

'Terrorism threatening democratic nations'

By Alok Mukherjee

MAURITIUS, MARCH 10. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, arrived here today on a three-day official visit which was partly overshadowed by the developments in Bihar. All along the nearly seven-hour long flight from New Delhi, anxious queries were being made by the Prime Minister's entourage as to what had happened in Patna where the NDA Chief Minister, Mr. Nitish Kumar, was to seek a vote of confidence.

There was no news for quite some time, but the Prime Minister's arrival coincided with the news that Mr. Nitish Kumar had resigned before the vote. In a sense, this was expected, because a senior official of the Prime Minister's Office told mediapersons on board the flight that the situation in Bihar was "touch and go; more go than touch." The Prime Minister's media managers were also planning some sort of a brief interaction with the media, but when it was realised that there were more questions on Bihar, the Clinton visit and the possible roll-back of budget proposals, the idea was dropped. Instead, the Minister of State for External Affairs, Mr. Ajit Panja, and other senior officials interacted informally with the media on board.

In Mauritius, Mr. Vajpayee was accorded a brief but impressive ceremonial welcome after which he inspected a guard of honour. In the evening, the Prime Minister held bilateral discussions with his

cause on March 12, 1930, Mahatma Gandhi had set out on what history now records as his famous "Dandi March."

In his speech, Mr. Vajpayee also called upon the two nations to remain vigilant against new threats. In particular, he said "terrorism poses an unprecedented threat to open and democratic societies. We need to work together to evolve and strengthen international consensus against this danger to peace and stability. We have also to guard against forces that seek to divide our secular societies."

In an oblique reference to developments in Pakistan, Mr. Vajpayee said in his speech that "democracy has been our lifeblood; it is the best guarantor of economic development and social progress. Any attempt to strangle democratic aspirations in any part of the world is a threat to democracy. This threat needs to be removed if democracy has to survive."

Taking note of the fact that Mauritius had consistently supported India on the issue of a permanent seat in the U.N. Security Council, on the Kashmir issue, the nuclear tests and the Kargil conflict, the Prime Minister "deeply appreciated" the consistent support extended by Mauritius on issues of concern to India. In turn, Mr. Vajpayee reaffirmed India's consistent support for the sovereignty of Mauritius over the Chagos Archipelago, parts of which are under U.S. occupation.



The Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, with his Mauritius counterpart, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, after arrival at the Ramgoolam International airport on Friday.—PTI

that India and Mauritius enjoyed a close political relationship and the visit of Mr. Vajpayee was basically aimed at furthering that relationship. In fact, in his speech at the banquet, Mr. Vajpayee recounted the close relationship between the two countries and paid handsome tributes to the father of Mr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, the late Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam, who was immensely impressed by Mahatma Gandhi. In fact, Sir Seewoosagar had decided to celebrate the Independence Day of Mauritius on March 12 be-

Senior officials accompanying the Prime Minister emphasised

Delhi High Court hearing on public interest litigation next month

No change in Indo-Mauritius pact

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Dec. 30. — The government is not thinking of changing the double taxation avoidance convention (DTAC), that exists between India and Mauritius, despite the scope for misuse that has been highlighted with the Mauritius channel emerging as the prime source for routing foreign direct investment (FDI) into India, officials said.

This agreement allows companies that have routed their investments through Mauritius into this country, to avoid paying taxes in this country, even on capital gains, and with Mauritius being close to a zero tax destination, investment companies reap huge benefits, which other investors cannot avail of.

A public interest litigation asking the government to withdraw the DTAC was admitted by the Delhi High Court last month. It is due to be heard some time next month.

There are more than 500 registered foreign

institutional investors (FIIs), who have made a net investment of around \$13 billion in India since 1993. The official estimate is that more than 60 per cent of these investments have been routed through Mauritius, a preferred choice of investing companies because of its liberal tax regime and DTAC with India.

Mauritian economic development minister, Mr Sushil Khushiram, who recently visited India, also

DOUBLE TAXATION

ruled out any changes in the double taxation agreement between the two countries, despite reports of that country being increasingly used as a tax haven by foreign portfolio investors in India.

"We (the two countries) agree that the double taxation agreement between the two countries is working well and there is no question of amending or altering it," Mr Khushiram had said after meeting with the finance minister Mr Yashwant Sinha.

He denied that Mauritius was increasingly used to route illegally laundered money abroad into portfolio investments in India by FIIs.

In April this year, the finance ministry cleared all Mauritius-based FIIs of tax-related probes once they provided certificates of residence from that country. Earlier, a move to investigate 37 of the Mauritius-based companies, and impose penal taxes of Rs 9 crore on seven FIIs, led to a virtual collapse of the stock market, forcing the government to retract from the probe.

Mr Khushiram said Mauritius was keeping a close watch on offshore companies which have set up offices there prior to grant of certificate of registration, with adequate safeguards to ensure, that the company did not exist merely on paper, but had substantial presence and operations.

Internationally, capital gains on financial inflows are not taxed by the host country and the DTAC between India and Mauritius was in line with this procedure, finance ministry officials indicated.

THE STATESMAN

31 DEC 2000

Mauritius to strengthen links with India

By V. Jayanth

CHENNAI, DEC. 20. Mauritius has decided to strengthen its links with India and collaborate with professionals and intellectuals here to enhance its educational and training facilities.

Mr. Ramduthsing Jaddoo, a former Minister and now the brain behind a movement to revamp higher education, is now in India to finalise this programme and establish firm and close links with some of the south Indian centres like Chennai, Bangalore and Hyderabad.

Talking to *The Hindu* here today, Mr. Jaddoo said: "We have the traditional colleges and courses. But we now feel the need for higher and hi-tech education in management and the application of Information Technology in various sectors."

He said a University of Technology was taking shape in his country, through a private initiative. Since the existing Mauritius Institute of Public Management was closing down, the Government was also keen on encouraging this initiative and utilising its services to re-train and upgrade the management skills of its officers.

Mr. Jaddoo, who visited the IIT and met some of the leading educationists, explained that a consultancy centre would be established very soon to source the talent from this region for



Mr. Ramduthsing Jaddoo, former Minister of Malaysia and Mr. Munbodh Suresh, educationist and consultant, during an interaction in Chennai on Wednesday.

— Photo: N. Sridharan

Mauritius. This could be both for employment and in the training faculty.

Himself a former Minister for Human Resource Development, Mr. Jaddoo said both Government Ministries / institutions and the private sector needed modern, IT-friendly management training to equip themselves for the era of globalisation.

From the Ministries and the traditional industry like sugar, to the service and financial sectors from banking and insurance to tourism, there was an urgent need to re-train the managers and update their skills.

They had to use IT to service

their regional and international operations.

