal extradites Pakistani to India

AFP/Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, September 6

NEPAL QUIETLY extradited a Pakistani to India after police recovered 35 kgs of RDX explosives from him and others in a hotel here, a local daily said today.

The daily *Himalayan Times*, quoting an anti-terrorist squad official, identified the Pakistani national as Mustaq alias Safi, an alleged terrorist. He

was extradited to India yesterday.

Meanwhile, "police are interrogating Shiba Khadka and Habib Malik who have been arrested in a joint operation of the Nepali and Indian police," the newspaper said.

Khadka is a Nepali national but the nationality of malik is yet to be ascertained.

Mystery shrouded the reported arrest of the three, with the Nepal Government neither confirming nor denying the incident. Though the news of the arrest first appeared in the local media yesterday, government-controlled publications have remained silent. "I've just come across the news," said

H-13

Nepalese Information and Communications Minister Jay Prakash Gupta when asked to comment on the unequal treatment of the subject in the government and private media. Similarly, senior police officials also claimed ignorance.

On the contrary, local journals quoted police sources as saying the Pakistanis were arrested from a

hotel at Sundhara in the heart of the capital.

They claimed the explosives were meant

for carrying out terrorist operations in India. Last year, the police had seized 19 kgs of RDX from Pakistani nations from a hotel at Teku.

There are conflicting views about the alleged underplay of the incident. While a section of diplomats and bureaucrats are of the view that Kathmandu wants to avoid interference by the Pakistani embassy by keeping the arrest a secret till a thorough interrogation.

However, some feel the alleged suppression indicates Nepal is not strong enough to take action against persons connected to Pakistan.

RDX Haul

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

57 Oct 2001

Bhutan Army Major ULFA conduit: Assam police

HT Correspondent
Guwahati, September 7

ASSAM POLICE have identified a Major in the Royal Bhutan Army (RBA) as the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA)'s liaison man in Bhutan.

The incident occurs barely two months after Assam Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta accused Bhutan of misusing diplomatic bags in favour of certain North-East militant outfits.

Though the Royal Government of Bhutan officially does not support ULFA and National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) militants camping in the Himalayan kingdom, some top ranking civil and Army officials of the country help militant outfits to maintain clandestine camps and provide safe passages to their cadres to and from Bhutan, senior police officials said here.

"We have definite information about this RBA Major who is posted in southern Bhutan and we are waiting for an opportune moment to reveal his name," Additional Director-General of Police (Operations) G M Srivastava told *The Hindustan Times* here on Thursday.

Authorities are trying to convey the name of this major and other Bhutanese go-betweens to Thimpu.

The RBA major is reportedly on the payroll of the ULFA and possesses weapons that were taken

Though the Royal Government of Bhutan officially does not support ULFA and NDFB militants camping in the Himalayan kingdom, some top civil and Army officials have been helping militant outfits maintain clandestine camps in Bhutan

from the outfit's Nagaland camp last week.

Srivastava said the infighting in the ULFA forced many cadres to flee the Nagaland camp, about 20 km inside Bhutanese territory. Militants loyal to ULFA comman-

der-in-chief Paresh Barua had apparently removed the weapons. According to senior police and Army officials, the militants who fled Nagaland and other ULFA camps had taken refuge in the Manas National Park, part of which is in Bhutan and is known as the Royal Manas Park there. Unified Command personnel comprising the Army, police and CRPF men have cordoned off the park and its adjoining areas to flush out the militants.

Srivastava said ULFA men in Bhutan have virtually been cut off from Paresh Barua, the militants chairman Arabinda Rajkhowa and other leaders. "Distrust rules the ULFA, so much so that veteran militants such as captain Biju Dekha has been confined in one of the camps in Bhutan."

Senior police officials revealed that a man called Bailung, reportedly a cadre trainer based in Phuntsholing, is handling the ULFA's Bhutan affairs. Bailung deals with Bhutanese officials sympathetic to the ULFA's cause. Another man called sergeant Ramu is the outfit's odd-job man, who escorts top militant leaders to and from the Himalayan kingdom's Paro Airport.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

30 SEP 2001

Koirala's India visit to be a tightrope walk

Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, July 31

THE NEPALESE Prime Minister, Mr Girija Prasad Koirala's week-long visit to India, beginning from Monday, should actually have been an occasion for celebration as it coincided with the 50th anniversary of the signing of the 1950 Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship — the very basis of the close relationship between the two neighbours.

Far from being so, the much-publicised tour, first by a Nepalese Premier since 1996, seems to have turned into a tight rope walk for the Bihar-born Mr Koirala as he, paradoxically, wants bilateral talks to revolve around the Indo-Nepal ties since the signing of the treaty, which most Nepalese feel is heavily loaded in India's favour.

Aware of the fact that he has to maintain a balance between the conflicting wishes of his countrymen and hosts for his own political survival, the 76-year-old Premier said: "There should not be any kind of expectations anywhere. My visit is just a confidence building exercise. I've no particular agenda to discuss with India. All I want is a review of the entire gamut of bilateral relations since 1950".

According to him, the relations between the two countries "have largely gone off-track because of the long absence of high-level interactions between their Prime Ministers".

He said: "I am going there with an open mind. Things will be all right if the two countries try to understand and appreciate each other's security perceptions."

Mr Koirala, who spent a long time in exile in India during the Nepali Congress-run pro-democracy movement and who is often accused of pro-India leanings by

his opponents, pledged to turn his visit into "an occasion to perpetuate the bond of friendship established by B P Koirala (his late brother and first elected Premier) among the new generation of Nepalese and Indians."

Commenting on the escalation of anti-India propaganda in his country on the eve of his visit, he said: "There are some people who try to fan such feeling. But I'm confident that their designs will never succeed."



Nevertheless, pressure is constantly mounting on him to raise certain vexatious questions which in all likelihood may earn him India's displeasure.

Mr Koirala is cautious about his views on the 1950 treaty. Refusing to pinpoint the changes he may like to have in it, he merely said, "Let us add a new dimension, a new vision to our ties in the new millennium."

Since the beginning of the influx of people from Bhutan in 1990, Nepal has been seeking India's help for their resettlement in the Buddhist kingdom.

However, Delhi has stayed away from it saying that it is a bilateral matter between Kathmandu and Thimphu, another close ally of

India.

Besides, the Indian embassy here last week defended the construction of the Laxmanpur barrage saying it is very much within Indian territory and does not pose any threat to Nepal.

Gearing up for more attacks on the beleaguered Premier, Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist) general secretary and leader of the Opposition Madhav Nepal remarked: "It's strange that Mr Koirala says he has no specific issues for his visit which he claims will clear the atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust between India and Nepal. He should keep in mind that the people of Nepal will not tolerate if he works against the country's interests."

Koirala is again in danger of facing resistance from his detractors within the ruling Nepali Congress if he fails to make any major breakthrough in Delhi. He succeeded his arch rival Krishna Prasad Bhattarai as Prime Minister only four months after a majority of Parliamentarians from the party switched their allegiance to him. To keep his countrymen on his side, Koirala promised to "place details of his visit in Parliament in the most transparent manner."

Notwithstanding all this, nine Leftist students' unions have decided to call a general strike in the Kathmandu valley this week coinciding Koirala's visit in protest against the passing of the Citizenship Amendment Act by the Koirala Government last week and the construction of the Laxmanpur Barrage.

Opposition parties fear that the new Act would allow the non-Nepalese, mostly Indians, to acquire Nepalese citizenship and might turn the kingdom into another Fiji.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

1 AUG 2000

Nepal's India-baiting may undermine its gains

Udayan Nambodiri
New Delhi, July 31

NEPAL'S PRIME Minister Girija Prasad Koirala arrived here tonight against the backdrop of a rhetoric charged atmosphere which has slightly shifted the focus from the intended purpose of his visit. Sizeable gains await Nepal from this visit but their import may get undermined by the politics of India-baiting.

Education, scientific inputs for harnessing Nepal's considerable natural resources and assistance to set up an infrastructure for information technology make up the first line of India's diplomacy when

it comes to dealing with Nepal. Mr Koirala's visit may well produce significant tie-ups in these fields.

For instance, the demand for national status for Nepalese students seeking admission to Indian universities may be granted. India used to be the preferred destination of the Nepalese upper classes seeking education in the old days. The Nepalese middle classes found it difficult to compete for entry in Indian colleges. This is set to change in the near future.

India has made it clear that it has no problem to reviewing the treaty. Two rounds of Foreign Secretary-level talks have already been concluded on the matter.

Despite the hype raised, the possibility of this figuring in any serious discussion is extremely slim. In any event, India has not pursued the implementation of the treaty to the hilt.

To observers, India need not take off on a "guilt trip" about not doing enough for Nepal. When fact is sifted from fiction, it becomes apparent that post-1990,

Nepal has done better with its trade deficit with India than in the preceding four decades.

In 1992-93, Nepal exported Rs 101.4 crore worth of goods to India. In 1998-99, the figure grew to Rs 818 crore.

What became known later as the "Gujral doctrine" of not expecting gains from economic ties with neighbours, was actually initiated by the Narasimha Rao regime which has led to a situation where India's share in Nepal's foreign trade fell from more than 90 per cent in the 1970s to about 37 per cent by the end of the century.

As it happens all too often in the sub-continental neighbourhood, politicians in Nepal have almost succeeded in colouring the nature of the special relationship between India and Nepal.

Mr Girija Prasad Koirala, who is heading a majority government, does not have to play to the gallery. That is why India perceives it is in its own interest to use the opportunity to win as many hearts as it can in Nepal, ISI or no ISI.

Prime Minister
India, Nepal to discuss security *HD-13 2/8*

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, AUG. 1. India and Nepal today held a major brainstorming session to address threats to their security and ways to orient their relationship to new political and economic demands.

"Being on the last leg of my political career, I want to fill the vacuum and connect the missing links," the visiting Prime Minister of Nepal, Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala, said. Mr. Koirala, who was accorded a ceremonial welcome at the forecourt of the Rashtrapati Bhavan, said he was on a "goodwill visit and confidence-building mission" and wanted to "set an example to the world that two good and friendly neighbours can go ahead hand-in-hand. The younger generation should continue the friendly relations between the two countries." The Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, who received the visiting dignitary, hoped that the interaction between the two countries would intensify. The two later met in the evening for delegation-level talks.

After the IA hijacking episode, security issues have dominated Indo-Nepal relations. New Delhi

is concerned about the use of Nepali soil by the Pakistani Inter Services Intelligence for subversion in India. India's concerns have been deepened by the linkage of a section of Nepali elite with an ISI-run smuggling network. The ISI was also reportedly funding religious schools in Nepal.

Earlier, during talks with the External Affairs Minister, the two sides discussed a wide range of issues, including the possible review of the 1950 Indo-Nepal treaty.

THE HINDU

- 2 AUG 2000

An old friend comes calling

EXPRESS FOCUS DIPLOMACY

A shadow hangs over the visit of Nepalese Prime Minister G.P. Koirala, brought on by years of mistrust and a 'small neighbour' syndrome. But will the clouds lift? JYOTI MALHOTRA reports

TWO anecdotes below, far apart in character but inextricably linked to the other, perfectly illustrate the stormy but intense relationship that exists between India and Nepal.

The story goes that Nepal's King Mahendra and his wife Aishwarya have wanted their daughter to get married to the true blue son of the ex-Maharaja and Maharani of Jodhpur.

The second is about a recent incident where the young Nepalese Crown Prince Dhirendra, presid-

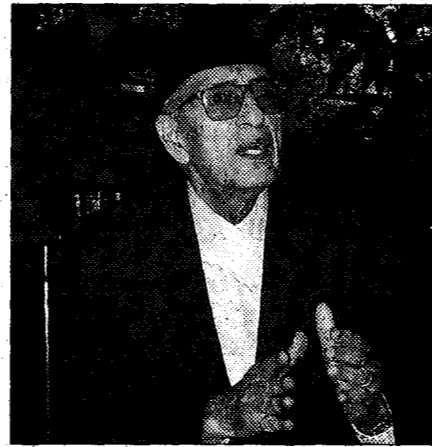
ing over a meeting of an NGO at home, was confronted with an over-enthusiastic royalist who proclaimed that he would do anything for the kingship, including assassinate the Prime Minister of India.

Royalty, so far removed from the colourful chaos of the bazaar, is usually never a true indicator of the complex relationships that exist between democratic nations. But this is Nepal, where the King held full sway only until a decade ago and continues to wield a number of barely visible levers of power. But apart from Kathmandu's own rela-

96-7
tionship with the Palace — which has its own impact on New Delhi — the two stories above show that the cultures of India and Nepal are as close as the two folded hands in a *namaskar*.

Under this clouded sun, Nepal's Prime Minister G.P. Koirala is paying an official visit to India. The Nepalese press, reflecting perhaps the divisions within Koirala's own Nepali Congress — which drew much strength from Indian democracy to mount its own people's revolution in 1990 — as well as the politics of the Opposition, has gone to town about "undue advantage" that has been taken of "Nepalese decency and trust".

The editorial in the *Kathmandu Post* offers advice on what New Delhi should do for a start: Withdraw its troops from Kalapani (an ITBF outpost is stationed on a contested stretch of land in the far west of Nepal, overlooking China), demolish the Laxmanpur barrage (on



Nepalese Prime Minister G.P. Koirala — AFP

the border at UP, which Kathmandu claims has submerged large tracts of Nepalese territory; Delhi, however, denies the claim), and accept the Nepalese proposal to control and regulate the open border.

To the *Post* edit, Nepalese ambassador to India B.B. Thapa last week added a few more items that

Kathmandu would like featured on the bilateral agenda: A review of the 1950 Treaty of Friendship between the two sides, equitable sharing of water resources (Nepal's rivers have a combined potential of 85,000 MW of hydro-power, even a partial exploitation of which would render redundant the much-touted Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline), and a better interpretation and implementation of the Trade and Transit

treaty.

The origin of the problem on the 1950 Treaty as well as on the border at Kalapani lies in the unspoken demarcation of the sphere of influence between India and China in the 1950s. The Himalayan watershed above Nepal was supposed to be the dividing line, with

Beijing and New Delhi agreeing to restrict their clout to either side of the mountain range. That was really when India agreed to "give up" Tibet to China, in exchange for the understanding that the nations south of the Himalayas — Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim — would be part of the Indian penumbra.

Key clauses in the 1950 Treaty, on security and defence, made it incumbent on Nepal to first clear this with India. So when Kathmandu intermittently raises these issues as a violation of its "sovereignty", New Delhi sees red. Once in a while it defends itself by quoting Bihar's claims that Nepal is sitting on large tracts of ITS territory.

Certainly, the Indian government has no intention of keeping Nepal under its own security umbrella and officials point out that New Delhi has "an open mind" on a treaty review.

"But Nepal must think of the implications that follow from an abrogation, amendment or a brand new treaty," the officials add, pointing out that since there exists a very porous border, New Delhi has the "right" to protect its own security interests.

"You cannot define the relationship with unilateral concessions from one side," is the Capital's view. "It cannot be sustained in the long-term. Nepal needs to look at issues with greater maturity, while India needs more patience. But basically, India needs to avoid going on a guilt trip every time some problem comes up."

The hijacking of IC-814 in December from Kathmandu's Tribhuvan airport focussed the relationship, warts and all, as it had never done before. New Delhi's insistence that the long Terai border was being used by Pakistan's ISI to set up terrorist bases aimed at India and that a majority of the staff at the Pakistan embassy in Kathmandu were actually ISI agents was thrust into Kathmandu's face.

When the government justifiably sought an enhancement of security measures — such as installing a secondary X-ray machine at the cargo area and ladder-point frisking — Kathmandu hemmed and hawed. New Delhi didn't budge. Kathmandu gave in after four full months, knowing well that air traffic was hurting its own tourism industry badly.

Today, the relationship has clearly reached a new low, and Koirala's visit is aimed at rebuilding bridges. Old-timers compare this with the time when about a decade ago, Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister ordered the blockading of transit routes to Nepal and anti-India hysteria reached a stormy pitch. What escapes reason is why New Delhi, knowing its neighbour like the back of its own hand, is unable to anticipate the complexities so common with the "small neighbour" syndrome. Worse, the government is not averse to playing intra-party politics within Nepal, often supporting one faction of the Nepali Congress against the other — unfortunately, often, to its own detriment.

All these issues and more are likely to come up in talks with Koirala. Nepalese officials insist they want to be treated with far more seriousness from Delhi. New Delhi's mantra on the other hand will call for "mutual respect and concern to each other's securities." Maybe the twain, like the old friends that they are, will meet.

Readers can send feedback to focus@expressindia.com

India, Nepal agree to correct past mistakes

Udayan Namboodiri
New Delhi, August 2

NEPAL PRIME Minister Girija Prasad Koirala completed a historic visit today. Uneasy neighbours India and Nepal have agreed to correct mistakes of the past and remove bottlenecks at the political level.

There was a convergence views between Mr Koirala and Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee on matters of far reaching import relating to political, security and development co-operation. If ISI operations against India based in Nepal have been bothering New Delhi, and the coalition between Maoists and Bihar Naxalities ganging up against Kathmandu were irritants to better ties, these would be sorted out with the help of exchange of inputs, comprehensive border management and more dialogue.

A senior Nepalese official said

3/8
the most important outcome of the visit was to inject new life into the forums for dialogue that had gone cold with disuse or had become so inactive that few remembered what they were set up for. An example of the latter was the one set up to study land inundation more than three decades back. Significantly, new mechanisms have been developed which would be time bound and result oriented.

These include a Joint Technical Committee set up in 1980 to carry out border demarcation which is in limbo. It has been decided to settle the creaking Kalapani and Narsai Susta problems within a tight time frame. India has agreed to address Nepal's genuine concern at its perceived lethargy with hydel power projects.

A joint committee headed by the two sides' water resources secretaries has been set up with the mandate to meet every six months.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 3 AUG 2000

Timetable to resolve Indo-Nepal border row

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, AUG. 2. New Delhi and Kathmandu have worked out a new timetable to resolve differences over their boundary alignment and decided to take a fresh look at the five decades old Indo-Nepal treaty.

The boundary committee, which was formed 20 years ago will complete its work by 2001-02, according to a senior Foreign Office official. It is specially looking at the boundary alignment in the mountainous Kalapani area at the tri-junction of India, Nepal and China as well as the Susta zone in Bihar's Champaran district. The committee will be able to prepare "strip maps" of the boundary areas by 2003.

Given the sensitivity of the issue, the committee was directed to compile detailed reports with evidence of some boundary segments where it is unable to reach an agreement. Its findings would then be considered by the two Governments. The 1,700-km.-long boundary was demarcated in 1920 but alignment in some of the riverine areas needs to be revisited as some of the rivers, which have been the reference points for demarcation have, in some instances, changed course. With the

passage of time, some of the boundary pillars have also disappeared.

On the controversial 1950 treaty, which Nepal feels needs a review, the two sides decided that their Foreign Secretaries will address this subject. The visiting Prime Minister, Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala, and the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, who met yesterday, directed their Foreign Secretaries to meet once in six months. Sources point out that Nepal is particularly keen on reviewing some of the security clauses of the 1950 treaty.

India and Nepal have decided to intensify the crackdown on cross-border terrorists. The Home Secretaries, met last month, decided to expand cooperation between the two law enforcement and security agencies. While India is concerned at the ISI-masterminded smuggler-terrorist nexus in Nepal, Kathmandu is urging New Delhi to curb the activities of Left-wing extremists from its soil.

During the discussion on the utilisation of water resources, it was decided to complete the detailed project report on the construction of the 6,000-MW Pancheshwar dam on the Mahakali river, by 2001. Besides, the Water Resources Secretaries



The Nepal Prime Minister, Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala, with the Congress president, Ms. Sonia Gandhi, in New Delhi on Wednesday. — PTI

would oversee field investigations for harnessing the waters of the Sapta-Kosi river.

An agreement on science and technology was also finalised. The two Prime Ministers agreed that the large hydro-electric potential needed to be tapped in an environmentally sustainable manner on both sides of the border. A special committee of Water Secretaries has been set up to discuss all

proving the infrastructure at major cargo transit points on the border. Special emphasis will be laid on improving facilities at the Raxaul-Birganj, Sunauli-Bhairawa and Joghani-Biratnagar junctions. The committee also recommended improvement of transportation links between the adjoining districts of India and Nepal.

After deliberation, Nepal is likely to accept import of Indian motor vehicles whose emissions conform to Euro-1 specifications. The two sides also decided to work out an agreement to formalise the cross-border movement of motor vehicles.

PM to visit Nepal

UNI, PTI report:

Mr. Vajpayee has accepted an invitation from Mr. Koirala to pay an official visit to the Himalayan kingdom. The dates for the visit would be worked out later, the Foreign Office said.

Koirala cancels visit

Meanwhile, official sources said Mr. Koirala cancelled his scheduled three-day visit to Bangalore scheduled to begin tomorrow, in the wake of the emotionally-charged atmosphere there following the kidnap of Karnataka superstar, Mr. Rajkumar, on Sunday last.

important issues every six months.

Both delegations considered the recommendations of the special committee headed by the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister on the Indian side and the Chief Secretary of Nepal. These recommendations revolve around construction of small and medium-sized dams in the future and facilitation of trade by im-

Bandit robs Krishna of Koirala

5-18-2000

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Aug. 2: Bandit king Veerappan has forced Nepal Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala to omit the country's homegrown Silicon Valley in Bangalore from his itinerary and instead head for Chandrababu Naidu's Cyberabad.

The dignitary from Kathmandu was keen to visit the country's premier infotech city. But the Karnataka government, under pressure following superstar Raj Kumar's abduction, has made it clear it cannot handle a VIP visit to the state now.

The Centre was in two minds on the issue. The government initially felt Koirala should not cancel his trip to Bangalore as it would set a bad precedent and send the signal that Delhi was cowering before an ordinary criminal. Foreign secretary Lalit Mansingh had said as much to the Karnataka government.

But with Bangalore continuing to remain tense, South Block finally decided that Hyderabad was a safer choice.

Koirala is in India on a six-day "goodwill" visit aimed at drawing up confidence-building measures between the neighbours.

Bilateral relations had crashed following the hijack of the Indian Airlines Airbus on a flight from Kathmandu to Delhi last year.

