

Bihar wants Nepal-India security talks

BY SOROOR AHMED

Patna, July 27: The Bihar government on Tuesday asked the Centre to talk to Nepal to ensure full security to engineers and other employees of the state working in Gandak and Kosi barrage projects in the Himalayan Kingdom.

It has also sought the intervention of the Union government to see that the barrages, embankments and other installations in that country are protected.

If immediate steps are not taken, there is apprehension of massive floods and widespread

destruction in North Bihar.

The state government letter follows the two unprecedented incidents in which the officials and engineers of the water resources department were prevented from entering Nepal by the citizens and the police.

They were manhandled and even threatened that their vehicles would be burnt if they tried to enter the country.

In the first incident on July 13, the state's water resources commissioner, Ms Radha Singh, was prevented by the Nepalese police from entering the country near Birpur in the Kosi belt.

Similarly on July 17 when the engineers working in the western Gandak Main Canal went to plug a breach inside the Nepalese territory, they were asked by the local people to leave the place immediately.

The Nepalese citizens even warned them of dire consequences and threatened that the tractors and other vehicles brought by them would be torched.

The breach in the embankment was reportedly caused by the locals causing flood a large area.

Gandak and Kosi barrages were built under the India-

Nepal treaty and round the clock monitoring on both sides of the border is necessary during the monsoon to prevent any flash flood or breach.

The water resources commissioner of Bihar, who herself was prevented from entering Nepal on July 13, wrote to the joint secretary ministry of external affairs (in-charge North) and deputy chief mission of embassy in Kathmandu in this regard.

Sources attribute this hostile attitude of the Nepalese to the growing anti-Indian feeling and expanding support base of the Maoists.

Centre's move against arms smuggling

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

AGARTALA, July 28. — The Centre has already approached the governments of Bangladesh, Myanmar and Thailand to take necessary steps to do away with the systematic smuggling of foreign arms into the North-east states. The Union minister of state for home, Mr ID Swami, stated this in a written reply to a question earlier tabled by Mr Khagen Das, Rajya Sabha member from Tripura.

Mr Swami said in his reply yesterday that the Centre was worried over the manner in which ultras were getting support in terms of funds and materials from various channels.

The Centre was also aware

that the rebel groups were extorting huge amounts of money through numerous illegal ways, he said.

Mr Swami said some of the North-east militant groups had links with several European non-government organisations. Such non-government organisations through their sister units were providing funds to the ultras in North-east. Some of the terrorist groups in the region had their accounts in the foreign banks. "The Centre has been keeping a close watch on the situation," Mr Swami said.

The ultras in North-east are getting supply of sophisticated foreign arms via Thailand and Bangladesh and Myanmar. Mr Swami said a huge

supply of foreign arms for the North-east rebel groups including those operating in Tripura had reached Coxs' Bazar near Chittagong port in Bangladesh in the first week of April.

He said the NSCN, the Ulfa, the NDFB and the National Liberation Front of Tripura and the All Tripura Tiger Force had been banned.

He also said an arrangement had already been made with the authorities in Bangladesh, Myanmar and Thailand to exchange information at Intelligence levels on a regular basis regarding smuggling of arms into the north-eastern states.

Vigilance along the border had been stepped up, Mr Swami added.

Attack repulsed: An attack by National Liberation Front of Tripura ultras was repulsed by a combined contingent of the state police and the Tripura State Rifles at Pritimoni para in Dhalai district's Manu last night.

None of the policemen were injured.

Militants retreated after an encounter of about half-an-hour.

Six National Liberation Front of Tripura ultras and five members of the Borak National Council of Tripura surrendered their arms before the BSF in South Tripura on Thursday.

They also handed over some explosives, ammunition and certain incriminating documents.

India likely to back Masood successor

SRINJOY CHOWDHURY
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Sept. 22. — India is likely to continue backing the supporters of slain Afghan leader, Ahmad Shah Masood. His successor is Mr Fakhim Khan, who headed Masood's Intelligence wing.

Masood, the Northern Alliance leader, was killed in a bomb blast, allegedly masterminded by the Taliban, just before the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. India, Iran, Tajikistan and Russia have long supported Masood's forces and his death is seen as a great loss for India.

A senior government official confirmed that Masood had come to India last summer for discussions with Indian authorities. He had hoped to increase the strength of his forces and wanted help from his allies. Masood had apparently felt that his army was too small to fight a larger Taliban foe. He wanted to build up his troops and felt the addition of another 20,000 men, trained and well-equipped could turn

the tide. Masood despite been holding his own had not been able to decisively defeat the Taliban.

Quiet in Kashmir: The shadow of the coming battle in Afghanistan is falling on Jammu and Kashmir. "No one is bothered about Kashmir. Everyone is looking at Afghanistan," is the refrain of the Hizbul Mujahideen. Officials who have intercepted radio conversations of Mujahideen militants said the militants feel their activities are being overshadowed by the events in Afghanistan.

In the last 48 hours, there have been virtually no major incidents. Even earlier, in the last week, the number of attacks on Indian security forces had come down as have the number of explosions. This suggests that the militants are not sure what to do now, with the General Pervez Musharraf, supporting the USA. The radio intercepts show the militants are against Gen Musharraf. They support the Taliban.

None of the 5 per cent Afghans among the 2,500 to 3,000 militants in the state



Mr Jaswant Singh signs a condolence book in memory of Ahmad Shah Masood (pictured) at the Afghanistan embassy in New Delhi on Friday. — AP/PTI

have returned to take part in the 'jihad' against the USA. Over half the militants in J&K are from PoK and parts of

MINISTRY SILENT ON JASWANT REMARKS

NEW DELHI, Sept. 22. — The defence ministry today refused to comment on the alleged remarks by Mr Jaswant Singh about giving up charge of the defence ministry.

A defence ministry official said Mr Singh made his alleged statements, at a meeting with foreign ministry officials. He was reacting to a report about Mr Singh speaking about giving up the defence ministry during a meeting with Indian foreign service officials.

In any case, Mr Singh has only additional charge of the defence portfolio along with external affairs. It is also widely believed that Mr George Fernandes, who resigned in the wake of the Tehelka scandal as his party president, Mrs Jaya Jaitley, and her followers allegedly received a bribe at his house, could return following a possible clean chit from the Justice Venkataswami Commission investigating the case. The commission is officially due to finish its hearings by 24 November. How much time it will take is not known. If Mr Fernandes is cleared, he could return as defence minister and that may be only two months away. Mr Singh has been a defence minister for about six months and in this period, has made several important decisions including implementing the Group of Ministers' report on restructuring the defence ministry and integrating the three services. — SNS

Palace, India in insurgency plot: Koirala

Kathmandu, Sept. 7 (AFP): Nepal's royal palace and India may be assisting a Maoist insurgency to topple the government, former Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala has alleged.

"The palace and India are directing the Maoists who have been running terrorist activities in the country for the past six years," Koirala, who is president of the ruling Nepali Congress party, said yesterday.

As proof of the palace's collusion with the Maoists, Koirala alleged that the army — which is under the command of King Gyanendra — had been deployed in July against rebels in far Western Nepal but then suddenly stopped. "This is very surprising. It makes me confused as to whether the palace is not supporting the Maoists," said Koirala, quoted by his personal secretary Birendra Dahal. The army was first deployed against the Maoists in July when Koirala was in office. The Prime Minister resigned in August.

THE TELEGRAPH

8 SEP 2001

Nepal Muslim body backs ^{India} J&K militants ^{& her} ^{neighbour}

Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, September 10

CONTRARY TO Nepal's stance on the Kashmir issue, a Nepalese Muslims' organisation has extended support to the separatist agitation in Jammu and Kashmir.

Nepal Muslim Etehad Association president and former minister Salim Miya Ansari today said, "We express our solidarity with Kashmiri Muslims who are fighting for their liberation in Kashmir. We want India to hold a referendum there. We cannot sit quiet as India has killed 70,000 Muslims there."

Nepal has always recognised Kashmir as an integral part of India for which scores of Nepalese Gorkhas from the Indian Army have either laid down their lives or won gallantry awards since 1947.

Ansari, who is also a leader of the major Opposition Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist), raised the Kashmir issue at a press conference called by the association to oppose "the propaganda of the Indian government and media against patriotic Nepalese and Muslims."

The 12-year-old association has 42 units mostly in the plains bordering India. The kingdom has an estimated 20 lakh Muslims. Last month, some Indian

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newspapers had reported that Delhi was seeking Ansari's extradition in connection with an alleged plot to kill tehelka.com editor Tarun J. Tejpal.

Describing him as an ISI agent, they claimed that the Nepalese leader has links with Rashtriya Janata Party MP Mohammed Sahabuddin, who is also suspected to be involved in the plot.

Ansari, an Urdu-speaking person from Birgunj near the Nepal-Bihar border, alleged, "India has prepared a grand design to gobble up Nepal like Sikkim or enslave it like Bhutan. Whenever a patriotic Nepalese raises his voice against this, India calls him an ISI agent."

He claimed that the Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP), an organisation of Nepalese of Indian origin, is helping India to grab the kingdom. He alleged that Delhi had launched a tirade against him only because he had opposed its expansionist programme.

He refuted the NSP's claims that 40 lakh plainmen have not received Nepalese citizenship for a long time.

He added, "Their number is hardly two lakhs. What will happen to Nepal if a large chunk of people from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh try to become its citizens."

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

11 SEP 2001

Nepal wants better Indo-China ties

Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, September 4

KING GYANENDRA has said Nepal should not play India and China against each other.

"We have to pursue a balanced policy based on reality. And, the reality for us is both are our neighbours. Playing one against the other will be a short-sighted policy," the monarch said in an interview to columnist Dhruvahari Adhikari.

Naya Sadak, a Kathmandu-based tabloid, carried excerpts of the 65-minute interview in Monday's edition.

The 55-year-old King, who

ascended the throne on June 4 after the massacre of the late King Birendra and his family, said, "We should be sensitive towards the valid interests of our neighbours. At the same time, we must see that our glory and prestige remains intact."

King Gyanendra, who is said to have business links with India, said, "China is an emerging world economic power. As a neighbour, Nepal should be wise enough to utilise the opportunities of economic development offered by China."

In a bid to silence his critics, the King said, "I am aware of

the fact that a king cannot run businesses in competition with citizens."

Earlier, there were allegations that the King was running several firms including a hotel chain, a tobacco factory and a vehicle importing company. Communist leaders have asked him to declare his businesses and turn the royal palace, where the June 1 palace massacre took place, into a museum.

He tried to clarify the confusion over the role of the Army at Holeri in western Nepal where Maoists had held 73 police personnel captive in July. There was speculation that

Girija Prasad Koirala resigned as Prime Minister after the Army did not cooperate with him.

The King, who is the supreme commander of the Army, said, "The deployment of the Army, which was carried out at the Prime Minister's request, did not work out because of lack of planning."

He added, "I feel there should be an attempt to make the Maoist give up arms and take part in electoral politics. One cannot under any circumstances accept a situation in which a Nepali takes up arms to fight another Nepali."

INDIAN EXPRESS

18.11.2001

Gorkha students demand repeal of Indo-Nepal treaty

By Nirmalya Banerjee
Times News Network

DARJEELING: The All-India Gorkha Students' Federation plans to launch an agitation in February 2002, demanding abrogation of the Indo-Nepal treaty of 1950 and the formation of a separate Gorkhaland state comprising hill areas of Darjeeling, the Terai areas adjoining Siliguri and Dooars in north Bengal.

The problems of Gorkhas living in north Bengal were discussed threadbare at an AIGSF meeting in Guwahati last month, AIGSF president Roshan Giri said in Darjeeling on Sunday.

According to Mr Giri, there was a need for a clear cut demarcation between the Gorkhas of India and the Nepalese of Nepal. For this, abrogation of the 1950 treaty was necessary. Under the treaty, citizens of either of the countries could enter the other without any travel document.

Demanding the introduction of the passport and visa system between Nepal and India, Mr Giri said because of the unrestricted

entry of Nepalese from Nepal, even the Indian Gorkhas often faced harassment in different parts of north-east India where indigenous people were scared that the growing Nepalese population would swamp them.

At the Srirampur checkgate at the border of West Bengal and Assam, Nepalese travellers were sometimes looted of their belongings, he said. In Assam, nearly 2.6 million Indian Gorkhas who resides often had to face harassment. The situation was similar for about 200,000 Gorkhas living in Meghalaya.

Yet another recent incident was the killing of a gram panchayat member of Gorkha origin by suspected Kuki militants in Manipur. For about 5,000 Gorkhas living in Mizoram, the situation was better as their number was too small to raise an alarm locally. Mr Giri estimated that there were about 10 million Indian Gorkhas in the whole country.

Explaining why a separate Gorkhaland state was necessary, he argued that the interest of the Gorkhas would not be well pro-

tected otherwise. Demanding restrictions on sale of land owned by Gorkhas to other communities, he said Gorkhas in Darjeeling had lost a lot of land to others. Nearly 100,000 Tibetans who had entered Darjeeling after 1962 enjoyed special privileges because of their refugee status, he said.

The AIGSF also demanded reservation of Indian Gorkhas in higher and technical education and government jobs, though Mr Giri was not clear how this was possible since Gorkhas were not regarded as tribals who enjoyed such facilities. "The government should make some constitutional arrangement," he said.

In Darjeeling, unemployment was turning out to be the main problem facing the people, he said. Except for government jobs, there was little else available, and these too were few and far between. Arguing that Gorkhas were lagging behind in educational facilities, he said the demand for autonomy for the Darjeeling government college was still to get the support of the West Bengal government.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

4 SEP 2001

Indo-Nepal treaty adversely affecting both nations

H-12
27/8

By Jayanta Das

THE INDO-NEPAL treaty is due for renewal on December 5. This treaty allows Nepal to send to India goods that are duty free. The treaty, it has been signed to generate development of industry in Nepal.

While addressing Nepalese businessmen, Jaswant Singh on his recent visit to Nepal spoke on this issue and the spirit behind the existence of such a treaty.

The recent past has been particularly bitter in view of Indo-Nepalese trade given that there has been misuse of this treaty by scrupulous traders particularly hitting badly at a number of our own domestic industries. Traders in Nepal are importing goods directly from other nations and then routing the products to India, paying zero duty, who otherwise would have to pay high duties if imported directly from the country of origin.

India has been affected severely in specific industries mentioned below, while Nepal failed

to see any growth in its industry as traders find it more lucrative to import and then export than take the toil of producing and selling. In such a backdrop, the Indo-Nepal treaty requires introspection. The treaty does not fulfill its objectives and worse has been killing many of the domestic industries in India.

Leave alone from an Indian view point even at the level of SAARC (South Asian Association of regional Co-operation), such lopsided bilaterals which are further misused, would do more harm than good.

Industries like acrylic yarn, polyester yarn, vanaspati, refined oil, zinc oxide or cigarettes have been suffering due to such preferential trade agreement. The items included in these agreements have vast duty variation. In addition with almost no import duties in Nepal, goods from places that would otherwise have faced anti-dumping duties in India, are re-routed through Nepal with almost zero duty.

Jaswant Singh has rightly

highlighted that the treaty requires some modifications. This has to be worked out keeping in view the loopholes that exist. For example, there are no provisions for Rules of origin or Minimum Value Addition.

There are also no checks related to underinvoicing. Analysts say that this trade agreement at pre 1996 levels has clauses for input of Indian origin. Such issues should be reconsidered before the new treaty is entered into. This would help address the true objective of the purpose of bilaterals. It should be a win-win situation for both the nations who are participating in such an agreement. In the remaining period, both the nations must jointly address the reframing of the treaty. It is important that from India's viewpoint Nepalese industry grow.

This should give a boost to the Indian industries who could be supplying inputs to Nepal. The imports from Nepal are less compared to the exports from India, an argument raised to show that India has benefitted more.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

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Chaos in Nepal

^{26/18} **T**he virtual collapse of the political system in Nepal is a matter of deep anxiety for the whole region. Insurgents have taken control of the fragile state structure and are now in effective charge of the Army and police as well. The developments in the recent past suggest the failure of the political parties operating in the Himalayan kingdom. As a matter of fact, the flux in Nepal is directly linked to the deep ideological divide that has characterised the state ever since the communists failed to rein in politically disruptive elements in their ranks and the centrist parties failed to provide a logical alternative. The insurgents, officially described as Maoists, have taken advantage of the political instability that has been a part of the politics in the state from the time the transition to a democratic order was rudely disrupted by the intrigues and violence that rocked the kingdom earlier this year. The Nepal government has been quick to suggest the presence of the ubiquitous "foreign hand" which is being seen as the motivating force behind the mercenaries and insurgents. There were several pointers of an imminent breakdown of the civilian order in the country which have obviously gone unheeded. Incidents of violence have been continuous and intensive over the past several weeks. The country's Cabinet has outlined a sort of contingency plan to contain the insurgents who are heavily armed and seem to have extensive local roots. In the prevailing atmosphere of uncertainty that exists in the kingdom, law and order has been an instant casualty. It has been officially acknowledged that the insurgents could not have succeeded without subverting the intelligence system that exists in the country. There has been no dearth of documentary evidence about large scale infiltration of the political system by those whose aim is to destroy the tenuous democratic structure from within. Kathmandu is no longer a Shangri-la, with all varieties of destabilising forces having gained a toehold there. Categorical instances of destabilisation can be traced back to the hijack of an Indian Airlines plane late last year. The preponderance of extremists in the kingdom has raised several questions about the very future of democracy there. The manner in which the Nepal government has responded to the insurgents' challenge reflects a certain panic which could end up actually helping insurgents make deeper inroads. The vice-like grip of criminals over the social system had always made democracy a kind of gamble in the state. The failure of the established political parties to retain their credibility has meant that the insurgents, who have donned a "revolutionary" garb, have found consolidation that much easier. A rather shrill anti-Indian streak that has emerged in Nepal in recent times has also been used by the Maoists to expand themselves in the country. The rebels have apparently networked the whole kingdom, establishing their roots in the interiors as well. While immediate measures to physically contain the rebel onslaught have been promised by the government, the success of these measures will depend a great deal on the resilience of the political system which is under tremendous stress. The task is a severe test of the political class as a whole, since its very existence has been challenged by the extremists. Unless the Nepali state makes a determined bid to redeem the situation, instability could well degenerate into even greater chaos in the neighbourhood.