Since Mauritius was already an off-shore and financial hub, with a regional and international profile, there was a greater need to upgrade managerial skills.

Instead of always looking to the West, he and his friends decided to source this talent from India, which had a rich pool of experts.

During this scouting trip, he would visit Bangalore, Manipal and Hyderabad to identify institutions and people with whom the University of Technology could interact.

The consultancy centre to be set up here to follow up on these

links and tie-up with them for a regular exchange programme, signing MoUs with the new university in Mauritius.

Mr. Munbodh Suresh, a consultant, educationist and also chairman of the National Computer Board, who is accompanying Mr. Jaddoo, said an official delegation from Mauritius would visit India in January. Led by the Minister of Information Technology and Telecommunications, the delegation would highlight Mauritius' vision for the development of IT in the country.

The Minister was likely to unveil an attractive package for Indians to both invest in Mauritius and take up professional appointments there. The official delegation would visit New Delhi and then the southern centres to follow up on the work of this scouting mission.

Both of them expressed complete satisfaction even with the first phase of their southern expedition. They had established a link with the IIT here and tapped Chennai's potential for training in finance, economics, IT and management already. This would be strengthened further through links in Bangalore and Hyderabad.

The Pai foundation in Manipal had already decided to establish an institution in Mauritius and they would like it to expand the service in due course.

THE HINDU

21 DEC 2000

9.10.1997

Indo-Fijians on statute panel branded 'traitors'

410-12

By Amit Baruah

SINGAPORE, OCT. 7. Indo-Fijian members of the Constitutional Review Commission appointed by the interim Prime Minister, Mr. Laisenia Qarase, have been branded "traitors" by the rest of the ethnic Indian community.

Both the National Federation Party (NFP) and the Fiji Labour Party (FLP), dominated by Indo-Fijians, have denounced the appointments of Mr. Fred Achari, Mr. Joe Singh, Mr. Benjamin Bhaghwan and Mr. Joseph Maharaj. The appointment of pliable members of the Indo-Fijian community is hardly a surprise since the Qarase Government has been on the look-out for such persons to participate in the review of the multi-racial, consensus 1997 Constitution.

"Every right-thinking Indo-Fijian knows that the four members... have no following in society... No Indo-Fijian with any self-respect and dignity would serve on such a racially-weighted and top-sided Commission," the

NFP general-secretary, Mr. Attar Singh, was quoted as saying. "The interim administration of Mr. Qarase must be told that the community will not accept any decision of this Commission and its cronies. The administration should remember that the international community will also reject this cosmetic exercise."

A FLP spokesman, Mr. Krishna Datt, said the four had no mandate from the community and were on the Commission only due to personal interests. "It is shameful for Fiji and a sad day for all those who respect and honour democracy," he was quoted as saying.

The Fiji Youth and Students League (FYSL) and the Fiji Trade Union Congress also condemned the decision of the four Indo-Fijians to work for the review panel. The FYSL general-secretary, Mr. Ravindra Pillay, said they should step down from the Commission if they had any respect for their community.

He maintained that the 1997 Constitution did not need any re-

view and catered for everything needed for democratic rule in the country.

In their defence, the four, who were sworn in on Thursday, said they were not worried about a mandate, claiming that the country was more important than differences generated by race and religion. They did not represent any ethnic group, but were on the Commission in their individual capacities.

Mr. Qarase has expressed disappointment that the two Indo-Fijian parties had chosen not to participate in the review process. This, he said, could be seen as a communal act of non-cooperation, which could widen the Fijian-Indian divide.

About the nominated Indo-Fijians, the interim Prime Minister said, "I am sure they will perform their duties in an exemplary manner as the Commission proceeds with its work and we salute them for their enduring faith in Fiji and what it can become."

THE HINDU

7-6 OCT 2001

Deposed Fijian Premier visiting India

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NEW DELHI, AUG. 6. The deposed Fijian Prime Minister, Mr. Mahendra Chaudhry, who was released last month after being held hostage for eight weeks by the rebel leader, Mr. George Speight, is visiting India on August 17, the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, said today.

"We will give him a hearty welcome," Mr. Vajpayee said at a function to mark Sant Shiromani Goswami Tulsidas Jayanti here.

India had greeted, with a sense of relief, the decision of Fiji's Great Council of Chiefs to release Mr. Chaudhry and his Cabinet colleagues.

New Delhi had hoped the step would lead to the restoration of a democratic and Constitutional Government within the framework of Fiji's 1997 Constitution.

India had been instrumental in mobilising international pressure to restore a democratic Government in Suva.

Reacting swiftly to Mr. Chaudhry's ouster, India had contacted leaders in Australia, New Zealand and the United Nations to emphasise that the Commonwealth's principles, outlined in the Harare Declaration and the Millbrook Action Programme, should be adhered to.

People of Indian origin in Fiji had contributed a great deal to the development of the island nation but had been denied their legitimate rights.

In an apparent reference to Mr. Speight, Mr. Vajpayee said the "criminal" who had triggered a crisis situation in Fiji, was now behind bars.

Asserting that India's secular credentials were proven beyond any doubt in the comity of nations, Mr. Vajpayee said the country's rich culture and traditions would be preserved for all times.

He appreciated the role of Indians settled abroad in this task and hoped the new generation would follow the teachings of Ramayana.



Ms. Salome Speight and her daughter Jackie, sister and niece of the former Fiji coup leader, Mr. George Speight, walk into the Suva Central court on Saturday. Ms. Salome, along with other relatives of Mr. Speight and his coup crew, was denied bail and remanded in custody.

— Reuters

Describing Tulsidas as a great poet, the Prime Minister said the Sant's renderings in simple language were widely understood by

common people while they also contained immense depth that could be appreciated by the intellectuals. — PTI

Speight can receive family visitors

SUVA, AUG. 6. The detained Fiji rebel leader, Mr. George Speight, and key supporters can receive family visitors on their island prison on Sunday as they wait to find out if police will press treason charges against them.

The police are still investigating possible treason charges against Speight and his associates. The offence carries the death penalty, but it has not been carried out since Fiji's independence in 1970.

While Mr. Speight and his 12 associates were remanded to their Nukulau Island prison until Friday, when they can re-apply for bail, their conditions have been improved. They are allowed to receive incoming phone calls and family visitors thrice a week. Police, military and prison officials have been warned not to illtreat or injure them.

There were no reports of unrest following Mr. Speight's court appearance on Saturday, and the military said its crackdown on Fiji's second island of Vanua Levu to mop up remaining pockets of Speight supporters was progressing well. More than 150 people have been arrested, and one rebel shot dead, since the military moved in last Thursday.