At the end of two days of official talks, including a one-to-one between Koirala and Atal Behari Vajpayee, both nations claimed that the first steps towards removing the air of mistrust had been taken.

Referring to the contentious Kalapani issue, Delhi made it clear that while it was not interested in taking "even an inch" of Nepal's territory, it will not take kindly to attempts at politicising the land dispute.

As a trade-off aimed at keeping Kathmandu happy, India has decided to waive a special additional customs duty of four per cent imposed by it on Nepalese goods. In response, the Nepalese leadership has agreed to allow import of Indian cars subject to self-certification by manufacturers and the vehicles being Euro-I compliant.

But the "good atmospherics" generated during the talks was not enough to enable the two sides to come out with a joint statement.

The proposed statement, with the approval of the two Prime Ministers, could not be released



Nepal Prime Minister G.P. Koirala and his wife in New Delhi. (PTI)

till late evening as diplomats from the two countries continued to ponder over wordings of every single paragraph to ensure there were no loose ends.

On the crucial security issue, Koirala assured his hosts that Nepal's territory will not be used for anti-Indian activities.

Though this a known and stated position of Kathmandu, Delhi says this time the level of cooperation assured by Koirala is much more than what was given in the past. The reference is obviously to the growing activities of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence in Nepal.

Nepal expresses solidarity with India in fighting terrorism 4/8

HD-15
NEW DELHI, AUG 3. Nepal today expressed its solidarity with India in its efforts to fight terrorism even as the two countries agreed to review and rationalise institutional mechanisms for dialogue to set the tone for mature relations and enhanced cooperation in diversified areas.

Conveying his grief and dismay over the massacre of Amarnath pilgrims, the visiting Nepalese Prime Minister, Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala, said Nepal and its people condemned such dastardly acts of terrorism.

Kathmandu's sympathies were conveyed by Mr. Koirala in a letter to the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee. Nepal had yesterday assured India that its territory would not be allowed to be used by Pakistan's ISI agency for anti-India activities. A joint statement, issued after the talks between Mr. Koirala and Mr. Vajpayee, said the two leaders reiterated the commitment of their Governments to strengthen the friendly relations between the two countries. The two premiers were convinced that a regular dialogue at various levels was required to continuously explore new avenues of cooperation, implement understandings reached in the past and avoid complacency, it said.

Mr. Koirala also met his old friend and the former Prime Minister, Mr. Chandra Shekhar. "I have come to India on a goodwill visit and it is a confidence-building mission," he said.

The two sides agreed that the first meeting of the revived Indo-Nepal Joint Commission would be convened during the forthcoming visit of the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, to Kathmandu.

The commission would act as an umbrella body at the Foreign Ministers level to oversee the entire ga-

mut of bilateral relations and provide directives on measures to further strengthen them.

Both the Prime Ministers directed that the Inter-Governmental committee on trade, transit and unauthorised trade, headed by the Commerce Secretaries of the two Governments, be convened soon to address certain issues in a constructive manner. The committee had been asked to take steps to promote trade and economic links between the two countries.

The two sides agreed to facilitate expansion of the industrial production base in Nepal, through enhanced participation of the private sector. With this objective, it was agreed to conclude a bilateral investment protection and promotion agreement at the earliest. The two leaders directed that the conclusion of a bilateral agreement on trans-border movement of motor vehicles be expedited, the statement said. They also directed that the joint task force on flood control and forecasting be set up to review cooperation in a comprehensive manner and give its recommendations to the two Governments.

Responding to the Nepalese concern over inundation in the Banke district of Nepal, the Indian side assured that measures were being taken to ensure that the flood control embankment constructed on the Indian side would not cause inundation in adjoining regions of the Himalayan kingdom.

India has also agreed to extend cooperation in the development of information technology in Nepal. It was agreed that a technology institute would be established in Nepal as a partnership project, with IT as the key thrust area. — PTI

THE HINDU

- 4 AUG 2000

India, Nepal agree to fight 'scourge of terrorism' jointly

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, August 3

HT-10
A/8

NEPAL AND India have agreed to work closely to fight the "scourge of terrorism" and pledged that their respective territories would not be permitted for use by terrorists operating against either government and people. The misunderstanding that had cropped up over this in bilateral relations has been addressed in the joint press statement issued by both prime ministers at the end the Delhi leg of Mr Girija Prasad Koirala's official visit.

The two prime ministers directed that co-operation this regard be stepped up. Discussions on the management of the border would continue in the Joint Working Groups on border management as well as in talks between the two home secretaries.

Rapid pace was ordered on the settlement of outstanding problems. The Joint Technical Level Boundary Committee was directed by the two prime ministers to complete its field work by 2001-2002 and final preparation of strip maps

by 2003. In case the committee was unable to reach a mutually acceptable agreement on specific segments, detailed reports on those pockets including a compilation of the available evidence would be submitted to the two governments for their consideration.

The Joint Working Group of the committee was asked to expeditiously complete its study of the facts relating to the alignment of the western boundary including Kalapani. The "differences in perception", an Indian stand, was acknowledged in the joint statement.

India agreed to waive the four per cent Special Additional Duty on imports from Nepal which had been a major point of discord in bilateral relations. Two important agreements, pertaining to trans border movement of motor vehicles and self certification regime for Indian automobile exports to Nepal have been signed.

Similar speed was ordered on the work of reviewing the 1950 Friendship Treaty. Already the foreign secretaries of the two sides have met over this.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

4 AUG 2000

Restoring confidence

BEFORE HE arrived in India on a goodwill visit earlier this week, Girija Prasad Koirala, Prime Minister of Nepal, put it very well when he told the Kathmandu media that his aim was to restore confidence in the relationship between India and Nepal. It was known that there would be much to talk about, such as the security concerns of both sides, border issues, trade-related irritants, hydro-power projects and a close look at the 50-year old India-Nepal Treaty which governs the overall special ties between the two countries. A veteran, Mr Koirala knows well enough that the economic well-being and security of the two countries are intertwined, though lately there has been insufficient appreciation of this.

The visiting dignitary would no doubt have noted how deep-rooted are India's security concerns vis-a-vis Pakistan and China (including increasing ISI activity across the border), which Nepal can help address on account of the apprehensions here that Nepali territory is being exploited, possibly through subterfuge, by anti-India elements. The value of mutuality in maintaining special relations, particularly in the field of trade, would also have been emphasised during the dialogue. These are positive markers in the development of ties.

Of particular satisfaction is the fact that the Nepal leader's visit has given a concrete direction to the construction by India of the Saptakoshi High Dam, a project under discussion for 50 years! The completion of the dam well within the ensuing decade has the potential to double Nepal's GDP through the sale of much-needed power to India. India should also keep in view that a balanced review of the 1950 Treaty, from which citizens of both countries draw sustenance, would give a boost to mutual ties. With democracy in Nepal maturing over the last decade, India could also institutionalise regular high-level visits and close official interaction between the two countries.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

— 11 A 12 000

Good neighbourliness

By K. K. Katyal

India and Nepal are divided by their many bonds... The only way out — time-bound efforts and pragmatism on the part of the two sides.

IT IS the problem of proximity, the crisis of commonalities. India and Nepal are divided by their many bonds — historical and geographical, cultural and economic. Because of the asymmetry in size — and all that goes with it — India is drawn into the big-brother syndrome in relation to Nepal. For that matter in regard to other smaller neighbours, such as Bangladesh and Sri Lanka (the ties with Pakistan falling in a different category). The bonds do not bind always, at times divide, cause irritants. The resultant anti-India sentiment becomes a major political factor in these countries: it is a convenient handle for those in the Opposition and affects the style of those in power in their dealings with India.

The current visit of Nepal's Prime Minister, Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala, and his talks with his Indian counterpart, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, and other leaders, are to be seen in this context. Of late, divisive factors had been fanning all manner of controversies in Nepal — the demand for revision of the 1950 treaty, inundation of Nepalese areas because of the alleged carelessness of Indian authorities, demarcation of the boundary in areas where the line is not clear, especially, the claim on Kalapani, a stretch on the India-Nepal-China trijunction, the specific issues relating to the exploitation of the huge hydro-power potential and complaints of Nepalese extremists getting sanctuary in adjoining Indian areas.

New Delhi has its quota of grievances, relating notably to the use of Nepalese territory by Pakistan's ISI for anti-India activities, the laxity at the Kathmandu airport, resulting in the hijacking of the Indian Airlines plane in December last year, the non-reciprocity in the treatment of Indian nationals in Nepal.

On arrival in New Delhi, Mr. Koirala spoke of the missing links in bilateral ties, and this was held responsible for irritants. By this he meant, as he explained in an informal conversation, the absence of contacts at the top political level. He cited the fact that the last prime ministerial vis-

it (one way or the other) took place over three years ago when Mr. I. K. Gujral went to Kathmandu in June 1997 while the preceding contacts had taken place after gaps of four years or more. He made a case for meetings more often to contain wrangles and prevent their snowballing into unmanageable controversies. This, in his view, was not to be left to bureaucrats — and in so many words, he blamed them for the unresolved problems.

Well, it should not be difficult to provide the "missing links". It was, no doubt, odd that the Heads of Governments in India and Nepal should be taking three to four years to meet to address bilateral problems. In Western Europe, for instance, such interaction take place every few months, even weeks. Mr. Koirala recognised the merits of an overall approach — with a view to dealing with the totality of problems. He did not like to be drawn into discussion on specific controversies, preferring a forward-looking approach to a post-mortem of the past. The hijack episode — that led to a temporary chill in bilateral dealings — was "history now". On one issue — the help received by Maoist extremists from India — he was emphatic. Some form of "border management" appeared to have been agreed on by the two sides.

Top political-level consultations are necessary for imparting impetus to efforts for strengthening ties but the nitty-gritty of specific issues has to be left to bureaucrats and experts. More important is the need for a code to be observed by politicians (in Nepal, in particular) so as not to exploit bilateral matters for narrow partisan ends. It is doubly objectionable to conduct such campaigns by misrepresenting facts or by treating individual cases in isolation.

Take, for instance, the 1950 treaty, often projected in Nepal as a symbol of

or what clauses of the treaty be removed.... This is not a one-way process. We might say we don't like this. They may say they like that. So it is not something said and it is done.... It should be our effort to make India realise that all is not well with the treaty." Discussing the various scenarios, he asked: "Have we really gone into the repercussions of the various clauses? For instance, if you do not want the treaty, you will have to close down the border tomorrow. That means you will have to issue passports to the people going across the border."

While this question continued to feed irritation in Nepal, thanks to the internal dynamics, another controversy erupted some four years ago — on the status of Kalapani. It became a major issue on the eve of Mr. Gujral's 1997 visit. Around that time, Nepal's Parliament took up a resolution on the ratification of the just-concluded treaty with India for exploitation of the irrigation-power potential of the Mahakali river basin. The treaty was ratified with certain conditions or "san-kalps".

The resolution 1) wanted the status of the Mahakali to be defined, whether or not it was a border river, 2) demanded that the origin of the river be clarified, Nepal said it originated from Kalapani, and 3) called for correction of the existing border pillars. Two other conditions related to financial arrangement for the supply of water and power. India was categorical that Kalapani was well within its territory and that a post of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police had been located there since 1962. The issue — of border demarcation — comes alive from time to time, now, to coincide with Mr. Koirala's trip.

Not long ago, two perennial controversies — on trade and transit — were settled with India accommodating the Nepalese demands. It is time the other matters too are sorted out without much loss of time. The dilatory approach has only complicated problems. The only way out — time-bound efforts and pragmatism on the part of the two sides.

abridged sovereignty, and the periodic demand for its revision on the ground that it had become out-of-date, that there had been a material change in the regional context, with the SAARC emerging as a new platform of cooperation in South Asia, and the technological advances, which had turned some parts of the treaty obsolete. What is forgotten, however, is that the treaty is one element in a special relationship, of which the open border and the privileges and facilities enjoyed by Nepalese nationals are other important aspects.

The provisions of the treaty on security-related matters too were worked out as part of a package. Hence, any modification could not but affect other areas of the special relationship. To say this is not to suggest that New Delhi has not on occasion departed from the letter and spirit of the sensitive provisions. The failure to allay Nepal's fears and unilateral actions made matters worse. On its part, Nepal carried its pique to the extreme — like the use of the China card. In keeping with the forward-looking approach stressed by Mr. Koirala, all that is not to be allowed to cast its shadow on the present and the future.

The rhetoric on the revision of the treaty has been limited to generalities, to pleas for the repeal of "unequal" provisions. But whether the critics are clear about its implications for the rest of the relationship is not known. In a recent interview, the Nepalese Foreign Minister, Mr. Chandra Prasad Banstola, while favouring a serious dialogue with India on the treaty, put the issue in a proper perspective. He wanted various sections in Nepal to be specific in their thinking and to build a national consensus. In an interview with the *Rising Nepal*, he said: "What if India says what is it you want: a no-treaty regime or an alternative treaty

Time to rejuvenate relations between India and Nepal

Too close for comfort

The prime minister of Nepal, G.P. Koirala, was in New Delhi from July 31 for a three day visit. Koirala has come to New Delhi after a gap of nearly four years. His visit is timely. Indo-Nepalese relations are in doldrums with undercurrents of anxiety and suspicion. Relations have been a Kafkaesque phenomenon of attachments flavoured with emotional hostility and complexities. Commonalities of religion, language and culture generate impulses of apprehension and disappointment on the part of Nepal towards India. Conversely, there is emotional and political frustration in India about Nepal's not being an uninhibited partner and supporter of India despite the many ties that bind Indians and Nepalese.

Indo-Nepalese interactions have always been animated by a deep Indian responsiveness towards the wellbeing and aspirations of Nepal's people. At each successive stage of Nepal's political transformation, a process which India helped along, relations between New Delhi and the successive power structures in Kathmandu have been subject to tensions and alienation. India helped the Nepalese monarchy free itself from the feudal and oligarchic hold of the Ranas. For nearly two decades relations between the monarchy and India remained adversarial. India supported democracy's revival in Nepal in the early Nineties. But successive elected Nepalese governments have had problematic relations with India.

It is necessary to contrast the current dilemmas affecting relations with the benefits of uninhibited cooperation in certain spheres.

Five broad problems affect Indo-Nepalese relations.

One, restructuring the macrolevel political terms of reference of the relationship. Two, fashioning a relationship in the context of Nepalese perceptions about the regional balance of influences which would serve Nepalese interests. Three, resolving territorial disputes, taking into account Nepal's views on its identity and India's strategic concerns. Four, coming to equitable and fair arrangements about the use of the water resources of shared river basins. Five, resolving issues affecting the internal security of both Nepal and India arising from terrorism, secessionist movements and Nepalese immigration to Bhutan. Finally, finding practical solutions for Nepal's economic and commercial anxieties rooted in its being landlocked.

When it comes to restructuring the terms of reference, there have been incremental demands from Nepal to revise the 1950 Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship and some of the guiding principles about bilateral trade contained in the 1950 Treaty of Trade, Commerce and Transit. Both these agreements, while diluting the assertive role envisaged in

The author is former foreign secretary of India

J.N. DIXIT

the previous Anglo-Nepalese treaties, still provide for a special relationship. Though the treaties with independent India have benefited Kathmandu, Nepal feels the 1950 agreements militate against their national identity and freedom of options.

Now, after a seachange in world and

certain chemistry and symbiosis in bilateral security, political and defence relations would stand diluted and India will have to pull back from some aspects of this special relationship to balance this dilution. Nepal should accept this as a consequence of its keenness to revise the treaty.



Indo-Nepalese interactions have been animated by an Indian responsiveness towards the wellbeing of the Nepalese

India should be willing to initiate discussions for revising the treaty. If agreed upon, a logical consequence would be for India to stop being overanxious about Nepal's relations with China. The less anxiety India expresses, the less Kathmandu will feel it can play a China card against India and an India card against China. This does not mean New Delhi should not watch out for an extensive Chinese presence in Nepal.

India's approach should be to acknowledge Nepal's right to exercise options. But it should send categorical and clear messages that India would take remedial actions to redress excessive Chinese involvement inside Nepal. That India would do whatever is necessary for its security in the way of strategic, diplomatic and defence planning. The activities of Pakistani intelligence and North-eastern secessionist groups in Nepal has

become a matter of increasing concern to New Delhi. More importantly, these activities effect the internal cohesion and security of Nepal even more.

At the formal, governmental level, Kathmandu has given repeated assurances the past decade to cooperate with India in this matter and take effective internal steps. But the situation leaves much to be desired. India's case needs to be categorical, backed up with facts and details. Nepal's tendency to question Indian anxieties and describe India's claims as unwarranted is also wrong. The two countries need to remember they share a substantive mutuality of interests in this problem.

As far as trade and transit goes, India must be as accommodating as possible to Nepal's requirements and provide additional transit routes and port facilities. In the era of globalization, free flow of goods and the forces of modernization, the old anxieties India has about commerce and trade, are irrelevant at more substantive levels. India needs to help Nepal achieve its full international, economic and trade potential.

The two sides should avoid static negotiating positions on Kalapani — which is what seems to have happened. Some *via media* should be found by which India acknowledges Nepal's *de jure* jurisdiction over the area while Nepal acknowledges India's security concerns by allowing a *de facto* Indian presence in the area, at least until the Sino-Indian boundary dispute is resolved.

Cooperation in using river water resources shared by the two countries can benefit both countries economically. Talks have not taken off because of Nepal's inhibitions and because India has adopted a strictly technical and commercial negotiating stance. Agreements on the Tanakpur hydroelectric project and the Mahakali project still exist only on paper. If these resources are exploited, 85,000 megawatts would be available for Nepal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and northern West Bengal.

A creative and innovative approach must underpin the policies of both countries in this important sphere of cooperation for mutual benefit. Though among the smaller of India's neighbours, good relations with Nepal are of high strategic importance. New Delhi should seek to consolidate this relationship despite the complexities and pressures involved. India should convey assurances to Nepal about India's desire to have a stable partnership on the basis of equality, mutual respect and benefit.

The problem of Nepalese migrants to Bhutan, though a bilateral matter between two other countries, merits assistance from India. The national security advisor, Brajesh Mishra, visited Nepal earlier this summer. Koirala's visit raises the discussions to the highest political level. It is reasonable to anticipate that these problems must have been discussed between the two prime ministers. Hopefully, the discussions were animated by a spirit of reasoning and give and take.

KOIRALA VISIT-I

Connecting The Missing Links

By PARMANAND

THE process or phenomenon of taking each other for granted had become so pronounced in Indo-Nepalese ties that it had become absolutely essential to view the whole thing in a more serious and institutionalised fashion to the advantage of both the South Asian states. The week-long (31 July-6 August) official visit of Nepali Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala to India brought that opportunity to the surface, and both sides utilised that to discuss exhaustively the entire gamut of ties between the core South Asian state and the landlocked Himalayan kingdom.

The India visit of the 76-year-old and the longest-serving prime minister in the post-multiparty democracy era was significant for several reasons. First, the visit took place after a gap of more than four years. The last Nepali Prime Minister to visit India (February 1996) was Sher Bahadur Deuba. Second, Girija Prasad Koirala is the first Nepali Prime Minister in the post-multiparty democracy era to have the privilege of visiting India for the second time as the head of government — his first visit as the kingdom's premier was in December 1991. Third, probably the Koirala visit perforce had to address itself to many more bilateral issues than ever in the past. Obviously, bilateral problems had increased over the years.

COMPLEXITY

Relations between Nepal and India are so close that they are bound to become complicated. The sovereign and independent status of both the states, if anything, is bound to contribute to this complexity. And the only way out to reduce — if not also remove altogether — the complication is to have a continuous dialogue.

It was against this backdrop that Girija Babu — as he is popularly known — came to India, leading a big delegation, and met a large number of Indian leaders, including President KR Narayanan and Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee. The presence of his only daughter, Sujata Koirala, during the visit contributed to making it more social. The presence of 53-year-old Nepali Foreign Minister Chakra Prasad Bastola in the delegation contributed to making the prime ministerial visit more exhaustive.

Before leaving Kathmandu, Girija Babu had asserted that his visit aimed at creating goodwill and building confidence between Nepal and India. More significantly, in an emotional tone, he said in New Delhi, "Being in the last leg of my political career, I want to fill the vacuum and connect the missing links". Koirala said he was also keen that "the younger generation should continue the friendly relationship between the two countries". These emotional expressions are as true as significant. A great deal of anti-Indianism has, of late, grown in Nepal — of course, not entirely because of the *modus operandi* and *modus vivendi* of India. Apparently, competitive India-bashing is becoming a fashion in today's Nepal — particularly in political and intellectual circles.

Having been born in India, where his father Krishna

Prasad Koirala (1888-1945) — known as the "Gandhi of Nepal" — was living in exile, Girija Babu is genuinely concerned over these developments. He had taken sufficient care to do his homework. Before leaving for India, he had long discussions with opposition leaders over the agenda of talks with India. It is altogether a different matter that the delegate from the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) decided against



coming over to India.

A joint statement issued after the talks between GP Koirala and AB Vajpayee said the two leaders reiterated their commitment to strengthening friendly relations. The two premiers were convinced that a regular dialogue at various levels was required to continuously explore the new avenues of cooperation, implement understandings reached in the past and avoid complacency, the statement said.

On 3 August, Nepal expressed its solidarity with India in its efforts to fight terrorism. Conveying his grief and dismay over the massacre of Amarnath pilgrims, Koirala said Nepal and its people condemned such dastardly acts of terrorism. Koirala conveyed his sympathies to Vajpayee through a letter to the latter. Not less importantly, Nepal chose the occasion to assure India that its territory would not be allowed to be used by Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence agency for anti-India activities. In a personal interview, Foreign Minister Bastola said that Nepal has assured India of every possible cooperation in combating cross-border terrorism. He said the two sides have agreed to discuss and decide on the modes and mechanisms of cooperation on this front. In other words, Nepal showed much more concern than in the past over India's security.