THE ASIAN AGE

20 AUG 2001

INDO-NEPALESE TIES

Time to take a hard look at the 1950 Treaty

THE Sher Bahadur Deuba government appears to be heading for stability and this augurs well. Since taking over last month, the Prime Minister has managed to have the government-sponsored anti-insurgency Armed Police Force Bill passed by the lower house of parliament. Significantly, even the opposition Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist), which had earlier opposed such a move, has agreed. Deuba's efforts to end the six-year-old Maoists insurgency through negotiations have also received party approval, including former Prime Minister GP Koirala, who had refused to cooperate with the Deuba-led committee to initiate a dialogue with the insurgents. The pattern of Indo-Nepalese relations — which took a dive following the hijacking of an IA Airbus in December 1999 and suspensions of flights for over six months — depended on the situation. Opposition politicians, particularly Leftists, who have strong influence on the Nepalese populace, had always seen India as a big brother. This must be countered.

Jaswant Singh's three-day stay in Kathmandu, described as a goodwill visit, was timely and should help build confidence. His was the first visit by a senior minister after the hijacking and the Royal massacre in June. If India has to improve ties with Nepal it must try to remove minor irritants like the alleged presence of Indian troops in the Kalapani area, Nepalese doubts over water projects and construction of an embankment by India in UP which Nepal says is threatening to flood Lumbini, the Buddha's birthplace. It is in India's own interest to take a hard look at the Friendship Treaty of 1950 signed by Prime Minister Maharaja Mohan Shumshere Jung Bahadur Rana and take the initiative to review it. This is what Leftists in Nepal have advocated since many of its provisions have become obsolete.

THE STATESMAN

Jaswant voices ISI worries to Nepal

2018
KFA
Kathmandu, August 19

Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, August 19

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS Minister Jaswant Singh today said there is proof of ISI activities in Nepal. Speaking to the Indian media at the end of his three-day "goodwill" visit here, Singh said: "Since the securities of India and Nepal are interlinked, I brought up the issue, particularly the ISI, during my meetings with Nepalese leaders."

Singh met King Gyanendra, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and heads of the ruling Nepali Congress and the Opposition. On his meeting with the King, Singh said: "We appreciate the resilience and restraint shown by the Nepalese in the hour of grave crises like the palace massacre and the simultaneous attack on democracy."

"The two countries do not have



JASWANT SINGH

any major, insurmountable problems, though there are some issues that have arisen at the local level. We have to develop some mechanism to resolve them," Singh said.

"Knowingly or unknowingly, India will never do anything that

will threaten Lumbini," he said. The regulators built at Rasia-balkhurd have enough space for passage of water.

Singh made it clear that India is firm about revising the Indo-Nepal Trade Treaty before its renewal scheduled for December 6. "There are certain areas that have to be looked at and corrected without affecting the spirit of the treaty. I explained this to Deuba and other leaders... I also reaffirmed our commitment to building up bilateral friendship and cooperation," he said.

India suspects that some Nepalese exporters, taking advantage of duty free access provided by the treaty, are re-exporting goods imported from third countries to India.

Singh said he was aware of the 1,200 Indian teachers who have been fighting against Nepal's decision to sack them. "Nepal

has given assurance that they will not deprive the Indian teachers of their rights," he said.

On the security of Indian nationals, especially in the wake of the Hirithik Roshan episode, Singh said: "In view of certain incidents, it's not unnatural for them to feel unsafe. But, there is no need for panic."

Asked about the reported attacks on Dawood Ibrahim and Chhota Shakeel in Karachi on Saturday, Singh merely said: "I'm in Kathmandu at the moment."

Last week, some Nepalese journals had carried reports about Dawood spending a couple of days here early this month. There were rumours about him trying to contact his henchmen in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh where some people were arrested with explosives on the eve of Independence Day.

ADJUSTMENTS TO BE SOUGHT IN TRADE TREATY

Nepal not to tolerate anti-India activities, Jaswant assured

India - & her neighbours

By Neena Vyas *HO-1*

NEW DELHI, AUG. 19. The External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, during his three-day goodwill visit to Nepal which ended today, conveyed to his hosts India's concerns about the use of Nepalese territory for anti-India activities and he was assured that Nepal would not tolerate such activities against friendly neighbours.

In a statement released here today by the Indian Embassy in Nepal, it was pointed out that security issues of concern to both the countries came up during the discussions Mr. Singh had with the Nepalese monarch, King Gyanendra, and the Nepal Prime Minister, Mr. Sher Bahadur Deuba.

While India appreciated the recent movement made by Nepal towards negotiation and reconciliation with Maoist groups politically active in the Himalayan Kingdom, it expressed concern about the use of Nepalese territory by "elements manoeuvred by third countries" for "anti-India activities."

The hijacking of an Indian Air-



lines flight from Kathmandu to Kandahar in Afghanistan in December 1999 had underlined the growth of suspected ISI activities. The Uttar Pradesh Government has repeatedly talked about the growth of an ISI network in areas bordering Nepal.

During the extensive discussions, Mr. Singh signaled that India would seek "necessary adjustments" in the five-year trade treaty between the two countries signed in 1996 which would come up for review later this year. The view here is that

clearer rules of origin for exports will help Nepal export goods manufactured there (and thus encourage manufacturing and value addition) rather than be used as a trade route for goods manufactured elsewhere and dumped here. India expressed confidence that solutions satisfactory to both countries would be found.

Mr. Singh assured his hosts that construction of the Russiyal-Khurdwar-Lautan bund had been stopped on July 10 after Nepal had expressed concern. He noted India would do nothing that would in any way cause damage to Nepal. While dismissing unfounded apprehensions he assured that Lumbini, the birthplace of the Buddha, was as sacred to India as to Nepal.

This was the first high-level visit by an Indian dignitary to Nepal after the massacre of the royal family on June 1. The emphasis was on India's continued commitment to building on the existing friendship between the two countries and strengthening ties in all areas.

PTI reports from Kathmandu: Mr. Singh told reporters before

leaving for India that he offered deep condolences to King Gyanendra on the massacre.

"We in India have high appreciation for the Nepalese Government and the people for evincing rare courage and patience and the remarkable way in which Nepal has coped with the most sorrowful national tragedy because of the inherent resilience and strength of its polity and society," he said.

"I am happy to have had this opportunity to visit Nepal. My visit was very cordial and successful and I achieved more than I had expected."

On bilateral ties, he said, "I do not believe there are any major problems or insurmountable issues."

"Such matters as occasionally do crop up at the local level are really not the defining moments of the relationship between the two countries and they must be attended to, worked through and we should establish mechanisms so that they themselves do not become any type of area of contention," he said.

THE HINDU

18 AUG 2001

India reassures Nepal of continued cooperation

KATHMANDU, AUG. 18. Reassuring the new dispensation in Nepal that India continued to attach importance to strengthening relations with Kathmandu, the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, today sought lasting relations between the two countries.

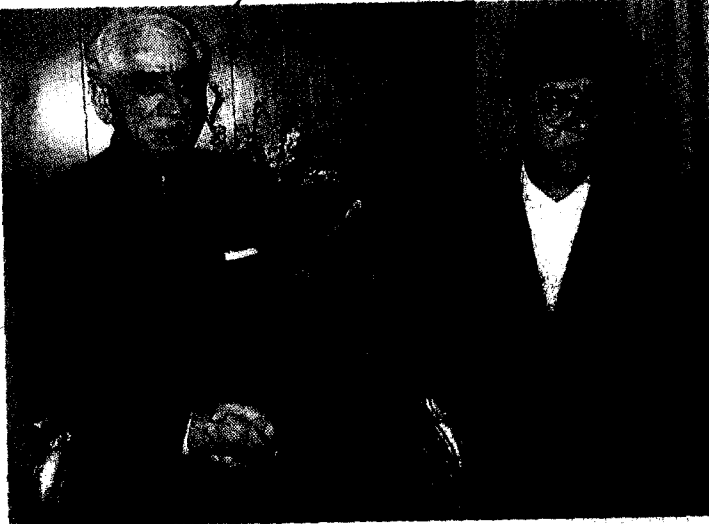
Mr. Singh, who is on a three-day goodwill visit, held wide-ranging discussions with the Nepalese Prime Minister, Sher Bahadur Deuba, and a cross-section of Nepali leaders on the entire gamut of bilateral relations and prospects for further consolidating them.

The Minister, who arrived here on Friday, reiterated India's commitment to the principles of sovereign equality and respect for each other's concerns, sensitivities and aspirations.

The need for coordinated efforts at border management, joint action to prevent terrorists and infiltrators and examining prospects for greater trade and commercial ties figured in the talks.

This is India's first high-level political contact with the new Nepalese leadership since the gunning down of King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya and other members of the royal family in the palace massacre on June one.

Mr. Singh's engagements began with a meeting with the former Prime Minister, Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala, the president of the influential Nepali Congress. He also met the Agriculture Minister, Mr. Mahendra Acharya, the former Prime Minister, Mr. K. P. Bhattarai, and the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Madhav Kumar Nepal.



The Nepal Prime Minister, Mr. Sher Bahadur Deuba, (right) with the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, in Kathmandu on Saturday. — AFP

"I have come here as a friend, a long-standing friend of Nepal. I have also come as an ambassador of goodwill and (to promote) lasting good relations between the two countries," he told presspersons.

Mr. Deuba said "I feel honoured that India, a very friendly country, has sent its Foreign Minister to enhance our bilateral ties. I want India's support to reduce trade imbalance."

Soon after his arrival, Mr. Singh visited the famous Pashupatinath temple. He will call on King Gyanendra tomorrow and also meet the former Prime Minister, Mr. Surya Bahadur Thapa, who is the president of the Rashtriya Prajatantra party, and Mr. Gajendra Narain Singh, the chief of the Ne-

pal Sadbhavna Party.

During his meeting with King Gyanendra, Mr. Singh is expected to express India's readiness to extend all possible cooperation to the Himalayan kingdom.

India has stated in clear terms that it was interested in a strong and stable Nepal. The Nepalese Government has been confronted with the challenge of stepped up Maoist insurgency.

Mr. Singh also met Nepali business leaders and discussed trade differences between the two south Asian neighbours.

Keen to improve bilateral trade and commercial links, India has suggested a review of the 1991 Treaty on Trade before extending its validity beyond December three, 2001. — PTI

KATHMANDU

19 AUG 2001

India reassures Nepal of continued cooperation

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¹⁹¹⁸ ^{Dr. Di. Sh. M.}
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The Nepal Prime Minister, Mr. Sher Bahadur Deuba, (right) with the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, in Kathmandu on Saturday. — AFP

friend of Nepal. I have also come as an ambassador of goodwill and (to promote) lasting good relations between the two countries," he told presspersons.

Mr. Deuba said "I feel honoured that India, a very friendly country, has sent its Foreign Minister to enhance our bilateral ties. I want India's support to reduce trade imbalance."

Soon after his arrival, Mr. Singh visited the famous Pashupatinath temple. He will call on King Gyanendra tomorrow. — PTI

THE HINDU

13 AUG 2001

Nepal Maoists hold hush-hush conclave in Siliguri

Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, August 17

NEPALESE COMMUNISTS — held a strategy session in Siliguri on Wednesday. The revelation, ahead of Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh's visit to the Nepalese capital, has created a ripple here.

Among those who attended the hush-hush conclave were Maoist chief Pushpakamal Dahal, alias Prachand, and the Communist Party of Nepal (Uni-

18/8
fied Marxist-Leninist) general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal. The Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist-Leninist) general secretary Vamdev Gautam, Communist Party of Nepal (Masa) general secretary Mohan Bikram Singh, Communist Party of Nepal (Unity Centre) general secretary Prakash, Samyukta Jan Morcha MP Lila mani Pokhrel and Nepal Mazdoor Kisan Party chief Narayanman Bijukchhe too were present. None of these parties has so far made any

since the June 1 palace massacre and the recent change of Government, begins his three-day "courtesy visit" to the kingdom tomorrow. He is scheduled to meet King Gyanendra, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, heads of political parties and former Prime Ministers.

When asked about the Siliguri meet, a CPN (M-L) leader answered tongue in cheek: "There was need for such a meeting to sort out differences among the Left forces. But we can't say where it was held and who were



official statement on the Siliguri meeting.

Jaswant Singh, the first senior Indian leader to set foot here

present." The UML headquarters merely said Madhav Nepal, who is the Leader of the Opposition in the Nepalese Parliament, had gone to the border district of Jhapa, from where Siliguri is 25 km away. Since last week, the UML and the CPN (M-L) have initiated a move to unite the Communists.

A lot of importance is being attached to the meeting, for it comes at a time when the Maoists — who have taken control of several districts — are preparing to revive negotiations with the Government. This apart, it has further deepened the mystery about the whereabouts of the Maoist chief.

Some time ago, Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chaming had said he would discuss with the Centre the infiltration of Maoists into his State. A fortnight ago, a statement extending support to Maoist insurgents and the "liberation struggle" of the people of Darjeeling, the Dooars and Sikkim was issued in North Ben-

gal. One Comrade Angami signed this. However, the Akhil Bharatiya Nepali Ekta Samaj, which has a number of former CPI(M) supporters, opposed it as a fake.

The Darjeeling-based Communist Party of Revolutionary Marxists and the CPI(M), whose leaders had actively campaigned for the UML in the 1991 general elections, denied having any knowledge of Wednesday's meeting. The district administration too denied that such a meet took place in Siliguri.

Jaswant's Nepal visit to focus on improved ties

Keshav Pradhan & X(9)
Udayan Nambhoodiri
Kathmandu/New Delhi, August 17

INDIAN EXTERNAL Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh, who arrived here this evening, said India would work towards strengthening its ties with Nepal.

Saying his three-day tour was a "goodwill visit", Singh told the media, "We'll discuss all important bilateral issues." The visit, the first by a senior Indian leader since the palace massacre and the recent change of Government, comes at crucial time with raging controversies over the Indo-Nepal Trade Treaty and an embankment in UP, which most Nepalese feel poses a threat to

Lumbini, Buddha's birthplace. On the embankment, Singh said, "We're aware of the issue." The trade issue would definitely come up for discussion, he said.

Nepalese parties and journals have kept up a shrill campaign against Delhi since last month over these two issues.

Right now, Nepal has neither a Foreign Minister nor a Defence Minister, two portfolios Singh holds for India. Nor does it have a Commerce Minister. Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, who took charge on July 22, looks after all three ministries.

Singh may take up the issue of ISI activities and the security of Indians living in Nepal.

He was received by Nepal

Agriculture Minister Mahesh Acharya, is scheduled to meet King Gyanendra, Deuba, former Prime Ministers and heads of political parties.

During his two-day stay in Kathmandu he will call on King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev. He will be the first Indian minister to personally meet the new monarch. There will be official talks with the Deuba.

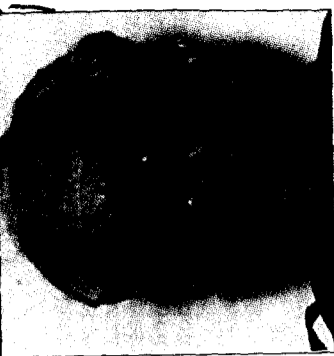
Jaswant last visited Nepal in September 1999. Indo-Nepalese ties have since undergone substantial changes. Bitterness returned to Nepalese perceptions about India when Delhi unilaterally discontinued Indian Airlines flights after the IC-814 hijack.

Brajesh Mishra's visit in June

2000 was preceded by alleged media leaks hinting that the India was concerned over ISI activities in Nepal.

Girija Prasad Koirala's August 2000 visit to India cleared the air, but there was hardly any follow-up to cement the resultant goodwill. Only one meeting of foreign secretaries has taken place since then — not counting the conference at Colombo this month — to work on the prickled issue of reviewing the 1950 Indo-Nepal Treaty.

The palace massacre in June has caused re-emergence of tension in bilateral ties. There were protests on Kathmandu's streets over the way some Indian TV channels covered the tragedy.



JASWANT SINGH

has no special place for India in his heart. But he is believed to be free of pressure from hard-liners who feel anti-India rhetoric is good for votes. As Deuba is in charge of foreign affairs, Jaswant will have the advantage of dealing with a PM who controls the country's outlook towards a bigger neighbour.

There was every sort of rumour aligning the new King to China as well as India. This did not bode well for bilateral relations. New Delhi had offered to send Vice-President Kishan Kant to attend the funeral of King Birendra and his family. But the Koirala Government turned the offer down, saying Nepalese tradition dictated that funerals were left low-key. The Indian Government has since sought various dates with the new monarch, but confirmation from Kathmandu had to wait until the new Government came to power.