The worst-affected areas, Labasa and Dreketi, where there had been violence and attacks on ethnic Indians, are returning to normal with shops and schools reopening.

Mr. Speight and 12 others were refused bail in a Suva court on Saturday. The chief magistrate, Mr. Salesi Temo, said he had considered releasing the men but was worried by an affidavit from the military which said 27 Army weapons stolen by the rebels were still missing. — Reuters

THE HINDU

7 AUG 2000

Private homecoming for ousted Fiji PM

During his stay here, he will also be visiting Haryana — his home state — and pay a visit to his native village Jamalpur, where a series of civic receptions are awaiting him.

It is interesting the way India is handling Chaudhry's visit. Delhi continues to refer to him as the Prime Minister of Fiji, but is aware that the political point that it is making cannot be extended in treating him officially as the head of the island's government.

Chaudhry, who is of Indian origin, was ousted from the Prime Minister's post in Fiji after a coup led by local policeman George Speight and his armed followers.

"It's not unusual for heads of the government to come here on a private visit," Indian foreign ministry spokesman R.S. Jassal said. He pointed out that the King of Bhutan and head of governments of neighbouring countries do this on a regular basis. But he did not want to comment on whether there were any other precedents for an ousted Prime Minister to come to India on a "private visit".

Chaudhry's visit is part of his tour of many nations, particularly members of the Commonwealth. He has been to Australia and New Zealand and will leave for the UK and other European nations at the end of his 10-day visit here.

Vajpayee will host a lunch for Chaudhry and hold talks with him on a number of issues, including developments in Fiji. But the presidential dinner, which is extended to a visiting Prime Minister, is missing. Chaudhry gets to meet Narayanan in the morning on August 17, but there will be no banquet for him. He will also have detailed discussions with the foreign minister later that day and before the end of his visit on August 26. Chaudhry will also get to meet Lok Sabha Speaker G.M.C. Balayogi and other senior parliamentarians and be honoured by them. However, he does not get a chance to address the House.

from the diplomatic nuances and absence of established protocol norms.

The carefully crafted stand taken by India stems from both its domestic compulsions as well as its desire to send out a strong signal to the outside world on democracy. By insisting on calling Chaudhry the Fijian Prime Minister, Delhi not only keeps the domestic audience happy, but also makes it clear that it is not yet in a mood to accept military ruler Pervez Musharraf as the legitimate head of the Pakistani government. Not at least till he supports cross-border terrorism in Kashmir and other parts of the country.

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Aug. 14: Politically-savvy India has decided to give ousted Fijian Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry a "hearty welcome" when he arrives here on Wednesday for a 10-day tour of the country, but is dubbing it as a private visit and not an official one.

Chaudhry is being given access to the topmost level of the Indian leadership that includes President K.R. Narayanan, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and foreign minister Jaswant Singh. But the fact that his is "technically" not the visit by the head of a government can be read



Mahendra Chaudhry

THE TELEGRAPH

15 AUG 2000

Chaudhry comes home with battle call

ATUL SANGAR
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

ROHTAK, Aug. 17. — Fiji's deposed Prime Minister Mr Mahendra Chaudhry today urged India to take "strong steps" to restore democracy and the Fijian constitution of 1997 in that country. He said his current international tour was aimed at making international community take steps to restore the 1997 constitution.

On the first day of his visit to Haryana, from where his ancestors set off for the Pacific island, he received a tumultuous welcome. Mr Chaudhry pledged to carry on the fight for restoration of democracy and human dignity in Fiji, saying: "Our struggle has just begun." He said he would apprise Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee of the plight of Fijian Indians when he meets him and appeals for cooperation.

He said India should neither wait for the response of Britain, New Zealand and Australia to the Fijian tangle nor echo their line on this issue. "It is our people, the Indian people, who are being beaten up in that country. So the response must come from India."

Indians and the 1997 constitution of Fiji, Mr Chaudhry said native Fijians faced no threat from Indians settled in that country for the last 131 years. The Indian settlers had contributed immensely to Fijian agriculture, industry and trade. Stressing that the issue was not of conflict between native Fijians and Indians, he said only a handful of Fijians and some elements in the Army opposed his government.

He said after a democratically-elected government was toppled in 1987 by those who couldn't make it, a decade-long struggle paved the way for a new constitution ensuring rights for all. "Now the same trap is sought to be set by those who lost the elections by the talk of a constitution review. India and the international community must not fall into this trap. That issue has been settled."

Virtually ruling out his leaving Fiji or seeking asylum in India, Mr Chaudhry said: "Fiji is my motherland. There is no other country for us. We were taken there by the British as indentured labourers and we made it prosperous. We are asking for no favours, only assurance of human dignity and democratic rights."



Mr Mahendra Chaudhry (centre) with Mr OP Chautala and Mr Devi Lal in Bhu Jamalpur on Thursday. — API/PTI

He was accorded a civic reception in the state. Mr Chaudhry's ancestors hailed from the Bahu Jamalpur village in Rohtak.

Haryana government and several Presenting a strong case for ethnic

THE STATESMAN

19 AUG 20M

Chaudhry wants India to play an 'assertive' role in Fiji affairs

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, August 18

HC-10

FIJI'S DEPOSED Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry is working to get the international community's support for the restoration of democracy in his country. He wants recognition for a "government of national unity," headed by him and a good part of his dialogue with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee was dedicated to urging India to shun the present "interim" regime in Suva.

Mr Chaudhry was forthright that he expects India to play a more "assertive" role so that his country can return to democratic rule. In fact, running counter to the Indian External Affairs Ministry's stand that "Indian origin" Fijians should seek a more home-grown solution to their problems, Mr Chaudhry holds the view that it is India's duty to protect the interests of the

entire Indian diaspora the world over.

While awaiting the outcome of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) meeting scheduled for September 15 in New York, Mr Chaudhry is ready with his own roadmap for Fiji's return to democracy. He has found the answer within the 1997 Constitution which has a provision for a national government with representatives of all political parties with eight seats or more in the Fijian Parliament.

Mr Chaudhry has the support of his coalition partners in the defunct government in this. Talks are in progress with the Sitiveni Rabuka-led Opposition. He enjoys the support of roughly one-third of the Great Council of Chiefs. That being his political clout for the moment, the deposed PM expects world powers to avoid any dialogue with the "illegal" regime.

He disclosed that the response from the Indian side has been "encouraging" till now. "Our position is that we want the Constitution reinstated and a solution. Now that George Speight has been charged with treason, the May 19 coup has effectively failed. Therefore, it is only logical that the legitimately elected government should be brought back".

Mr Chaudhry and Mr Vajpayee held their talks this morning in Hind in an atmosphere of deep-seated mutual trust.

Officials of his rump government would carry on intensive talks with the Indian side over the next few days.