TREATY

The 1950 Treaty of Peace Friendship and Nepal's demand to update it was another important issue. The two sides agreed that the foreign secretaries of the two countries would discuss Nepal's genuine concerns under the changed and changing circumstances. By strange coincidence, the official visit of the Nepali Prime Minister commenced exactly 50 years after the treaty was signed in Kathmandu by the then Rana Prime Minister, Mohan Shamsheer — against whom the Nepali Congress launched a movement in November of the same year — and India's then Ambassador to Nepal, CPN Singh.

In a way, the ruling Nepali Congress has to carry the burden created by the UML leaders, the late Prime Minister, Man Mohan Adhikari, and the former Deputy Prime Minister,

Madhav Kumar Nepal, as also the former foreign minister, Kamal Thapa, of the Rashtriya prajatantra Party. Willy-nilly, the 1950 treaty is, by and large, being seen as an anathema amidst the growth of a new kind of ultra Nepali nationalism. On its part, India is trying to become as accommodative as possible.

Not less significantly, the two sides agreed that the first meeting of the revived Indo-Nepal Joint Commission would be convened during the forthcoming visit of External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh to Kathmandu. In fact, the Commission would act as an umbrella body at the foreign ministers level to oversee the entire gamut of bilateral relations and provide directives.

Quite significantly, both the Prime Ministers directed the inter-governmental committee on trade and transit and unauthorised trade, headed by the commerce secretaries of the two governments, be convened soon to address certain issues in a constructive manner. The committee has been asked to take steps to promote trade and economic links.

The two sides agreed to facilitate expansion of the industrial production base in Nepal, through enhanced participation of the private sector. With this objective, it was agreed to conclude a bilateral investment protection and promotion agreement. The joint statement also stated that the two leaders directed that the conclusion of bilateral agreement on trans-border movement of motor vehicles be expedited.

TASK FORCE

The two Prime Ministers also directed that the joint task force on flood control and forecasting be set up to review cooperation and give its recommendations. Responding to the Nepalese concern over inundation in the Banke district of Nepal, the Indian side declared that measures were being taken to ensure that the flood control embankment constructed on the Indian side would not cause inundation in adjoining regions of the Himalayan kingdom. On utilisation of water resources, it was decided to complete the detailed project report on the construction of the 6,000-MW Pancheshwar dam on the mahakali river by 2001.

In the agriculture sector, the objective would be to set up joint ventures, leading to the formation of an Indo-Nepal food processing complex. Task forces would be set up on various issues related to agro-processing.

In separate interviews Prime Minister Koirala and foreign minister Bastola, who had served as Nepal's first Ambassador to India in the post-multiparty democracy phase, said they were overall satisfied with their visit to India. Bastola stressed, "We have been able to communicate and things do not happen overnight. I am confident that cooperation between the two countries would become more effective, fruitful and mutually beneficial in the future."

One hopes a new era of concrete and mutually beneficial cooperation would begin and petty misunderstandings that keep surfacing would pale into insignificance. An agreed visit by Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee to the mountain kingdom, one hopes, would bring the two countries more close in the future.

(To be concluded)

The author is the Honorary Director of the South Asian Studies Foundation, New Delhi.

KOIRALA VISIT-II

A Position Of Confidence

By PARMANAND

A VERY common question raised in Kathmandu before the beginning of Koirala's India visit was: will he be able to go to India as the kingdom's Prime Minister? This was palpably an indication of the growing uncertainty in the ruling Nepali Congress (NC) — which has a clear and comfortable majority with 113 members in a 205-member lower and popular house, the Pratinidhi Sabha — in particular, and Nepali politics, in general. Not less significantly, one tends to remember the resignation of Krishna Prasad Bhattarai as the kingdom's Prime Minister in March amidst his preparations for a state visit to India.

It is rightly said that while in power with a comfortable majority, the Nepali Congress does not need enemies in other parties to topple its government, for it always has a significant number of dissidents. This was, inter alia, visible during the royal coup of December 1960, and much more pronounced in July 1994, when the then Prime Minister, by coincidence, GP Koirala, himself, was forced to resign and seek a fresh mandate. Of course, the Nepali Congress even lost the status of the single largest party in the 15 November 1994 election.

DISSIDENCE

Ever since Girija Babu was elected leader of the NC Parliamentary Party securing 69 votes, as against 43 votes polled by another former Prime Minister, Sher Bahadur Deuba, in the 18 March election, dissidents within the party have not given up their anti-leader activities. More often than not they would stress that the Nepali Congress must govern for five years — even if it has to change its leader.

A series of meetings of the NC Central Working Committee held in June provided the dissidents, led by KP Bhattarai and SB Deuba, an opportunity to take the Koirala government to task on various counts. On his part, Girija Babu listened to various suggestions and grievances of the CWC members and promised to rectify them to the possible extent. It could be said to augur well for the party.

Former Prime Minister KP Bhattarai — ever since his resignation — has been indulging in another political exercise: meeting the NC MPs from various regions of the mountain kingdom, and also at times meeting leaders of other parliamentary parties at his residence. Indeed, Girija Babu has also attended some such meetings. Some view it as a positive development in the NC. Many, though, consider it as an exercise in keeping the Prime Minister and his government on tenterhooks. Significantly, amidst these adversities, Girija Babu has exhibited his accommodative attitude, endearing himself to the NC's rank and file.

The 10th convention of the *Mahasamiti* (general council) of the NC is slated to be held at Pokhara in November. The dissidents want to utilise that occasion to elect a new president of the NC, replacing Girija Babu. As such, the convention is likely to be crucial. Several committees have been formed by the NC CWC to make preparations for the convention. Even Girija Babu's adversaries concede that he is one politician who is never scared of elections: be it organisational or national.

The Communist Party of Nepal (Unified marxist-Lenin-

ist), the main parliamentary opposition party — with 68 members in the lower house and 17 in the upper house — often gives a good account of itself and behaves as a responsible opposition party. But its recent activities — particularly after a special election court unseated its member Rajendra Prakash Lohani and declared Rashtriya Prajatantra Party's Prakash Chandra Lohani elected from Nuwakot-I constituency in June — leave much to be

take action against these people.

Despite statements made by the Prime Minister and other government leaders from time to time, the People's War, launched by the Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) in February 1996, is far from over. Indeed, the proposed talks between the Deuba Committee — formed by the NC government of KP Bhattarai — headed by former Prime Minister SB Deuba and the Maoists' representatives remain a matter of speculation in the

Press. To make matters worse, comments by the ruling side leaders and dissidents in the Press on the proposed talks generate more cynicism in the public mind than optimism.

Delivering a statement of public importance in the Pratinidhi Sabha on 20 June, Home Minister Govind Raj Joshi disclosed that a total of 1,366 persons, including 223 innocent citizens, 194 police personnel, and 946 Maoists had been killed and property worth over Rs 180 million had been looted so far in the course of the Maoist "people's war" since 13 February 1996. Joshi added: "So far, some 217 persons have been abducted by terrorists. Of them, 21 have been killed, 113 have been released and 83 are still being held."

GESTURES

The Home Minister asserted: "As the first and foremost duty of the government is to guarantee security, extra security arrangements are under consideration." Joshi also said: "The government has released 123 Maoist workers after the issue of talks came up in order to build an atmosphere for talks."

Without doubt, the government's gestures are praiseworthy. What is essential, though, is the beginning of talks with the Maoists and the end of the intra-party squabbles of the NC over the issue. The Maoists seem to have some seriousness — but much more is expected from them.

Amidst all these problems, the kingdom's economy appeared to be improving. In a press release issued on 23 June, the Nepal Rashtra bank (equivalent to the Reserve Bank of India), inter alia, said that during the first 10 months of the current fiscal year (1999-2000) both exports and imports registered a growth of 42.4 per cent to Rs 41,742 million and 25 per cent to Rs 87,857.7 million respectively.

The export-import ratio, which was 41.7 per cent last year increased to 47.5 per cent this year. The overall balance of payment recorded a surplus of Rs 13,469 million. As a result, foreign exchange holdings of the banking system increased by 21.4 per cent to Rs 9,175.6 million as of mid-May 2000 — 84.9 per cent accounting for convertible currency and 15.1 per cent for non-convertible currency.

It was against this backdrop that the employees of His Majesty's government recently got a substantial hike to their salary and allowances. This has endeared Girija Babu to employees. Unsurprisingly, then, the Nepali Congress, under Girija Babu's leadership, seems keen to hold local elections for Village Development Committees, Municipalities and District Development Committees etc. During the 1997 local elections, the UML had performed better than the NC. The situation may be reversed now.

(Concluded)



desired. The party leaders and workers not only indulged in violent activities and used undesirable language against the judge, but also went to the extent of threatening the Supreme Court. The UML also stalled the parliamentary proceedings for several days, protesting against the court verdict.

Amidst this confusion and uncertainty, certain elements opposed to the multiparty democracy in the kingdom did something that stunned the kingdom. At a programme organised by an organisation called the Rashtrabadi Yuva Dal (Patriotic Youth Forum) in July in the capital, a popular Nepali film actor, Mohan Niraula, said that if he received orders, he would kill the Prime Minister. Former Prince Dharendra Shah — King Birendra's youngest brother who abdicated the Prince's title — was the chief guest at the felicitation-cum-talk programme organised by the Patriotic Youth Forum. In an interview, Dharendra said about his future role: "I will act according to circumstances. Should there be need, I will be active for the sake of the people and the nation."

THREAT

King Birendra was away in London during this period in connection with his medical check-up and treatment. For days together parliamentary leaders of all hues blasted comments made during the talk programme. Pradip Gyawali of the main opposition UML said in the Pratinidhi Sabha on 10 July: "We cannot accept the threatening remarks expressed at the programme that was chaired by Dharendra Shah against both multiparty democracy and leaders of the nation." Another UML leader, Subhash Membang, demanded that the government take prompt action against these "anti-democratic elements". He stressed that "the threat to the Prime Minister and the leaders is in violation of the laws and the Constitution and a severe blow to the popular movement of 1990".

More importantly, former Prime Minister and RPP chairman, Surya Bahadur Thapa, who comes from the Panchayat background, said: "The government needs to seriously check these forces and take strong action against these people." Needless to stress, members of the ruling NC were even more vocal on the issue, demanding that their own government

Home Secy to talk security in Nepal

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, July 3

UNION HOME Secretary Kamal Pande will pay a four-day visit to Nepal to confabulate with his Nepalese counterpart on security-related matters. He will leave for Kathmandu tomorrow.

The last Home secretaries' level meeting between the two countries was held here in June, 1998.

According to a Home Ministry spokesman, apart from meeting his counterpart P. P. Pokharel, Mr Pande will also call on the Nepalese Home Minister and other senior Government officials.

They are slated to broach the issues affecting the

internal security of the two countries.

The main focus of Mr Pande's discussions would be on exchanging information about the activities of various militant outfits, particularly the problem of the militant's infiltration in India through Nepal border.

Besides, there are also issues pertaining to smuggling of arms, ammunition, narcotics and fake currency.

Mr Pande's visit also assumes significance as it is taking place after the recent resumption of Indian Airlines flights to Kathmandu.

The flights were suspended after the hijacking of its IC-814 flight by Pakistan-backed militants to Kandahar in Afghanistan.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

HD-14
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India, Nepal begin talks on security

NEW DELHI, JULY 5. India and Nepal today began discussions on security-related matters including ways to strengthen surveillance along the 1600-km long "porous and highly sensitive" Indo-Nepali border, Home Ministry sources said here today.

The three-day talks, being held in the Nepali capital Kathmandu, assume significance in the wake of reports of anti-India activities from Nepali soil and after the last year's hijack of Indian Airlines airbus IC-814 from Kathmandu airport. These are the first Home

Secretary-level talks between the two countries after two years. Previous talks were held in June 1998 in New Delhi.

The Indian delegation at the talks is led by the Home Secretary, Mr. Kamal Pandey, while the Nepali Home Secretary, Mr. P. P. Pokharel, heads his country's team. The sources said that apart from reviewing the progress of the decisions taken at the previous meeting, discussions will also be held on practical measures for checking infiltration, smuggling of arms etc.—UNI

THE HINDU

- 6 JUL 2000

India, Nepal sign pact on terrorism

KATHMANDU, JULY 6. India and Nepal today signed an agreement to set up a specialist joint unit to counter terrorism and share information about criminals operating along their border. ^{HO-11}

The Indo-Nepal coordination committee will be headed by a Chief District Officer in Nepal and Magistrates from Indian States of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, the Nepal's Home Secretary, Mr. Padam Prasad Pokharel, told AFP. ³¹⁷

Mr. Pokharel and his Indian counterpart, Mr. Kamal Pandey, also agreed to introduce official papers or identity cards for air travellers aged over 10 between the two countries. — AFP

THE HINDU

7 JUL 2000

Passport to be must for Nepal travel

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, July 7: Passports will be the only valid document for air passengers travelling between India and Nepal.

An agreement to this effect was signed between Kathmandu and New Delhi during Union home secretary Kamal Pande's three-day visit to that country.

For the first time, it was put in writing that the two countries shared the objective of combating

terrorism and cross-border crime and preventing their respective territories from being used for "activities directed against, or prejudicial to, the other side".

Obviously, this step is directed against Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence which, since the 1993 Mumbai serial blasts, has made Nepal a base for its anti-India operations.

Briefing reporters here, a home ministry spokesman said the two countries agreed that they would "eventually" move towards

the passport system for identification purposes.

It will most likely be applicable by the year end and will be a major departure from the existing practice of mere production of any identification on demand.

However, air passengers will not have to apply for visa. A pruned down list of admissible travel documents will be introduced with effect from October 1 to "tighten" the existing system of identification.

The two sides also decided to increase co-operation between law enforcement agencies with more regular meetings and sharing of information to curb criminal activities.

Kathmandu and Delhi will take measures to quickly dispose of requests for assistance in investigation of criminal cases, improve the legal framework and take action against those found violating the open border.

Pande and his Nepalese counterpart, P.P. Pokharel, agreed to

improve the management of the 1041-km border with the objective of preventing trans-border activities of terrorists, criminals and other "undesirable elements".

A joint working group comprising Nepalese and Indian officials will soon be formed.

It is learnt that Pokharel agreed to take all steps to prevent fundamentalists from using the hundreds of mosques and madrasahs that have come up on the Nepalese side of the border.

Bhutan paves way for joint anti-terror drive

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, July 8. — The adoption of a resolution in Bhutan's National Assembly, authorising the government to conduct military operations against ULFA and Bodo militants, may eventually lead to joint anti-militancy operations with India.

The Indian government made no comments on the prospect of joint operations — a politically sensitive issue — but it formally welcomed the resolution.

An external affairs spokesman said India appreciated the resolution. Both governments, he said, continued to cooperate with and consult each other in dealing with the problem.

The resolution goes one step ahead of an earlier resolution asking the government to act to evict militants. Following the earlier resolution, the Bhutanese government had held talks with ULFA men, asking them to leave its territory. This request was refused.

The government had also

asked the people not to help the militants. The issue of military operations was, however, not sanctioned by the Bhutanese Assembly until now and the government had not taken any action against the militants.

Steps to implement the Assembly's green signal on military action will also raise the issue of the ability of Bhutan's limited military strength to conduct successful operations. India has been arguing the need for joint operations, a move that has been resisted by Bhutan which is wary about letting India conduct military operations on its territory.

The issue was discussed by the two governments during the visit of the Bhutanese foreign minister, Mr Lyonpo Jigmi Y Thinley, in April.

Mr Thinley had stated that the right measures would be taken at the right time. He had said Bhutan was not resistant to steps advocated by India but that these should be undertaken in the right manner.

THE STATESMAN

Security net for Nepal flights

FROM OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, July 11: Nearly seven months after the hijacking of the Indian Airlines Airbus, the national carriers of India and Nepal have decided to introduce within two months the "advance passenger information system" on all routes between the two countries so that air travellers can be screened properly.

This is part of a comprehensive restructuring of security arrangement and the implementation of the understanding, reached between Union home secretary Kamal Pande and his Nepalese counterpart P.P. Pokharel during the former's visit to Kathmandu last week. The security arrangement would be coordinated and supervised by the immigration authorities of the two countries after consultation with the civil aviation authorities.

Pande is learnt to have been satisfied with the measures taken by the Nepalese government to tighten security at Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International airport from where the five Pakistani hijackers boarded the aircraft. Kathmandu has begun cracking down

on persons travelling with forged passports and other illegally procured travel documents. Delhi will provide all necessary equipment to detect forged documents.

Faced with severe criticism of the security arrangement and instances of lapses, the Nepalese government has begun work on computerisation of immigration facilities and networking of "control and monitoring" systems at Tribhuvan airport. Pokharel assured Pande that the computerisation would be completed within six months. In this context, both sides agreed to take up in a phased manner the networking of immigration control at check-posts along the 1,041 km-long Indo-Nepal border.

Over half-a-year after the hijacking, which established that Nepal had become a "launching pad" for anti-India activities of the ISI, Kathmandu agreed to part with all original documents relating to the investigation being carried out by Nepalese law enforcement agencies. Home ministry officials felt that the Nepalese "have begun to realise how their territory was being used by the ISI and terrorists to undertake operations in India".

THE TELEGRAPH

12 JUL 2000

Bhutan tops ULFA militants list of hot spots

Utpal Parashar

Sandrup Jongkhar (Bhutan), July 11

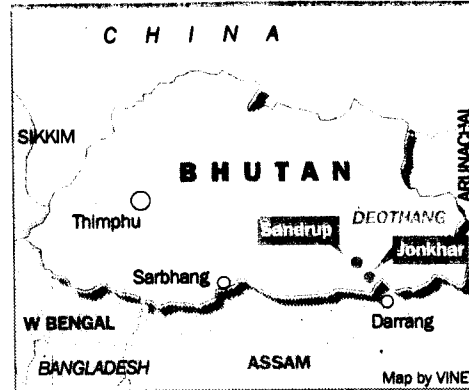
SANDRUP JONGKHAR, a remote town in SouthEast Bhutan bordering India, is a popular destination, not for tourists but for the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) militants.

Located near the Indo-Bhutan border, this small town with a population of over 11,000 is a favoured spot of the ULFA militants living in camps spread across the border. The town has over 25 small and big hotels and restaurants, which cater to the militants and also serve as points where strategic discussions are held.

But apart from the militants and some occasional tourists, hotel owners do not have much business. "Earlier we used to have a large number of tourists, but after the mili-

tants started operating from Bhutan, business has been very disappointing," said a hotel owner. Local residents seem resigned to the presence of militants in their soil and hope they will leave soon.

Earlier the entry and exit points into this town from Assam was very easy but following an increase in the activities of the ULFA and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) militants, restrictions have been imposed.



"After the recovery of arms and ammunitions from militants and other Indian nationals the entry and exit points are strictly monitored and visitors without proper verification are not allowed in. Restrictions have been imposed after 9 p.m.," said a Bhutan government official on condition of anonymity.

The ULFA general headquarters, barely 18 km from Sandrup Jongkhar, is situated in the forests of the Deothang area. Six others

camps, all belonging to the banned outfit are also located in the region. According to Government officials, about 4,000 militants belonging to ULFA and NDFB are presently based in Bhutan.

In recent months, the Bhutanese Government has been under tremendous pressure from the Indian Government following allegations of aiding and abetting militants. Recently, two junior diplomatic officials were prosecuted for transferring money to foreign countries on behalf of the ULFA.

Though, the Bhutan Government has officially declared to root out militant camps from their territory, nothing much has been done so far. Royal Bhutan Army officials stated on condition of anonymity that the gun power possessed by them is of no match to the sophisticated arms the militants have.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES
12 JUL 2001

New Indo-Nepal treaty on anvil

Anil Anand
New Delhi, July 12

A NEW Indo-Nepal extradition treaty is on the anvil. The earlier, less fool-proof treaty is being replaced by the two South Asian neighbours with the sole objective of facilitating hiccup-free transfer - by Nepal to India -- of criminals involved in acts of terrorism.

In recent years, Nepal has been used by the ISI in a big way for carrying out acts of sabotage in India. Officials here said the new pact will streamline the extradition procedure by removing loop-holes that prevented the transfer of 'wanted' persons, particularly those belonging to a third country.

The modalities for updating the existing extradition arrangement were discussed during Home Secretary Kamal Pande's recent visit to Kathmandu. A draft treaty will be shortly authored jointly by experts from the two sides for consideration and final acceptance by New Delhi and Kathmandu.

According to Home Ministry

sources, the need for fine-tuning the arrangement was felt when the Nepalese Government expressed its inability to extradite their 'own' nationals and those belonging to other countries.

Certain complexities in the old system also hindered visits to Nepal of Indian police teams probing cases requiring extradition of the accused in addition to on-the-spot investigations.

Extradition

In another significant breakthrough which could prove to be of immense help to investigators probing the Kandahar hijacking incident, the Nepalese Government has agreed to part with original documents containing pre-flight details of IC-814 at Kathmandu's Tribhuvan Airport.

The aircraft was hijacked to Afghanistan (Kandahar) by Pakistan-backed militants last year. To prevent recurrence of such incidents, the two countries have

also agreed to put in place a better procedure for passenger-identification.

Accordingly, an Advance Passenger Information System will be introduced by the airlines of the two countries in the next couple of months, to ward off possibility of the kind of security-breach that led to the hijack of IC-814.

Inordinate delays in investigation of important criminal cases have lent a touch of urgency to enhance Indo-Nepalese cooperation in tracking down international syndicates behind such offences.

A team of the Interpol's India unit will visit Nepal this month end to speed up the pending probes.

India's willingness to help Nepal in setting up a police academy is very much linked to its overall objective of strengthening bilateral cooperation on security-related issues.

Likewise, an appreciable increase is likely in the number of Nepalese officials undergoing training at the Indian police establishments.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

TOWARDS A PASSPORT REGIME

ONE OF THE positive effects of the hijacking of an Indian Airlines flight from Nepal last year has been a comprehensive review of the security at the Kathmandu airport and a detailed discussion on bilateral security cooperation. Last week's visit by the Union Home Secretary, Mr. Kamal Pande, and the agreements with his Nepalese counterpart, mark another milestone in bilateral relations. Instead of taking things for granted, or blaming each other after an unforeseen incident like the hijack takes place, it is much better to agree on a framework of security guidelines that can prevent its occurrence. Viewed from that perspective, the agreement to curb terrorism, and the other to evolve a set of travel documents for visitors, should make it easier for the enforcement agencies on both sides. Without making it cumbersome by insisting on visas before the travel, the two Home Secretaries have suggested various personal documents for immediate identification of the passengers. These include the passport or an identity card. In all probability, India and Nepal may move towards a passport regime, without the visa formalities. After the hijack of IC 814, that seems to be the best solution.