Deuba, unlike previous Prime Ministers, is of a new crop of Nepalese leaders. He has not spent years in exile in India and

Jaswant visiting Nepal to build new ties

By C. Raja Mohan

9/20/86
rest
NEW DELHI, AUG. 16. The External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, arrives in Nepal tomorrow on a three-day goodwill visit to establish political contact with the new leadership of the Himalayan Kingdom.

Mr. Singh, who also holds the charge of the Defence Ministry, will be the first high-level political visitor from any country to visit Nepal since the tragic massacre in the revered royal family on June 1.

As he engages the new King and the Prime Minister of Nepal, Mr. Singh is likely to convey the strong Indian commitment to build a new partnership between the two nations.

At a time when the political establishment in Kathmandu is struggling to cope with the political challenge from the spreading Maoist insurgency, Mr. Singh is likely to signal New Delhi's strong interest in the stability and security of the Kingdom.

Mr. Singh will have an extensive round of

HD-17 *1718*
talks with the Prime Minister, Mr. Sher Bhattar Deuba. He will also call on King Gyanendra. The Government hopes Mr. Singh's talks will reassure the Nepal leadership of the enduring Indian commitment to a cooperative relationship with its very special neighbour.

At the same time Mr. Singh is also likely to convey India's hopes for greater predictability in the ties between the two nations that have gone through many ups and downs in recent years. Meanwhile, India has told Nepal it wants a review of the 1996 trade treaty before deciding to extend it for another five years. New Delhi has also proposed talks on the subject to Kathmandu. The Indo-Nepal trade treaty signed in December, 1991 calls for its automatic renewal for another five years unless either side raises objections.

Official sources here say the decision to seek a review of certain provisions of the treaty in no way implies that India wants an abrogation of the treaty.

They point to the many positive results

from the treaty, which has seen a five-fold increase in Nepal's exports to India. Nearly 50 per cent of Nepal's exports worldwide now head to the Indian market. India, however, has some concerns, in particular the inadequate "rules of origin" in the treaty. As a result, Nepal has become a trading conduit rather than an attractive base for value addition before export to India.

New Delhi believes that clear rules of origin and their effective implementation will benefit both sides by promoting manufacturing activity in Nepal and preventing the dumping of goods manufactured elsewhere on the Indian market. Mr. Singh is unlikely to go into a detailed technical discussion of either trade or a whole range of other contentious issues between the two countries.

But it will be Mr. Singh's endeavour to send a strong political message that the Government is ready to address seriously all issues of mutual concern on the basis of equality and common benefit.

THE HINDU

AUG 1991

Nepal Indians step up autonomy demand

Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, August 13

HT-4
19/8

NEPAL'S FAILURE to solve the decades-old citizenship problem of Nepalese of Indian origin, or Madhesias as they are popularly known, has given a fillip to their demand for autonomy.

Madhesia leaders alleged that Kathmandu has always discriminated against their community as far citizenship is concerned. Interestingly, the autonomy issue brought the Madhesias close to other ethnic groups of Mongoloid origin who are fighting to end "the domination of high caste hill Nepalese."

Nepal Sadbhavna Party (NSP) MP Rameshwar Yadav, at a seminar here on Sunday, said, "The only way to end this discrimination is to attain political autonomy." He offered to join hands with the Mongoloid groups to fight

against "discrimination on racial and linguistic grounds."

Human rights activist Padma Ratna Tuladhar, also a champion of ethnic rights, called for a broad-based movement against such discrimination. He said, "Madhesias will never be able to achieve anything until they begin an aggressive campaign like the Maoists. They must support the demand for a federal system of government."

The Maoists, who have been fighting for a Republican state, has already set up a radical organisation called Madhesi Mukti Morcha to support the madhesia cause. The Madhesias, who dominate the Nepalese terai bordering Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, have become restive after the government failed to defend citizenship certificates of about 30,000 of them, which were declared invalid by the Supreme Court for proce-

Indira & her nephew

dural mistakes last month. Amid strong protests from them, the government last week offered to issue fresh certificates.

A report prepared by Madhesi Janadhikar Forum convener Upendra Yadav said while the government is reluctant to grant citizenship rights to 40 lakh madhesis living in Nepal for generations, it willingly gives such rights to Nepali-speaking people from Darjeeling, Sikkim, Assam and other Indian provinces.

Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist) general secretary and leader of the Opposition Madhav Nepal said, "We must try to solve the citizenship problem once and for all even if it requires a constitutional amendment." The NSP, a political organisation of madhesias, will meet here on Wednesday to chalk out its strategy to fight for citizenship rights.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

14 AUG 2001

14 AUG 2001

India, Nepal discuss fallout of insurgency

By Atul Aneja

NEW DELHI, AUG. 9. Concerned about Maoist insurgency in the mountains and the simmering discontent in the plains of the Terai, India and Nepal are defining new ground rules that would encourage stability in the sensitive Himalayan kingdom.

Troubled by the insurgency, which has its epicentre in the northern highland districts, the Nepalese Government is groping for ways to address this challenge. Aware of India's influence in Nepal, New Delhi and Kathmandu have discussed the fall-out of the insurgency on their security.

The developments in the flatlands of the Terai and its implications on the insurgency in the North-East also came up for talks during the recent visit to India of the Nepalese Vice-Chief of Army Staff, Lt. Gen. Pyar Jung Thapa.

India and Nepal realise that there is a glaring dissimilarity in the combat role of the two armies. Unlike the Indian Army, the Nepalese Army is geared mainly for internal security duties as it does not perceive a security threat from any of its neighbours.

Consequently, the Nepalese army, in terms of combat demands, has more in common with the Indian paramilitary forces than with the Army. Not surprisingly, tie-ups between the Nepalese army and the paramilitary forces in the future could increase.

India, however, according to the 1950 In-

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do Nepal treaty, has a role in providing military equipment for the Nepalese forces. Given its existing security challenge, Nepal is keen to acquire modern infantry weapons from India. These include rifles, grenades, night vision devices and radio sets for communication.

The aviation fleet of the Nepalese army may also have to be beefed up, especially with more light transport helicopters, such as the Chetak and the Cheetah which are produced in India.

Despite the larger implications of instability in Nepal, India has ruled out any possibility of getting physically drawn into Nepal's internal strife. The developments in the Terai are also of considerable concern to both sides.

Citizenship issue

India is keen that Nepal does not push ahead with rules which would deny citizenship rights to hundreds of ethnic Indians in the Terai belt. Since several Nepalese of Indian descent have relatives as well as economic linkages in the Indo-Gangetic belt, any such move is likely to generate a negative fall-out on the politics of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. The Government is keen to avoid a political backlash, especially as the crucial Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh are not far away.

India also wants the use of the Terai region for funneling arms to the North-East

insurgents contained. As of now, arms are sent mainly through the Siliguri corridor — the narrow link which connects the North-East with the rest of the country. Once weapons cross into India, they can be channelised northwards towards Bhutan and Sikkim or southwards along the Barak valley towards Silchar, Manipur and Nagaland.

There are apprehensions in Government circles that a spurt in anti-India activities from the Terai belt is likely. Growing communalisation in the area which can be traced to the demolition of the Babri Masjid is already encouraging this.

The Vishwa Hindu Sangh (VHS), Islamic Yuva Sangh (IYS) and the Muslim Ekta Sangh (MES) which have a perceptible presence in the Terai belt, especially in the Nepalgunj area, have all contributed to deepening the communal divide. The IYS reportedly has links with the Benori mosque and the Haqqani school of thought in Pakistan.

Aware of this polarisation, Pakistan's intelligence apparatus has acquired a foothold in the Terai to exploit the situation, Government sources say.

Some of the "genuine" commercial establishments in the Terai which are headquartered in Pakistan have been penetrated by the ISI. Pakistani textile firms in the Terai include Silver-fiber textiles, Vivid textiles and Pantech textiles.

message only exposure

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The Other Nepalis

India
blame
Nepal

The Nepal supreme court's recent order denying citizenship to thousands of people of 'Indian origin' who have lived for generations in the Terai region could trigger a domestic crisis fraught with implications for India-Nepal relations. The three to four million Terai people, known as Madhesis, are de facto Nepali citizens. However, they have been denied citizenship papers, which are necessary to secure property rights, employment, and school admission for their children. Effectively, this means that Nepal will disown nearly four million of its own citizens and reduce them to statelessness. To cite that the Madhesis originated in India generations ago as the reason for taking away their citizenship, is a violation of basic tenets on which the concept of the state is founded. It amounts to a denial of the right to life and livelihood, and is an affront to human dignity. Technically, the court is on firm ground: it has only nullified the procedure for granting citizenship. The order comes in the wake of a ruling in April which rendered "indeterminate" the status of the Madhesis. The amendment to the Citizenship Act was attached to the finance bill by the G P Koirala ministry. The argument for doing this was that the upper house of parliament cannot return a finance bill, and that the king would have to give his assent. But the king referred the bill, passed by the lower house, to the court which held the amendment to be in contravention of the constitution. While the ploy failed, the Nepali Congress of Mr Koirala could publicly claim that it had acted to settle permanently the question of citizenship in favour of the Madhesis.

There lies the core of the issue: political parties proclaiming their commitment to resolve the matter, and yet fighting shy of taking the necessary legislative and legal action to give Madhesis the citizenship that is their inalienable right. During the struggle for democracy in 1990-91, the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal had promised to undo this injustice to the Madhesis. But by pandering to misplaced anti-Indian sentiments and failing to get the Citizenship Act amended they have created a situation that could exacerbate the conflict. Sections of the extreme right and left are already stoking fears that citizenship to Madhesis could result in a Fiji-like situation where Indians dominate Nepal's political and economic spheres. By their effete response, the mainstream parties are guilty of perpetuating exclusivism and endangering the kingdom's multi-ethnic and multi-cultural traditions that predate multi-party democracy. At stake is the democratic right of all Nepalis to equality before the law. Given the potential for ethnic conflict and its inevitable consequences, it is crucial that the 1990 constitution, which left intact the panchayat regime's provisions on citizenship, be amended to give legal sanction to the prevalent reality. This requires all the parties to act in concert and ensure passage of the citizenship bill so that, as the court has been insisting, there is a constitutional sanction to the process of granting of citizenship papers. Otherwise, Nepal — which has already undergone much trauma and upheaval — would be courting another avoidable conflict.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

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India to review trade treaty with Nepal

A B Indrani Bagchi
NEW DELHI 6 AUGUST
WITH THE domestic industry adversely affected by a surge in imports, India is set to review the Indo-Nepal trade treaty next month. The treaty, which comes up for automatic renewal in December, requires a notice of three months. India, though mindful of its duties towards its neighbour, finds itself without options.

A high-level meeting between the two commerce secretaries, over the weekend in Kathmandu, on the implementation issues in the treaty proved inconclusive.

India's grouse stems from a "sudden surge" in export of certain items like hydrogenated vegetable oil, copper wire, zinc oxide, acrylic yarn, iron pipes and plastic materials from Nepal, which has severely affected the domestic industry. Though Nepal said it is cognisant of

Indian concerns, it added that they scheduled a meeting of senior officials one year after India sought emergency consultations. India interprets this as a sign of Nepal's unwillingness to address the issue with sufficient interest.

Nepal, in turn, points to the difference in the size of the two economies as well as its trade deficit with India as defence of its actions. Nepal said the import surges could not possibly affect the Indian industry. India argued that on a sectoral basis, the unchecked imports have affected, for instance, the textile industry in Ludhiana or the vanaspati producers in many north Indian states.

It is the duty differential which can go anywhere between 35-75 per cent, that makes competition unequal for the Indian industry. Added to this is the duty drawback that Nepal has recently introduced, which compounds the inequality.

During the long-pending review last week, Nepal pointed out that it had increased export duties on some goods from 3 per cent to 5 per cent. But India finds this inadequate and asked for additional measures.

Indian industry groups have recommended, among other things, that India extend MFN status to Nepal though it is not a member of WTO, which will give it the same treatment that others receive. But the government is unwilling to go that far because it is conscious that as Nepal's largest trading partner and the source of the highest FDI (37 per cent), India cannot impose very harsh measures on Nepal, especially since the trade treaty has had a beneficial impact on Nepal's industrial growth.

But there is a growing feeling within the government and the industry that Nepal should be a lit-

tle more sensitive to Indian concerns — both on the trade and the security fronts. Nepal has been dragging its feet on an investment protection agreement, the draft of which has been sent by India four years ago or a motor vehicles agreement to formalise an ad-hoc arrangement from the 1960s. Instead, Nepal wants to rush through a railway operation agreement that extends a railway route from Kolkata to a dry port in Birganj that will boost its third country trade.

India has now linked the latter to the motor vehicles pact. India's concerns include a discrimination Nepal follows by accepting pollution certificates from manufacturers of Korean and Japanese vehicles but not from Indian.

On the security front, too, India has been raising its concerns about the growth of ISI activities in Nepal.

Ulfa to dislocate four bases in Bhutan

Royal government clinches deal with militants after talks

BY BIJOY SANKAR SAIKIA

AA 3/6/8
New Delhi, Aug. 5: The Ulfa militants of Assam will dislocate four of their base camps in Bhutan soil by December this year. The Royal Bhutan government has clinched a deal to this effect with the Ulfa leadership after several rounds of talks spanning May-June. This was revealed in the National Assembly of Bhutan by the Speaker on Friday at the end of a discussion on the security threat posed to the nation by the illegal activities of Ulfa and Bodo militants.

According to the *Kuensel*, Bhutan's national newspaper, the 79th session of the National Assembly, which concluded on Friday, was largely dominated by the growing security concerns among the Bhutanese people and the

policy makers in view of a rise in violence and also the persistent diplomatic pressure from the Indian authorities to evict the Northeast rebels. In several meetings earlier, the representatives of the clergy, the government and the citizenry in general had pledged their physical and material support and even their lives to any move by the King to protect the security and sovereignty of the nation.

In fact, the King himself was under tremendous pressure from his countrymen as well as the Indian authorities to evict these militants from his kingdom.

Last year, the Indian Army had even trained 2,000 soldiers of the Royal Bhutan Army in jungle warfare and provided them with sophisticated weapons to fight the Northeast rebels.

But the King seems to have preferred a

peaceful settlement to the issue in view of the fact that any offensive against the rebels might choke the supply lines of essential commodities as all such supplies pass through Assam.

Making a statement on the breakthrough, the Speaker told the House that there will be five more Ulfa camps left in Bhutan territory after December. He expressed confidence that the Assam rebels will soon be persuaded to dislocate these camps also. Meanwhile, the Royal Bhutan police has requested the Kokrajhar district police in Assam to identify and arrest the culprits behind the gruesome land mine attack on a Bhutan forest department truck at Devadangri on Tuesday in which four Bhutanese forest guards and a student were killed and six others, including a woman and a four-year-old child, were injured.

THE ASIAN AGE

6 AUG 2001

Assam killings worry Bhutan king, MPs

HT Correspondent
Guwahati, August 4

THE NATIONAL Assembly of Bhutan has witnessed much uproar in the past few days over the recent killing of five Bhutanese people in Assam.

Bhutan Home Minister Lyonpo Thinley Gyamtsho told the Assembly that King Jigme Singhe Wangchuk was deeply disturbed by the unprovoked attack on Bhutanese people.

The King has commanded the Royal Bhutan Army commander in Gelephu to make all necessary arrangements to help the victims and their families.

Among the victims of the July 31 blast was the son of the representative from Panbang in Bhutan.

Expressing sympathy, his colleagues said that since Indo-Bhutanese friendship was built on mutual trust and confidence, it was important that the Indian Government took immediate action against the killers. Four forest guards and a student were killed when a forest department truck carrying 13 people was blown up by a remote-controlled landmine at Devadangi in Assam, four km from Gelephu, on July 31.

Eight people, including a woman and her four-year-old child, were injured. The blast is suspected to have been set off by the NDFB. The Assembly members reacted with shock, grief and anger. The atmosphere was subdued and emotionally charged.

"India has always been a close friend of Bhutan, but what are the foundations of this friendship? Even if a stranger dies at someone's doorstep, the owner of the house cannot help but be responsible for the person. When innocent Bhutanese people are being killed in India, the Indian Government must accept some responsibility and bring to justice the culprits," said a representative from South Bhutan.

The Assembly members said the people of Bhutan are completely in the dark about the

ULFA SNEAKS INTO PEACE DISTRICTS TO LICK WOUNDS

SMARTING UNDER debilitating attacks by the Army, the Ulfa has slowly crept into Assam's two quietest districts — Goalpara and Dhubri — which had been hitherto spared the claw-hold of militancy. The peace and quietude of these two westernmost districts of Assam can be gauged from the fact that the Ulfa did not have even a district command here, when its cadres were running amok all over the State during the early part of the bloody '90s. According to intelligence sources, it is the geographical location of these two districts lured the crippled Ulfa here. The militant outfit has almost been pushed to oblivion in all other districts except, of course, Nalbari. Goalpara district, on the south bank of Brahmaputra, shares the inter-State border with Meghalaya, which shares the international border with Bangladesh, thereby providing passage to the militants from and to Bangladesh.

PTI, Guwahati

motive behind the killings. "We do not know the Indian Government's stand on this problem. It is imperative that the two countries discuss the issue to avoid such incidents," the representative from Thimpu said.

The Assembly members argued that Bhutanese people would never think of deliberately harming a single Indian citizen, and yet Bhutanese citizens were not safe on Indian soil.

They expressed dismay that the Indian authorities have not yet arrested the killers who massacred 15 Bhutanese citizens last December.