Mr Vajpayee told reporters after the talks that there should be international pressure on the rogue regime in Suva. India would use its position in the United Nations and the Commonwealth to keep up this pressure.

THE HINDUSTAN TIME

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India sends emissary to Fiji

9.9 Nov 80 New

By V. Jayanth

NEW DELHI, MAY 31. By sending its Secretary (Economic Relations), in the Ministry of External Affairs, Mr. S. T. Devare, to Australia and Fiji, India has signalled the launch of a diplomatic initiative to begin fire-fighting operations in the South Pacific island. External Affairs Ministry officials and analysts are not too optimistic about the possible outcome of this effort. But the intention seems to be to convey a clear message to the Commonwealth and Fiji that India will not remain a silent spectator if the island wants to return to the discriminatory system of the 1990 constitution.

The sudden developments in Fiji, which have dragged on for nearly a fortnight now, have taken not just India, but the international community by surprise. New Delhi recently restored diplomatic ties with the island republic, but apparently, there were no early warnings about the impending 'coup'.

Sources in the External Affairs Ministry say that the first priority will be to restore law and order in Fiji and secure the release of the democratically elected Prime Minister, Mr. Mahendra Pal Chaudhary, and others detained in the parliament complex.

The next step will be to work for the restoration of democracy there and step up international pressure to stick to the 1997 constitution, which the new military regime has scrapped. Even as Mr. Devare and the Indian High Commissioner to Australia proceed to Fiji in a couple of days, New Delhi is in constant touch with key players in the Commonwealth to evolve a no-nonsense approach

to deal with the crisis. There is a growing realisation that not much can be achieved in the short term, except to secure the release of Mr. Chaudhary and the others detained.

"We are in touch with both the Commonwealth and the South Pacific Forum, which are directly concerned about these developments in Fiji. The Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr. Don McKinnon, has already taken a tough stand and the Ministerial group will meet soon to finalise a strategy," the sources explain.

Simultaneously, India is trying to get the South Pacific Forum, which is closer home to Fiji, to get into the act and impress on Suva the need to stick to the path of democracy and a multi-ethnic, pluralistic political fabric.

But diplomats are conscious of the limitations in pressure tactics. Mere threats and economic sanctions cannot help in such a situation, which needs to be handled with care and by all sides to the Fijian crisis.

Analysts argue that behind the 'assault on democracy' by the coup leader, Mr. George Speight, and the tacit support extended by the indigenous Chiefs in the Council, lies the problem over land control and rights.

According to Mr. S.K. Bhutani, a retired Indian diplomat, the land titles are coming up for review and renewal very soon and the indigenous Fijians, who own the land, want to ensure a better deal for themselves. The lands are owned by the Fijians, while those of Indian origin cultivate them. Vast tracts are under sugarcane and with Indian hands.

The plan of action, analysts believe will be to sort out the land deals under a "pro-indige-

nous administration" and then prepare for fresh negotiations on the constitution. But it is too soon to really fathom the seriousness of the coup. An equally important factor will be the real motive of failed-businessman, Mr. Speight.

Indian officials are trying to assess the extent of support within the military that the new Chief Executive of Fiji, Cmdr. F.V. Bainimarama, commands. He comes from the Navy and it remains to be seen if the Army will stand by him in this exercise. "Unless they are able to put Mr. Speight in place and release all the hostages, including the Prime Minister, the military regime cannot be seen as taking charge," they argue.

Though it was clear that Mr. Speight would be granted 'amnesty' as a pre-condition for the release, New Delhi is worried that despite the acceptance of all his demands, the self-styled coup leader refuses to budge. The question that has arisen is, does he enjoy the backing of a section of the Army? Unless that becomes clear and a civilian Government is installed, there can be no return to normality in Fiji.

This can prove to be a major diplomatic challenge not just for India, but more so to the Commonwealth and the South Pacific Forum. These are troubled days for democracy and ethnic groups.

For India, it is a second test for its diaspora or the 'People of Indian Origin' (PIO). New Delhi is trying to assist Sri Lanka in resolving its ethnic crisis and has now been confronted with this challenge in Fiji.

THE HINDU

JUN 7 1980

Fiji situation uncertain: official

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, June 3. — Senior Indian diplomat, Mr ST Devare, completed his visit to Suva today, reporting a considerable degree of uncertainty about the release of the hostages and the direction that events were taking in Fiji.

Mr Devare, who will be proceeding to New Zealand tomorrow, met members of the Indian diplomatic mission, other Indian nationals, leaders of Indian organisations as also Fijian nationals, both ethnic Fijians and Fijians of Indian origin. He did not have any meetings with either of the groups exercising control at present.

Briefing the media about the outcome of Mr Devare's visit, the external affairs spokesman said the immediate concern of all the people Mr Devare had met was the early release of the hostages.

However, the political climate in the country

was still very uncertain and there appeared to be no clear authority.

Mr Devare, who found appreciation for the Indian response to the situation, said his presence had reassured the Indian nationals there and there was no sense of panic.

The position to be taken by the Commonwealth in the meeting of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group on Tuesday was a matter of considerable interest in Fiji.

India expects the Millbrook Action Programme to kick into place following Tuesday's meeting of the CMAG. The CMAG provides for expulsion from participation at ministerial level meetings as well as a wide range of flexible measures to be decided upon by the CMAG dependant on its assessment of the gravity of the situation.

A clearer picture of the events as also the international community's response will however emerge after the meeting of the great council of chiefs in Fiji tomorrow.

THE STATESMAN

4 JUN 2000

Indian woes in Fiji

FOR THE second time in just over a decade, the citizens of Indian origin in Fiji are in dire straits. The saving grace of the earlier coup, led by Sitiveni Rabuka, was that the government's overthrow did not mean utter lawlessness since the army was in charge. Despite the denial of an equal status with the indigenous Fijians, the ethnic Indians were at least assured of a surface calm. This time, however, even the army seems at a loss as to how to deal with George Speight's hoodlums who are holding former Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry and several of his ministers hostage. The fact that Speight even threatened to kill former President Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara's daughter, who is one of the hostages, if the army stormed the Parliament precincts, showed the ruthless nature of the man. There is little doubt that Speight has been emboldened by the failure of successive authorities, whether Ratu Mara or the army under Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama, to call the rebels' bluff and enforce the law. Instead, the law itself has been undermined by the promises of amnesty to the law-breakers and a change of the constitution to satisfy them.