Considering the nature and extent of travel by both Indian and Nepalese citizens across the more than 1000-km border, it will be a damper to introduce too many formalities. Air is not the only means of travel between the two countries. There are more land crossings and so much of border trade takes place between the neighbours — unfortunately, most of it seems to be clandestine. To enhance security and come down on illegal trade, it is essential to start insisting on some form of identification. When non-Nepalese, especially militants, start misusing the porous border, it creates more problems for India. That is why New Delhi has been asking for travel documents or personal identification. Ultimate-

ly, it would be useful to move on to what are called 'restricted passports' that can be used only between two neighbouring countries. No visa formalities are called for, but travellers must carry this passport for easy identification. If computerised, the authorities can blacklist any individual or known criminals, offenders and militants. Issuing a passport means a cost, but that becomes inevitable in the present security environment in South Asia. No country wants to take chances, that too along a land border.

HO-12 19/7
The agreement to strengthen cooperation in fighting terrorism needs to be taken seriously by both sides. The National Security Adviser, Mr. Brajesh Mishra, recently visited Nepal to impress on the Government the need to tackle the terrorist menace in the region. Even if Kathmandu does not want to let its territory be used for anti-India activities, it could not prevent a large mass of organised agents from setting up a base there. Thanks to the aircraft hijack, the two sides have been able to comprehend the extent of the problem and take urgent steps to deal with it. Apart from enhancing exchange of information on known offenders or militants, the two Home Secretaries have agreed to further institutionalise cooperation on this front. The border district authorities on both sides will now be involved in a regular exchange of information and the Governments will speed up any further assistance that may be sought. Since speed has to be the essence of any fight against terrorism, India and Nepal must work out an arrangement to swoop down on dreaded terrorists, when they have information of their presence in Nepal. Given the nature of crimes in Nepal, the Indian authorities must also extend all possible cooperation in nabbing such elements operating in India. In all these operations, the issue of corruption at the field level must be addressed.

THE HINDU

14 JUL 2000

Indian Army trains Bhutan forces to fight Ulfa, NDFB

DIPANKAR ROY

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

GUWAHATI, July 16. — The Royal Bhutan Army is strong enough to deal with Ulfa and National Democratic Front of Bodoland rebels since 2,000 of its personnel, specially trained by the Indian army, joined their ranks recently.

According to a home ministry official who spoke to The Statesman from Delhi, the RBA personnel were in India to be trained in counter-insurgency operations. They were also appropriately armed. Another batch of RBA personnel is undergoing training now. The official said the RBA would now be capable of tackling militancy.

However, the Bhutanese army may

still need Indian help in terms of intelligence and logistics when it's time for a military crackdown on the rebels. The official said according to intelligence reports, some 1,200 militants were sheltering in the jungles of southern Bhutan — about 400 of them armed.

The National Assembly of Bhutan has already approved military action if negotiations fail to make the Assam militants leave the Himalayan country. Bhutan had set 15 June as deadline for the Ulfa and NDFB leadership to hold their third round of talks with the government.

The leaders, however, did not turn up, citing security risks.

During the second round of talks with the Bhutan home minister in May 1999 Ulfa had said their men would not be

able to leave the country for at least another one and a half year. Both sides agreed to continue the dialogue.

The official felt army operations were now inevitable since the Ulfa and NDFB militants were unlikely to leave the country on their own. The operations, however, might not begin at once because of the rains. The RBA has already deployed 4,000 officers and men from Kalikhola to Daitam.

Some senior police officers in Assam, however, feel Bhutan will not launch an army operation to evict the militants. The National Assembly resolution, according to them, is more for continuity. Bhutan was caught on the wrong foot when documents leaked to a section of the Assam press by officials

revealed that some officials in the Bhutanese foreign ministry had helped the Ulfa by transferring money in diplomatic bags.

The police officials argued if Bhutan was serious about military action then the least they would have done was to set a final deadline for the militants to pack up. Instead, the Assembly has kept the door open for negotiations, though the Ulfa and NDFB have shown no signs that they are interested in a peaceful settlement. But the police also think that the Bhutan Assembly decision may send some militants looking for shelter within India, and that is the time when the security forces can grab them. But action or no action, the officials agree that the Assembly resolution was a step in the right direction.

THE STATESMAN

Hurdles ahead in Indo-Nepal ties

By C. Raja Mohan

NEW DELHI, JULY 30. As the Prime Minister of Nepal, Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala, arrives here tomorrow to revive engagement at the highest level, India is ready to signal its political commitment for a solid cooperative relationship with a very important neighbour.

The hijacking of an Indian Airlines aircraft last Christmas from Kathmandu to Kandahar had shaken Indo-Nepal relations to the core. Since then there has been an intensive interaction at the level of senior officials and a measure of normality has been restored.

India and Nepal recognise the enormous stake they have in maintaining a steady relationship and the importance of travelling together towards a more prosperous future. But there are many bumps on the road.

Unless Nepal demonstrates greater pragmatism and India displays considerable patience in nurturing their complex interdependence, New Delhi and Kathmandu could easily drift apart again.

Mr. Koirala is already under pressure from his political opponents at home to adopt a muscular line on a number of issues that he will be bringing up for discussion with his counterpart, Mr. A. B. Vajpayee.

These include a review of the 1950 treaty establishing a unique relationship between India and Nepal, the management of water resources and a scientific delineation of the border between the two countries.

Seasoned observers of Indo-Nepal relations here say, the post-hijack negotiations on restoring IA flights with additional security reflect the huge structural problems that bedevil the very close and intense ties between India and Nepal.

The rise of prickly nationalism in Nepal and the tendency to politicise even normal state-to-state relations have begun to exact a heavy toll on bilateral relations.

Competitive India-bashing within the Nepali domestic politics has poisoned the atmosphere for any attempt to discuss and resolve outstanding disputes.

Kathmandu will have to find a way of addressing this fundamental constraint on deepening bilateral relations. India, on the other hand, would be well advised to persist with a sensitive approach towards Nepal.

There is enormous goodwill for Nepal within the Indian political class, and Kathmandu will be unwise to squander it and push New Delhi beyond all reasonable limits.

While New Delhi is by no means looking for

reciprocity in its ties with Kathmandu, it will find it difficult to perpetually acquiesce in a one-sided relationship.

India might want to convey a non-defensive approach on the question of the review of the 1950 treaty between the two countries. New Delhi must be realistic enough to acknowledge that it cannot impose any arrangement even on its closest friends.

Nepal is, indeed, free to choose either an abrogation or a modification of the treaty. Kathmandu, however, needs to think through the consequences. Would it want to end the special privileges it avails in India through the treaty?

Meanwhile, many of the defence benefits granted to India in Nepal under the treaty have long been whittled down. Further, while New Delhi continues to offer "national treatment" to Nepali citizens in India, there has been reluctance in Kathmandu to provide the same to Indian citizens there.

Any attempt by Nepal, according to observers here, to dilute the treaty terms on its own obligations while insisting on retaining the benefits under the treaty could turn out to be a huge setback to the current efforts to rebuild and expand the relationship.

NEW DELHI

31 JUL 2000

Flights to Nepal resume

kingdom. Earlier, IA flight to the Himalayan tourist destination took off from here at 1115 hours with 161 passengers on board.

IA formally announced resumption of its daily flights from Delhi and five flights a week from Calcutta from June one after India and Nepal entered into an agreement during the visit of Nepalese Foreign Minister Chakra Prasad Bastola to Delhi last month.

The service was resumed after

at Tribhuvan airport.

Under the agreement that followed prolonged negotiations between the two countries, the Nepalese authorities have accepted the demand of IA for installation of an additional X-ray machine as well as a final check by Indian security personnel at Kathmandu airport.

This would be in addition to the security drill for passengers carried out by Nepalese authorities, the officials said.

Flights to Nepal resume after five months

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, JUNE 1

AN Indian Airlines plane, on resumption of flights to and from Kathmandu after a five-month suspension following hijacking of a plane to Kandahar, landed at the Indira Gandhi International Airport this evening.

The return flight IC-814 carrying 131 passengers on board touched the IGI airport at 1640 hours, an airlines spokesperson said here.

Chairman and Managing Director of the Indian Airlines Sunil Arora, who was on the flight, appreciated the security measures taken by the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN) at the Tribhuvan International airport.

"I am extremely happy on the resumption of Indian Airlines flights to and from Nepal," he said.

Arora also expressed hope that flights from Varanasi would be resumed shortly and said "our flights from New Delhi and Calcutta are being resumed with immediate effect."

The CMD also expressed desire of working closely with the government of Nepal and the private sector to further promote tourism in the Himalayan

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

INDIAN EXPRESS

2 JUN 2000

IC-814 soars again

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, June 1. — Indian Airlines resumed flights to Nepal today, with the Airbus 300 that was hijacked last year flying out 161 passengers from Delhi to Kathmandu.

Calcutta-Kathmandu flights will resume tomorrow. Flights between Varanasi and Kathmandu will start after consulting tour operators, most of whose clients are foreign tourists.

The repaired Airbus left IGI International Airport at 11.15 a.m. The return flight, IC-814, brought 131 passengers back to Delhi at 4.45 p.m.

Nepal has agreed to instal more X-ray baggage screening machines at Kathmandu airport, and to permit IA personnel to carry out a final check at the aircraft's ladder.

But IA and the aviation ministry were mum on the presence of sky marshals on the flight. "Even if they were on the flight, they would be travelling incognito," an IA official said.

- Another report on page 4
- Photograph on page 8

THE STATESMAN

JUN 1 1991

Brajesh arrives in Nepal

nb
KATHMANDU, JUNE 6. The Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister and National Security Adviser, Mr. Brajesh Mishra, met the Nepalese Foreign Minister, Mr. Chakra Prasad Bastola, here today, the Foreign Ministry officials said.

9. Nepal K9-B
During the meeting, Mr. Bastola sought India's cooperation to woo Bhutan in getting 100,000 Bhutanese refugees living in eight UNHCR-run camps in Nepal repatriated to the tiny Himalayan kingdom, a Foreign Ministry source said.— AFP

THE HINDU

- 7 JUN 2000

Flight into Nepal

The resumption of Indian Airlines flights to Nepal five months after they were suspended is a welcome opening to a new chapter in relations between the two countries. Although the process of flight restoration was protracted, the exercise underscores that given goodwill even the prickliest of issues can be negotiated to rewarding mutual advantage. The government of India has shown that changes in the complexion of political authority in New Delhi do not necessarily mean abandonment of policy directions, such as the Gujral doctrine in this case. This heartening aspect of "cooperative bilateralism" in South Asia, first stressed by Atal Behari Vajpayee when he was foreign minister in the late '70s, should not only be strengthened but deepened on many fronts. The atmospherics for doing this are just right at the moment and the prime minister's principal secretary, Brajesh Mishra, should take the lead in opening up new tracks of cooperation when he visits Kathmandu this week. As co-chairman of the high-level task force on India-Nepal development, Mr Mishra should widen the areas of partnership in civil aviation and tourism, clear obstacles that dog trade and transit ties, and chalk out time-bound plans for speeding up work on other large and medium projects particularly for utilising water resources.

The resumption of flights should be followed by other steps such as allowing private airlines to operate from India to Nepal. The civil aviation agreement between the two countries provides for a doubling of airline capacity, but neither Indian Airlines nor Royal Nepal Airlines has been able to use the provisions for want of aircraft. Tourism is a priority sector for Nepal and suspension of flights had hit the economy severely. New Delhi should go for greater cooperation in this area to capitalise on the region's potential in the global tourism sweepstakes. While there have been sporadic and half-hearted attempts in the past, what is required is a serious effort to jointly promote and help each other through a well-conceived marketing strategy. Apart from tourism, there ought to be greater urgency in harnessing water resources for generating power. Work on the Mahakali, Karnali and Kosi high dam projects is not progressing at the pace it should. The detailed project for Mahakali is yet to be worked out while funds have to be found for Karnali. In the case of Kosi even the project report is yet to be completed. The task force is mandated to decide on development cooperation and Mishra's mission should be to look at all possible projects underway as well as those in the pipeline. Equally important is to remove obstacles in the enforcement of the Trade and Transit Treaty renewed in January 1999. There are a number of other outstanding issues, such as the four per cent additional duty on imports from Nepal and the inability of students from that country to avail of educational opportunities in India because of the dollarised fees levied on foreign students, which should be dealt with at the earliest. As the superpower in the region and given the perceptions of 'big brother' that haunt smaller neighbours, New Delhi should go the extra mile to help Nepal respond to Mr Vajpayee's call to the SAARC countries to "grow rich together".

THE TIMES OF INDIA

7 JUN 2000

Indo-Nepal security ties to be strengthened

By Atul Aneja

NEW DELHI, JUNE 25. Nepal is likely to take concrete steps to marginalise the influence of Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) in high places in Kathmandu and deepen its security ties with New Delhi. According to highly placed sources in the Government, a report in an Indian weekly magazine linking several leading Nepali personalities with the ISI has resulted a churning within a large section of the Nepali establishment. The report, according to sources, is based on a lengthy confidential Intelligence document, a part of which had been published in the weekly.

Sources pointed out that the mention of the names in the list does not mean that all of these personalities were active collaborators of the ISI. Several of them have been connected with smuggling. But their names have now been dragged in because of the enlarging influence of Pakistani Intelligence in cross-border smuggling in Nepal.

Pakistani Intelligence, the sources pointed out, got actively involved in the last decade after the demolition of the Babri Masjid. The demolition of the mosque, it is said, drew a unbridgeable sectarian wedge within the India-based smuggling mafia. One section allegedly led by Dawood Ibrahim after the event got increasingly close to Pakistani Intelligence and this was ultimately manifested in the Bombay blasts. ISI consolidation in Nepal began thereafter as the smugglers in league with the organisation continued to exploit the Himalayan kingdom as their safe haven for operations. Not surprisingly, a section of the Nepali traders and elements of the political class, who had earlier links with these smugglers now got indirectly networked with the ISI. India's problems with Nepal became serious once smuggling,

which by now had acquired a larger political dimension began to directly affect national security. The benchmark was the irrefutable proof in 1998 that Nepalese territory, including its airport was being used for smuggling RDX into India. A former Inspector General of police in Nepal had accused a Pakistani diplomat of being involved in handing over 30 kg. of RDX to a Sikh militant then.

The export of terrorism into India became graphically illustrated with the hijacking of the Indian Airlines flight IC-814 from Kathmandu into Kandahar.

Aware of the seriousness which India attached to reducing the ISI influence in Nepal which was responsible in catalysing cross-border terrorist activity, key representatives of the Nepal political establishment, have met recently. Sources pointed out that it is now likely that active steps are taken across the board by leading personalities in Nepal to extricate themselves from the ISI.

The leaked document also appears to have had a positive impact on the Nepalese royalty, a key player in local Nepali politics. The royalists, the sources said are concerned about references in the report by the ISI's conscious attempt to demographically alter Nepal's essentially Hindu character. This awareness itself appears to draw the royalists closer to New Delhi. Nepal, in the meanwhile has taken the report in its stride. The Nepalese Foreign Minister, Mr. Chakra Prasad Bastola, was in the capital recently while transiting to Warsaw for the ministerial meeting of the community of democracies.

Correction: In the news report under the caption "Bacher aware only after April 7" the UCBSA Chairman did not testify before the King Commission on Friday as stated in the report published in these columns on June 24.

THE HINDU

THE HINDU

26 JUN 2000

IA flights to Nepal soon

By Osh Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MAY 8. Indian Airlines is likely to resume its flights to Nepal in two weeks. An announcement is expected during the current visit of the Nepalese Foreign Minister, Mr C.P. Bastola.

The airline operates 19 flights to Kathmandu — daily flights each from Delhi and Calcutta and five flights from Varanasi — on Airbus 300/320 aircraft.

Flights between Indian and Nepal were suspended following the hijacking of the Indian Airlines flight IC 814 in December last. India had sought foolproof security arrangements at the Tribhuvan international airport in Kathmandu. Recently, the Nepalese Civil Aviation authorities issued new

security guidelines at the Tribhuvan airport for all airlines. This also includes a secondary X-ray machine surveillance with the cooperation of airline security agencies.

Much of the groundwork for resumption of flights had been done during the visit of a high-level Indian delegation led by Mr Sunil Arora, Joint Secretary, in charge of security in the Civil Aviation Ministry.

The three-day visit of the delegation which included officials from Indian Airlines, the Bureau of Aviation Security and the Ministry of External Affairs, had almost clinched the issue.

Only the Nepalese side was wary of the ladder-point checks by the Indian security as against

their sovereignty. It seems now the issue has been amicably resolved.

Indian Airlines had given its security requirements to the Nepalese Civil Aviation authorities last month. A delegation had visited India also in the interim period and the glitches were finally removed to enable an announcement about resumption of flights during the visit of Mr Bastola.

IA officials heaved a sigh of relief at the prospect of resuming flights to Nepal as it is one of their profit making routes. The Nepalese side is also relieved as the lack of passengers/tourists from India had brought about a dip of about 25 per cent in tourist arrivals to Nepal.

Talks on power project: Page 13

10 MAY 17

India, Nepal discuss power projects

By Our Special Correspondent

New DELHI, MAY 8 The visiting Nepalese Foreign Minister, Dr. C.P. Bastola, and the Union Water Resources Minister, Mr. C.P. Thakur, on Monday discussed the possibility of involving the private sector, besides the Government, in the development of power and trade between the two countries.

Mr. Bastola suggested working out modalities of development of hydro-power projects and the terms of power trade. It was felt that smaller projects could be immediately executed by Indian experts and the possibility of investment could also be explored. Both sides felt the need for generation of hydro-electricity at cheaper rates.

The two sides agreed on a two-year time-frame for the Joint Project Office on the Pancheshwar Multipurpose Project on the Ma-

hakali river for completion of detailed reports.

The Indian Government would undertake a comprehensive overview of various issues relating to implementation of the Mahakali treaty. Both sides recognised the need for resolving various issues on development of various water resource projects including the Sapta Kosi High dam, extension of embankments on the rivers Lalbakeya, Kamla, Bagmati and Khando in Nepal and establishment of remaining flood forecasting and warning stations on rivers common to both countries.

On the Nepal Minister's request for expeditious construction of embankments, Mr. Thakur hinted that the Centre might take over the task if State Government was slow in implementation. An Indian delegation led by Mr Thakur would visit Nepal in June to hold the next round of discussions.

29 MAY 2000

India, Nepal set to chart new course

By Our Special Correspondent
NEW DELHI, MAY 9. After agreeing to revive air links, India and Nepal are all set for a new round of engagement to develop infrastructure, promote trade and improve border management.

The visiting Nepalese Foreign Minister, Mr. Chakra Prasad Bastola, during talks with the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, decided to chart a new road-map for developing infrastructure in Nepal with Indian help. The proposal follows the completion of the first cycle of India-aided construction of 22 bridges along the key East-West highway. Both sides decided that a high-level task force headed by the Indian Principal Secretary and Nepal's Cabinet Secretary would be formed to chart out a new course.

Not surprisingly, the visiting Minister invited Mr. Singh for the inauguration of the 22 bridges. India, on its part, reiterated its invitation to the Nepalese Prime Minister, Mr. G. P. Koirala, and discussed tentative dates for

the trip. New Delhi and Kathmandu also decided to revive the official-level links between their Foreign and Home Secretaries. Besides, the two leaders discussed the possible agenda of the India-Nepal joint commission, which is scheduled to meet here later this year.

Mr. Bastola also called on the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee.

Earlier, the Nepalese Ambassador, Mr. B. B. Thapa, said on the sidelines of a meeting to honour the visiting Minister that flights between the two countries were likely to resume within the next 15 days.

Aware of the problems faced by land-locked Nepal in transiting its goods, India agreed to extend by a year the Phulbari route, which links Nepal to Bangladeshi ports. Under the Indo-Nepal treaty on transit, Nepal has access to the Calcutta port along 15 earmarked routes. There are 22 entry-exit points along the Indo-Nepal border for trade. Nevertheless, there has been a constant demand from Nepal for access to Bangladeshi ports to offset the congestion in Calcutta.

Steps to enhance hydel-power generation in Nepal were discussed. Both countries, despite protests from environmental groups, are keen on completing the project report for the Pancheswar dam on the Mahakali river soon.

Discussions were also held on resolving problems related to the construction of the Sapta Kosi high dam. With the monsoon round the corner, Nepal wants to utilise India's assistance to construct embankments on some flood-prone rivers.

India and Nepal reiterated that their border should be kept "open", but that steps should be taken to ensure this access was not misused. Nepal also expressed concern about the profile Maoist rebels were acquiring on its soil. Significantly, Mr. Bastola today met the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, and the Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes. He will meet the Human Resource Development Minister, Dr. Murl Manohar Joshi, tomorrow before leaving for home.

RESUMING FLIGHTS TO NEPAL

ALMOST FIVE MONTHS after suspending all Indian Airlines (IA) flights to Kathmandu, the Government of India has agreed to resume services to Nepal. The visit of the new Foreign Affairs Minister of Nepal, Mr. Chakra Prasad Bastola, marks another step forward in bilateral relations. Kathmandu has been mounting pressure on New Delhi to restore the suspended flights which had meant a loss of revenue and a sharp drop in the arrival of tourists to the Himalayan Kingdom. The hijacking of IC 814 from Kathmandu on Christmas eve by Islamic militants and the drama that unfolded in Kandahar for a week, have left scars in India. That led the Centre to first suspend all flights to Nepal and then call for a thorough revamp of the security arrangements at the Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu. Since it caused quite an international uproar, the Nepalese authorities undertook a serious review of the security systems in the airport and presented a new arrangement to satisfy the needs of international airlines operating to Kathmandu. As far as India was concerned, the insistence was on a security check at the ladder-point before embarking the aircraft, by Indian security personnel. This problem has been sorted out and IA services are expected to resume before June 1.