Meanwhile, the Royal Bhutan Police has urged the district officials and their counterparts across the border to identify and arrest the killers.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES
- 5 AUG 2001

Dam put on hold to nurture Nepal ties

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Aug. 1: Aware of the sensitive nature of its bilateral ties with Nepal, India has decided to suspend the construction of a 12.5-km-long embankment on the Khura Ghugi dam in Uttar Pradesh.

The Nepalese leadership had expressed concern that construction of the embankment had inundated large areas adjoining the border and also threatened to flood Lumbini, the birth place of Buddha. The embankment is between Gorakhpur and Gonda districts bordering Uttaranchal. Nepal's Lumbini district is just across the border.

Indian and Nepalese experts have decided to conduct a joint inspection of the area on August 6. "The construction has been tem-

porarily suspended," foreign ministry spokesperson Nirupama Rao told reporters today. She said the decision was to assuage the Nepalese concerns.

The Uttar Pradesh government had decided to build the embankment in November last year to prevent adjoining areas from being flooded. But experts on the other side of the border said the barrage threatened more than 200 Nepali villages and was a danger to the heritage site at Lumbini.

Keeping these concerns in mind, India put up six regulators to ensure that the water, once it rises beyond a certain level, does not flood Nepalese areas but comes back to India.

In Kathmandu, the flooding of Nepalese villages was hotly discussed in parliament. Charges have already been levelled against

Delhi that the inundation of Nepalese areas was a deliberate act on India's part.

Last year, riots and had rocked Kathmandu and other parts of the Himalayan kingdom over an alleged anti-Nepal remark by film star Hrithik Roshan. Even during the recent palace massacre, sections in the country had blamed India for the killings.

A Forward Bloc team, led by Amar Roy Pradhan, met water resources minister Arjun Sethi to highlight the inundation of large parts of Cooch Behar and other areas of North Bengal because of the failure of Bhutanese authorities to take effective steps. One of the reasons for this was said to be the haphazard manner in which dolomite mining was being carried out in Bhutan leading to rapid deforestation.

THE TELEGRAPH

2001

Nepal smells Indian conspiracy over dyke

Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, July 31

NEPAL'S CAMPAIGN against India over an embankment has turned almost hysterical as incessant rain plays havoc in parts of the kingdom.

At least 40 persons have died in landslides in western Nepal over the past three days. The embankment in question is in Uttar Pradesh's Siddharthanagar district close to Lumbini, a Nepalese village, which has now got worldwide recognition as the birthplace of the Buddha.

Earlier, there was a controversy over whether the founder of the Buddhism was born in India or Nepal. A section of the Nepalese now smell an Indian conspiracy to

destroy Lumbini, a world heritage site, by blocking water with the help of the embankment.

Samyukta Jan Morcha (a radical Communist outfit) MP Lilamani Pokhrel alleged in Parliament yesterday that India wants to project Piprahawa, an Indian border village, as the Buddha's birthplace. He claimed that India has built an artificial stupa to prove it as the Buddha's birthplace.

This was despite India's earlier announcement that the UP Government had already stopped flood control work along the embankment on June 24. It further said that 47.5 km of the 60-km long embankment was built decades ago. It claimed that UP was building two regulators to monitor the flow of water through the incom-

plete stretch of 12.5 km that often submerges at least 85 Indian villages.

On Sunday, a seminar attended by religious leaders, geographers and water resources experts, also made similar allegations against India.

Nepalese parties alleged that India had taken up construction work unilaterally in violation of international convention. Countries like Japan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma and China have spent billions of dollars to develop Lumbini into an international pilgrimage centre like Mecca. A cartoon in a prominent daily even portrayed Indian Prime Minister A B Vajpayee as the Taliban who hit the headlines for destroying Bamiyan Buddhas.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

1 AUG 2001

India swallows Nepal citizenship curb

Udayan Nambodiri
New Delhi, July 30

THE NEPAL Supreme Court's recent order denying rights of citizenship to over 300,000 ethnic Indians settled in the Terai valley has put the Indian Government in a fix. Unable to react officially for fear of upsetting Nepalese sentiments at a sensitive juncture in its history, the turn of events has quite complicated India-Nepal relations.

During his visit to India last July, former Nepalese Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala had assured the Indian Government of his positive interest in permanently settling the country's Indian-origin population.

The Nepal Sathbhavna Party, which represents the interests of the ethnic Indian minority, has been threatening an agitation over Kathmandu's indecisiveness over its long-standing demand for citizenship for the community for years. For new Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, the issue represents an additional headache as the Government fights the Maoist insurgents.

Koirala had been sincere in his attempts to settle the Indians even though the palace had harboured opposition to it for decades. Last year, Koirala's Government moved the Citizenship Amendment Bill in the Nepalese Parliament, but the Supreme Court struck it down, saying a

Constitutional Amendment should be carried out first.

The Koirala Government attached the Bill to the Finance Bill which was passed by the Pratinidhi Sabha (lower House) of Parliament. But the Rashtriya Sabha (Upper House) objected to it. The matter was then referred to the King Birendra who sent it to the Supreme Court.

Last week, the apex court ruled that the Bill was in contravention of the existing Constitution and the Government must first move an amendment to the Constitution before introducing it afresh.

The present political alignment between pro- and anti-India forces in Nepal make things diffi-

cult for any legislation favouring merger of the Indian-origin people with the rest of the population impossible.

A large number of Nepalese people fear the country may be landed with a Fiji-like situation if the ethnic Indians are allowed political and economic parity with the indigenous population. Devoid of citizenship rights, the community feels discriminated against in employment, land-ownership and even admission of their children to State-run schools.

But at this point, Delhi can only wait and watch. There is also considerable apprehension over the possibility of refugees pouring into adjoining Bihar and Uttaranchal.

Nepal, Bengal rebels in team-work pact

FROM PROBIR PRAMANIK

Kakarvitta (Indo-Nepal border), July 20: Emboldened by their growing influence in Nepal, Maoist rebels have forged close ties with insurgent outfits in north Bengal and the North-east. They have formed an umbrella organisation to provide tactical support to each other.

Indian intelligence agencies are concerned about a secret meeting between the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists), the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO) and the National Democratic Front of Boroland (NDFB) at Birgunj in eastern

Nepal last month.

Sources said they have more reason for concern now that the extremists in Nepal have received a shot in the arm with Prime Minister Giriya Prasad Koirala resigning, raising their hopes of a communist republic.

Nepalese intelligence officials confirmed that a high-level meeting between Maoist leaders and the Indian insurgent outfits took place on June 20 on the outskirts of Birgunj town in Jhapa district in eastern Nepal. Top Bhutan-based KLO and NDFB militants were reported to have attended the secret meeting.

"We have information that the

Maoists have sought both arms and safe houses from militants in north Bengal and Assam. They lack sophisticated firepower, which the KLO and the Bodo outfits have. The Indian insurgents have promised to provide them with arms," the Nepalese official said.

"The Indian rebels also promised to provide arms training to the Maoists in camps in eastern Nepal, mostly in Ilham and Jhapa districts. Though we have been keeping a close tab on the Maoist rebels, the meeting could not be detected on time," the official said.

Indian intelligence officials are afraid that there could be a likely connection between the Indian re-

bels, the Nepal Maoists and the ISI. "The meeting is of great concern to us. We are trying to ascertain whether any ISI operatives were present during the talks," said an intelligence officer based in Siliguri.

"What is even more worrying is that the militants have drawn up plans to destabilise the vulnerable Siliguri corridor, which is being increasingly used by Bhutan-based north-eastern militant outfits for both routing arms as well as a transit point to a third country," the official said.

"The insurgent groups could be gathering funds and working in tandem with Pakistani mercen-

aries based in Kathmandu. It is through Kathmandu that North-east militant groups, including the NDFB, KLO, National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) and Ulfa gather funds and then start operations in countries like Bhutan and Bangladesh," the official said.

"Taking advantage of the situation along the eastern border of Nepal, some of which are under the control of Maoists, Ulfa has managed to establish its transit camps at Ilham, Jhapa, Tapelgunj and Panchtar in Nepal. Ulfa and NDFB have also been procuring arms and ammunition via this Nepal corridor," an army intelligence official pointed out.

Indian teachers in Nepal fear sack

Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, July 11

INDIA HAS asked Nepal not to retrench Indian teachers working in the kingdom for years on grounds of their nationality.

This comes in the wake of last week's sacking of Hridaya Narayan Mishra, a resident of Uttar Pradesh's Maharajgunj district who taught science and mathematics in a Nepalese school for about 14 years.

Mishra was fired from service despite an understanding between Nepal and India on the retention of Indian teachers who joined work before 1990.

The Bharatiya Shikshak Sangh (Nepal), which has taken up Mishra's case with the Indian Embassy and the Nepalese Education Ministry, claimed that at least 1200 Indian teachers might get the sack soon. Of them, 11 have already received quit notices. In view of this, Indian ambassador to Nepal Deb Mukharji wrote a letter to Nepalese Education Minister Amod Prasad Upadhyaya on July 6, asking for withdrawal of the termination order served

on Mishra. Mishra received the order only on July 4, though it is supposed to be effective from March 14, 2001. Mukharji expressed "distress" at the fact that Mishra's services were terminated for his not having Nepali citizenship. He reminded the Minister of the assurances given by Nepal earlier that the services of the existing Indian teachers would not be terminated on grounds of their nationality. Sangh president Balji Pandey, who had also received a termination letter earlier, said, "Nepal does not want to abide by either the 1950 Indo-Nepal Peace and Friendship Treaty or by the several understandings that it has reached with India about our jobs." He added that his organisation would file a case in the Indian Supreme Court next month, questioning the relevance of the 1950 Treaty that allows Indians and Nepalese to work in each other's country.

Nepalese officials maintained that they could retain only those teachers who were directly recruited by the government.

India, Nepal vow to curb

terrorism

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, June 29. — India and Nepal today expressed their firm determination not to allow use of their territories for activities directed against each other. They also agreed to strengthen cooperation to control terrorists' activities across the border.

This was decided at the two-day fourth India-Nepal Joint Working Group meeting on border management here when the two sides also agreed to share Intelligence so as to effectively deal with terrorists and undesirable elements across the border.

The decision assumes significance in the context of apprehension in New Delhi about the activities of anti-Indian elements in Nepal which were suspected to be behind the hijacking of the Indian Airlines aircraft from Kathmandu and the anti-Indian riots early this year on the Hrithik Roshan controversy.

While agreeing to hold regular meetings of the Interpol units to expedite disposal of pending cases on both sides, the meeting also decided to commence expert-level discussions on a legal framework for cooperation in criminal and civil matters and to review extradition arrangements, an official release said.

The two sides also agreed to expedite the procedural aspects of improving infrastructural facilities at the border checkpoints.

While appreciating the improvements in the security arrangements at the Tribhuvan International Airport at Kathmandu, the meeting emphasised the need for early computerisation of immigration facilities.

It was agreed that the home secretary-level talks between the two countries would be held here at the earliest and the fifth meeting of the JWG would be held at Kathmandu at mutually convenient dates.

While the Indian side was led by Mr Surendra Kumar, joint secretary in the home ministry, the Nepalese side was represented by Tika Dutta Nirualu, joint secretary in the home ministry.

THE STATESMAN

Indo-Nepal JWG meet begins

NEW DELHI, JUNE 28. The fourth India-Nepal Joint Working Group (JWG) began its two-day meeting here today to discuss among other issues steps to curb terrorist and criminal activities and measures to strengthen the extradition treaty.

The meeting also discussed security arrangements at Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International Airport. It reviewed the joint district-level boundary committee meetings held earlier and the progress made on the mutual legal assistance treaty. — PTI

THE HINDU

India's task in Nepal

By Atul Aneja

49-10
19/6

THE ASSASSINATION of the royal family in Nepal has brought to the fore a realignment of political forces which pose a serious challenge to India. With instability knocking on the doors of Nepal, India has to grapple with policy options which will best protect its national interests.

What are India's interests in Nepal? For India, geostrategic compulsions demand that Nepal remains politically stable. Nepal continues to remain a key buffer between the two Asian giants, India and China. Any alteration of the status quo in China's favour, therefore, can have negative repercussions on India as it can affect the bordering Indo-Gangetic plain area.

In fact, in case China deepens its hold in Nepal, it can well be positioned to exert an influence over India's political heartland. China already is in a position to lean on India, along the 4000-km-long border in the Northeast and Ladakh.

Second, stability in Nepal is vital for India's internal security. Nepal, for instance, has already become a base which has been exploited by foreign agencies for spreading extremism including urban terrorism in India. It has now been established that around 100 kg of RDX had been planted in Nepal by the Pakistani intelligence around 1995-96.

These explosives were then distributed throughout Nepal and subsequently used for selective terrorist activity. For instance the RDX used in the Lajpat Nagar blasts in New Delhi was smuggled from Nepal.

Investigations related to the incident led to the recovery of another 15 kg of explosives from a Kathmandu hotel. Around 20 kg more was seized from a Sikh militant who served as the conduit for the Khalistan Zindabad Force at Kathmandu airport in December 1998.

With its open borders with India's eastern States, Nepal, is well suited to be a base for launching subversive activity in the strategically-important Siliguri corridor. The Siliguri corridor, which is

surrounded by Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan and China, is highly sensitive as it is the only link between the Northeastern States and the rest of India.

The upsurge in Maoist activity in Nepal poses yet another security challenge to India. This is because the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) has deep linkages with the People's War Group (PWG) and the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) which is influential in Bihar.

By establishing its linkages within India, the Maoists in combination with the PWG and the MCC can pose a security

challenge to at least four Indian mainland States.

As chaos grips the Nepali State, India's policy options are limited. Pragmatism demands that India supports the new royal dispensation. Such a disposition is necessary not on any personal grounds but because India has a big stake in protecting some of Nepal's key institutions.

With political turbulence rocking Nepal and political parties decaying, India has a clear interest in preserving the institution of monarchy as stabilising force in the restive Himalayan state.

Establishing a political stake in the monarchy may pay off well as Nepal's

For too long, our foreign policy has been dealing only with the Nepali elite, and ducking the anti-India tirade at the ground level.

challenge to at least four Indian mainland States.

According to reports, Maoists with the Dandakaraniya forests as the destination, are establishing a land corridor with the help of their Indian allies. In case this happens, it will affect the Indian States of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh.

The Maoists within Nepal have emerged as a powerful political force. With four districts of mid-western Nepal as their hub, Maoists in Nepal have fanned out in 35 out of 75 districts of the country. Their activities have so far affected two-thirds of Nepal's 24 million people and have resulted in around 2000 deaths. After remaining in the wilderness for some time, the Maoists are taking steps to come into the national and international limelight.

In terms of their tactics, the Maoists model themselves after Peru's "Shining path" guerrillas. With a core strength of around 2,500, supported by an estimated 10,000 militia, the rebels have benefited from the expertise of ex-Indian and British army Gurkhas.

ruling establishment after the emergence of King Gyanendra on the scene is showing signs of pro-activism. For instance, Nepal's rulers have not hesitated to use the Army, when threatened by the riots which broke out.

Nepal watchers have been surprised by this act as the army has been kept confined to the barracks since the 1990 pro-democracy movement. The show of strength included the deployment of armoured personnel carriers on the streets — a powerful sign that King Gyanendra means business.

After flexing its muscles on the streets, the Nepali Government, with the apparent nod of the royalty, has shocked the Nepali intelligentsia by arresting a well-connected editor of a leading Nepali daily for publishing a "seditious" article written by a top Maoist leader. The signals are obvious. The media has to stay within its limits and the Maoists will be confronted as King Gyanendra takes charge.

New Delhi needs to engage King Gyanendra in the hope that he will preserve the institution of monarchy and encour-

age the Nepali establishment to get tough to protect India's core security interests. It is also hoped that King Gyanendra will do his bit to keep the Chinese influence in the Himalayan Kingdom under check.

While establishing a stake in the monarchy, it will be a huge mistake by India if it defines its foreign policy towards Nepal on a single track. While moving close to King Gyanendra, Indian establishment needs to parallelly develop discreet contacts across Nepal's political spectrum. Even the Maoists need not be neglected.

The need for multi-track diplomacy is the lesson from Kandahar, for the absence of any real contacts with the Taliban aggravated a national embarrassment during the hijack of IC-814, the Indian Airlines flight from Kathmandu.

India, in fact, should take the cue from China. In the case of Nepal, the Chinese have gone ahead with an across-the-board engagement of the country's political class. China now has the levers which it can use to promote its national interests in the Himalayan kingdom. India, in such a situation, will do well to widen its linkages.

While realigning its stance in Nepal, India foreign policy has to grapple imaginatively with yet another challenge — the anti-India sentiment. For too long, Indian foreign policy has been dealing only with the Nepali elite, and thereby ducking the anti-India tirade at the ground level.

A change of tack, therefore, becomes necessary, and this is possible if the Indian establishment undertakes initiatives which affect the Nepalese people directly. This can include low cost options such as opening of primary schools, health-care centres or other institutions for providing humanitarian relief, preferably with the help of non-Government organisations. This is an approach which has been mastered by the Japanese and has yielded impressive results.

THE HINDU

Nepal rules out change in India ties

Kathmandu, June 11

NEPAL TODAY said there "would not be any change in the fundamentals and basic parameters" of its relations with India in the wake of enthronement of King Gyanendra and asserted that it would not allow its soil to be used for anti-India activities. It however recognised the Kashmir issue as the core issue in forging better understanding in South Asia.