For the Indians, however, the situation is nightmarish. Speight and his gang may be holed up at the moment in the Parliament building, but the army is apparently unwilling to move against him while Ratu Mara has fled to a safe haven. Evidently, the entire administrative system has collapsed, with the conditions becoming all the more frightening because the upheaval has been motivated by nothing other than intense racial animosity against Indians. It is not only Speight who is campaigning in favour of reducing Indians to the status of second class citizens, it is undeniable that the army, too, harbours similar anti-Indian sentiments. When he was still President, Ratu Mara had little hesitation in kowtowing to Speight and ordering Mahendra Chaudhry's dismissal.

For the individual Indian, as for the rest of the community, each day must be one of unbearable tension. Nothing can be more distressing than to be regarded as outcasts in a country where they have lived for a century and which they have come to regard as their own. Nor are Indians a small community. Despite the exodus in Rabuka's time, they still comprise 44 per cent of the population. It is unclear at the moment whether Speight represents the majority of Melanesian opinion or that of a relatively small rabid section. But even he cannot be unaware of the turmoil that will result if he tries to terrorise more than 40 per cent of the population into submission. The consequent shock waves will be disastrous for Fiji's political and economic future.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

7 JUN 2000

India demands

release

of Fiji PM

NEW DELHI, JUNE 8. India today demanded the immediate release of the deposed Fijian Prime Minister, Mr. Mahendra Chaudhry, and other political leaders held hostage by coup leaders.

"Our priority is the earliest release of the hostages in Fiji and their safety. They have been criminally held," the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, told reporters after an hour-long meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) chaired by the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee.

He said the Government was in touch with the Foreign Ministers of Australia and New Zealand and the Home Secretary of Britain. "We are closely monitoring the situation in Fiji."

Referring to Sierra Leone, Mr. Singh said India was in constant touch with the United Nations, the United States and countries bordering the trouble-torn West African State.

Terming as erroneous reports that a large number of Indian troops had been surrounded and isolated by rebels, he said only a few of them were in the custody of the rebels.

THE HINDU

9 JUN 2001

India and Fiji

By K. K. Katyal

New Delhi is justified in taking up cases of violation of human rights and democratic principles anywhere, more so when the victims happen to be people of Indian origin.

JUST WHEN India was grappling with the Sri Lankan crisis, the Fiji catastrophe posed another major challenge — bringing out, on the one hand, the severity of constraints under which New Delhi has to operate and, on the other, the urgency of effective remedial steps. There is a case for massive diplomatic initiatives to mount pressure on the delinquent men on the tiny Pacific island to heed the voice of sanity and restore the sanctity of democratic norms. The immediate task is to secure the release of the Prime Minister, Mr. Mahendra Pal Chaudhry, and undo the damage done to the representative institutions.

India's options may be limited but are not non-existent. Close coordination with Australia and New Zealand has to be the starting point of its strategy. Appropriate moves, by these two countries, especially in trade matters, could yield immediate results. There are other instruments of pressure. Fiji's economy is dependent on tourism, export of sugar and the garment trade. The prevailing uncertainty has already hit tourist traffic and a squeeze by the main importer of sugar, European Union, could mean a crushing blow. Whoever is at the helm on the island would want to avoid it. An Indian approach to Brussels, thus, acquires urgency. All sections of Fijian politicians, the "locals" not excluded, value links with the Commonwealth, which could be persuaded to play an effective role.

How far can New Delhi go in espousing the cause or safeguarding the interests of people of Indian origin settled abroad? In some cases, they are in large enough numbers to play a major role in the politics and economy of the country of adoption — even to capture political power — and this leads to confrontation between them and the "indigenous" population. A pro-active policy by India could expose them to the charge of extra-territorial loyalties and, thus, provide an additional excuse to their opponents for embarking upon campaigns of terror. In the final analysis, the Indians abroad have to manage their affairs themselves, in cooperation with others or dealing with them suitably in difficult and abnormal situations. They need to make a judicious use of their clout as economic and political

players, and make conscious efforts to win over the "locals" and develop partnerships with them. If that is done, the relative prosperity of the Indian-origin sections will not rankle with the others or cause provocation of any kind. The tendency to exclusivity in social, political or economic areas may seem fine but it has the potential for serious trouble at the hands of the unscrupulous and the desperate among the non-Indian fellow citizens.

To say this is not to suggest that New Delhi can afford to be a passive spectator when the Indian-origin sections are victimised, sought to be driven out of the positions they have occupied by dint of hard work and spirit of enterprise, are deprived of their rights and privileges as citizens, and denied equality of treatment and opportunities. There are several reasons why it cannot remain disinterested. One, the overseas Indians, even if they are two or three generations removed, have family ties or other equally strong links and any harm to the cousins abroad will cause unease and concern here. The worried local relations will put pressure on the Government which is not easy to ignore on humanitarian grounds, if not for other considerations.

Two, the danger of the influx of refugees is very real. Three, New Delhi is justified in taking up cases of violation of human rights and democratic principles anywhere, more so when the victims happen to be people of Indian origin.

New Delhi, thus, has a legitimate interest in the affairs of the Indian-origin community in Fiji, now that it has been subjected to all manner of tyrannies. The Prime Minister, along with some Cabinet colleagues, has been held hostage simply because of his Indian origin. The hostage-taker, a local businessman, Mr. George Speight, makes no secret of it — he seeks to justify his barbarous action, and give legitimacy to it in the name of the aspira-

queries do not realise that the two situations are not comparable, that, in Sri Lanka, the legitimate Government, though under heavy pressure in one part of its territory, continues to perform its functions, that it has been in close contact with New Delhi, so much so the island's Foreign Minister was in India when pressure from Tamil secessionists was very acute. And the missions of the two countries function normally.

Mr. Devare's presence, even though brief, helped impart a sense of assurance to the Indian-origin sections. He got an opportunity for an on-the-spot assessment of the situation, was able to have detailed discussions with the Governments of Australia and New Zealand — which, hopefully, could be a prelude to effective concrete steps for an immediate and medium-term solution to the problem, created by the hoodlum-mounted attack on democracy. Imagine a businessman, upset by his failure to win a contract, holding the democratic set-up to ransom.

The developments in Fiji are cause for concern to Australia — it cannot take lightly any turmoil or instability in its close vicinity. Canberra may be the first destination of refugees from the island in case the situation there worsens. It hesitates to impose trade sanctions — perhaps because of experience. Last time, when the democratic Government was ousted and a Fijian "local" seized power, Australia moved ahead with the sanctions but other countries — Japan, Malaysia and China — sought to fill the gap. It was a cruel irony that those seeking to uphold human and democratic rights had to pay dearly for taking a principled stand.