With 19 flights a week from India, bringing in a load of tourists, Nepal wanted to revive the flows. It was a lucrative route for IA. Many foreign tourists from the West and even Sri Lanka were taking the Indian Airlines service to Nepal, resulting now in a 25 per cent drop in tourist arrivals. Tourism is bound to benefit from the restoration of IA flights, and it is one of the major industries as well as foreign exchange earners for the Kingdom. But there is more to the Bastola visit than just the resumption of air services. The Foreign Minister has had wide-ranging talks with his counterpart, Mr. Jaswant Singh, the Power Minister and the Water Resources Minister among oth-

ers. There was a comprehensive review of bilateral relations and the irritants in taking them forward. India's help in bridling the Nepalese rivers and implementing hydro-electric power projects there has been mutually beneficial. Nepal wants New Delhi to expedite the work on the embankments of some rivers which could be in spate when the rains begin. It also wants India to take up more infrastructure projects in the Kingdom, now that work on the 22 bridges has been completed. This has to be on a continuing basis, but India needs to find the funds for it. It is in this context that the Government wants the involvement of the private sector in some of the infrastructure projects, especially power.

Despite the frequent change of Governments, earlier in New Delhi and now in Nepal, bilateral relations have been on a fairly firm footing. There are problems and practical difficulties in containing the activities of the ISI in Nepal and for the free movement of goods under the border trade agreement. Though India has given access to the Calcutta port through 15 routes, Kathmandu wants similar access to the ports in Bangladesh through India, to beat the congestion at Calcutta. To earn this access, Nepal will have to at least prove its sincerity in the efforts to contain the activities of forces inimical to India. But this has to be achieved in a friendly way without any arm-twisting or giving rise to anti-India sentiments in the Kingdom. Nepal and Bhutan have been strong allies of India in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), with Sri Lanka also moving much closer now. To make SAARC effective and an instrument for economic cooperation, India will have to make some sacrifices to avoid being seen as the 'Big Brother'. By opening up to free trade with individual countries, India can try to make the South Asian Free Trade Area a reality in the next few years.

THE HINDU

11 MAY 1991

HILL HARMONY

India And Bhutan Come Closer

By PARMANAND

THE nine-day (18 April-26 April) first official visit of Bhutan's foreign minister, HE Lyonpo Jigmi Yozer Thinley, to India has brought into sharp focus several important questions: what is the state of Indo-Bhutan ties today? Where does Sino-Bhutanese relations stand? What is the state of Bhutan's domestic politics? What is the future of refugees in various camps in Nepal?

The Bhutanese foreign minister, who was the first chairman of the Bhutanese council of ministers during 1998-99 in the post-political reform era, met a number of leaders and officials, including the President, the Prime Minister, Jaswant Singh, Murli Manohar Joshi and Ajit Panja. He also talked extensively to MEA officials.

Jigmi Thinley said that his was primarily a "goodwill" visit. He said he had come to thank Indian leaders for the assistance that Bhutan has been receiving from India for a long time. He emphasised that the relationship between India and Bhutan has moved from one of "donor-donee" to that of "mutually benefiting partners". Thinley's visit was at the invitation of Jaswant Singh. His visit had been preceded by a visit to Bhutan by India's foreign secretary, Lalit Mansingh, in March.

VISITS

They said that such reciprocal visits would become more frequent to further improve Indo-Bhutan ties. Jaswant Singh, Vasundhara Raje and CP Thakur are slated to visit Bhutan soon. There will also be reciprocal visits by parliamentarians, officials and businessmen. Thinley feels this will strengthen ties between the two countries at the grassroots level. Thinley hoped that these visits would eventually culminate in a visit by His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, in October-November.

Bhutan availed itself of this opportunity to express its happiness that various Western powers, among others, have assured India that they will support India's claim to a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. Bhutan was the first country to plead India's case for a permanent seat several years ago. The then foreign minister, Lyonpo Dawa Tsering, had argued a very forceful case in the General Assembly.

Bhutan, through its foreign minister, also took the opportunity to support India's stand on the future of Saarc. The minister stressed that Saarc must continue as a process, and it should eventually culminate in a South Asian Economic Union. Like India, though, Bhutan feels that they should wait for a more "favourable environment" for a summit. The Saarc summit slated for Kathmandu in November 1999 had to be postponed indefinitely, since India did not want to legitimise General Pervez Musharraf's regime.

Thinley also expressed his satisfaction over the deepening Indo-US ties after President Bill Clinton's recent visit. He felt happy over the successful visit to France by Indian President KR Narayanan. Overall, Bhutan is quite happy

The author is the Hon Director, South Asian Studies Foundation, New Delhi.

to see India's international stature as an economically, industrially, scientifically and technologically advanced state grow.

The development of Bhutan's vast hydropower potential has been a major area of cooperation between the two countries. The beautiful and small king-



dom — with an area of 46,500 sq km and a population of 7 lakhs — has an estimated hydropower potential of 30,000 MW of which only 2 per cent has been harnessed so far, mainly with India's assistance. A number of small hydropower schemes were set up in the mid-60s. On 23 March 1974, the two governments entered an agreement to construct the 336 MW Chhukha hydropower project on the Wangchu river in Bhutan. It was the largest cooperative venture between the two countries till then and the biggest project undertaken in Bhutan.

The project was financed by the government of India with 60 per cent of the project cost as grant and 40 per cent as loan. In 1988, the then Indian President, R Venkataraman, inaugurated the Chhukha Project as a symbol of friendship and cooperation between India and Bhutan.

The project today generates about 1,900 million units of electricity annually, out of which about 1,500 million units are expected to India. Revenue from the sale of power from Chhukha constitutes nearly 30 per cent of Bhutan's annual revenue.

PROJECTS

India is helping Bhutan actualise the Kurichu and the mega Tala hydropower projects: they will be commissioned in 2001 and 2004 respectively. Thinley is quite satisfied with the progress on these projects. There is a free trade regime in Bhutan, and it exports 90 per cent of its produce to India and 85 per cent of its imports come from India. Relations on these fronts have never received a setback.

However, the presence of the Bodo and Ulfa militants in Bhutan has caused concern in several quarters in India. The Assam chief minister, Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, had reportedly accused the Bhutan government of helping Ulfa and Bodo rebels operate from Bhutan. Santosh Mohan Dev, Congress MP, had also made allegations about "training camps" for terrorist groups in Bhutan. Bhutan's unicameral National Assembly had in its 77th session last year passed a resolution to cut off supplies to the militants, satisfying India to some extent.

During his talks with his Indian counterpart, Jaswant Singh, Thinley asserted that

Bhutan would not allow activities that were inimical to India's national interests in Bhutan. Indeed, the two sides also agreed to work together to counter terrorism and combat religious fundamentalism. Thinley also said that both the countries have decided to take appropriate action at the appropriate time to deal with Bodo and Ulfa militants. Bhutan, though, would like to see India solve the problem politically and internally.

Bhutan's ties with China, which borders Bhutan in the north and the east, is a significant element of its foreign policy concerns. Thirteen rounds of boundary demarcation talks — the first held in April 1984 in Beijing and the 13th in September 1999 in Thimphu — have already taken place. At the initial stage, the size of the disputed border area was 1,128 sq km. It has now been reduced to 269 sq km. However, a final resolution of the border dispute remains

an illusion.

China insists on establishing diplomatic ties with Bhutan. Many in Bhutan and outside consider this a pressure tactic in resolving the boundary problem. China is also stressing the fact that it is the only immediate neighbour of Bhutan with which the latter has no diplomatic ties — and that according to China is an anomalous situation.

AGREEMENT

The two sides — probably because of China's insistence — signed during the 12th round of talks in December 1998 in Beijing an "interim agreement" (the first inter-governmental agreement) to maintain "peace and tranquillity" along the border. Some in Bhutan feel that delay in establishing diplomatic ties with China might be viewed as a hostile act. The royal government in Thimphu, though, is quite cautious. It does not want to play the China card vis-a-vis India as Nepal has for quite some time.

Thinley said that during his India visit Indian leaders and officials told him that the problem of refugees living in Nepal's various camps — and claiming to be Bhutanese citizens — has to be sorted out bilaterally between Nepal and Bhutan. Some in Nepal insist, however, that India must arbitrate.

Meanwhile, about a lakh Nepali-speaking refugees continue to suffer in seven refugee camps in Nepal's Jhapa district. The problem has been largely internationalised, despite appeals against internationalisation from both sides. Thinley had discussions with his Nepali counterpart, Chakra Prasad Bastola during the recent conference of Nam foreign ministers and he thinks that the next round of ministers-level talks — 8 rounds have already taken place — might result in some concrete solution.

On the domestic front, Thinley stresses that political reforms are a continuing process, and Bhutan is moving towards further decentralisation and devolution of politico-economic powers under the leadership and guidance of the king. On his part, having assumed the role of a constitutional monarch in 1998, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck is finding more time to be interact with the Bhutanese masses.

IA to resume flights to Nepal from June 1

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MAY 15. The Indian Airlines today announced its decision to resume daily flights to Kathmandu from Delhi and five flights a week from Calcutta, from June 1, with Airbus A300. The date of commencement of flights on the Varanasi-Kathmandu sector will be announced later, sources said.

The decision to resume the flights between India and Nepal was finalised during the recent visit of the Nepalese Foreign Affairs Minister, Mr C. P. Bastola, after the Nepalese Civil Aviation authorities issued new security guidelines at Tribhuvan International airport. The Nepalese authorities had sought early resumption of services but the Indian Airlines sought time to work out the modalities. Flights to Nepal were suspended last December following the hijacking of Delhi-bound Indian

Airlines flight, IC-814, to Kandahar via Amritsar, Lahore and a military base in UAE.

Several rounds of discussions were held during the five months of suspension. The Indian Government insisted that security arrangements at Tribhuvan airport be made "foolproof." Initially, the Nepalese authorities had reservations about ladder point checks. Finally it was agreed that the airline could undertake security checks somewhere along the ladder. The new guidelines include a secondary X-ray machine surveillance "with the cooperation of airline security agencies".

The guidelines on security arrangements emerged after at least three official visits on both sides, where the Indian side is said to have bargained for foolproof security. The Civil Aviation officers were helped by officers of the Bureau of Aviation Security and the Minis-

IA to resume flights to Nepal from June 1

try of External Affairs. The final stamp of approval was given at a meeting between the Civil Aviation Minister, Mr. Sharad Yadav and Mr. Bastola, in New Delhi on May 9.

The Delhi-Kathmandu daily flight, IC-813 will depart Delhi at 11.15 a.m. and arrive in Kathmandu at 1.00 p.m. The return flight IC-814 will leave Kathmandu at 1.50 p.m. and arrive in Delhi at 3.10 p.m. local time.

On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, the Calcutta-Kathmandu flight, IC-747, will depart Calcutta at 10:15 a.m. and arrive in Kathmandu at 11.45 a.m. The return flight, IC-748, will leave Kathmandu at 12.40 p.m. and arrive in Calcutta at 1.45 p.m. On Tuesdays and Saturdays the flight will depart Calcutta at 9.50 a.m. and arrive in Kathmandu at 11.20 a.m., depart Kathmandu at 12.15 p.m. and arrive in Calcutta at 1.20 p.m.

16 MAY 1990

Indo-Nepal border to retain open nature

New Delhi, May 16

YK 17/5
THERE IS no proposal to change the open nature of the Indo-Nepal border despite reports that it was being misused by terrorists, criminals and other anti-social elements, the Lok Sabha was informed today.

However, there are no reports to indicate a steep rise in such activities, Minister of State for Home Affairs Vidwasagar Rao said in a written reply. Government does not intend to set up a special force to counter the Special Service Group (SSG) of Pakistan, he added.

Websites: Certain Indian websites have been affected by hackers' activities which generally operate under fictitious names or from some dormant sites, he said.

The Information Technology Bill will act as a deterrent to cyber-crime, he added.

Kargil: Government is constructing bunkers for safety of Kargil people, Mr Rao said, adding 2,000 have already been constructed.

Militants: The number of militants who have surrendered in Jammu and Kashmir was dropped from 270 in 1997 to 109 last year, he said.

Satellite phones: Certain instances of the use of satellite phones by the underworld have come to the notice of the government and corrective steps are being taken by concerned agencies, Mr Rao said.

Refugees: Over 5.2 lakh people were internally displaced in India due to political violence, according to the US Committee for Refugees' report, Mr Rao said.

Questions in LS

17 MAY 1998

Bhutan's ultimatum to ULFA leaders

By Haroon Habib

DHAKA, MAY 17. The Government of Bhutan has served a notice on the ULFA leaders giving them one more chance to negotiate a peaceful withdrawal from Bhutan's virtually impenetrable forest areas in the east, where the Assamese separatist guerrillas have set up camps.

The Royal Government of Bhutan has asked the guerrilla leaders to fix a date for another meeting to finalise the timeframe for withdrawal. Thimpu is hoping that the guerrillas would see reason and eventually withdraw.

The Bhutanese Foreign Minister, Mr. Lyonpio Iigme Y. Thimley, who just completed a five-day visit to Dhaka, told a Dhaka daily: "We cannot wait indefinitely. We are getting ready to expel them by force, if we have to, as the last op-

tion." The Independent Foreign Minister as saying that the Himalayan kingdom will not allow its soil to be used by the ULFA or Bodos, or for that matter any insurgency group.

Amartya Sen in Calcutta

CALCUTTA, MAY 17. Dr. Amartya Sen, Nobel laureate, arrived here today from London on way to Santiniketan to visit his ailing mother. He was received at the airport by the State Finance Minister, Mr. Asim Dasgupta. Dr. Sen

Talking to reporters, Dr. Sen declined to make any comments when asked whether the subsidy system should exist in developing countries, particularly India. — PTT

India, Nepal gear up for closer ties

KATHMANDU: India and Nepal are now looking forward to closer and intensive relations than before in the coming days, with several high-level exchanges on the anvil to reactivate the bilateral consultative mechanisms which had lately been grossly neglected.

Following the New Delhi visit earlier this month by Nepal's foreign minister Chakra Prasad Bastola and a subsequent visit here by Indian external affairs secretary Lalit Mansingh, both neighbours have succeeded in removing the feeling of estrangement that had crept in following the unfortunate hijacking of an Indian Airlines flight in December last. During the two interactions, both sides discussed the common threat to each other's security by the forces of terrorism and have agreed to work together to combat them. They reviewed each other's security concerns and assured each other not to allow their soil to be used for any activity against the other's interest.

And now, they are gearing up for even more hectic rounds of further interactions at ministerial and senior official levels to not only restore bilateral relations to earlier levels but to afford them an even closer and intensive character.

With Indo-Nepal relations encompassing a wide range of activities, proposed areas of collaboration are expected to be in the field of increasing milk production in Nepal on the lines of the Indian experience in dairy development and cooperatives, launching a pilot project for integrated rural development and cooperating in the information technology sector.

Besides, both neighbours intend to take up an Indo-Nepal partnership initiative in tourism to give a boost to the sector, a leading contributor to the foreign exchange earnings of the Hindu Himalayan kingdom. Later this week, the Indo-Nepal high level task force is to meet in Kathmandu — after a gap of almost three years — to review the status of on-going bilateral cooperation, to take up new proposals for execution. While principal secretary to the prime minister Brajesh Mishra, will lead the Indian delegation at the HLTTF meeting, the Nepali side will be headed by chief secretary Tirtha Man Shakya.

Next month, Kathmandu will also host the Indo-Nepal home secretary-level talks. During the month, the water resources secretaries of the two countries will also meet here to clear the cobwebs in the field of bilateral cooperation in the sector.

Besides, external affairs minister Jaswant Singh is also slated to be here next month to attend the formal inauguration of the 22-bridges-project in mid-Western and far-western Nepal implemented by India at a cost of Rs 60 crore to provide the much-needed road-link facility in these areas of the Himalayan kingdom.

And on June 1, when the Indian Airlines will resume its Nepal Operations, civil aviation minister Sharad Yadav was expected to come to Kathmandu on board its first flight from New Delhi. (UNI)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

2-4 MAY 2000

2-4 MAY 2000

Indian and Nepalese firms sign agreements

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, April 16. — Indian and Nepalese companies have entered into a number of agreements covering diverse areas such as medical transcription, tourism refractories and chemicals in an attempt to widen bilateral trade ties between the two countries.

Indian companies that recently signed a memorandum of understanding for setting up joint ventures or sourcing goods from India with Nepalese companies included Indo Rama Synthetics, Indo-German Engineers, ITC Surya Tobacco and United Breweries Group.

The agreements were signed at the Nepalese Export Promotion Meeting 2000 and the Nepalese Trade Fair held recently in Kathmandu, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Ficci) said in a release.

THE STATESMAN

13

India replaces Nepal envoy

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, April 16: Three months after the hijack of the Indian Airlines airbus from Kathmandu, India has decided to replace its ambassador to Nepal K.V. Rajen with Dev Mukherjee, now the high commissioner in Dhaka.

According to sources, Rajen may take over as secretary (east) a post lying vacant since Nareshwar Dayal was appointed India's high commissioner in London — or be asked to head the Foreign Service Institute at Akbar Bhavan.

That Delhi is keen to improve Indo-Nepal relations is also evident from the Atal Behari Vajpayee government's decision to receive the new Nepalese Prime Minister, G.P. Koirala, for a two-day official visit from May 8.

Officially, South Block is not saying that Rajen is being recalled. He has already served nearly five years in Kathmandu — well beyond the usual three-year tenure for a diplomat. Besides, if Rajen's transfer is made out to be anything but routine, it could raise questions as to why other senior officials were not being punished.

South Block officials, however, conceded that the government was irked by the Indian embassy's "failure to lead" during the crisis. According to them, an effective Indian mission with adequate intelligence operatives would have intercepted and countered the hijack plot.

Sources in South Block said another reason for the transfer was the slow progress on key economic issues like the Mahakali and the Kosi multi-purpose projects.

Foreign minister Jaswant Singh had discussed ways to improve ties with his Nepalese counterpart, Chakra Prasad Bastola, on the sidelines of the recent Nam foreign ministers' meet in Cartagena.

Bastola's appointment as foreign minister in the Koirala Cabinet has, therefore, brought back smiles in the Indian establishment. He is considered Delhi's "close friend", who had served as Nepal's ambassador to India during the pro-democracy period from 1991 to 1994. The new foreign minister has assured India that he would try his best to iron out differences and take steps to normalise ties.

17 APR 2000

Kathmandu's double game

Nepal's policy towards India is based on extracting concessions without meeting its obligations. V.K. GROVER warns against ignoring this 'one-way street'

NEPAL IS the only Hindu kingdom in the world and yet it has no love for Hindu India. Historically, ever since Independence, Nepal's attitude and policy towards us has been ambivalent. It has been one of extracting concessions, without any reciprocity and has also been devoid of meeting its obligations when required.

Indian policy towards Nepal has been one of benign neglect, based more on sentiment than national interest. We have consistently surrendered our leverage after acquiring it. After the recent hijacking of the Indian Airlines plane, Nepal has denied us the facility of having our own security checks and has also not accepted its failure in preventing the hijacking.

After India eliminated the rank of the Ranas and restored the monarchy, the kings of Nepal tilted towards China and followed a policy of open hostility after 1962. The Ranas had strong inter-linkages with India. They owned property and their families were married exclusively into the Indian princely households. Except for a brief time, when King Tribhuvan suggested Nehru take over the foreign policy and defence of Nepal, his successors looked to China as an effective counter against India. After the 1962 Sino-Indian war, Nepal severed military links with India and the Indian military contingent on Nepalese soil was asked to pack up and leave.

The natural ally of India at the time was the Nepali Congress. Its activities were banned and its leaders went into exile across the border. As usual, we did nothing to disturb the king, as we had done with the Rana rulers. We did not provide support which was needed by the Nepali Congress for reasserting their domestic rights in Nepal.

Then came King Birendra with his unfriendly proposal for declaring Nepal a zone of peace. This was his way of abrogating the 1950 Treaty of Friendship, which linked the two countries together in some form of partnership. The Trade and Transit Treaty lapsed in 1976. In 1961, when the treaty was signed, a customs union was to be formed but was never permitted to come into effect. From Nepal there were only demands, no desire to meet obligations.

PLATFORM

In 1976, Nepal started an agitation for dividing the Trade and Transit treaty so that smuggling across the Indian border could continue unhindered. Indira Gandhi held out, as she was aware of Nepalese intentions. However, when the Janata Government came to power with its so-called 'good neighbourly relations policy, trade was separated



King Birendra swearing in G.P. Koirala as PM

from transit in 1978.

The never-ceasing demands continued. It was not suiting Nepal to have both the Trade and Transit treaties run concurrently. So it asked for the periodicity to be changed. The Transit Treaty was conceded in perpetuity in 1996, with only the Trade Treaty having to be revised from time to time. They used the usual refrain "Trust us and you will see how good relations can be". Nepal insisted on transit through the "chicken's neck" to Bangladesh. To date, only 20 countries have used this route which presents a serious security threat to India.

After 1990, the power of the monarch was broken and replaced by multi-party democ-

racy. There was a feeling in India that, at last, we would have a friendly regime in Nepal. This was not to be. Any leader in Kathmandu, much like in Bangladesh, who made friendly gestures towards India, was promptly dubbed a traitor. We are all aware of the fate of Mujibur Rehman in Bangladesh.

The Mahakali Treaty is in a deep freeze. People of Indian origin, born and permanently living in the Terai region of Nepal, have no franchise and cannot vote. There is no voice for India in the Nepalese Parliament. Nepal is totally oblivious to India's security concerns, as the recent hijacking of IC-814 has demonstrated. Indians living and working in Nepal are not given residence permits whereas millions of Nepalese earn their livelihood in India. The Nepalis elite owns expensive properties in India; Indians have no such rights in Nepal.

It is time we reflected on our relations with Nepal. The demand for a revision of the 1950 Treaty of Friendship has again been made to the Vajpayee Government. Nepal wants all the benefits while discarding all obligations. The Gujral syndrome is rearing its ugly head once again. We have been consistently losing out to the China-ISI nexus in Nepal. The BJP's emotional stance towards Nepal is as misguided as was I.K. Gujral's to Pakistan. Mr Gujral severely damaged national security. This government, by ignoring the cussedness of the Nepalese authorities, is putting India's security in danger.