"There will be continuity in relationship. Slight changes do happen in relations between countries, but the fundamentals and basic parameters will remain the same," Nepalese Foreign Minister C P Bastola said when asked whether the change of guards at Narayanhity Palace would affect ties between New Delhi and Kathmandu in any way.

He described Kashmir as a "very deep-rooted problem" between India and Pakistan, adding that lessening of tension between the neighbours would help in forging better understanding in South Asia.

"We feel that the lessening of tensions between India and Pakistan will create an atmosphere for strengthening of better understanding in the region for mutual cooperation, which has been lacking for sometime," Nepalese Foreign Minister Chakra Prasad Bastola said, when asked about the proposed talks between AB Vajpayee and Pervez Musharraf.

PTI

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Nepal not to allow anti-India activities

KATHMANDU, JUNE 11. Nepal today said there would not be any change in the basic parameters of its relations with India in the wake of the enthronement of King Gyanendra after the June 1 palace massacre and asserted that it would not allow its soil to be used for anti-India activities.

"There will be continuity in relationship. Slight changes do happen in relations between

"very pragmatic, friendly, sympathetic and cooperative".

In an interview to PTI here, Mr. Bastola said the reports about Nepal were being used by the anti-India forces and were blown out of proportion in the same way as reports about anti-India sentiments in Nepal.

He said, "We will not let our soil be used against our neighbours. We know that it will be against our own interests."

Mr. Bastola said India and Nepal would have to strengthen their ties in the context of globalisation and other changes sweeping the world while keeping in mind the factors that had guided the relations in the past.

'Kashmir a deep-rooted problem'

Describing Kashmir as a "very deep-rooted problem" between India and Pakistan, Mr. Bastola said lessening of tension between the two nuclear neighbours would help in forging better understanding in the southern part of Asia.

"We feel that the lessening of tensions between India and Pakistan will create an atmosphere for strengthening of better understanding in the region for mutual cooperation, which has been lacking for sometime," he said when asked about the proposed talks between the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, and Gen. Pervez Musharraf.

Shahi being questioned

In the first-ever official confirmation, Mr. Bastola said the army doctor, Capt. Rajiv Shahi, a close relative of the royal family, was being questioned after he charged the late crown Prince Dipendra with the killing of his father, King Birendra and others.

Mr. Bastola, however, said he was not aware of the whereabouts of the captain. Inquiries at Capt. Shahi's residence and the military hospital, where he works, did not yield any result.

Journalists protest

More than 300 local and foreign journalists held a demonstration today to demand the release of the editor of a leading Nepali newspaper who was arrested on charges of treason.

'Dipendra had married Devyani'

WASHINGTON, JUNE 11. Nepal's late Crown Prince Dipendra, accused of having shot his father King Birendra and other royal members in a dispute over his marriage, had married Ms. Devyani Rana "in a Hindu marriage ceremony", a report in *Newsweek* said today.

According to the report "sources linked to the palace claimed Dipendra, whose marriage to Devyani was unacceptable to Birendra, married his beloved in a ceremony called Tikka, which is not legally recognised in Nepal". — PTI

countries, but the fundamentals remain the same," said the Nepalese Foreign Minister, Mr. Chakra Prasad Bastola.

Expressing satisfaction over India's response following the killings, he said the New Delhi's reaction to the events had been

OBITUARY



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Turmoil hits India's trade with Nepal

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA June 9. — More than a week has passed since the royal massacre in Nepal, but India-Nepal trade is yet to overcome its effects. The international border is virtually closed, a situation officially being described as "intense vigilance".

"Close to 400 trucks are stranded at the Raxaul border. With each passing day, costs are mounting," said Mr SK Jain, Federation of India Export Organisation chairman (eastern region).

Nepal is an important market for, among other things, Indian consumer durables, while Nepal's

consignments to India include medicinal herbs and Pashmina shawls.

"Some Indian export items have to be transported through Nepal. Textiles, for example, are transported via Nepal, and at times Bangladesh, because of import restrictions in some countries," Mr Jain said.

Calcutta Port clears consignments after it receives letters from the Nepal consulate. Consulate sources said the letters haven't been issued for the past five days. And the business community here doesn't expect the situation to normalise before another week.

Mr DP Bhandari, acting

consul-general, said: "If all goes well, we expect to start issuing the cargo clearance letters from Monday."

Mr Sushil Kumar Bagla, Bengal National Chamber of Commerce and Industry president, said: "Kolkata businessmen have been hard-hit because the city serves as gateway to Nepal. I don't think anyone is sparing any thought for the business community in this time of crisis."

In the past, India-Nepal trade ties have always proved to be delicate. Trade and tourism, closely linked in Nepal, were disrupted after an Indian Airlines plane was hijacked in December 1999,

and demonstrations rocked Kathmandu over alleged anti-Nepal comments by Hrithik Roshan earlier this year.

Mr Jain hopes the stalemate is temporary. "The trade with Nepal is not export in the strict sense of the term. All the same, it's vital for both the countries. I expect the losses to be recovered once trade resumes."

Mr HM Bangur, Bengal Chamber of Commerce president, said: "The uncertainty and the curfew has closed businesses in Nepal. For India, which supplies most of the consumption items, the standstill is a cause for concern."

India to rework relations with Nepal

Pramit Pal Chaudhuri
New Delhi, June 7

AFTER RECEIVING a nasty shock from the crisis in Nepal, the Indian government plans to give its neighbour more consistent attention than before. With King Gyanendra having taken the first steps towards winning public confidence in his legitimacy, New Delhi plans to reengage Kathmandu after the end of the official period of mourning. This time, it plans to do so on a broader spectrum than before.

During the crisis, New Delhi has kept its distance for fear that any overt interference would only worsen the crisis. "Nepal requires space and we should give it to them," as one senior official said earlier this week.

India wants to move away from a perception that its Nepal policy is defined by its relationship with the Nepal Congress. Sources say the royal crisis has brought home New Delhi's need to have better contacts not only

ISI HAND IN NEPAL KILLINGS: THACKERAY

THE SHIV Sena chief Bal Thackeray said on Thursday that at least 120 people, including King Birendra and others, were killed after Pakistan-sponsored militants sprayed bullets on them at a party in the Narayanhity Palace in Nepal. "It was a conspiracy... the gunning down of King Birendra and Queen Aishwarya along with other members of the royal family was the handiwork of the ISI and Pak-sponsored militants," he said. **PTI, Mumbai**

with the monarchy, the army and the opposition parties, but with specific groups among them all. This will include even the Unified Marxist-Leninists, a group noted for their virulent attacks on India.

The argument being made in official circles is based on simple experience. Namely, that irrespective of which party is in power in Kathmandu, official Nepalese policies

towards India remain broadly the same.

India is also expected to be more cognizant of the Maoist guerrilla movement as well. Nepalese officials have long complained of India's seeming disinterest in the insurgency.

A more holistic approach to Nepal is necessary. India's policy has so far been reactive, and at times overly punitive. The Kandahar hijack or even the issue of Chinese re-exports led to heavy-handed Indian reactions.

However, the present crisis has brought into relief that the Nepalese state is far more rickety than the upper circles of the Indian government had been willing to accept.

That Kathmandu may well be incapable of keeping out the ISI or keeping a check on smuggling. It has also shown that Nepalese perceptions of India are so negative as to virtually New Delhi's ability to influence developments during severe crises. India and Nepal have both learnt lessons from this crisis, officials have said.

THE HINDU

10 JUN 2005

Delhi protest over Nepal editor's arrest

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

9/6 *media* *11* *AP-1*
New Delhi, June 7: Journalists, artistes and academics gathered in protest outside the Nepal embassy carrying placards, shouting slogans and making angry speeches demanding the immediate release of Mr Yubaraj Ghimire, editor of the prominent Nepal newspaper *Kantipur*, and his colleagues, who were arrested by the Nepal police for "treason."

Shouting slogans like "Nepal government hai hai," "*Yubaraj ko riha karo*" and placards reading "Allow free press" and "Release Yubaraj and arrested journalists," the gathering vent its anger on the action of the Nepal government. A memorandum signed by them will be given to the Nepali ambassador to India, Mr Bekh Bahadur Thapa. Calling the action of the Nepal government a crackdown on the freedom of the press, they expressed solidarity with the

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(... news service)

India beefs up security along border

AA 4 21
New Delhi, June 6: India has put its paramilitary forces on high alert along its winding border with Nepal following the June 1 massacre of King Birendra and his family and the resultant violent street protests, officials said Wednesday.

With political instability in Nepal being perceived as a security threat to India, Indian officials said Wednesday paramilitary forces are on full alert along the 1,690-kilometre border with its northeastern neighbour.

"We are keeping a close watch over the situation, especially along the borders which could be vulnerable at this time," said an official of the ministry of home affairs. Cross-border traffic was closed in parts of Siliguri, Purnea (Bihar) and the Terai region in Uttar Pradesh due to the crisis in the Himalayan kingdom. There are around 20 exit points along the India-Nepal border, according to officials. The situation is understood to have figured in a discussion between Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Home Minister L.K. Advani Tuesday. The Nepal situation could well be exploited by subversive forces to destabilise the subcontinent, the Indian government fears. (IANS)

THE ASIAN AGE

The Nepal crisis & Indian diplomacy

By C. Raja Mohan

As it grieves with the people of Nepal in their moment of national sorrow, India must begin to conceive of an approach that discards past symbols of hegemony and modernises bilateral relations.

on which it is prepared to work with the other great powers.

India does not have the power or capability to unilaterally impose solutions — even if they are sensible — on its neighbours. If India is prepared to work with the West on the basis of universally acceptable principles, it can at once enhance its own international standing as well as nudge the region in a positive direction. India must signal its readiness to cooperate with the United States, the European Union and China in assisting the people of Nepal to overcome one of their most difficult national crises. India must initiate consultations with all these key powers, sharing its own assessments with them, and exploring the possibilities for a common international endeavour to salvage the situation in Nepal. The past efforts by New Delhi to keep other powers out of the Subcontinent have had a disastrous consequence. They have deepened fears of Indian hegemony among its neighbours and driven them closer to each other in limiting New Delhi's capabilities. Nowhere has India's claim for an exclusive relationship in dealing with smaller neighbours been challenged in the public domain more than in Nepal.

The present crisis in Nepal as well as a series of events in the recent months have demonstrated the intensity of popular, even if irrational, fears about Indian dominance. There is no question that the geography of the Subcontinent gives India a very special place in regional affairs — a fact which demands that India go the extra distance in demonstrating sensitivity to its neighbours' concerns and avoiding actions that smack of hegemony. Relations between India and Nepal are very unique, given the nature of historic ties between the two peoples and the complex interdependence and interpenetration of the two societies on the ground. And precisely for that reason, New Delhi needs to signal its understanding of the Nepalese quest for a relationship with India based on equality.

As it grieves with the people of Nepal in their moment of national sorrow, India must begin to conceive of an approach that discards past symbols of hegemony and modernises bilateral relations to suit the new political realities on the ground.

irreconcilable differences among the governing classes. Similarly in Sri Lanka, the two-decade-old civil war has prevented the island nation from becoming the first economy to escape from bondage of underdevelopment in the Subcontinent. Colombo and the leadership of the Tamil minority have found it impossible to end the bitterness between them and create a political framework that allows the two communities to live together in peace.

India itself has not been immune from the malaise, with large parts of the nation showing the symptoms of collapsing state structures. At a time when the nation should be focussed on rapid economic development, its ruling

party is pushing the nation into divisive debates on religion and identity. Yet for all its own internal difficulties, the task of leading the region towards economic modernisation, political moderation, and social development inevitably falls on New Delhi. For India to play that role it needs to shed one of the great myths its strategic establishment has generated. For more than a decade, India's strategic discourse has been dominated by one single proposition, that India must 'rise above' the South Asian framework and play a wider role in Asia and the world. But the latest crisis in Nepal has pointed, as did the recent border stand-off with Bangladesh, one more time to the simple reality that India cannot cut itself off from the region, however attractive that proposition might seem.

There is no way India can fulfill its aspirations for a larger international profile without addressing its problems in the neighbourhood. The real tensions in India's relations with all its neighbours will act as a huge fetter on its attempts to become a major power on the global scene. India cannot run away from its neighbourhood. However frustrating it might

be, there is no alternative available for Indian diplomacy other than a substantive and patient engagement of its neighbours. Despite repeated warning signals in recent years, the Government has not been able to sustain a serious diplomatic focus on the Subcontinent. There is no question that the Government has been largely successful in reworking India's relations with the major powers in the aftermath of its nuclear tests in May 1998. It has also taken important diplomatic initiatives in the so-called 'extended neighbourhood', the Gulf and South East Asia.

Tending and nurturing the Subcontinent, for all its Sisyphean problems, needs to get a much higher rating in India's list of diplomatic tasks.

Demonstrating the capability to defuse the multiple crises of the Subcontinent, and displaying the political imagination to lead the region to peace and prosperity must be placed at the top of India's national security objectives. As it renews its diplomatic focus on the challenges in the neighbourhood, India needs to discard much of its traditional baggage. Shedding the past suspicion of the major powers has become an urgent imperative.

In the past, New Delhi had sought to keep the other powers out of the region, claiming some kind of an exclusive mandate as a regional power to manage the affairs of the Subcontinent. That approach has been neither credible nor effective. New Delhi does not have the luxury of pursuing a kind of Monroe doctrine for the region. Instead of trying to keep other powers out of the region, India must work with the Western powers and China to nudge the region towards economic integration and a peaceful resolution of inter-state and intra-state problems. India needs to define a set of regional objectives — economic modernisation, social harmony, political moderation, and preservation of the current territorial status quo —

WORLD VIEW

HD-12 216
THE TRAGIC developments in Nepal over the last week represent one of the gravest challenges to Indian foreign policy in recent times. While striving to cope with the imperatives of the moment, the managers of India's external relations need to sit up and rethink the basics of the policy towards its immediate neighbourhood. If India is to respond more effectively to challenges in the region, it is important to understand the huge dimensions of the problem. The mayhem in Nepal must be seen as symptomatic of a deeper malaise in the Subcontinent, of collapsing institutions, the failure of the political classes to govern purposefully, the growing economic gap between the region and the rest of the world, and the inability to find ways to broaden the basis for regional cooperation.

The massacre of the royal family in Nepal last Friday has come on top of a deepening political crisis in the mountain kingdom over the last few months. An insurgency led by the Maoist groups has begun to challenge state authority in large parts of the country. In many districts of the impoverished countryside, the Maoists have established parallel administration, collecting taxes and dispensing quick justice. The ruling Nepali Congress is a divided house and no crisis appears big enough to push the warring factions to get their act together and begin to address the multiple challenges facing the nation. The opposition parties there have believed their only job is to oppose the Government and paralyse the political process. During its last session, Nepal's Parliament could not sit even for a day.

Pervasive economic deprivation and rising levels of political frustration among its youth have shortened the fuse of the tinderbox that Nepal has become. Nepal is not alone in pointing to a grim political future in the Indian Subcontinent. The democratic experiment has failed one more time in Pakistan, which has returned to military rule. Pakistan is finding it impossible to cope with the challenges from the rising forces of political extremism and economic underdevelopment. In Bangladesh, politics has been reduced to a permanent 'bandh' that shuts down all normal economic activity in the name of

KING SIZED PROBLEM

5/16 Anticipating the new Nepal

THAT there's more to the explanation of the blood-soaked royal dining room in Kathmandu than was officially provided has been clear almost from day one. Now, with experienced observers putting the weight of their assessment behind what plain logic seemed to have indicated, the most crucial question for New Delhi is how to react to the new royalty. That doubts have developed in the official Indian mind, too, was clear on Monday when the MEA, contrary to issuing the usual extravagant officialese which welcomes new regimes, remained quiet. Indian diplomacy needs to take into account three basic factors in reacting to the Nepalese situation. First, the strong suggestions of a violent palace coup. Second, possibilities of India's not-so-friendly neighbours increasing their activities in Nepal. Third, and very strongly related to the second, Indo-Nepalese economic relations.

As often happens in knotty diplomatic problems, the best approaches are not fully morally defensible. In this case that will translate into India's not getting engaged in internal Nepalese diabolism, however murky the sudden royal succession. Fortunately, from the diplomatic point of view, royalty is not the governing face of Nepal, which allows India, and other countries which may have reservations about the new inheritors of the palace, to pretend as if the problem does not exist. That assumption will, however, change if and when the new royalty does one or both of these things: one, increase its collaboration with hardline elements in the army, in part to whittle down the power of republican Nepal; two, get really cosy with Beijing, which has always seen Nepal as a useful piece in the South Asian strategic chessboard. It is too early to predict anything useful about the possibilities of either of these eventualities. But many seasoned South Asia watchers believe that Indian officials should plan with both these contingencies written in. In the event of either or both of these happening, realistic assessment must be that there's little India can do to directly stop them. Meddlesome covert diplomacy is not always effective. In any case, India has never really played the game well. Better to stick to the one advantage we have: economics.

Nepal stands to lose a lot more economically from fractured relations with India than it stands to gain from being a very junior partner in some South Asian, anti-India manoeuvres. True, such obvious facts are not always obvious to regimes with unfriendly disposition. Look at Pakistan, for example, which has refused to see the point that regularising and increasing the lucrative unofficial Indo-Pakistan trade does not need to wait for a resolution of the Kashmir problem, whatever that may be. Nepal may become similarly irrational. To prevent that possibility India should try and reinforce bilateral economic relations to the point where only a Nepalese Hindu version of a mad mullah will feel bold enough to sacrifice income and jobs in a poor country. And if Kathmandu does get its version of mad mullahs? Safe to say India's neighbourhood will then become one of the worst in the world. That possibility should spur Indian diplomacy now.