However, the past need not deter Australia and should instead spur it into working for a comprehensive strategy that plugs loopholes of the type left earlier. Which means, coordination with other regional players, most of whom do not endorse — going by their publicly-stated positions — the ethnic crimes. India and Australia could put their heads together — the latter concentrating on the regional moves and the former focussing on the broader effort covering the Commonwealth, the European Union and the U.S.

tions of the indigenous Fijians. True, the Indian-origin people are slightly outnumbered but Mr. Chaudhry came to power through a democratic exercise — through elections under the Constitution. Obviously, he was backed by a section of locals. The democratic conscience of the world community, big powers in particular, does not appear to have been outraged enough to find ways of coercing the usurper into terminating his misadventure.

Imagine the legitimate head of Government being held in captivity as rampaging hoodlums were incited to take to violence and looting. The loss suffered by the Indian-origin community, mostly engaged in trade and business, was estimated at about \$15 million. The Constitution was abrogated — simply because it could not ensure against the rise to power of a group of Indian-origin politicians (of course, along with "local" Fijian colleagues). The army, which took over power in pursuit of another coup, is unable to tame the leader of the civilian coup who continues to call the shots, threatening to kill the hapless hostages. The international reaction has been far from adequate — confined to the step of a Commonwealth group towards the suspension of Fiji, apart from critical statements from some chanceries. The easiest — and most painless — way of bringing the Fijian adventurers to their knees is to impose trade sanctions. Such a step by Australia could be the most effective. So far, things have not moved in that direction.

New Delhi did well despatching a special envoy — Mr. S. T. Devare, Secretary (East) in the foreign office — to the island. It was a peculiar mission which evoked some uncharitable comments in advance. Who would Mr. Devare see on the island? What would he do? Some among the diplomats here wondered why New Delhi had been in a hurry to send an envoy to Fiji when it had not taken such a step in relation to Sri Lanka? Those raising such

India dismayed, to act decisively

By C. Raja Mohan

NEW DELHI, MAY 19. India will mobilise support from the international community, the Commonwealth in particular, to act decisively against the forces trying to undermine constitutional rule in Fiji.

Expressing "dismay and regret" at the unfortunate turn of events in Fiji, the Ministry of External Affairs, in a statement here, demanded "immediate restoration" of the legitimately elected Government there.

Given the unclear situation in Suva, the Government is calling the armed occupation of Parliament and the detention of the Prime Minister as an "attempted coup."

Asked whether the Government has taken up the issue with key Commonwealth nations, the Spokesman of the Foreign Office said India "will be in touch with the relevant governments and or-

ganisations." The Commonwealth had reacted swiftly to the military coup in Islamabad last year and suspended Pakistan from the Councils of the organisation.

The Pakistan precedent is expected to set the tone for an early Commonwealth action against Fiji, if the attempted coup turns out to be successful.

Over the last decade, the Commonwealth had adopted democracy and pluralism as fundamental values of the organisation and applied pressure on member states deviating from these principles.

The statement of the Ministry of External Affairs called on Fiji and other members of the Commonwealth "to uphold" the organisation's commitment to the norms of democracy and the rule of law.

The initial soundings from the Commonwealth have been en-

couraging. Mr. Don McKinnon, Secretary General of Commonwealth, has already referred to the Pakistan example.

The British Foreign Secretary, Mr. Robin Cook, condemned the coup attempt in Fiji, and demanded the immediate release of the Prime Minister and a "prompt return to democratic government within the terms of the Fijian constitution."

A possible Indian and Commonwealth action against the coup makers in Fiji will be marked by a sense of déjà vu. Two military coups in Fiji in 1987 saw the Commonwealth's punitive action as well as the Indian move close down its mission in Suva in mid 1990.

After Fiji returned to constitutional rule in 1997, India dropped its objection to Fiji's reentry into Commonwealth, and restored is diplomatic mission there in May 1999.

THE HINDU

9 0 MAY 19

Help free Fijian PM, Vajpayee urged

NEW DELHI: Anxious relatives of Fijian premier Mahendra Chaudhry, held hostage by armed rebels, on Tuesday met PM Atal Behari Vajpayee and sought concrete diplomatic steps to mount international pressure for his early release and restoration of democracy on the island nation.

"The prime minister assured us that appropriate steps will soon be taken at the diplomatic level as also through other necessary means to end the crisis in Fiji," Mahavir Singh, brother-in-law of Mr Chaudhry, told reporters.

"We urged Vajpayee to take up the matter with all friendly countries and the United Nations. His response was quite positive," said Mr Chaudhry's niece Mukta Chaudhry.

PM Vajpayee said that any move to oust the legitimately elected government in Fiji would be unacceptable to India. He said that India condemned the undemocratic and criminal nature of the events that had occurred in Fiji.

He expressed surprise that the coup leaders appeared to enjoy police protection and freedom of action. "They are in violation of the principles of the Harare Declaration and the Millbrook Action Programme of the Commonwealth". The PM directed external affairs

minister Jaswant Singh to take up the matter urgently with the Commonwealth secretary general and the British government.

The group that visited the PM comprised ten close relatives of Mr Chaudhry, said that countries like the U.S., Britain, Australia, New Zealand and France had not only condemned the coup, but also extended support to the elected government of Mr Chaudhry.

A memorandum submitted by them to the PM said, Mr Chaudhry, who belonged to Rohtak district of Haryana, has made "all of us proud by becoming the first democratically elected Prime Minister of Indian origin in Fiji".

Stating that over 44 per cent of the Fijian population was of Indian origin, it said "hence our concern and responsibility increases manifold".

Seeking bold steps for the release of Mr Chaudhry and restoration of the elected government in Fiji, they said "we hope that you will play a crucial and pivotal role in protecting democracy in Fiji".

Meanwhile, Haryana CM Om Parkash Chautala, on Tuesday asked the UN to intervene in Fiji to ensure early restoration of democratic rule through reinstatement of the Mahendra Chaudhry-led government. (Agencies)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

3 4 MAY

India will despatch envoy to Fiji on fact-finding mission

Udayan Namboodiri
New Delhi, May 30

INDIA HAS decided to despatch an envoy to Fiji to get a first-hand report on the fast-changing developments in the island country. The Ministry of External Affairs has announced that S T Devare, Secretary (Economic Relations), will soon be heading for Suva, the capital of Fiji, to conduct urgent consultations with everyone concerned. En route, Devare will stop at Canberra where he will be joined by the Indian High Commissioner to Australia, C P Ravindranathan.

Caution is now the centre-piece of New Delhi's Fiji policy. Notwithstanding its strong condemnation of the coup against the Mahendra Chaudhry regime followed by its dismissal by the Fijian President, New Delhi has preferred to toe a moderate line. It realises that if India is seen as playing a major role in isolating Fiji and causing its economy to cripple, the problems for the ethnic Indians would only multiply.

"What we are seeing now for the past 10 days is essentially an anti-Indian movement. The Fijians want to deprive the ethnic Indians of their political rights and events

are taking the course witnessed in 1990.