India should address its security concerns and use its levers — whatever little is left of them — against Nepal. The Indo-Nepal border needs to be closed and Nepalis living in India should have proper identity cards. Property purchases by the Nepalis should be permitted only after government clearance.

All flights to Nepal should be banned till such time that Nepal addresses our security apprehensions. If PIA cannot fly to Nepal, ISI activities will suffer a setback. When an Indian team recently visited Nepal to beef up security for Indian Airlines flights, it was refused permission. It is time we realised that Nepal is only keen on exploiting India.

FLIGHTS TO NEPAL

5/8 Resumption a question of prestige

IN the four months since the suspension of flights to Kathmandu following the hijacking of IC-814, Indian Airlines has lost more than Rs 2,500 crores. Both countries stand to lose if flights are not resumed soon. About 31 per cent of the tourists Nepal receives every year are Indians. Not much progress was made at a recent meeting of officials because of differences over Indian security personnel being posted at Tribhuvan International Airport. Both countries must come to terms because national prestige and mutual interests are involved. As a sovereign country, Nepal is perhaps right in rejecting the Indian suggestion as also the proposal that Royal Nepal Airlines passengers travelling to India undergo a second security check. Though Delhi makes the point over inadequate security at the TIA, it is for consideration whether all flights should have been suspended. Besides, Delhi is also to blame for allowing the hijacked plane to take off from Amritsar. Both countries must admit to mistakes. Nepal has already submitted the high-level inquiry report, the contents of which have not been made public. Nepal should not have occasion to believe that India is playing big brother.

Former Nepalese Prime Minister KP Bhattraï admitted that there were severe "security lapses" at the TIA. And he should know, because he was heading a committee overseeing airport security. The TIA is reportedly manned by a 350-strong police force, the National Investigation Department and special police. Nepal seems wiser after its first hijacking. Security is reportedly tightened and staff more vigilant; just as well because the airport serves 15 airlines. It is not just prevention of hijacking. The Maoist threat in Nepal is real, the administration needs to keep its eyes peeled.

11/11/11

20 APR 2000

Onus is on Nepal

THE IMPASSE over flights to Nepal has gone on for too long. It may well be true — as the Government of India argues, off the record — that the curtailment of flights is doing India no harm and that it is Nepal's tourism industry that is suffering. It may also be true that ever since Indian Airlines stopped flying to Nepal, Indian tourism destinations have gained because holiday-makers have preferred Kulu to Kathmandu.

Nevertheless, as the big kid on the block, India cannot afford to be seen as a bully that picks on smaller, poorer neighbours. Tourism is crucial to Nepal's economy. Ever since foreign tourists (with the exception of trekkers, mountaineers and backpackers) began overflying Nepal in a search for more up-market destinations, Indians have comprised the bulk of tourist arrivals. Now that so few Indians can (or dare to) visit Kathmandu, Nepal's economy is beginning to feel the strain. The school holidays will begin soon and unless flights are resumed, Kathmandu's hotels will remain empty through the summer. Hence the Nepal Government's urgent efforts to end the impasse.

The problem — from an Indian perspective — is that Nepal has not done enough to curb the activities of Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI). Worse still, ISI agents have combined with Nepal's underworld to run flourishing smuggling rackets. Many of these smugglers finance political parties and pay off influential officials. Combine the ISI influence with the staggeringly incompetent security at Kathmandu airport and you have a recipe for disaster. The hijacking of IC 814 should have served as the signal for a security crackdown. Instead, the Government of Nepal, in a display of monumental foolishness, produced a report that exonerated the entire security complement at Kathmandu airport. As if this was not bad enough, it also refused to let Indian Airlines run its own security checks (to make up for the incompetence of Nepal's operation). Naturally, the Government of India has shown an unwillingness to resume flights in these circumstances. Strangely, Nepal, which pleads for a resumption of air services, either cannot, or refuse to, see that only a lemming would want to fly to Kathmandu in this situation. So, the impasse continues. The sensible way out would be for Nepal to accept that India has legitimate fears and for New Delhi to try and find a way to save Nepal's tourist season before it is too late.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

21 April 1974

Mahanta: Bhutan shelters Ulfa men

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

GUWAHATI, April 22. — The Assam chief minister, Mr Prafulla Kumar Mahanta today charged the Bhutan government with sheltering different insurgent groups, including the Ulfa.

Returning from a three-day visit to New Delhi, Mr Mahanta said he had apprised the Central leadership, including Mr LK Advani, of the present situation in the state. He had also urged the Centre to take up with Bhutan, Myanmar and Bangladesh the problem of insurgents operating from their countries.

The ISI's sinister design posed a grave threat to the unity, integrity, peace and harmony in the North-east, Mr Mahanta said, adding, the state government was able to put up the ISI issue before the Central government in the most convincing manner.

According to Mr Mahanta, the ISI was providing training, arms and ammunition to the extremist outfits here and to counter its evil designs the state government had urged the Centre to take prompt measures in the interest of the

nation.

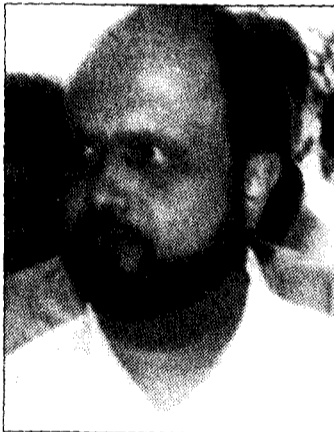
The leaders at the Centre were convinced about the seriousness of the menace with facts supported by a large array of documentary evidences, Mr Mahanta said. He hoped the Centre would take the best possible action to foil their pernicious designs.

The chief minister also impressed upon the Central government the need to rehabilitate all the militants of the state who had returned to the mainstream, to enable them live a normal life.

He said the haphazard manner in which rehabilitation was taken up during the

period of the previous government, had resulted in several complexities but now the Centre had responded favourably to the request. Mr Mahanta hoped effective steps would be soon be taken up to deal with the matter effectively.

Expressing concern that some Islamic centres of learning and religious places were being misused by the militants, the chief minister said: "Nobody should jump to a conclusion that all these sacred institutions had been maligned".



Mr Mahanta: talks tough

THE STATESMAN

2-3 APR 2001

Bhutan, India discuss joint 51.8 76.4 action against Bodos, Ulfa

STATESMAN NEW SERVICE

NEW DELHI, April 25. — The Bhutanese foreign minister, Mr Lyonpo Jigmi Y Thinley, has said steps to combat Ulfa and Bodo extremists in Bhutan and joint operations with India against them were some issues that were discussed between the two countries. The right measures will be taken at the right time, he said.

Replying to questions at a reception in the Bhutanese embassy this evening, Mr Thinley said Bhutan is not resistant to the steps advocat-

ed by India, but the same should be adopted in the right manner.

Mr Thinley said he had not raised the issue of the charges being made by the Assam chief minister, Mr Prafulla Kumar Mahanta (who had reportedly accused the Bhutan government of harbouring militants). He said Bhutan felt that Mr Mahanta may have been misquoted. Anyhow, it was a matter between the Indian government and the Assam government, he said.

Mr Thinley called on the Prime Minister, the Union

external affairs minister, Mr Jaswant Singh, and the minister of state for external affairs, Mr Ajit Kumar Panja, today.

He calls on the President, Mr KR Narayanan, tomorrow. Mr Thinley said the countries also discussed the existence of Bodo and Ulfa camps in Bhutan, a matter of concern for both.

Denying the charge that his government was sheltering militants to use them for combating indigenous extremism, Mr Thinley said the Bhutan government in fact thought that these extremists were col-

THE STATESMAN

25 APR 2001

India, Bhutan stress on better ties

HT Correspondent AF10
New Delhi, April 26

INDIA HAS officially informed Bhutan of its concern at the activities of ULFA and Bodo militants operating from within Bhutanese territory. The visiting Bhutanese Foreign Minister, Mr Lyonpo Jigmi Y. Thinley, has however, made it clear at his meeting with Minister For External Affairs Jaswant Singh, that charges made over the past few days by the senior officials of Assam that King Jigme Singhye Wangchuk had visited camps of the Assamese ultras in Bhutan were baseless.

While officially the Indian Government did not comment on the Assam Government's comments, Mr Singh downplayed the impact, which the Asom Gana Parishad obviously wished to achieve by timing the statements to coincide with Mr Thinley's visit. India has also pointed out that ISI

operatives were active in the mountain kingdom threatening the internal security and social fabric of Bhutan. The two sides are believed to have stressed that bilateral relations should not come under a cloud as a result of the allegations.

Indication of the MEA's reluctance to face a barrage of questions on the subject was evident when a scheduled press briefing on the outcome of the two Foreign Ministers' talks was called off today. Though the talks were held yesterday at Hyderabad House, the official Indian version of what transpired was to have been disclosed today. The spokesman of the MEA disclosed that the Joint Secretary (North) in the ministry would be present to make the briefings. But she cancelled it after keeping reporters waiting for over half an hour.

The two sides, however, issued a joint statement which avoided the

contentious issue altogether. It was kept confined to making an announcement about a "Bhutan Exhibition" to be hosted by India in October this year. The proposed theme of the exhibition will be "The Living Religious and Cultural Tradition of Bhutan". It will showcase Buddhism in Bhutan, Buddhist ritual performances, the arts, craft, performing arts and architecture of Bhutan. It will be held in New Delhi and Calcutta for a fortnight each in the two cities.

The ULFA-Bodo camps in Gilekphu, southern Bhutan, have been the subjects of discussion in the Bhutanese National Assembly (Parliament) since 1997. Last year, the government was empowered by Parliament to "cut off" supply lines with the region.

The area is covered with dense jungles and though in Bhutan, is more accessible from the Indian side.

Sources disclosed that the MEA

does not attach much importance to the Assam Government's claim that the King himself had visited the camps. However, there are reasons to believe that a member of the royal family could have visited a camp. Since the introduction of democratisation in the kingdom, it is suspected that much of the erstwhile powerful aristocracy of the country now seeking new roles after being eased out.

India, though not keen to push the new dispensation in Bhutan to any rash action against the ULFA and Bodos, would like to engage Thimpu on this with a view to an eventual solution. India appreciates Bhutan's fears that if provoked, the militants would launch an unprecedented and violent act of vengeance.

An indication of this was received when Bodo activists, in 1997, attacked a police station in Sandrup Jhonkar region killing four police personnel.

IA flights to Nepal may resume soon

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, March 4. — The government today hinted at early resumption of Indian Airlines flights to Nepal. Flights had been suspended immediately after the hijack of the airline's Kathmandu-Delhi flight IC 814 on 24 December.

Talks between Indian and Nepalese authorities are likely to result in heightened security at Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International Airport, the Minister of State for Civil Aviation, Professor Chaman Lal Gupta, said today.

On the Indian demand that its personnel be stationed at Tribhuvan airport for security checks, he said "some compromise is being reached on the

matter and talks are at an advanced stage".

Reports of the Nepalese probe into security lapses during the IC 814 hijack had been received, Prof Gupta confirmed. While the Nepalese had carried out their own probe, Indian teams have visited Kathmandu to review the situation and talk to their counterparts.

Speaking to reporters after a seminar on civil aviation security here, he said the government would have to spend between Rs 400 crore to Rs 500 crore for the proposed specialised aviation security force. The force, with a projected strength of about 25,000 personnel, will look after all aspects of airport security, he said.

Prof Gupta said the civil avia-

tion ministry was talking to public sector units under its control and the government to raise the money required for the force. Air India, Indian Airlines and Pawan Hans were being approached to set aside Rs 100 crore for the force, he said.

The minister said sky marshals had been deployed on 37 routes but other sectors were also being covered at random. Admitting that the system would not be adequate without a similar system for private airlines, Prof Gupta said they were also being asked to carry sky marshals.

On other security measures put in place following the hijack, he said a three-point check system had been introduced. Passengers were being

checked at the entrance, in the security zone and the ladder of the aircraft.

Surprise checks were being carried out at airports to ensure that screening equipment, X-ray machines and other gadgets were working properly.

The seminar on aviation security, which Prof Gupta opened earlier in the day, was attended by representatives of the National Security Guard, Intelligence Bureau, Bureau of Civil Aviation Security, Airports Authority of India and Directorate General of Civil Aviation. It was addressed by Professor Paul Wilkinson, Director and founder-member of the Centre for Study of Terrorism and Political Violence, UK.

Aviation team to visit Nepal for IA flight resumption

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, March. 6. — A team of the Union Civil Aviation Ministry will soon review security arrangements at Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International Airport, a move which is expected to pave the way for early resumption of Indian Airlines flights to Nepal.

The team, to be headed by a joint secretary, will leave for Kathmandu soon and the Indian ambassador in Nepal was already informed, the Union Civil Aviation Minister, Mr Sharad Yadav, said today.

Though declining to set a date for the resumption of services, suspended after the IC-814 hijack on 24 December last year, Mr Yadav said it would be done "at the earliest". The Indian authorities had to ensure themselves that all possible lapses were removed and steps were taken for heightened security.

Meanwhile, Nepal has reportedly denied India's request to involve its personnel in security duties at the airport. The aviation ministry was hopeful that the request would be acceded to. But a report from Kathmandu quoted senior Nepalese officials as saying they would not allow it as Nepal was a sovereign state.

Nepal has, however, been pressing for early resumption of flights. Indian Airlines is also keen to resume operations as the suspension is causing a revenue loss of about Rs 25 lakh per day. Before flights were suspended, there were daily flights to Kathmandu

from Delhi and Varanasi and five flights a week from Calcutta.

On the new aviation policy, Mr Yadav said it would be finalised in a month or so after incorporating the views of experts.

Mr Yadav parried questions on disinvestment of Indian Airlines, merely saying the process for selecting a strategic partner had begun. He, however, iterated the government's policy of not permitting foreign airlines in the domestic sector.

It was a concerned Mr Yadav who earlier addressed delegates while inaugurating a two-day workshop on "Enhancing Safety Management at Airports", organised by the Foundation for Aviation and Sustainable Tourism in association with Airports Authority of India.

"AAI should plan for the next 100 years...there should be a vision for expansion in the future," the minister emphasised. Incidents like the escalator tragedy at the Indira Gandhi International Airport were a poor reflection on the level of co-ordination between employees at airports. Introducing a humane touch would help employees perform more effectively, he felt.

Pointing out that the ideas discussed at the workshop had to be disseminated down the line, he suggested that such interactions also be held at the level of smaller airports.

The Minister of State for Civil Aviation, Professor Chaman Lal Gupta, spoke of the specialised civil aviation force and sky marshals.

Incredible: Nepal hijack report absolves airport staff

'Tribhuvan security cannot be blamed because arms of hijackers could have been fake'

Sudhi Ranjan Sen
New Delhi, March 9

BELIEVE IT or not, the Nepal Government's "high-powered committee" probing into security lapses that led to the hijacking of Indian Airlines flight IC 814 last December, has given Kathmandu's Tribhuvan Airport staff a clean chit.

This is despite the fact that the five hijackers managed to board the Delhi-bound aircraft with pistols, grenades and knives.

The committee, headed by ex-Nepal police chief Khim Bahadur, has expressed its "satisfaction" with the security at the airport on the day of the hijacking. The panel's report says that the arms and ammunition in the possession of the hijackers were not taken

on board at Kathmandu airport. The panel report avers that the weapons used for the hijacking could have very well been fake ones. It has concluded that since there was no way to ascertain whether the weapons were real, security personnel at the airport are above blame.

The probe panel has also discounted any irregularity in the issue of boarding cards for the flight that was commandeered shortly after it took off. "The five hijackers had boarded the aircraft with genuine boarding passes," the committee has concluded.

The Indian Ministry of Civil Aviation is currently examining the report. Civil Aviation Minister of State Chaman Lal Gupta said today that the Nepalese government has cited the findings of the

Committee to turn down the demand to that Indian security officers be allowed to be stationed at Tribhuvan Airport before IA flights to that country are resumed. Nepal has said that being a sovereign country, it alone can provide security at the airport.

Although investigations by Indian intelligence agencies had conclusively proved that two senior staff of the Pakistani embassy in Kathmandu had delivered a packet to unidentified passengers at the airport the day the plane was hijacked, the report is silent on this issue. Two cars bearing the registration plate of the Pakistan embassy in Nepal were also sighted at the airport that day, Indian investigations had revealed.

Mr Gupta, said that the Indian team-comprising senior officers of Indian Airlines and

the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security - which had visited Nepal few days after the report had reached India - had found several loopholes in the security at the Tribhuvan International Airport.

Mr Gupta added: "We are keen to resume flights and sort things out amicably. But prior to that, security at the airport needs to be up to the mark."

Even though the findings of the Committee have given the government of Nepal a clean chit, 18 officials posted at the airport were suspended following the hijack.

"The fact that 18 officials have been suspended following the hijack shows that something was wrong. But no government would admit that security lapses on its territory had led to the hijack", he added.

Nepal's no to Indian securitymen holds up IA flights resumption

VINAY JHA
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, March 9. — Nepal's reluctance to allow Indian personnel a role in ground security at Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International Airport is learnt to be the main stumbling block for resumption of Indian Airlines flights to and from Nepal.

With Indian Airlines incurring a revenue loss of a whopping Rs 25 lakh a day and Nepal also eager to have services restored since the suspension has affected trade and industry in that country, both governments have been keen to put the past behind them and begin afresh.

But the demand to allow Indian personnel to be stationed at Tribhuvan airport to strengthen security is high on the agenda of a team of civil aviation ministry officials which is to visit Nepal for a decisive round of talks soon.

Senior Nepalese government officials have recently said they would not allow this as Nepal was a sovereign country. India is determined to wrangle a permission on this count though officials conceded

"this is a ticklish issue".

"It is relatively simpler when an airline recruits locals for the purpose," an official said. It was the presence of Indian nationals that the Nepalese authorities were reluctant to permit.

"We are still negotiating. We cannot compromise on security," the Minister of State for Civil Aviation, Professor Chaman Lal Gupta, told The Statesman. On Nepal's reported reluctance, he pointed out that incidents like the hijack affected both countries adversely.

He was hopeful a solution would be worked out when the Indian team, to be led by a joint secretary in the civil aviation ministry, meets Nepalese officials.

India wants its own nationals playing a role in crucial areas like screening of registered baggage and monitoring the cargo areas, a step which is expected to provide the "heightened security" it has been clamouring for.

Senior aviation ministry officials pointed out that this had been a long-standing demand and this was not the first time the Nepalese authorities have expressed their reluctance.

"The whole world knows what happened at Tribhuvan International Airport," an official remarked, referring to the hijack of IC-814 shortly after it took off from Kathmandu. The Indians are obviously in no mood to take any more risks.

Officials pointed out that even if this demand was not conceded, India could ask the Nepalese to permit in-flight security personnel on Indian Airlines flights to and from Kathmandu. "They are a lot like sky marshals. The difference is that while sky marshals deployed on several IA flights have been covert, the in-flight security will be overt in nature," a security expert explained.

The sky marshals deployed on IA flights on sensitive routes have been travelling incognito, going as passengers and returning as passengers. For Kathmandu, the Indians could press for permission to allow in-flight security so that its personnel could conduct ladder-point security checks.

"Two or three personnel can go in the aircraft, carry out the ladder-point security checks when passengers are boarding and return in the same flight," the expert suggested.

THE STATESMAN
10 MAR 2000

Centre wants Bhutan to help flush out ultras

DIPANKAR ROY
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

GUWAHATI, March 12. — The Centre is according "top priority" to having Assam militants, taking shelter in Bhutan, flushed out from that country.

"It is a top priority area for us and we are hopeful of receiving help of the Bhutan government in this regard," a senior Union Home Ministry official said today. He was, however, not willing to hazard a guess as to when help will come.

The Ufa is reported to have its headquarters and several camps in southern Bhutan jungles. Bodo militant groups too have camps in that country. Militants sneak into and out of Bhutan — being adjacent to Assam and the border porous — after carrying out strikes in the state, often frustrating security forces' efforts to apprehend them.

The official told **The Statesman** over phone that the Centre was aware that as long as militants had sanctuaries in neighbouring countries, counter-insurgency operations in Assam could not achieve desired results. "We do take up the matter with other countries and we are certain that they will help," he said.

Citing a recent instance of such "help," the official said Myanmar had informed that its army had over-run the central headquarters of NSCN-K located within their territory. According to information made available by the Myanmar government, 22 NSCN-K militants, 10 ULfa ultras and eight People's Liberation Army (of Manipur) terrorists, who were in the CHQ, were killed in operations.

(The NSCN-K spokesman, Mr Kughalu Mulationu, told **The Statesman** from an undisclosed location that it was the Myanmar army which had lost over 50 men in the skirmish while "our side" had

only seven casualties. "The leaders of the various outfits had left the area before the Myanmar soldiers moved in," he said over telephone. According to him, this was not the first time that such an incident had happened.)

"Even Bangladesh has been helping," the official said, pointing out that at least 50 ULfa militants were in prisons in that country.

"And so will Bhutan," he said.

The official said it would be wrong to expect that all the countries will make "uniform progress" in such matters. "But we are not sitting idle either. We keep doing things in our own quiet way since everything need not be publicised; that may, in fact, hinder progress," the official said.

The Assam Governor and the chief minister recently said counter-insurgency operations in Assam had not achieved desired results as militants

were being able to take shelter in Bhutan, Myanmar and Bangladesh. The fact that the unified command structure did not operate in the other states of the North-east also affected operations. The official said the Centre would have no objection to any state opting for the unified command structure. "It is a matter for concerning states to decide, the Centre cannot do anything about it," he said, adding the security co-ordination committee system, in force in Tripura, could also be an answer instead of the unified command structure.

While the unified command is a three-tier structure with the strategy group and operations group being headed by the Chief Secretary and GOC of 4 Corps respectively and the third-tier looking after the districts under Deputy Commissioners, the security coordination committee is headed by the Chief Secretary.

Indo-Nepal talks tomorrow on IA services

NEW DELHI, MARCH 25. India and Nepal would hold crucial talks on Monday to resume regular Indian Airlines flights to Kathmandu which were suspended after the hijacking of the IA flight in December last.