Pakistani reports on India's role baseless: Nepali Congress

9-86-2000
HTC

Kathmandu, June 5

6/6
THE RULING Nepali Congress today termed as baseless, reports in Pakistani media about the alleged involvement of India in the palace massacre and said the blackout of Indian TV news channels in the country was a "cautious" step as their reports were causing confusion.

"We have not seen the reports but we don't believe that any Indian agency had any role in the recent developments. The relations between the two countries are based on total faith and democratic values," Susheel Koirala, general secretary of the Nepali Congress said.

A section of the Pakistani media had alleged the involvement of RAW in the killings.

"Anti-Indian forces were responsible for circulating such rumours," he said.

"Instead of talking to responsible people many Indian journalists are talking to people on the streets. Anti-democracy forces including Maoists and right-wingers are out to create confusion and are exploiting the sentiments of the people," he said.

PTI



AFP PHOTO

A visitor takes a close look at Nepalese currency notes with pictures of King Birendra at a numismatic exhibition in Bangalore on Monday.

PM WAS HASTY ON NEPAL: CHANDRASHEKHAR

FORMER PRIME Minister Chandrashekhar on Tuesday criticised AB Vajpayee for his "hasty reaction" on the Nepal developments and said "India should have waited for more details before commenting on the issue... Where is the need for PM to say that what had happened in Nepal was not part of a conspiracy, when the situation in the country continues to be delicate," he told reporters here after launching his "Chetna Yatra", from Puri to Porbandar in Gujarat.

HTC, Bhubaneswar

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

2000 JUN 5

10-14

Nepal's stability vital for India

66

By K. K. Katyal

NEW DELHI, JUNE 5. New Delhi has wisely followed a non-intrusive line on Nepal, now in a state of high ferment, and, thus, avoided giving a handle to anti-India elements there. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, has confined his public observations on the situation there to an assurance of cooperation to the government in Kathmandu. A low profile and minimum comment was in the best interest of India and of its relations with Nepal at this critical juncture.

Equally important, however, was the fact of India's heavy stake in the stability of Nepal and concern over the scenarios of instability. While keeping in mind the sensitivities of the problem and leaving it to Nepalese representatives to come to terms with the fast-changing situation, New Delhi had indicated its readiness to

cooperate with them in their onerous task.

How is this assurance of cooperation to be translated into action, into concrete steps? That would depend on the requirements of the Nepal government. The assurance, as conveyed by Mr. Vajpayee to his counterpart, Mr. G. P. Koirala, was appreciated. Unfortunately, Kathmandu was not in a position to define its needs because of the collapse of the functional system. For the concrete response, New Delhi would, thus, be awaiting the word from Nepal.

The stability of Nepal was vital for India because of the open border between the two countries and the presence of a very large number of Nepali nationals in professions, services and trade and business activities.

Probe panel composition

Among the points of immediate interest was the shape — if not

the fate — of the inquiry commission, comprising the Supreme Court Chief Justice, Mr. Keshav Prasad Upadhyaya, the leader of the opposition (of the Communist party), Mr. Madhav Kumar Nepal, and the Speaker of Parliament, Mr. Tara Nath Rana Bhat. The opposition leader chose to opt out of it. His stated reason — the three-day time-frame was too small for bringing to light the various elements of what, according to his party, was a deep controversy. Actually, he may be wanting not to collaborate with the government in its efforts to get out of a highly problematical situation.

The opposition would like the government to face the consequences of the predicament, it found itself in, instead of helping it out. Some objected to the announcement of the probe by the palace: they would have liked this step to be taken by the government. It was, however, important

that the palace had allowed itself to be subjected to an inquiry by an outside agency for the first time.

The country continued to be in a trauma in the wake of the killings in the palace during the week-end. The credibility of the monarchy was badly damaged, the Koirala government was riven by acute factionalism. And the most worrying factor — the Maoists had been engaged in insurgency for the last five years, having proclaimed their lack of faith in the parliamentary democracy.

They had demonstrated their capacity to disrupt and strike at the targets of their choosing. And they were already in action, according to a source familiar with the situation in Nepal. Then there were popular protests — by youth and students who wanted truth to be unraveled and the real story to come out.

THE HINDU

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All help to Nepal: India

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JUNE 5. India has conveyed to Nepal its readiness to help the Himalayan kingdom in any manner to tide over the turbulent phase in the wake of the killings of the King, Queen and other royal family members, the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani said here today.

"The Government has already conveyed to Nepal that we are willing to assist in any manner," Mr. Advani told presspersons. He described the killing of King Birendra and the royal family members as "a tragedy of an extraordinary kind." Mr. Advani said the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, was in regular touch with his Nepalese counterpart, Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala on the latest developments in Kathmandu.

President, PM write to new King

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JUNE 5. Both the President, Mr. K.R. Narayanan, and the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, have written letters of condolences to the new King of Nepal, King Gyanendra, conveying India's anguish over the loss of royal lives as well as affirming the country's traditional ties with the Himalayan Kingdom. The letters of condolences are

also being seen as equivalent of "recognition" for the new King and an expression of support for the institution of monarchy in Nepal.

In his letter, the President assured the King that "in these sad circumstances, I would like to express the solidarity of India, as a close friend of India, in your effort to put behind you this national tragedy and lead the people of Nepal in their continuing endeavors for stable socio-economic development."

The President also noted that "my Government looks forward to working with Your Majesty's Government to further strengthen and intensify mutually beneficial cooperation between our two countries."

The Prime Minister, in his letter, recalled his interaction with the late King Birendra in January 1999 and his contribution towards deepening of India-Nepal relations. "We would like you to know that in this hour of national sorrow, India and its people are with the Kingdom of Nepal and its citizens. We are confident that the innate courage and resilience of the Nepalese people will enable them to bear this great loss and continue their journey on the path towards peaceful progress and development. We will continue to extend our fullest support and cooperation in this process," he said.

Mr. Vajpayee has also written a letter of condolence to the Queen Mother of Nepal, Ratna Rajya Laxmi Devi Shah.

Cautious India reposes faith in Gyanendra

By Seema Guha
The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: Taking a cue from Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's statement in Bhuj on Monday, external affairs ministry officials said India would stand by Nepal in its hour of need.

Mr Vajpayee had set the tone by reposing confidence in Nepal's new leadership. "We are confident that the situation will improve. I have spoken to the Nepalese Prime Minister and we have assured them of our cooperation," the PM had told reporters in Bhuj.

The tragic events have placed India in a delicate position. Realising the potential danger of the situation taking an anti-India turn, New Delhi is trying to remain as non-intrusive as possible. "We have to do the correct thing and not try to give any unwanted advice," said a senior official.

India had to balance its desire to remain a detached spectator along with

its duty to Indian citizens living in Nepal. New Delhi hoped that the new monarch, King Gyanendra, and Prime Minister G.P. Koirala could stem the growing tide of public resentment triggered by the wishy-washy explanations of the circumstances that had led to the regicide, a ministry spokesperson noted.

According to the official, India would have advised Nepal to be open about the circumstances that had led to King Birendra's death. At least a high-level inquiry could have been ordered, instead of issuing a statement about the accidental gunfire which defied logic.

So far, New Delhi has handled the delicate situation coolly. Officials are hoping that the grief and anger of the people did not develop into another major riot against India and Indians living in Nepal.

New Delhi realises the major problems facing King Gyanendra, who has assumed the throne under difficult cir-

cumstances. "India is willing to extend all help to Nepal in its hour of need, but only if it is wanted," officials say.

"The important thing is not to act like a big brother, but to show sympathy and understanding," officials say. Past experiences, especially during the hijacking of the Indian airlines plane from Kathmandu, had left an unsavoury taste with the Nepalese public.

New Delhi had excellent ties with King Birendra, which had grown stronger when the late monarch had shown his inclination to allow democracy in the Himalayan state. Aware that the monarch's friends had been advising him to assert himself in the wake of the failure of successive democratic governments, India had pointedly praised the monarch's democratic credentials.

New Delhi would like the same kind of relations with King Gyanendra.

► Media asked to be cautious, Page 7

No 'pro-active' role for India in Nepal

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, JUNE 4. The Indian Government is watching the "tense and confusing" developments in Nepal but has no intention whatsoever of playing a "pro-active" role in the Hindu Kingdom. Delhi prefers to let Nepal's traditional political institutions recover their equilibrium.

The inclination among the senior policy-makers seems to be that India (as well as non-official Indians) should not be seen as doing or saying things which could be misconstrued. The idea is to let the Palace, political parties and others personalities have "the space" to come to terms with the unprecedented development and its difficult consequences. The Nepali Ambassador in New Delhi visited the Foreign Office today and probably heard for himself this note of restraint in the official thinking.

Foreign Office officials are unhappy that a section of the Indian media (print and electronic) has been less than restrained in giving credence to all kinds of bazaar "gossip" about various members of the Nepali royalty. Even if there is the realisation that there is very little that the Government can do to interfere in the media's performance, there is no denying

that the forces not-so-well disposed towards India are always willing to depict the reports in the media as inspired by the official thinking.

For now, the official inclination is to treat the developments in Nepal as its internal matter. Rather assiduously, the Foreign Office is not even prepared to make any assessment. In fact, the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, (at a press conference in Bhuj), refused to subscribe to the "conspiracy" theory.

The Foreign Office spokesman dismissed out-of-hand a report in a Pakistani newspaper that the Indian intelligence agency, RAW, had something to do with the palace killings in Nepal. "Ravings of an unhinged mind," was the precise comment.

Nonetheless, the official Indian inclination is to distance New Delhi from any suggestion that the new King was less-than-friendly to India. Apart from the fact that the monarch, Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, has some business links with India, very little is known about his preferences and proclivities. The preference is to wait before judging the attitude of the new royal order.

A message of felicitation from Mr. Vajpayee to the new King is being drafted.

PM, Cabinet lead India in condoling Nepalese regicide

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI, 2 JUNE

THE PRIME Minister, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, led the nation in mourning the deaths of the Nepalese royal family. At a meeting on Saturday afternoon the Union Cabinet observed a minute's silence and passed a resolution reaffirming India's support to Nepal. "India stands by Nepal in the hour of national grief," it said.

There was no Indian representation at the royal funeral on Saturday evening, in keeping with the royal family's wishes, though preparations had been made earlier for the President and the home minister, Mr L.K. Advani, to fly to Kathmandu.

According to Hindu custom in Nepal, cremation has to take place within 24 hours of passing. This was, according to sources, also the custom which prevailed at the death of King Mahendra, the father of King Birendra.

The incident comes at a time when this Himalayan state is going through major political instability. Opposition parties have been demanding



BLOOD ON THE WALLS: (From left) King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya and Prince Dipendra

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala's resignation for the government's alleged role in a bribery scandal and for not quelling a growing Maoist insurgency.

While the upshot of this for Nepal's internal politics is yet to be seen, the instability within the country

will surely deepen as a result of Friday's events. The resultant instability and uncertainty has fed an anti-India sentiment among the youth, which culminated in the anti-Hrithik Roshan riots in Kathmandu last year.

Therefore, India has reason to be concerned about the internal situation in Nepal.

India will, therefore, be watching the new regent — Prince Gyanendra — very closely, who, according to reports, is less favourably disposed towards India and believes in a more absolutist role for the monarchy.

The immediate upshot of the events in Nepal is the postponement of the Saarc special standing committee meeting of foreign secretaries, scheduled for next week in Colombo.

The Indo-Nepal border has been closed to vehicular traffic following the events of Friday night.

This was decided as a precautionary measure by security authorities on both sides to prevent law and order problems arising out of the political instability in the Himalayan kingdom.

...Birendra died without

...because of an astrological pre-

Indian channels blacked out

9-8-96
Nepal

Kathmandu/New Delhi, June 4

CABLE OPERATORS in Nepal stopped transmission of Indian news channels from this afternoon.

Quoting reports from Kathmandu, sources said the cable operators had stopped telecasting the *Star News* and *Zee News* from 4.30 pm. The move follows a sudden unrest in the country following a statement by the State Council that King Birendra and other members of the Royal Family were killed in "an accidental firing".

However, it was not clear whether the cable operators had taken the decision following instructions from the

Nepalese Government.

Nepalese authorities are under flak for news blackout on the Friday killings.

An influential English-language daily in Nepal today criticised authorities for the "total news blackout" on what led to killing of King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya.

"There was no need for the total news blackout. The official media is yet to come up with a factual and detailed report on just what took place," the *Kathmandu Post* said in a front page editorial. It said that some 15 hours after the shootings, the public was kept in the dark and an official statement put out by state

radio was brief and "raised more questions than it answered".

The Post, Nepal's largest-selling English daily, said: "In the absence of information, the tabloid press had a field day speaking of an impending curfew, Prime Minister G P Koirala's resignation and other drastic developments."

Observing that the rumours that swirled around the capital were more sensational still, the editorial said the delay in official announcement could have been occasioned by the need to ensure smooth transition.

The newspaper demanded an impartial probe into Friday night's massacre.

... OF INDIA

Media asked to exercise caution in reporting developments in Nepal

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: In an effort to ensure that the "tense and confused" situation prevailing in Nepal does not undermine bilateral relations, the government on Monday urged the press to exercise caution and restraint in reporting developments in that troubled country.

This unprecedented appeal, a special gesture towards India's close affinity with Nepal, was reiterated by government officials. In response to a question on the impact in Nepal of Indian press reporting, a spokesman urged the media "to respect the institutions of Nepal and sentiments of the Nepalese people in their hour of loss". He added that India was confident that Nepal would "be able to draw upon its inherent strength and tide over the present situation".

Even while reiterating the government's commitment fully to respect the freedom and independence of the media, senior officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, observed that at the best of times, India's relations with Nepal were "sensitive".

This was all the more so in the wake of the tragic happenings of the past few days. Against this backdrop, the officials argued, the role of the media assumed critical importance.

Cutting across party lines, the officials pointed out, the people of Nepal deeply resented any demonstration of disrespect for the monarchy or personal attacks on

members of the royal family. These abiding sentiments of the people of a friendly country needed to be respected. They were still reeling under the impact of the terrible happenings and needed time and space to adjust to the emerging situation.

The officials hoped that the media would, therefore, desist from speculative reporting based on rumour or hearsay and, especially, refrain from ascribing motives or character traits to members of the royal family.

Failure to do so, they added, would leave the field wide open to forces inimical to friendship and cooperation between the two countries to discredit India. Indeed, sections of the Pakistani press had already engaged in this exercise and some anti-Indian pamphlets had also been circulated in Kathmandu.

While refusing to comment on the likely outcome of recent developments, the officials said that attempts to discredit the institutions in Nepal ran the risk of plunging the country into anarchy. Certain radical elements believed that such anarchy could be exploited to their advantage. India, the officials said, had no doubts whatsoever that Nepal's leaders, at all levels of governance, were fully aware of this danger.

Self-restraint on the part of the media, they said, could go a long way in helping them face the grim challenges ahead and, in the process, help consolidate relations between the two neighbours.

Protesters burn Indian newspapers

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

KATHMANDU, June 3. — Protesters in Kathmandu today burned Indian newspapers for carrying reports holding King Dipendra responsible for the palace massacre.

Witnesses said crowds seized Indian dailies from stalls and distributors and set them on fire. The protesters' anger seemed to have been fuelled by the government's reluctance to offer a full and credible account of the circumstances leading to the tragedy.

The protesters also shouted slogans demanding a full and impartial probe into the killings. More than 500 motor-cycle riders protested in Kathmandu with similar demands.

'Ties will remain the same'

Nepal's ambassador to India today dismissed fear that the change of guard in the palace won't affect India-Nepal ties, UNI adds from Delhi.

"The structure of friendship between India and Nepal doesn't rest at one

place. It's people-centric," said Mr Bhekh Bahadur Thapa.

Mr Thapa's remarks came after a section of the Indian media reported that the Nepal Regent, Prince Gyanendra, didn't like New Delhi and held it responsible for the pro-democracy movement in his country.

The reports were "unfounded", Mr Thapa said. "Relations between the two countries are in a traditional framework. The Regent as a member of a well-knit royal family very well knows this structure."

He admitted there were a few anti-India voices in Nepal, but those were stray reactions. Nepal had firmly dealt with anti-India activities on its soil.

Refusing to comment on the demand for a probe into the massacre, he said: "Every society has its means to uncover the truth. The Nepalese society, by following its traditions, will uncover this truth. But give us some time and space." About Dipendra's condition, Mr Thapa said he was still on life-support systems and was not responding to any treatment.

Pakistan media find RAW material for India-bashing

Mubashir Zaidi
Islamabad, June 3

THE PALACE carnage in Kathmandu has kicked off a fresh round of RAW-bashing in Pakistan. Media and officials are floating theories that the murders of King Birendra and his family members were the handiwork of RAW to remind Nepal of India's clout in the region in the wake of Nepal's improving relations with other countries, especially Pakistan.

Jang, Pakistan's largest circulated Urdu daily has front-paged a news item, alleging that King Birendra had been punished for

his country's improved relations with China and Pakistan.

Quoting unspecified diplomatic sources, the paper said Nepal had enhanced its trade relations with China and Pakistan to such an extent that Indian businessmen and intelligence agencies were seeing in them a major threat to Indian interests.