The Constitution that was clamped following the Sittiveni Rabuka coup of 1987 had the one-point objective of making it impossible for an Indian to head the Government in Fiji," an external

Status Report

- Fiji's military commander Frank Bainimarama issues a decree revoking the Constitution.
- Rebel leader George Speight rejects the new regime and refuses to release hostages.
- Claims a split in the Army.
- Military chief names Ratu Epeli Nailatikau as new Prime Minister. Nailatikau is the husband of Adi Koila Mara who was the Tourism Minister in the ousted government.
- Fiji TV is back on the air.

affairs ministry official said.

Fiji's economy, which is heavily dependent on the Commonwealth nations, specifically Australia, for its foreign exchange earnings, will automatically collapse once the sanctions threatened by Canberra fall in place. With or without India

getting overtly involved, Fiji will be hit. Therefore, New Delhi does not wish to expose the domiciled Indian community of the island to risk of a backlash.

Already, Indian-owned shops and businesses have been targeted by supporters of George Speight, the coup leader who commands the loyalty of the Fijian masses. Anti-India feelings are expected to peak if Speight is denied a role in the interim Government of Ratu Epeli Nailatikau. What ethnic Indians dread most is a pogrom directed at them for their alleged loyalties to India. Fuelled by anger at being economically hit, the Melanesians may descend on the Indians with increased ferocity.

According to a senior official, the situation in Fiji is highly volatile and could take an altogether different character by the time the Commonwealth Action Group of Ministers (CMAG) meets in London on June 6. "We will not compromise on our demand for restoration of the Chaudhry Government, but the security of the Indian population must be assured during these troubled times," he said, justifying the decision to despatch Devare.

THE HINDUSTAN

31 MAY 2000

Mauritius backs India's claim

MAURITIUS HAS reaffirmed its strong support for India's "legitimate claim" for a permanent seat in a reformed UN Security Council, reports PTI.

"We believe reform of the UN is long overdue. Membership of the organisation has increased almost four-fold since its foundation... Mauritius is committed to enlargement of the Security Council to make it more democratic and representative," Mauritian Prime Minister Navinchandra Ramgoolam said last night at a banquet in honour of Prime Minister A B Vajpayee. "Mauritius is fully supportive of the position

of the African group and of the NAM on the issue of enlarging the Council. To this end, Mauritius has been vocal in its support for India's legitimate claim for a permanent seat in a reformed Security Council," Ramgoolam said.

He said though Mauritius is committed to the goal of a nuclear weapon free world and is a signatory to most international agreements relating to nuclear disarmament, "we also hold that multilateral instruments should not be discriminatory in nature and they should take legitimate security concerns of all states.

PTI, Port Louis

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

12 MAR 2000

Sea, sun, sand and diplomacy

EXPRESS FOCUS DIPLOMACY

The PM is in Mauritius on the eve of the Clinton visit. For his fifty-second poem? For strengthening ties? JYOTI MALHOTRA reports

HAVING successfully surfed the political tidal wave unleashed by his own government in the coastal state of Gujarat this week, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee is taking time off to seriously pursue some R & R this weekend. For the uninitiated, Rest and Recreation is the internationally accepted code for some 20th century lotus-eating, and with some enterprise, trying to do what no one has done before.

Ideas include, reforging bhairav ties with the diaspora in the Indian Ocean island of Mauritius, that nevertheless speaks Bhojpur, Tamil or Telugu with a pucca French accent. Vajpayee himself, while celebrating the holiday splendour of his beachfront hotel, could write his fifty-second poem over the next couple of days — taking off from his 'Kiyavan kavi-taayen' — or even a short story in country tie when you visit abroad.

So what is Vajpayee doing in Mauritius, that too in the middle of the Parliament session, and, on the eve of the Clinton trip to India? Answers could be found in a variety of places, ranging from the purely political, to the economic and ethnic and of course, sociological. Mauritius's melange of races is still predominantly of Indian origin and it helps to invoke the old country tie when you visit abroad.

That Indians continue to be held in high esteem is evident from the fact that Vajpayee has been invited as the chief guest of Mauritius's first independence day of the millennium on March 12

ther to look at some other incredible facts. The island is a true melting pot due to the successive waves of colonisation since the 17th century, each of which imported its choice race of indentured labour. Not surprisingly, today's Indians, Creoles, French, Dutch, Chinese speak English, French, Creole, Hindi, Urdu, Hakka Chinese and Bhojpur. Half of them profess the Hindu religion, the remaining are divided between Christianity and

helped enforce it. Tourism keeps the conservative streak on a leash. The result is a hybrid culture that allows a surprising latitude of freedom to all types.

Incredibly enough, the first Indians arrived in Mauritius soon after the British in 1810 defeated the French in battle and in 1835 abolished slavery on the island — much to the anger of Francophones who had got used to cheap labour on their sugarcane fields.

Since a large part of the PM's trip is driven by the "common tie" syndrome, it might help to bear in mind that the average Mauritian is essentially a liberal, who likes to wear his laidback attitude on his sleeve

Islam.

Since a large part of the PM's trip is driven by the "common tie" syndrome, it might help to bear in mind that the average Mauritian — even those who have zealously guarded their Indian faiths — is essentially a liberal, who likes to wear his laidback attitude on his sleeve. (Here we must stop a moment and pay salute to the incredibly rhythmic and somewhat erotic foot shuffle called the "sega" dance, the product of wilful influences but wholly Mauritian in sequence.) So if history has nudged the tiny population towards tolerance, geography — the Indian Ocean is all around — has

You don't need to go much far-

1810, the British were fully in command of sea routes to India. The 1814 Treaty of Paris ceded large amounts of territory to the victors, but did not dispossess the French sugar oligarchy and ensured that the Napoleonic legal code would remain. With the result that French continues to be the elite's language even today. Most newspapers are in French, the language is still taught at school, even though Creole — a melange of African dialects and French — is really the lingua franca of the island.

The Indians, meanwhile, over the 19th century bolstered their position in the country through their strength in numbers, aided by a visit by Mahatma Gandhi in 1901, who had stepped out of South Africa to take a look at the growing struggle of rights next door. Seewosagur Ramgoolam, a key figure in the movement, helped to set up the Labour Party in 1936. The Party in later years directed the struggle for independence.

History's quirks will be evident in full force this Sunday, at the independence day celebrations of the island. On the dais will be Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam, the grandson of Seewosagur Ramgoolam. Next to him will stand Vajpayee, prime antagonist of the dynastic mode of politics back home. There in the isle of Mauritius, amidst much bilateral bonhomie, contradictions will finally resolve paradoxes.