Official sources here told PTI that a three-member team of Civil Aviation Ministry officials would leave for Kathmandu on Monday

to hold the negotiations, which could pave the way for resumption of IA services to the Himalayan kingdom.

The sources said these talks "could be the final round" before the flights could re-start.

Meanwhile, a report from Kathmandu quoted the Nepalese Foreign Minister, Mr. Chakra Prasad Bastola, as saying that the IA

would resume flights "on a regular basis in the next two weeks".

An APP report also quoted the Nepal Civil Aviation Ministry Joint Secretary, Mr. Hari Bhakta Shrestha, as saying, "we are holding talks on the resumption of IA flights from Monday to hopefully reach a final agreement".

The Indian Airlines had suspended its operations after the

December 24 hijacking of its aircraft carrying 170 passengers by Pakistani militants. The suspension had severely affected earnings not only of the Nepalese tourism industry but also of the Indian Government as IA was a major carrier of tourists to that country. The Indian Airlines had been flying about 1,200 tourists every day to Kathmandu.

Delhi smiles at friend in Nepal foreign office

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, March 29: The induction of Chakra Bastola as Nepal's foreign minister has replaced the frowns with smiles in South Block. Bastola, considered a close friend of India, is expected to help rebuild Indo-Nepal relations, which plunged headlong following the hijacking in Kathmandu last December.

As a sign of the new attitude, a civil aviation ministry team is already in Kathmandu to talk to their Nepalese counterparts on the resumption of Indian Airlines flights to and from the Nepalese capital. The flights were cancelled after the hijacking.

Bastola had served in Delhi as Nepal's ambassador from 1991 to 1994 — a crucial period following the pro-democracy movement in Nepal. Bastola had then brought bilateral relations back on tracks. Subsequently, he played an important role in deepening cooperation between the two countries in the fields of health, civil aviation and tourism.

As Nepal's foreign minister,

Delhi hopes Bastola will not only strengthen bilateral relations, but will also take care of "sensitive" issues, particularly those related to increased Pakistani activity in Kathmandu.

Indo-Nepal ties suffered a jolt following the hijacking of the Indian Airlines airbus from the Tribhuban International Airport in Kathmandu. Though it has not been able to prove it, India feels the ISI was behind the air-piracy.

Delhi, which is celebrating the new foreign minister in G.P. Koirala's Cabinet, did not mourn K.P. Bhattarai's resignation as Prime Minister last week. Though Bhattarai's too was considered a close friend of India, his indifferent health did not permit him to assert himself in checking growing factionalism in his party. As a result, many ambitious politicians, both within and outside his government, openly started flouting him.

What has pleased the Indians most is that Bastola's predecessor, Ram Sharan Mahat, has not only been replaced, but has also been totally ignored by the new Prime Minister. Mahat, Delhi felt, had a

soft corner for the Pakistanis and therefore was reluctant to take steps that would hurt Islamabad's interests.

Bastola, on the other hand, had taken the initiative to set up the B.P. Koirala Indo-Nepal Foundation and had stressed on the positive aspects of the bilateral ties while trying to underplay the negative areas while dealing with Delhi. In the short time after taking charge, Bastola has been able to regain confidence of the Indians with his assurance that adequate steps will be taken by Kathmandu to ensure security for aircraft of a third country without compromising on Nepal's sovereignty.

The thawing process in Indo-Nepal ties had begun when Delhi accepted to have the chief of Royal Nepal Army Staff Prajwal Shamsheer Jang Bahadur Rana last month for a five-day visit. Rana not only held discussions with his Indian counterpart General V.P. Malik and other senior leaders, but was also gifted the ceremonial sword and the title of "General of the Indian Army" by President K.R. Narayanan.

THE TELEGRAPH

30 MAR 2000

Fences and Neighbours

Nepal's ambassador to India, Bhekh Bahadur Thapa, has much to say on the economic and diplomatic fallout of the hijacking of IC-814 from Kathmandu to Kandahar. He spoke to Shastri Ramachandaran on what may be called the 'hijack effect' and its implications for India-Nepal relations.

How has the hijacking of the Indian Airlines flight hit Nepal's economy? Have tourist arrivals from India and other places fallen sharply?

The main impact, as your question suggests, is on tourism. It is too early to quantify the loss. Indian Airlines is one of the major carrier of tourists from India and abroad to Nepal, and until IA resumes flights, which are now suspended, the gap in terms of capacity cannot be met by Nepalese airlines. In the aftermath of the hijacking there was reluctance of some Indian nationals to travel to Nepal, most of which can be attributed to adverse publicity. I think this is beginning to correct itself and our expectation is that IA will resume the flights very soon.

I am equally concerned with the media projecting Nepal, especially Kathmandu airport, as being less than very secure. The image factor — as if Nepal was either being permissive or lacking in attitude to prevent the hijacking — has been damaging. This unfair image pinned on us by sections of Indian media, more so the electronic media, needs to be corrected.

What has been the diplomatic impact? Has New Delhi been fair or unfair?

Diplomatically, I think the authorities in Kathmandu would have been happier if the publicity had been more balanced; and blame, if any, was specific and based on facts rather than assumptions. Maybe it was a sense of complacency that in Nepal's 50-year history of civil aviation no incident had taken place. But the way the lapses were projected and publicised gives the impression of involvement of Nepali citizens, or even the government turning a blind eye to the security aspects. Now that the report of the enquiry commission is out, it confirms that there might have been degrees of negligence on the part of some officials but that there was nothing deliberate.

It is not for me to say whether the blame is in excess of Nepal's share, but the perception of people in Nepal is that this is not a case for demonising a good friend and compliant neighbour. While the two governments were carrying on a dia-

logue soberly and responsibly, sensationalising events that followed the hijacking has left a negative impression in the minds of the Nepalese. As far as the seizure of fake Indian currency is concerned, it is the Nepalese police that uncovered it. This shows that the government in Nepal is extremely mindful of India's security interests.

What is the general perception of the Indian media in Nepal — that it is fair or unfair?

What I have sensed in my two years in India is that media in India generally ignores the neighbouring countries, more so the small, friendly neighbours like Nepal. When we do get attention and coverage it is mostly related to negative issues such as hijacking, floods and violence — political or social. Based on my observations on my earlier postings in the US, South Asia in the eyes of the western press received similar treatment and was always in the margin.

In many ways popular Indian culture, especially Bollywood, is threatening to swamp Nepali culture. Does this add to the feeling that India is a difficult neighbour to have and contribute to the growth of the image of the 'Ugly Indian'?

to jointly market Nepal and India? For example, if the Taj Mahal and Everest, representing respectively India and Nepal, are jointly marketed, it might induce greater number of long-distance, high-paying tourists to come to both countries.

While tourism in Nepal is a priority sector and we have succeeded in marketing it to a reasonable extent, South Asia as a region is a loser in the global tourism sweepstakes. Nepal and India have made sporadic and disjointed attempts on occasions to cooperate in this sector but no serious effort to jointly promote or help each other has taken place. This is one such sector where Nepal could also contribute to development of tourism in the hilly parts of India. The civil aviation agreement between Nepal and India provides for doubling the airline capacity. But neither IA nor Royal Nepal Airlines has been able to make use of the provisions for want of aircraft.

Good fences make good neighbours. It is often pointed out that the India-Nepal border is porous. Do you think that putting up barbed wire fences between the two would make us better neighbours or worse?

To begin with, the Nepal-India border was never intended or designed to be tightly controlled. So this talk of "porous border" is off the point. If changing circumstances demand a review and adjustment, I hope it will be done in consultation and be a joint effort. Above all the fundamental basis of Nepal-India relations is to allow for free movement of people, goods and services. Any measure designed to

curb undesirable movements of goods and people in the face of emerging security compulsions, of both India and Nepal, must not violate the needs, aspirations and sentiments of people living on both sides of the border.

What are these concerns which Nepal expects New Delhi to address?

These have been discussed at the governmental level and it may be premature to disclose the subject and content of the talks. However, in the context of global threats like terrorism, drug-trafficking, arms smuggling and human trade, open border is a matter of equal concern to Nepal. There are instances of growing violence in Nepal which may have links beyond our borders. Above all, the time has come for both to evolve a more positive agenda, especially in the field of investment and development of Nepal's water resources and electricity potential.



“What I have sensed in my two years in India is that media in India generally ignores the neighbouring countries, more so the small, friendly neighbours like Nepal. When we do get attention and coverage it is mostly related to negative issues such as hijacking, floods and violence — political or social”

First of all we cannot change geography and our relative sizes. In the area of culture and social interaction, there is a civilisational ethos that embraces most of South Asia within one fold. So the impact of Indian cultural advances would be more engulfing, because of size. But the desire of a small country to preserve and promote its own cultural identity is there and must be respected. In a global sense, you see the effect of Hollywood in Bollywood. This is comparable to what India's neighbours feel about Bollywood. In a rapidly-changing world, the concept of globalisation is affecting both our trade and culture. That is something we need to understand and grapple with. I hope that both countries will conduct their relations in a way that the emergence of the 'Ugly Indian' or a 'demonised Nepal' can be avoided.

Tourism is a very important source of foreign exchange for both Nepal and India. Has anything been done

India for paramilitary forces on Nepal border

Shishir Gupta

New Delhi, February 4

INDIA HAS conveyed to Nepal that it intends replacing the local police with personnel of central paramilitary forces for manning important checkposts along the 1,751-km Indo-Nepalese border as part of its efforts to strengthen security measures and prevent Pakistan-sponsored infiltration into the country.

The subject figured in the course of a meeting yesterday of the Indo-Nepal Joint Working Group (JWG) on border management. The Indian delegation was led by Special Secretary (Internal Security) in the Ministry of Home.

It is understood that the Indian interlocutors furnished details including hard intelligence on Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) activities in Nepal while explaining the spread of the Pak agencies tentacles in the Hindu Kingdom.

Official sources said the crux of the message was that ISI activities were detrimental to Kathmandu's security and strategic interests in the near future.

The Indian delegation pointed to their Nepalese counterparts the need for effective sharing of intelligence between the two countries and review of the effectiveness and adequacy of the existing arrange-

ments for exchange of information on criminal and terrorist activities. In brief, the focus was on combating cross-border terrorism.

Prior to the JWG meeting, a team of Civil Aviation security experts led by officials of the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) had visited Nepal to study the security measures at Kathmandu's Tribhuvan airport.

The team has since submitted its report to the Civil Aviation Ministry suggesting measures that need to be implemented for fool-proof security at the airport to

prevent a repeat of Kandahar. The JWG discussions and recommendations of the civil aviation security group will serve as important inputs in the event of the two countries deciding to institutionalise cooperation on security matters.

Sources said at the JWG meeting, the Indian side offered visitors' help in tackling the Maoist rebels in Nepal as they are believed to be in

touch with the militant Maoist Communist Centre operating in Bihar.

According to sources, the Nepalese side was told that New Delhi was ready to provide help in the form of sharing expertise on counter-terrorism. India has also expressed willingness to impart training to Nepalese police and security forces for tackling Left-wing extremist violence.

Indo-Nepal effort on anvil

INDIA AND Nepal will cooperate to control criminal activities across their common border, a joint statement from the two countries said on Friday. Security concerns about the India-Nepal border have mounted since five men commandeered an Indian Airlines plane from Kathmandu to New Delhi, shortly after it took off from Nepal on Christmas eve. "They (the officials) agreed to strengthen cooperation to control undesirable activities and the movement of terrorists, criminals and other undesirable elements across the border," said the statement. The statement from the south Asian neighbours came at the end of a three-day meeting of a joint working group.

Reuters, Kathmandu

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

5 FEB 2000

Hijack: Taliban played dual role

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Feb. 24. — The government today acknowledged for the first time that the Taliban had been sympathetic to the hijackers during negotiations for the release of passengers on board the ill-fated Indian Airlines flight IC 814.

"The Taliban authorities, while adopting an attitude of correct facilitators, consistently had their sympathies with the hijackers and their other supporters," the external affairs minister, Mr Jaswant Singh, said in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha.

The statement is the first sign of a change in government's attitude towards the Taliban since the hijacked plane landed in Kandahar. Though the government had made it clear that there was no change in its Afghanistan policy, it has so

far consistently maintained that the Taliban was cooperative during the crisis.

The government has also repeatedly thanked the Taliban and refrained from criticisms of its actions, till now. Today's comments provide the first hint that the government links the Taliban with the hijackers and Pakistan, the country it has accused of supporting the hijackers.

Mr Singh also said the the hijacking had made the world better appreciate the way Pakistan sponsored terrorism and its impact on India's security and that of the region.

In response to another question, he said that the government had spoken to Britain about the hijacker identified as Omar Saeed Sheikh, who is a British national.

The government had not made any formal request to the



Mr Jaswant Singh

British government for his extradition since there were no reports so far to suggest that Omar Sheikh was in Britain.

Mr Singh said Britain had assured the government of cooperation in the matter within the framework of the Indo-British Extradition Treaty of 1992.

THE STATESMAN
25 FEB 2000

Nepal seeks resumption of IA flights

NEW DELHI, FEB. 26. Nepal today sought immediate resumption of the Indian Airlines service to Kathmandu asserting that the security at the Tribhuvan International Airport had been made stricter after the hijacking incident in December, "leaving no room for lapses."

The Himalayan kingdom had taken the necessary action as suggested by the Nepalese probe commission that went into the incident to tighten security at the airport, the Nepalese Ambassador to India, Bhekh Bahadur Thapa, told presspersons while launching Nepal's tourism promotion programme here.

He described the hijacking of the Indian Airlines flight from Kathmandu in December last as an "unpleasant incident", adding it was the first such incident in the 50 year-aviation history of Nepal.

"The security system at Kathmandu airport is of international standard as laid down by ICAO and all other carriers are also operating from there," he said and asked whether any airline could stop its flights because of one hijack incident. "There should be no apprehension that Nepal is taking security for granted," Dr. Thapa said, adding that passengers going through the Kathmandu airport now were "talking about hassles because of the tight security measures."

The Indian Government had stopped operating air service to Kathmandu soon after the hijacking on December 25 last year.

Stating that Kathmandu and New Delhi had always shared extremely cordial ties and Indians comprised almost 32 per cent of the total tourist arrivals to Nepal, Dr. Thapa said the decline in the number of visitors to Nepal recently was only due to Indian Airlines pulling out its flights from Nepal.

Dr. Thapa said IA was not the only international airline operating from Nepal, which had as many as 13 foreign airlines flying. These airlines were very much satisfied with the security system at the Kathmandu airport and had "never made any complaint whatsoever."

Stating that the Indian media wrongly projected the episode as a bid to "sensationalise" it, Dr. Thapa said that the episode was over now and hoped that the media would offer full cooperation in boosting tourism which would benefit both countries. He said that IA should resume its flights to Kathmandu as soon as possible as both India and Nepal were incurring a loss as far as tourism and business were concerned.

Dr. Thapa today said security had been fully tightened at the Tribhuvan international airport. "The misconception in India that Nepal is deliberately allowing laxity in security is causing problems between the two countries", Dr. Thapa said. Last year 1.4 lakh people from India visited Nepal.

Every recommendation of the probe committee, which went into the hijack episode, had been adhered to to strengthen security. In fact, due to the stringent measures being taken at Tribhuvan airport, passengers were complaining and so also airlines, whose flight were being delayed because of the "excessively cautious" approach being adopted by officials. The Nepalese Commission had indicted some people for being less than fully alert and 18 had been reprimanded.

Mr. Tek Bahadur Dangi, director of the Nepal Tourism Board, said that no other airline had even thought of pulling of Nepal following the hijacking. — PTI, UNI

THE HINDU

27 FEB 2000

Prize catch for Taliban

FROM DIPTOSH MAJUMDAR

New Delhi, Dec. 31: The only winner in the entire hijack drama has been the Taliban. They outscored both the hijackers and the Indians and climbed not just one but several notches in the estimation of the developed countries who were treating them like a pariah all this while.

In a carefully-plotted media game that was publicised with the sophistication of any leading public relations outfit, the Taliban entered the new millennium camouflaging its fundamentalist interior with a humanitarian face. This gave it a significant degree of legitimacy.

On several occasions during the hijacking drama, the air pirates appeared to have no role to play. They were simply attendants who played their part of security guards for the hostages on board. The fine dividing line between the Taliban and the hijackers was often so blurred that it was easy to guess that Kandahar, the breeding ground of Islamic fundamentalists, was in complete control.

On hindsight, not just several researchers at the Institute of Defence Studies in Delhi but even a few in the government are now veering round to the opinion that probably the Dubai detour was part of a planned game to mislead world opinion and give the impression that the Taliban did not want the plane to land in its territory and had to change its mind

WHO WON, WHO LOST



Taliban foreign minister
W.A. Muttawakil

TALIBAN: Can't lose. It has played two aces with one hand. By acting as intermediary and appearing to talk tough with the hijackers, the militia regime has bought its passport out of pariah nation status. The release of Kashmiri militants helps it keep hardliners in the Islamic world happy.

INDIA: Can't win. With the passengers back, the immediate crisis is over. But by yielding to blackmail, the government may have made itself vulnerable to terrorist strikes in the future.

for humanitarian reasons.

The Taliban put forward the most credible of arguments. How can a plane with limited fuel be expected to fly forever?

But there is no escaping from the fact that Kandahar has been the honing ground for youth with talent to fight a long jihad.

A significant percentage of the mercenaries who have trespassed into Kashmir are from southern Afghanistan. They received military training and were suitably equipped with arms in the Taliban homeland before trekking across the Indo-Pakistan border to fight their war against the Indian administration.

Such backers of terrorism cannot become honest brokers in a deal with hijackers waging a war they cherish.

And as the crisis wore on, the

Taliban regime had everybody eating out of their hands. It was not India's recognition that they were looking for. What mattered to them was accolades and kudos from the West. For long they had been ostracised for harbouring the great Osama Bin Laden.

This was their chance to prove to the world that they can be arbiters in a dispute as sensitive as hijacking. And they can settle things peacefully.

The mightily pleased Taliban had its New York representative being contacted by most senior diplomats from the West. He was even called up by a United States government official.

The Taliban was receiving pleas from countries which had treated it as a global fugitive that needed to be brought to justice. The Taliban was not running

away any more. It had others running to it for help, for sustenance.

And for the camera crew that loitered around Kandahar airport, the Taliban foreign minister, the administration's spokesman, played out a drama brimming with humanity. The panchayat of elders, the Shura, ruled that ransom paid in cash and exhumation of a body during the month of Ramadan were not permissible because these were "unIslamic demands".

The foreign correspondents lapped up all these gestures, heaping lavish praise on the outcast Taliban.

The Taliban kept its word in every respect. It had promised not to allow bloodshed on its territory. It had pledged not to allow any foreign combat force to come in.

It organised a mock parade of anti-aircraft guns and battle cars and even threatened to send off the plane from its soil, whenever negotiations threatened to reach a deadlock.

The hijackers lost their separate identities in Kandahar. It was the Taliban who was doing the talking all the time.

In the end, India had to praise Taliban for its role. They had to suffer the humiliation of releasing three leading extremists. And the world sang paeans for the Taliban — the same Taliban whose status in the world eyes was no better than other rogue states like Muammar Gaddafi's Libya or Saddam Hussain's Iraq only a fortnight ago.

THE TELEGRAPH

: 1 JAN 2000

India, Nepal to intensify border vigil

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

DARJEELING, Jan. 3. — Officials of the Jhapa district administration in east Nepal here today discussed measures to check crime along the Indo-Nepal border with Darjeeling district authorities.

It was reportedly decided that vigil would be stepped up against smugglers operating in the region, with additional deployment of policemen on both sides of the border.

The team from Nepal was led by the Community Development Officer of the Jhapa district.

The district shares a common border with Darjeeling district.

The District Magistrate, Mr Naveen Prakash, headed the team from Darjeeling.

Smuggling across the border is rampant. And such activity goes largely unchallenged by the law enforcing authorities. Keeping a tight check on the goods being transported across the border was imperative, officials of both sides reportedly said at the meeting.

Greater inter-action between the police authorities of Jhapa district and those of Darjeeling was also necessary, the officials felt. Periodic review meetings between the two sides to monitor law and order in the region should also be held, the two sides reportedly agreed.

While the entire border stretch from Galgolia to Pasupathi is a haven for smugglers, Darjeeling district authorities are concerned over the possibility of militants making use of the porous border to escape the law enforcing agencies.

The problem has aggravated with reports of ISI agents having bases in Nepal.

THE STATESMAN

- 4 JAN 2000

Nepal's lukewarm response worries Delhi

Jay Raina

New Delhi, January 4

WHY IS Kathmandu vacillating in taking action against the ISI operatives even as New Delhi continues to furnish it with incriminating evidence on Pak-backed anti-India operations from its soil? Such evidence is reportedly corroborated by both the Nepalese police and its intelligence outfits.

Sections of India's Nepal-centric bureaucracy are clueless. However, according to highly placed intelli-

gence sources, besides having made deep inroads into the Nepalese officialdom, the ISI is reported to have managed a great deal of influence amongst its resourceful politico-business circles. These sources went to the extent of saying that ISI's penetration in Nepal was so deep that it could even blackmail some of its prominent beneficiaries.

Official circles are aghast at what they term as Kathmandu's lukewarm response to New Delhi's urgings to act, particularly, in the area of security-related issues.

A case in point is Nepal's total silence over India's offer on entering into two bilateral treaties—Mutual Legal Treaty in Criminal Matters and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Combating International Crime and Terrorism. New Delhi made the first offer around Aug-Sept 1998 while the second MOU was put forward as early as March 1997.

Significantly, India has for long volunteered to

has yet to clinch a Transit Treaty with Dhaka.

The revised Indo-Nepal Trade and Transit Treaty-1996 is also perceived to be heavily loaded in favour of Kathmandu with zero per cent tariff on its manufactured goods (50 per cent material and labour input in Nepal).

However, in real terms, Nepal is alleged to be flooding India with its re-packaged imported goods to the tune of thousands of crore of rupees each year. Rough estimates put the figure of such exports to India at around Rs 5000 crore.