It said RAW had established a significant network in Nepal to use the country to its interest and speculated on the Vajpayee-headed emergency session of the Indian Cabinet within 12 hours of the palace massacre. It quoted Nepalese ambassador to Islamabad Kumar P Giwali as having

said that all intelligence agencies including RAW had their own agendas, and the media could interpret his comments to draw any conclusion.

On the official front, General Pervez Musharraf has written a letter to the Nepalese Prime Minister, expressing deep shock and grief at the tragic demise of His Majesty King Birendra, Her Majesty Queen Aishwarya and other members of the Royalty. "The people of Pakistan join me in extending our heartfelt condolences at this terrible loss for the people of Nepal," he added.

King Birendra was held in high esteem in Pakistan for

"safeguarding Nepal's sovereignty and national dignity' and for his contribution to the promotion of friendship and co-operation between Pakistan and Nepal. "His passing will not only be mourned in Nepal but in Pakistan also," he wrote.

Though the Foreign Office have not officially suggested RAW's involvement, officials have voiced their suspicion that the massacre was a RAW plot. To supplement their suspicion, they have claimed that the regent to the King Gayanendra has a pro-Indian bend, and Nepal's relations with Pakistan may undergo a change in the days to come.

Bhutan troops to purge rebels

FROM PROBIR PRAMANIK

Siliguri, June 3: Bhutan has deployed more than 3,000 troops along its border with Assam and West Bengal in a bid to stop infiltration by Northeast militants and drive out those holed up in its territory.

A Royal Bhutan Army official said 10 new camps have been set up along the 250-km border to check intrusion. "Three battalions were deployed along the kingdom's southern border with Assam and West Bengal in May," the official said.

The deployment was aimed at "neutralising the presence of the guerrillas of the United Liberation Front of Asom (Ulfa) and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB). This is a pressure tactic to force the rebels out of Bhutan. But we have not yet decided whether to mount an operation and attack the militant hideouts in our territory", he added.

"We have exhausted the option to settle this problem through negotiations. We have asked both the Ulfa and Bodo outfits to get out of our kingdom. We have tried to cut off their supplies and have taken action against Bhutanese nationals helping them. But nothing seems to have worked. So now we have to use force," the Bhutan army officer said.

Fearing a militant exodus, Indian authorities have deployed troops along the Assam-Bengal-Bhutan border tri-junction along

the Sankosh river in Jalpaiguri.

"We apprehend that the militants under pressure from the Bhutanese Army might try to set up hideouts in the jungles on the Indian side. The Buxa Tiger Reserve could be used to set up camps. Though we have managed to cut off their supply lines in the Kalikhola area, the militants have opened up new supply lines further west," said an Indian army officer.

He added: "We have receded the belt recently to understand better the lay of the area in case operations are mounted to flush out the militants. However, the presence of the army in the sensitive and strategic tri-junction has so far deterred the militants."

With pressure mounting on the outfits, the Ulfa and the NDFB have threatened violence in the kingdom and said they will counter any Bhutanese or joint Indo-Bhutanese military offensive together and will continue to use Bhutan for "territorial advantage".

These two groups, not known for their camaraderie, have more than 30 big and small camps in southern Bhutan which house more than 600 guerrillas. Besides, these camps are used by Ulfa to train militants of the separatist Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO), which is active along the border in north Bengal.

Bhutan army sources said a recent security review weighed the options before the government and decided on military action.

President expresses deep shock, sorrow

By OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, June 3: President K.R. Narayanan on Sunday signed the condolence book kept at the Royal Nepalese Embassy in New Delhi, to convey the "deep shock and sorrow" of the nation at the "untimely and tragic demise" of King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev and Queen Aishwarya Rajyalakshmi Devi Shah of Nepal and other members of the royal family on Friday night.

Paying homage "to the memory King Birendra, who was not only a great leader of Nepal but also a visionary of South Asian cooperation and a great Asian statesman," the President said that "this was a great tragedy and an irreparable loss for the people of Nepal."

"On behalf of the government and people of India and on my own behalf, I convey our sincere condolences to the government and the people of Nepal in this hour of grief. May God give the friendly people of Nepal the strength to bear this loss."

The President, who visited the Nepal embassy at 9.15 am, was received by the ambassador of Nepal, Dr Bhekh B. Thapa, and other senior officials.



HOMAGE: President K.R. Narayanan pays floral tribute to King Birendra and Queen Aishwarya at the Nepal embassy in New Delhi on Sunday. (PTI)

Cautious Delhi plays good neighbour

COUNTDOWN TO DISASTER

9.00 pm: The royal family settles down to the Friday "family dinner", a weekly semi-formal affair, in the dining room of the palace; included in the group is crown prince Dipendra, supposedly in an inebriated state

10.00 pm: Dinner finishes and the extended royal family retires to the ante-room for an after dinner drink and, maybe, some coffee; here Dipendra plies himself with some more drinks

10.30 pm: Argument breaks out mainly between Dipendra and Queen Aishwarya on the former's marriage; voices are raised and King Birendra finally tells his son that enough is enough and that he should retire for the night

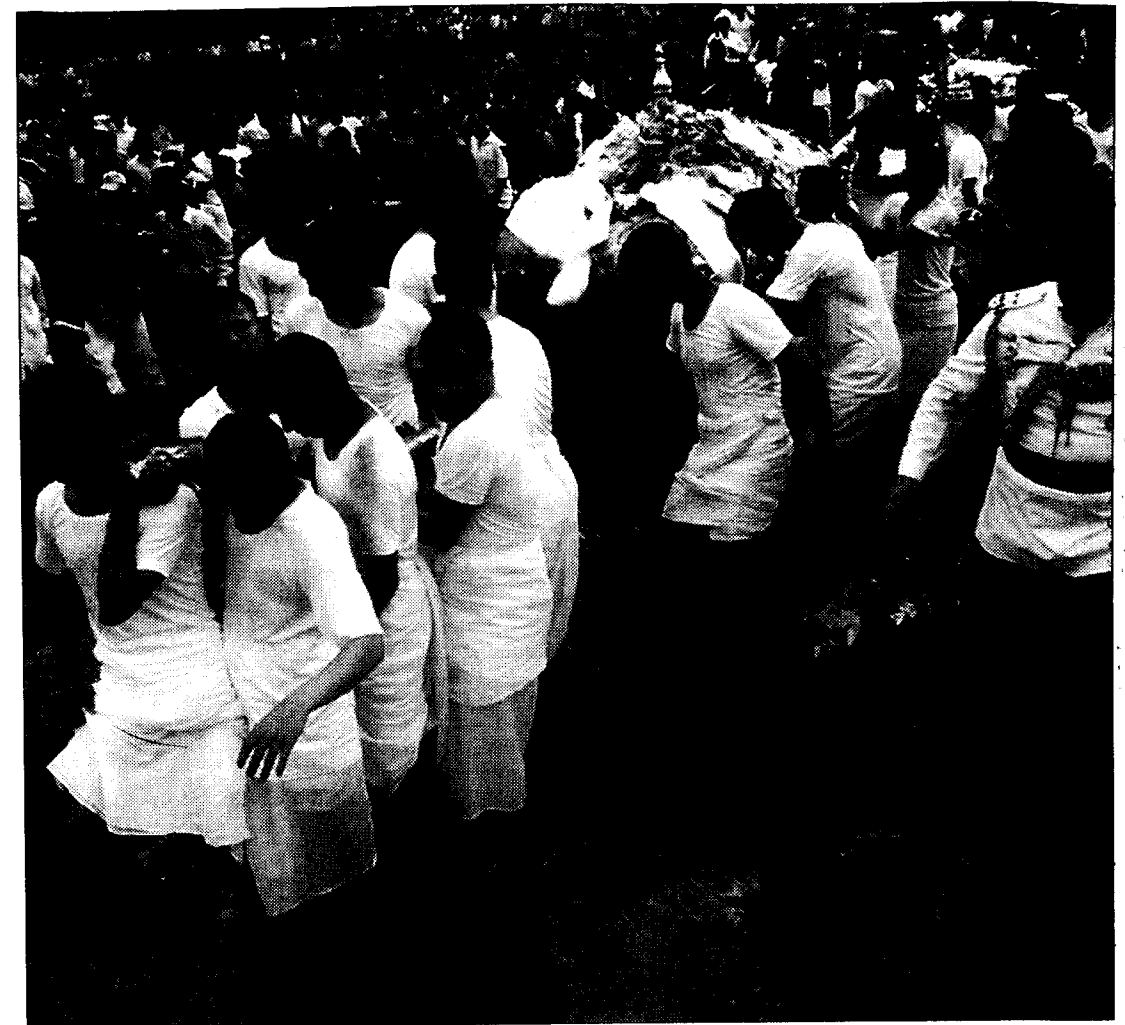
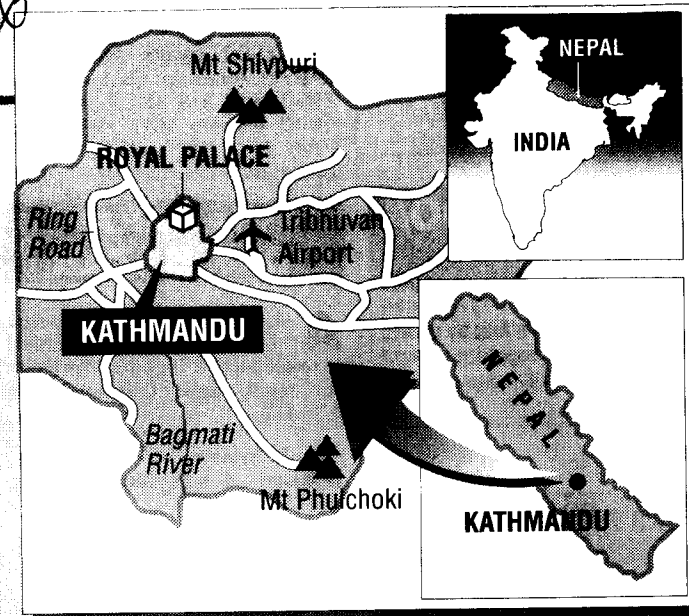
10.45 pm: Queen Aishwarya tells her son that if he has to have his way, it would have to be "over our dead bodies"; on hearing these words, Dipendra storms out of the room

11.00 pm: Prince Gyanendra's wife and son, tired at this quarrelling, leave the room and move to other quarters; the Queen Mother is called to her room to attend a telephone call

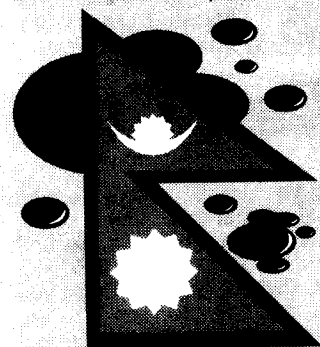
11.15 pm: Dipendra returns to the ante-room, this time in his army fatigues and carrying a semi-automatic gun; bursting in, he first shoots at his mother and then sprays the others with bullets, killing most of them on the spot; he then trains the gun on his head and fires

11.20 pm: Hearing the gun shots, the royal security moves in; alarm is raised; resources mobilised to rush the injured and the dying to the military hospital in south-west Kathmandu

Around midnight: The military hospital declares the King and the Queen dead; a weak pulse is felt in Dipendra and he is rushed to the operation theatre



Pall bearers carry the body of Queen Aishwarya through the river Bagmati in Kathmandu. (Reuters)



FROM PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, June 2: Stunned by the tragedy that struck the Nepalese royal family, India today decided on a cautious approach, playing the role of a dependable neighbour and sharing Kathmandu's grief by declaring a three-day state mourning in the country. But it refused to commit itself further as a clear picture on the succession issue was yet to emerge.

The Union Cabinet, which met in the afternoon, described the killings as a "great tragedy and irreparable loss to the Kingdom of Nepal and its people". Delhi, it assured Kathmandu, stands by the

"mourning nation and its people" in this hour of "national grief".

In private, however, South Block fears King Birendra's death might lead to another round of political instability in the Himalayan kingdom that could affect India's security and again strain relations between the two countries. Ties between the friendly neighbours had soured after the Christmas-eve hijack of an Indian Airlines plane and were only now returning to normal.

But sources said Delhi would not like to foreclose its options by putting any tag on the present Regent, Gyanendra — described in some circles as anti-Indian and by

many others as a nationalist.

Woken up early by the tragic news, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee called up his Nepalese counterpart, G.P. Koirala, to ascertain whether the reports of the assassination of King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya and other members of the royal family by Crown Prince Dipendra were true.

Once the news was confirmed, Vajpayee summoned an emergency meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security to review the situation in Nepal.

"The government and the people of India are stunned and deeply shocked at the tragic and untimely demise of his majesty

the King of Nepal, her majesty the Queen and other members of the Royal family," foreign minister Jaswant Singh said this afternoon while reading out the short statement issued by the government.

"As a close neighbour and friend, India conveys its heart-felt condolences to the mourning nation of the Royal Kingdom of Nepal and to the other members of the royal family. Our heart goes out to them and the Queen Mother in this hour of grief, India grieves with Nepal," the statement said. "We pray for the departed souls and that Nepal and its people be bestowed the courage and strength to bear this unprecedented per-

sonal loss and national tragedy."

Delhi declared a three-day state mourning beginning from today.

The statement revealed the cautious approach Delhi has decided to adopt in the absence of a clear picture emerging from Kathmandu. It was a clear indication that at this point India would not get into a position where it might have to speculate on a sensitive situation.

The government had to change its stand twice as the fast-paced developments on the one hand and the uncertainty on the other left it confused.

The Cabinet Committee on Security had decided that for the fu-

neral of King Birendra and his family members, the Centre should request President K.R. Narayanan to go to Kathmandu and that he should be accompanied by home minister L.K. Advani. This would show the importance India attaches to Nepal.

But, by evening, there were indications from Kathmandu that the Nepal government and the palace would prefer to have a private funeral and had decided against inviting foreign countries to send their envoys for the funeral.

Uncertainty about the Crown Prince's state also delayed the official reaction as it was not clear whether he was dead or alive.

After he was chosen king of Nepal, the Indian leadership went back into a huddle and came out with a short statement expressing its condolences.

Officials in South Block said the tragedy could lead to more instability in Nepal politics, already plagued by ineffective administration, quick changes in governments and violence by Maoist rebels.

The democratic system in the country has been unsatisfactory and, in the past six years, there were a number of petitions to Birendra to intervene. But Birendra had refused to meddle, though he continued to remain a figure of stability for the nation.

Graphic: RAJ

Delhi declares three-day mourning

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JUNE 2. While declaring that "India grieves with Nepal", and ordering a state mourning for three days over the massacre of several members of the Nepal royal family, the Vajpayee Government is keeping a close watch over the tragic developments in the world's only Hindu kingdom. The immediate concern is that the kingdom may be in a for a prolonged "period of uncertainty", with unpredictable geo-political fallout.

As soon as authoritative news of King Birendra's death was available,

the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, spoke to his Nepali counterpart, Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala. He also called an emergency meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security. The somewhat truncated CCS was of the view that preliminary evidence did not suggest any "conspiracy", and that the tragic events had to be put down to the crown prince's agitated state of mind.

However, since Prince Gyamendra has been declared only "an acting king", it would mean that agents would be calling the shots. India's concerns would be that the uncertain situation was not ex-

ploited by unfriendly powers to crank up an anti-India mood.

In a formal and bland statement, Mr. Jaswant Singh, Minister for External Affairs, put on record that "the Government and the people of India are stunned and deeply shocked at the tragic and untimely demise of His Majesty the King of Nepal, Her Majesty the Queen and other members of the royal family". The statement added: "As a close neighbour and friend, India conveys its heartfelt condolences to the mourning nation of the Royal Kingdom of Nepal and to the members of the royal family. Our heart goes out to them and the

Queen Mother in this hour of grief. India grieves with Nepal."

Later, the Union Cabinet met at the Prime Minister's residence and passed a condolence resolution. "As a neighbour and close friend," the resolution read, "in this hour of Nepal's grief, we share the feelings of immense sorrow of Her Majesty the Queen Mother, members of the Royal Family and the Government and people of the Kingdom of Nepal. We pray that the mourning nation and its citizens be bestowed the strength and courage to bear this irreparable loss. India stands by them in this hour of national grief." Briefing re-

porters after the Cabinet meeting, Mr. Singh noted that as per the earlier plan the President, Mr. K. R. Narayanan, and the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, would have represented India at the royal funeral; however, since then Nepal has expressed itself unable to invite any foreign dignitary.

India & Her neighbours

India joins Nepal in mourning

HTC-9
18/6

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, June 2

India today expressed deep shock over Friday night's massacre of the Nepal royal family, and declared a three-day State mourning across the country. The national flag will be flown at half-mast and there will be no official entertainment.

The Government wanted to fly out the President and Home Minister to attend the funerals, but gave up the idea because the surviving royals of Nepal didn't want foreign dignitaries at the ceremony. President K R Narayanan will sign the condolence book at the Nepal embassy tomorrow.

"Since the royal family is understood to have expressed disinclination to receive foreign dignitaries at the funeral, the Government's decision that India will be represented by President K R Narayanan and Home Minister L K Advani has been called off," External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh said after today's Cabinet meeting.

The Cabinet, which met under Atal Bihari Vajpayee for an emergency session here this evening, said it was "a very great tragedy and an irreparable loss

BORDER ALERT

THE UTTAR Pradesh Government on Saturday alerted police and district administrations all along the border with Nepal, where almost the entire royal family was killed on Friday night.