By defeating the French — who had earlier taken the island from the Dutch, who in turn had replaced the Portuguese — in

100-1
176 3

All help to Mauritius: PM

of India for new

By Alok Mukherjee

MAURITIUS, MARCH 12. The Prime Minister, Mr. A. B. Vajpayee, today rounded off his three-day official visit to this country with a public function at Illot village where he laid the foundation stone for a centre to be built in the memory of Rabindranath Tagore.

At this function, Mr. Vajpayee was at his eloquent best, evoking repeated applause from the audience comprising the local people. The Mauritian Prime Minister, Mr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, was also present and he set the tone for the meeting by making a presentation in Hindi, but switched to English subsequently. Mr. Vajpayee, however, delivered the entire speech in Hindi, which

went down very well with local population. The thrust of Mr. Vajpayee's address was on the time-tested Indo-Mauritian bilateral relationship and whenever he referred to "great initiative of the Mauritian People", the applause was the loudest. Mr. Vajpayee also drew a tremendous response when he promised that whenever Mauritius would need assistance of any kind, the "long distance between us will not come in the way of our reaching help to you."

Mr. Vajpayee also touched on the secular nature of the two countries and emphasised on this point a number of times. Drawing a parallel with India, the Prime Minister pointed out that it was a Hindu king who had without hesitation permitted the setting up of

the first Masjid in India and even the first Church in the country.

Earlier in the day, Mr. Vajpayee was the chief guest at the 32nd Independence Day celebrations of Mauritius, where he shared the dais with the President of the republic, Mr. Caseem Utteen, and Mr. Ramgoolam. The show was brief and somewhat on the lines of the Indian Republic Day celebrations. Of course, the scale and grandeur was much less. The celebrations were kicked off by a fly-past comprising three police helicopters, which was followed by march-past by the para-military forces of the country. A performance by school children and march-past by various organisations in the country rounded off the nearly one-hour long show.

PM breathes business fire before Clinton visit

FROM DIPTOSH MAJUMDAR

Port Louis (Mauritius), March 11: Ten days before President Bill Clinton's arrival, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee chose this idyllic island as a platform to lambast "economic globalisation" and its "failure" to deliver economic justice.

During his meeting with Indian leaders, Clinton is expected to lobby hard to extract promises on opening up the economy further. But a tough-talking Vajpayee appeared to be in no mood to sway to the same tune.

Speaking at the University of Mauritius, which awarded him a D. Litt, the Prime Minister said: "... (though) globalisation was supposed to deliver economic equality among nations, the reality is to the contrary. In the unequal post-globalisation world in which we live today, inequality is on the increase."

"One major concern is that economic globalisation has resulted in increasing income inequality both within and between nations," he said. The reference to

the domestic income gap is being seen as a justification of the budget, which was a mixture of soft and hard options.

The Prime Minister took potshots at the military regime in Pakistan, saying: "Democracy and development are two sides of the same coin."

Continuing with his campaign against terrorism, Vajpayee said: "The threat to democratic and open societies is from terrorism which, unless checked, will emerge as the scourge of the 21st century. The fact that terrorism today is linked with drug-trafficking, arms smuggling, money laundering and religious fundamentalism makes it a greater threat than ever before."

In a signal to the US, he added: "The scourge of terrorism can be defeated only by organised and concerted international action."

Hitting out at unbridled globalisation, Vajpayee said: "It is ironical that while globalisation is supposed to encourage competition and ensure freedom of choice for individuals, in recent times, we have seen big companies in-

dulging in mergers and acquisitions that would not have been possible in the pre-globalisation period. The emergence of these mega-corporations threatens both competition and freedom of choice."

The Prime Minister expressed concern at the increasing debt burden of developing nations. "This burden," he said, "grows yearly with new debts being contracted to pay off current interest rates. This results in a continual haemorrhage of wealth from the developing to developed nations."

He cited figures to show how the gap was growing. "Two hundred and fifty years ago, the richest countries were only five times richer than the poorest, and Europe only twice as rich as China or India. In 1976, Switzerland was 52 times richer than Mozambique. In 1997, it was 508 times richer."

Sending a signal to Clinton, he said: "If one in four of the world's people still live in severe poverty, there is something wrong somewhere. In South Asia alone, half a billion people live in poverty."

■ Clinton terror cushion for Kashmir blow, Page 6

THE TELEGRAPH

12 MAR 2000

CEMENTING INDO-MAURITIAN TIES

THE PRIME MINISTER, Mr. A. B. Vajpayee's visit to Mauritius last week was not just a return visit for that of his Mauritian counterpart, Mr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, but was intended to expand an already strong bilateral relationship. The African state, which is striving to emerge as a frontline financial and investment hub in the region, has always been a trusted and close ally in international fora. The independence day celebrations provided an occasion for Mauritius to invite the Indian Prime Minister and energise the partnership. During this visit, three bilateral agreements were signed — for cooperation in oceanography, information technology and trade — besides extending a \$9-million line of credit for supply of coastal surveillance equipment. Apart from assisting Mauritius in these spheres, India and its private sector would do well to tap the potential there to use it as a springboard to the European Union. Considering that Mauritius has a long-standing and unique relationship with France, joint ventures there may be useful in the years ahead.

Apart from the economic and political ties between the two countries, Mauritius has emerged as a useful diplomatic hub in regional and international cooperation. It is the seat of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC). This regional forum, which seeks to bring all the countries washed by the Indian Ocean together and revive the old exchanges as well as trade routes, faces many problems. As two of the founding members, India and Mauritius must work closely to ensure that it matures into a useful trade bloc

in a not-too-distant future. Thanks to its liberalisation and off-shore funds, Mauritius has emerged as one of the major investors in India. This is because even Singapore-based investments are routed through Mauritius because of its liberal regime. India can encourage this route, if it has basic advantages for investors. Air services to India have been another grey area. Many Indians prefer to fly to Port Louis via Singapore. Since there is potential for traffic, it is time to provide a connection to Chennai, given the cultural links. Hundreds of Mauritian students study in India, particularly in the south.

India must follow up on the discussions last week and act on the agreements. There is a lot of potential for cooperation in the oil and petroleum sector too. Indian help in higher education and information technology may be a trump card, but this is something which the country has failed to exploit not just in the case of Mauritius, but in many developing countries. There have been reports about the timing of Mr. Vajpayee's visit as Mauritius will go to the polls later this year. Mr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam may like to use this visit for his electoral gains, but New Delhi must steer clear of domestic politics. It has caused problems before. Whoever comes to power in Port Louis, ties with India cannot be ignored or neglected. Ties between India and Mauritius have certainly reached that level where irrespective of who runs the Government, the two countries can work together on a host of common concerns and goals.

THE HINDU
18 MAR 2000