Finance Ministry sources said that besides being disadvantageous to Indian industry, the country was loosing at least Rs 500 crore each year on such voluminous trade in case a nominal tariff duty worth at least 10 per cent was slapped against such large exports.

This excludes massive illegal smuggling of Nepalese goods (imported by the Nepalese businessmen from across the world in excess of their legitimate needs in the native markets through the 1,600 km long unmanned border between the two friendly neighbours.

ISI's Anti-India Operations

modernise Nepal's security-apparatus at Tribhuvan airport with professional input by way of training its police personnel and immigration officials. Even as a small group of commandos is presently being trained at Hyderabad in anti-terrorist (read Left-wing militancy) operations, Kathmandu has refused to go along with the first offer.

Nepal's lack of response flies in the face of India providing the landlocked kingdom with 22 land routes for trade and commerce including access to Bangladesh even as India on its own

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

5 JAN 2000

Seeking to encash IOU, Taliban want Indian recognition

New York, January 4 *HR 20*

AFGHANISTAN'S RULING Taliban want India to consider renewing diplomatic ties with Kabul, citing the close cooperation extended by the militia to resolve the hijacking of the Indian Airlines plane, a representative of the regime here said.

"Following the peaceful end of the hijacking, we think it is time when India has a great opportunity to consider diplomatic relations with the Taliban," Abdul Hakeem Mujahid, the permanent representative-designate of the Taliban Government to the United Nations, said. The hijacked Indian aircraft while on its flight to Delhi from Kathmandu was parked in the tarmac in Kandahar, southwestern Afghanistan, for seven days. Kandahar is the headquarters of the Taliban militia.

"We believe the momentum of cooperation between Kabul and New Delhi, generated during the hijacking, should be continued and diplomatic contacts should be established," Mujahid said. "We do not know of any kind of tension between New Delhi and Kabul, so why cannot there be diplomatic relations between us?" he asked.

India does not recognise the Taliban regime although it has made positive references to the cooperation extended by the militia in resolving the hijack crisis. New Delhi recognises the ousted opposition regime of Burhanuddin Rabbani whose representative is accredited as Kabul's envoy to India.

Mujahid claimed that what India knew about the Taliban Government before the hijacking was based on "total misinformation" and entirely negative reporting by Indian and international media, besides what the Opposition forces had projected about the militia.

"After the hijacking, I think the Indian Government saw first-hand what was going on inside our country and the practices under the Taliban rule and, in view of that, I think the two countries should come closer," he said.

On Dec 30, when asked if the Taliban regime might hand over the hijackers to India as a quid pro quo for New Delhi's recognition of Kabul, Mujahid had replied: "No way." He said the Taliban were not prepared to discuss the matter at a time when innocent human lives were in danger. *(LANS)*

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 5 JAN 2000

Vajpayee sends ISI-base notice to Nepal

FROM RASHEED KIDWAI

New Delhi, Jan. 4: Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee has written to his Nepalese counterpart Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, urging him to weed out Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) bases in Nepal. Vajpayee said India was prepared to extend all co-operation to Nepal to stamp out Pakistan-backed terrorist elements.

Vajpayee's letter drew attention to Nepal's growing reputation as a haven for anti-India elements ranging from Kashmiri separatists to Ulfa militants.

The Prime Minister regretted that adequate steps to stamp out anti-India activities had not been taken, though Delhi had frequently passed on intelligence inputs to Kathmandu.

Vajpayee's letter sought an explanation from the Bhattarai government on security lapses at the Kathmandu airport during the hi-



WE'RE BACK: Victoria Moreno (R) and Carlos Nelson, two of the four Spanish citizens held as hostages on board IC 814, wave at relatives and friends on their arrival in Barcelona. (AFP)

lack of IC-814.

Recalling India's historic relationship with Nepal, Vajpayee reportedly expressed regret that such an incident occurred in a friendly country.

The Prime Minister today rejected Pakistan's denial of its role in the hijack and said the government had "proof" to establish Islamabad's links with the hijackers.

"Their denial does not carry any weight. We know for a fact that they encouraged hijackers. We have the evidence and we will publish it," Vajpayee said at an *iftar* party hosted by him here. He said he was in touch with all friendly countries to mobilise international opinion against terrorism.

The Congress has, however, expressed fear that the government will not succeed in getting Pakistan declared a terrorist state by the international community.

"The government must show us the efforts it is making to achieve the goal," AIOC spokesman Ajit Jogi said, while emphasising that his party wanted the terrorist tag on Pakistan.

Vajpayee denied there were differences between him and Union home minister L.K. Advani over the handling of the hijack crisis.

"There is no resentment. He (Advani) was part of the decision-making process and attended meetings," he said.

Advani, who was present at *iftar* hosted by Vajpayee, denied any rift with the Prime Minister. "It was not a happy situation to have released the militants but there was no other option," he said.

Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, several diplomats and Union ministers and prominent Muslim leaders also attended the *iftar*.

Govt. to review border management with Nepal

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JAN. 6. The Government proposes to review the entire gamut of border management issues with Nepal. There exists a mechanism of interaction at several levels between the two Governments and a Joint Working Group (JWG) at the Special Secretary (Home Ministry) level is scheduled to meet soon in Kathmandu.

The JWG meeting, most probably to be held within a month, is likely to take note of a series of developments over the past one year where Pakistani Embassy officials and Pakistani ISI operatives were allegedly involved in anti-India activities. While there is interaction at the Home Secretary level, another JWG is active at the Special Secretary level. The last meeting of the JWG was held in 1998 and it could not meet due to elections in both the countries.

Though the North Block offi-

cial here say that on several occasions specific information has been shared with the Nepalese authorities, Kathmandu is yet to come up with a response that would satisfy the Government here.

Only two days ago, Mr. Asim Saboor, an Assistant Secretary at the Pakistani Embassy in Kathmandu, was caught red-handed while trying to exchange a consignment of fake Indian currency worth Rs. 50,000. Earlier, on several occasions the Nepalese police have seized fake Indian currency in huge quantities from ISI agents and underworld operators. In a major incident in 1998, an amount of Rs. 60 lakhs in fake notes of Rs. 100 denomination were deposited in Bank of Kathmandu, a leading private sector bank. On another occasion, fake Indian currency worth more than Rs. 12 lakhs were seized.

A high-level inter-ministerial

group had recommended in 1992 that the Indo-Nepal border be controlled by some special units of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) but it did not find favour with the Government as it was felt that the special relations and the visa-free regime between India and Nepal should continue the way it was. The vigil on the entire 1,751-km long border with Nepal is being kept by the State Police of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and there are 80 border outposts which have been strengthened periodically. Highly-placed sources said the Nepalese authorities have shown exemplary cooperation with India in the past and helped demolish some of the modules involved in anti-India activities. However, in the post-Kandahar phase, sources feel, it is up to the Nepalese authorities to act and move fast to pull down the ISI shop in Kathmandu.

Intelligence sources say there is

a "very deep" involvement of Dawood Ibrahim and his associates in cultivating Nepalese smugglers after the killing of Mirza Dilshad Beg, former Nepalese MP, known for his ISI links and anti-India activities.

Sources say that Jamir Shah, who owns the cable TV network of Space Time Network and had wanted licence from Kathmandu to operate in the Terai belt, and two other businessmen — Naeem Shah and Tahir Shah, were being actively "cultivated" by Dawood Ibrahim's operatives.

According to sources, there has also been evidence of the sprouting of madrassas on the Nepalese side of the border with assistance from several Islamic countries. Sources also feel that the game plan could be to "harden" the Indo-Nepal border and cause distortions in the long-standing special relationship between the two neighbours.

Nepal to make public hijack probe findings

By Amit Baruah

ISLAMABAD, JAN. 7. The contents of a Nepalese inquiry into the December 24 hijacking of an Indian Airlines flight from Kathmandu to Delhi would be made public, Mr. K.P. Gyawali, Nepal's ambassador to Pakistan, said today.

Mr. Gyawali, who was summoned to the Pakistani Foreign Office yesterday, had been asked by Islamabad to "share" the findings of the inquiry which would "hopefully provide important clues in determining the responsibility for the condemnable action".

When asked what his Government proposed to do about Pakistan's request, the Nepalese envoy told this correspondent that "everybody was eager to find out what it contained".

However, rather than sharing it with Pakistan alone, the contents of this report would be made public, he maintained. Mr. Gyawali could not provide any time-frame. Pakistan, meanwhile, dismissed as "manufactured evidence" the statement made by the Indian Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, that all the five hijackers were Pakistani nationals.

A Foreign Office spokesman was quoted as saying yesterday that the statement was part of the "continuing propaganda campaign of false accusations against Pakistan".

"Since the ending of the drama, India has not established contact with Pakistan, nor provided any information about the hijackers' identity or any other relevant details..." the spokesman said.

Pakistan, clearly, is on the back-foot with India making the identi-

ties of the hijackers known and releasing their photographs to the press as well.

We were not shown their photos: pilot

By Anita Joshua

NEW DELHI, JAN. 7. Contrary to the Vajpayee Government's contention, the pilot and the flight engineer of the hijacked Indian Airlines flight IC-814 today insisted that at least they were not shown the photographs of the five hijackers for verification.

At his press conference here on Thursday, the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, had asserted that the Government had confirmed the identity of the hijackers from (among others) the crew members.

When contacted, the pilot, Capt. Devi Sharan, told *The Hindu* that he had never been shown "these or any other photographs" during his meetings with Government officials after the release of the hostages a week ago. "Anyway, I would not have been able to recognise them because all the five kept their faces masked right through the week we were held hostage."

Similar was the reaction of the Flight Engineer, Mr. Anil Kumar Jaggia. "I don't know if other members of the crew were shown these photographs. I was never shown any photographs." Like Capt. Sharan, the Flight Engineer, too, expressed inability to say for sure whether the photographs released by the Government were, indeed, that of the hijackers. "They kept their faces masked all the time," he said.

Stricter vigil on Indo-Nepal border

Deepak Gidwani
Lucknow, January 7

THE INDO-Nepal Border Police (INBP) is planning a major operation on the UP border. The aim is to curb the activities of Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) insurgents and other infiltrators.

The project comes in wake of reports of the ISI routing arms, militants and counterfeit currency through the porous Indo-Nepal border. Fake currency notes have been recovered in large numbers throughout the state. Since UP shares the largest stretch (834 km) of the 1800-km Indo-Nepal border, such developments are focused on the state's border.

(Sikkim, West Bengal and Bihar - share approximately 100 km, 250 km and 700 km with Nepal.)

Sources say the INBP plans to increase the number of posts along the border, intensify patrolling, and provide a better infrastructure for the force. This will include vehicles and advanced telecommunication equipment.

INBP Additional Director General S.C. Chaube did not give out any details citing "operational

and strategic reasons". He said the matter was "extremely sensitive".

Sources say the number of INBP posts in the 11 districts lining the UP-Nepal border will be increased to about 70. (There are presently 48 of them.)

It also proposes to requisition more companies of the PAC to assist in its operations. The INBP has currently a meagre strength of about a thousand personnel. This includes four companies of the PAC and men drawn from the civil police.

"This strength is indeed inadequate even in normal times. With the current heightened sensitivity, we need a much better infrastructure to combat the ISI threat," said a senior official, on condition of anonymity. The official said there had been an alarming intrusion of ISI agents who were bringing in fake currency. Arms are coming to UP through Nepal. Infiltrators are also using the Nepal-Raxaul-Bihar route.

Recently, fake Rs 500 notes were recovered in Siddharthnagar district from a gang running an organised counterfeit currency racket in the border districts.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

8 JAN 2000

India awaiting probe report from Nepal

MUMBAI, JAN. 10. India is awaiting a report from Nepal Government's task force probing the hijacking of the Indian Airlines Airbus A300 and will then decide on resumption of flights to Kathmandu.

Describing it as a sensitive route, the Civil Aviation Secretary, Mr. Ravindra Gupta, said the task force was expected to submit its report shortly to the Nepal Government. *9-10-12*

"If we need to bolster our security, we will do so", Mr. Gupta told presspersons here today.

"We like to start early as we are losing revenue, but we need proper assurances from Nepal and see that adequate steps are taken before flights are resumed", Mr. Gupta, who is also the chairman of Air India, said. — PTI

THE HINDU
11 JAN 2000

Dealing with Nepal

The hijacking of IC 814 from Kathmandu and the subsequent haul of fake Indian currency from a Pakistani embassy employee in the Himalayan kingdom have added a new and serious dimension to Indo-Nepal relations. In the hype created by the media, often at the instance of government officials upset at having been worsted by the hijackers, there is a tendency to find convenient scapegoats. It is, therefore, not surprising that Nepal is being picked on for the security lapses at Tribhuvan International Airport, as well as for serving as a clandestine base for ISI-backed terrorists and infiltrators. Unfortunately, Nepal is not only land-locked but 'India-locked' in more senses than one, and for that reason an easy target. Because of the strategic access it offers to India, Nepal has become a tempting base of operations for many anti-Indian forces. Apart from terrorists and infiltrators inspired by Islamabad to stir up trouble in Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab, militant groups from the North-east are also exploiting the conditions in that country. In addition, underworld dons running smuggling, murder and extortion rackets from Dubai or Pakistan are increasingly using Kathmandu as a transit area or point of entry or getaway. Quite apart from these undesirable imports, including illegal arms and narcotics, Nepal has to cope with its own violent Maoist groups, which are making common cause with extremist groups from India.

However, to cite these notes of dissonance does not mean India should demonise Nepal and arm-twist its smaller neighbour. Nepal is as much a victim as India of the predatory practices of terrorists and arms and drug-runners. Incidents like the hijacking will hurt its tourism industry while the counterfeiting of Indian money will undermine its own fragile currency. Nepal is a soft state with not even an iota of the defences that India has against the forces of disruption. To its credit, Kathmandu has been the first to concede this. In the aftermath of the hijack, the Nepal government has reiterated its determination to prevent its soil from being used for any anti-Indian activity. If there is a gap between stated resolve and consequent action, it is because Kathmandu has neither the machinery nor the resources to cope with these threats. In the event, New Delhi needs to reflect on the situation and proceed with extreme caution in pursuing its security interests with Nepal. To keep repeating that the Indo-Nepal border is porous is pointless: the border was never intended or designed to be tight. In the changing global context of more open borders to better facilitate trade and the free movement of goods and services, it would be pointless to put up walls. India's security concerns are legitimate and there is nothing on record to suggest that Kathmandu will be anything other than accommodative in this regard. That being the situation, there is no room for pressure tactics or mutual recrimination. Security-related issues should be sorted out through consultation rather than imposition so as to overcome the areas where Nepal is vulnerable. Such an approach would be most in tune with the policy of "cooperative bilateralism" advocated by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee when he was foreign minister of the first non-Congress government in the late '70s.

THE TIMES OF INDIA
12 JAN 2000

Nepal to go strictly by facts: Envoy

Apratim Mukarji
New Delhi, January 12

NEPAL TODAY said that it would go strictly by facts uncovered during the current enquiry into the December 24 IC-814 hijack at Kathmandu Airport and take corrective steps accordingly.

"But we are firm in our commitment," said Ambassador Bhekh B. Thapa, "that we will not allow our friendship with any country to be abused against any other country."

"What we have said all along is that our commitment not to allow the Nepali territory against the interests of our neighbour (India) is total and unwavering," he said. "But we will be guided by facts rather than presumptions. To that extent, both the governments are cooperating."

"Let us not undermine the level of understanding and cooperation that exists between India and Nepal at the time of a crisis," he added.

Referring to Indian media reports about the "porous" India-Nepal border and Pakistani infiltrations exploiting the porousness, he pointed out that the border was

"manned on both sides by the respective government agencies."

"If there is a failure (at preventing infiltration), it's a mutual failure," he remarked.

The enquiry instituted by the Nepal Government into the first-ever plane hijack in the over 50-year-old history of civil aviation in the Himalayan kingdom assumes particular significance in the light of Indian accusations of Pakistan's involvement in the incident.

Ambassador Thapa said that while the enquiry commission had been asked to complete its probe within two weeks, an extension of the period was quite likely. The commission, constituted under a statute and independent of the executive, had sought relevant information from sources within and outside the country, including the International Civil Aviation Organisation and various airlines

with flights to Nepal.

"The report of the enquiry commission will be watched by the whole world," he said. "Terrorism is a global menace and everybody is interested to find out what happened. Based on the findings of the commission, we will seek cooperation in areas like tightening airport security and security for the



Bhekh B. Thapa

airlines."

Besides, the hijack and the continuing suspension of Indian Airlines flights to Kathmandu Airport had affected tourism, a mainstay of Nepali economy, adversely.

"We cannot allow any sense of complacency (in dealing with the situation)," he said.

He said that as Pakistan International Airlines was among the 22 airlines which flew to Kathmandu, Islamabad could be interested in finding out the safety

measures recommended by the probe body. "However, unless the Nepal Government acts on the report, it is difficult to say if it would be made available to the Pakistan Government as requested."

Refusing to react to Indian allegations against the Pakistani Embassy in Kathmandu, he said: "We take the concerns expressed by India about its security interests (in Nepal), whatever has been brought to our notice, seriously."

"But we will follow facts as we uncover them," he emphasised. "Facts have to be proved. Presumptions, allegations and innuendoes should not be the basis for conducting relations between two close neighbours (India and Nepal)," he said.

Pointing out that in the aftermath of the hijack, the Cabinet met at an emergency session, the enquiry commission was appointed and Prime Minister K. P. Bhattarai spoke to his Indian counterpart Atal Behari Vajpayee expressing his anguish and offering cooperation, the Ambassador said: "All this showed not only our sadness, but also our readiness to act as the situation demanded."

Delhi wary of Nepal clean chit to Pak

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Jan. 16: India is apprehensive that Nepal might give a clean chit to Pakistan absolving Islamabad of its complicity, as alleged by New Delhi, in the recent hijack of the Indian Airlines airbus.

Nepal foreign minister Ram Sharan Mahat is behind the attempt to water down the Pakistani angle, despite the best intentions of Prime Minister K.P. Bhattarai and other senior colleagues like the home minister and the civil aviation minister. The inquiry report is expected shortly.

India's ambassador to Nepal K.V. Rajan, who was here recently, briefed South Block officials on developments in Kathmandu after the hijack. Delhi has assessed that Nepal's foreign ministry is out of sync with the Bhattarai government on the hijack.

One reason behind that could be Nepal's internal politics. With Bhattarai's position much weakened, there is a feeling that he may have to quit in less than six months. This has, perhaps, prompted leaders like Mahat to assert themselves.

With many politicians having succeeded on an anti-India plank in the past, Mahat, by distancing himself from Bhattarai's close links with Delhi, may be positioning himself as the future Prime Minister. Many in Nepal are unhappy with India's initial outburst against Kathmandu and its allegations that one of the hijackers was a Nepalese national.

Mahat's "independent" line became clear soon after the hijack when Indian investigators were refused permission to visit Trib-

huvan International Airport on the plea of sovereignty. He did not want foreign agencies to start investigating since local officials were already on the job.

"We cannot accept this position and fail to understand how it raises questions about the country's sovereignty," a foreign ministry official said. He argued that India did not object when the United States sent FBI agents to find out more about the hijack as one of the hostages was an American.

Later, the Nepalese foreign ministry extended diplomatic immunity to a clerk in the Pakistani high commission who was arrested with counterfeit Indian currency, and allowed him to return to Islamabad. The clerk was not eligible for diplomatic cover and officials felt that he should have been tried in Kathmandu.

South Block officials said Mahat is seen to be "too close to Pakistan" and their assessment is that he would do everything within his powers to scuttle any move to establish Islamabad's complicity in the hijack.

India has often complained to Nepal that ISI agents were masterminding terrorist activities from its soil. When foreign minister Jaswant Singh visited Nepal last year, he was told steps would be taken to prevent this.

But with the hijack once again proving that Nepal has done precious little to curb terrorism, Delhi now wants to adopt a carrot-and-stick policy. Unless Nepal cooperates fully on dealing with terrorists and ISI activities, financial aid and other help from Delhi will also not be forthcoming, is the message India wants to send to Kathmandu now.

THE TELEGRAPH
17 JAN 2000

India for IA security officer at Kathmandu

Shishir Gupta

New Delhi, January 30

INDIA HAS decided to impress upon Nepal to permit Indian Airlines to station a security officer at Kathmandu for supervising its flight arrangements or allow New Delhi to position a liaison officer at the immigration control there as part of the measures to ensure fool-proof security at Tribhuvan airport.

Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) sources said that these are the bare minimum measures that need to be taken at the Kathmandu airport if the hijack episode is not to be repeated. They said India would also request the Nepalese Government to introduce a secondary check of all pas-

sengers boarding Indian Airlines flights and ensure that access to the operational areas of Tribhuvan airport is tightly controlled.

These measures will be discussed during the meeting of the Joint Working Group (JWG) of the two countries at Kathmandu on February 1. The Indian side, headed by a Home Ministry Special Secretary, will also have inputs from a delegation of civil aviation security experts that has just returned from Nepal after studying the security arrangements at Tribhuvan airport. It is learnt that the team found the Tribhuvan airport's design and construction responsible for its being porous. It also noted that the VVIP lounge, used by Pakistani diplomats on the day of the hijack, is perilously close

to transiting passengers.

The introduction of a passport-visa regime, patrolling of Indo-Nepalese border by para-military forces and tightening of customs controls are some of the issues that India has raised time and again in the JWG discussions. However, Kathmandu watchers feel that these measures could be counter-productive as they could come in the way of the historically close ties between the two neighbours. The 1951 Indo-Nepalese treaty envisages open borders. But, there is no escaping the fact that the two countries will have to ensure that activities of Pakistani intelligence agencies are controlled and that Nepal is not used as a base by Islamabad to direct subversive activities against India.

External Affairs Ministry sources say that since the past 14 years India has been insisting that it should be allowed to handle security arrangements for Indian Airlines flights. In fact, on December 1, 1986 the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu made that request in writing to the Nepal Government. The response received in March, 1987, said "that matter related to security of flights as well as the entire operational area is taken care of by the concerned authorities of His Majesty's Government."

In 1996, Indian Home Secretary sought permission from Nepal to station a liaison officer at Tribhuvan airport so that India-bound passengers could be screened.

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