Naresh Dayal, principal secretary, Home Department, said the alert has been sounded as a precautionary measure. The border has been peaceful so far. Uttar Pradesh has about 700 km of open border with Nepal. Police, trade tax officers and Customs officials man the checkposts on the border.

HTC, Lucknow

to Nepal and its people".

"As a neighbour and close friend, in this hour of Nepal's grief, we share the feelings of immense sorrow. We pray that the mourning nation and its citizens are bestowed the strength and courage to bear this irreparable loss. India stands by them in this hour of national grief," the resolution said.

Earlier in the morning, Vajpayee spoke to his Nepalese counterpart Girija Prasad Koirala to say how shocked he was personally at the tragedy. Immediately after the conversation with Koirala, the Cabinet Committee on Security met at the Prime Minister's 7 Race Course Road residence. The Committee is understood to have put the forces on high alert and ordered borders with Nepal sealed.

Later, Jaswant Singh issued a statement conveying India's heartfelt condolences to its grieving neighbour and members of its royal family.

With India formally mourning the tragedy for three days, Vajpayee's dinner meeting with his ministers of state scheduled for Monday evening has been called off. But he is expected to meet them informally, though there will be no dinner.

The meeting is important because junior ministers have been complaining about the way their seniors allot too little work for them. They also feel slighted over the way they don't get to interact with the Prime Minister in period meetings.

"Senior ministers keep on meeting the Prime Minister during the Cabinet meetings at least twice a week and we hardly get such a chance," one of them said.

JUN 2001

Not a Himalayan Task Inject Equality into Indo-Nepal Ties

By RITA MANCHANDA

11-10 23/5

DESPITE the physical and financial access, the free labour exchange and the familiar ease in language and culture, Nepal and India have become strangers and the lack of mutual knowledge, understanding and mistrust is only increasing. Take the example of how the Indian media treated the December 2000 violence on the streets of Kathmandu, sparked off by rumours about derogatory comments allegedly made by actor Hrithik Roshan.

The 'breaking news' frames defined the agitation as 'anti-Indian' and subsequent reporting barely mentioned the deeper implications of the communal turn to the violence that took place between the Parbatiya (hill people) and Madhesia (plains people deemed of more recent Indian origin). Had the media made the effort, it might have seen beyond the India baiters, to find an urban populace, deeply frustrated with the failure of the functioning of Nepal's procedural democracy and deepening economic and developmental deprivation.

The ISI, in all likelihood, is spreading its tentacles in Nepal, no doubt taking full advantage of the groundswell of resentment and bitterness towards India and Indians. The xenophobic resentment, especially of the growing urban middle class of Kathmandu, manifests itself in the cultural desperation to throw off the yoke of (India) 'colonised' minds. Take Hindi, it may be understood by a great many people in Kathmandu, but if an Indian wants to be politically correct he should speak in English.

There is a critical need for India to invest in understanding the limits and implications of Nepal's transformation into a democratic polity, both internally and externally: How the transition from autocracy of the kings and ranas to representational politics is splintering the 1950 India-Nepal treaty and the psychological and material structure of 'friendly' relations. In Nepal the 'special relationship', institutionalised in the trite rhetoric of the foreign offices on both sides, has been understood in contrasting terms — hegemony and resentment, inequality and hostility. There is a need imaginatively to reverse today's state-centric approach and recover and revalidate the plural perspectives of people.

Already, the Hindutva brigade has co-opted the intellectual voice of the 'realists' to clamour for nuclear India to flex its muscles and use fear and intimidation to instil respect in India's neighbours. Some

columnists blame India's loss of influence in Nepal to a misplaced policy of 'goodwill gestures and accommodation'. As part of the road map to a new foreign policy for a nuclear India, they argue for a power paradigm foreign policy, where fear of India's displeasure is the key in managing weaker neighbours.

An article in *Economic and Political Weekly*, for instance, advocates swapping the 'big brotherly' rhetoric for the currency of power. It suggests that the elites have no respect for India when what they should feel is a well-grounded fear of India's ire. Only then will that get transmuted into respectful regard for Indian security interests as per political science texts. Arguably, the logic of the 'fear-respect' dialectics, requires that India has the ultimate power, economic and military, to take on the responsibility of managing the South Asian system. Even if India were to have the capacity (and

IN BRIEF

- The Indian media made no attempt to understand the complexities of Nepal's multi-ethnic polity
- A policy of intimidating Nepal is counterproductive for India
- India needs to shed its big brother image in relation to Nepal

it does not), the attendants of such a power paradigm-driven policy would be expansion of centralised state power and militarisation within and hegemony abroad. As former West Bengal finance minister Ashok Mitra warns, 'big brotherly dominance' will make certain enemies of our neighbours.

Commenting on the deteriorating India-Nepal relationship, Mitra says, "Nepal will continue to be the only Hindu kingdom in the world, her people will continue to be devoutly Hindu and yet will turn into inveterate enemies of the Hindutva mongers ... A time will come when they will be persuaded to join the ranks of the certified enemies of this country."

The December violence was a signpost indicating a dangerous and inexorable drift towards an antagonistic scenario. On one side we have muscle-flexing Indian announcements about setting up police camps along the open border, and on the other side, a defiant urban middle class in Kathmandu clamouring to close the open border. At stake is

not only the implications of a deteriorating Nepal-India relationship, but integrally twined is the internal stability and survival of Nepal's multi-ethnic polity. Enlightened self interest demands introspective analysis and an imaginative restructuring to stem the rot.

In Nepal, some civil society groups have taken responsibility in the form of citizens' initiatives, to understand the implications of inter-community violence and to build harmony; to reach out to citizens in India and forge people's solidarities; to campaign for de-centring the statist Nepal-India relationship and re-imagine one based on dignity and mutual respect. One particular initiative is that of the 'Campaign for Solidarity and Friendship' facilitated by the South Asia Forum for Human Rights (SAFHR). Its perspective is based on the understanding that Nepali nationalism is increasingly being defined as anti-Indianism, further that the functioning of democracy in Nepal has failed to engage sufficiently with the situation of a multi-ethnic polity. As a result there is ethnic discrimination as a whole, the traditional divide between Parbatiya and Madhesia has aggravated and the government has lost moral authority.

Traditionally, it was the ruling elite which defined how close or how distant Nepal would be from India — and invariably the foreign policy options were India-centric. It was post-democracy that ties with China and others were developed. From a people's perspective what kind of relationship does Nepal (and India) want and need and what is possible? Should Nepal bank on Indian assurances that it will abandon its hegemonic attitude? That depends on whether India sees it in its self-interest. What is in Nepal's interest? To be in the Indian ambit? To be in the Chinese ambit? To develop options with non-Indian small neighbours?

Who loses when the Nepali people transfer their inefficiency to an external actor? Introspection demands a hard look by both. Nepal should get over its inferiority complex and drop affirming the unequal 'special relationship' and favour a relationship that upholds the dignity of both peoples.

India needs to understand that every reference to 'deep-rooted friendship' without a mention of mutual respect for sovereignty and equality conveys the message of India taking the Hindu kingdom for granted. A re-imagining of the relationship is crucial for both.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

11 MAY 20

India condemns Taliban decree

New Delhi, May 21

INDIA TODAY protested against the Taliban decree imposing separate dress codes for Hindus in Afghanistan saying it was discriminatory and against the minorities.

"We absolutely deplore such orders which patently discriminate against minorities," an external affairs ministry spokesman told reporters.

He was asked about the Taliban decree under which Hindu women have to wear a yellow cloth and Hindu household should hang a two-metre yellow cloth outside for easy identification. The decree prohibits Hindus and Muslims from living in the same house, bars Hindus from constructing new prayer houses or places of worship and asks Hindu men to desist wearing turbans.

"We have learnt that the Taliban have issued an order imposing fresh restrictions on Hindus in Afghanistan," the spokesman said observing "it is evidence further of the backward and unacceptable ideological underpinnings of the Taliban and justifies action that international community has taken in imposing sanctions against the Taliban."

India, Russia, US, Tajikistan and some other countries had co-

sponsored a resolution, which was approved by the UN Security Council clamping sanctions against the Taliban.

Asked whether India had been singled out by the Taliban for having spoken out strongly against it at different fora, the spokesman recalled that the international community had condemned the Taliban demolition of Bamiyan Buddhas in Afghanistan.

The Rabbani regime in Afghanistan also strongly reacted to the reported decree and asked the international community to check them "timely and unitedly". Afghanistan ambassador here Masood Khalili said "from extremist and super-fanatic groups like Taliban and their mentors this decree is not surprising."

If they were not checked "timely and unitedly", they would create problem after problem for the international community, said Khalili, who represents the Rabbani regime recognised by India. "I condemn this decree on behalf of the people of Afghanistan. Hindu Afghans have always lived freely, worshipped freely and wore whatever they liked and fought for Afghanistan's liberation each and every time."

PTI

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

22 MAY 2001

Gorkha brigade: Loyalty for India, moolah for Nepal

Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, May 19

DESPITE THE ups and downs in Indo-Nepal relations, the Nepalese soldiers serving in the Indian armed forces continue to be one of the biggest and steady foreign exchange earners for their homeland even as they remain as loyal to India as ever.

The Nepalese Gorkhas, serving or retired, bring home over Rs 1100 crore in Nepalese currency every year. This apart, India runs several welfare projects for its 1,10,502 former soldiers living in the kingdom.

Currently, an Indian military delegation headed by Lt Gen Sampath Kumar is here to study the ways and means to improve the existing welfare programmes. Earlier this week, the Indian Army Ex-servicemen's Welfare Organisation in Nepal

(IEWON) reviewed the ongoing welfare schemes at its annual meeting chaired by Indian ambassador Deb Mukharji.

Every year, India disburses Rs 554 crore as pension to its former Nepalese soldiers, a large number of whom received gallantry awards while in service.

Last year, India announced Rs six-crore one-time package for about 900 Nepalese soldiers killed or disabled in wars or other military operations since August 15, 1947.

At the moment, there are about 40,000 Nepalese subjects in the Indian Army that also has a substantial number of Nepali-speaking Indians. Besides, over 35,000 more personnel from Nepal serve in other branches of the Indian armed forces and Central and State police wings.

Compared to the earnings of its armed personnel, Nepal's

income from its trade with India does not look impressive. In 1999-2000, its exports of goods worth just about Rs 1700 crore while its imports stood at Rs 3300 crores.

India spends over Rs 8 crore on welfare schemes run by the IEWON. They include periodic visits of medical, eye and dental teams to interior areas and financial assistance to for the education of ex-soldiers' children.

The Indian embassy's military wing runs vocational training in computers, typing, knitting and stitching at over a dozen centres including Kathmandu, Pokhara and Dharan. A school named Nepal Bharat Maitri School has also been set up in Pokhara.

The recruitment of Nepalese subjects in the Indian Army began after a 1947 agreement between India, Nepal and the UK on the division of British Indian Gorkha regiments.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

20 MAY 2001

EFFECTIVELY BLOCKED: Indians will now need passports to visit Nepal

India-Nepal knots: The Big Block Syndrome

AA BY DUBBY BHAGAT

It must surely have occurred to several wags just how aptly named South Block is. While the South is sometimes a misnomer especially when dealing with the North, the Block lives up to its name by effectively blocking everything including such incidentals as good relations with one's neighbours.

The latest case in point is when The Block, after what must have been a cosmetic meeting with its Nepali counterparts, decided to overturn a fifty-year-old tradition and impose new documentation on Indian tourists to Nepal. So tourism to Nepal is blocked.

Mr and Mrs Bhindiwallah from Ludhiana Cantt. who have pots of money to spend must now obtain either passports or voter IDs for all the Bhindiwallahs who want to get away from the burning plains, and wallow in cool and casino replete Kathmandu.

The Block in its infinite wisdom has decreed that the Bhindiwallahs need nothing more than a wish and a scrappy bit of paper to cross the land border into Nepal. Because being mere citizens and not terrorists their intentions like halos will precede them at check points. This is, apparently, beyond the capabilities of those manning checkpoints at Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu who are dab hands at voter ID and passports but not terribly good at halos.

And the best terrorists can't possibly travel overland having

Mr and Mrs Bhindiwallah from Ludhiana who have pots of money to spend must now obtain either passports or voter IDs for all the Bhindiwallahs who want to go to Nepal

need of business club's liquid sustenance on Indian Airlines or Royal Nepal to perform their evil deeds.

Anyway The Block's and India's "security perceptions" are assuaged and everyone can now concentrate on seeing that the Red Fort and railway stations are not attacked by baddies instead of splitting their concentration.

But the Bhindiwallahs are not only people being blocked.

Bombay Dyeing, Hitkari and a number of India's business houses, as well as suppliers of livestock, *masalas*, you-name-it, are halted in their tracks as Nepal's orders to them diminish in direct proportion to tourism needs. But presumably this will take a little time to sink in. By then the present blockers will be replaced by clones who will stop or pass or block the fallout.

...And Nepal which is the ninth nation on China's list of nine places the Inscrutables can visit

And Nepal which is the ninth nation on China's list of nine places the Inscrutables can visit will woo the Chinese with the same attractive holiday packages offered to Indians

will woo the Chinese with the same attractive holiday packages offered to Indians, when Chinese premier Zhu Rongji visits on May 14. And the Block will say that Nepal is playing the China card and, or, a foreign hand is at work or all of the above.

The Block must be seen as working to perpetuate itself. Being possessed of mass it cannot bend to Nepal at the negotiating table with infinitely more carrot and much less stick. At the moment it is said that the Indian embassy has been trying to get the Nepalis, wounded by the negotiations, to meet again. But the Nepalis are busy for the next two months — so the Block mindset has been passed over several high mountains. Only in Nepal it is not called the Block it is called Singha Durbar or Sheetal Niwas.

Amazing what trans-Himalayan osmosis can achieve in making the bureau in the bureaucracy heavy and immovable.

The Block has to block so its budgets are ever higher, its power over the fate of twenty three million people absolute and it can truthfully tell its children, "I was working my blocks off to see you through school, college, marriage and a house in the hills since you cannot go to Nepal without a passport or a voter ID. And since your children can't get voter IDs and their passports will take forever, forget Nepal altogether. I have."

THE ASIAN AGE

14 MAY 2001

Govt asks Nepal to protect Indians

Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, May 12

FIVE MONTHS after the anti-Hrithik Roshan riots rocked the Nepalese capital, India has again asked Nepal to provide security to Indian nationals living in the kingdom.

The move comes in the wake of recent attacks on two Indian-owned elite schools by pro-Maoist Akhil Nepal Rashtriya Vidyarthi Sangathan (Krantikari) activists who are currently fighting for educational reforms.

The Maoist students have called a week-long school bandh from Monday in support of its 15-point charter of demands that include free education, abolition

of Sanskrit as a compulsory subject and a ban on singing of the National anthem that basically glorifies the King.

The Indian embassy, in a statement yesterday, expressed concern at the "renewed attempts at attacking Indian nationals and their property." It also stated that it has asked the Nepal Government to protect the Indians and their property.

The statement expressed happiness at the concern shown by Nepalese political and educational organisations over the "premeditated and organised armed attacks on the two schools".

Earlier on Tuesday, pro-Maoist activists raided and damaged Rupy's International School and Elite Co-ed School, seeking a 50-

per cent cut in the fees. They also manhandled some of the Indian staff even as they shouted anti-India slogans.

The incident has shocked the Indian community that runs a sizeable number of English-medium schools in the kingdom. Indians also form the bulk of the teaching staff in private schools.

This apart, two well-known business establishments owned by an Indian national and a Nepalese of Indian origin came under attack here and in the tourist town of Pokhara about a fortnight ago.

Earlier in the last week of December, mobs accusing Bollywood star Hrithik Roshan of making objectionable remarks on Nepal attacked business

establishments run by the people of Indian origin for three days.

Despite Delhi's suspicion about the involvement of the ISI and Mumbai mafia in the riots, a Nepalese fact-finding team that submitted its report last month gave a clean chit to the rioters by describing the violence as "a spontaneous outburst of popular emotion".

Even as a number of schools have declared holidays from Sunday (which is a working day in the kingdom), the Government has called a tripartite meeting between the Maoist students' union, the Private and Boarding School Organisation of Nepal and the Education Ministry on Saturday to break the deadlock.



HRITHIK ROSHAN

The attacks continue

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

3 MAY 2001

Delhi cheers monarch's rebel-camp tour

FROM CHANDAN NANDY

New Delhi, May 5: In an unprecedented development, the Bhutanese monarch last month toured the southern parts of his country and visited the base and training camps of the United Liberation Front of Asom (Ulfa) and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), bringing cheers to Indian authorities here.

This is the first time that the head of state of a neighbouring country has visited the training camps of Indian insurgent groups. King Jigme Singye Wangchuk undertook his visit in a helicopter and stopped over at some of the camps being run by Ulfa and Bodo insurgents. In the past, both these outfits have

mounted offensives against Indian security forces and civilians from base camps in southern Bhutan, especially Samudra Jhonkar district where they are deeply entrenched.

Officials here said the Bhutanese sovereign's "bold" initiative is the culmination of a sustained mix of pressure on Thimpu and New Delhi's bid to clamp down on the insurgent groups. Last year's flush out operations by the Bhutanese army were not much of a success.

Following his visit to the camps, Wangchuk called over the Indian ambassador and briefed him on his experience and inter-action with leaders of the two groups. He is learnt to have supplied the Indian envoy with a list

of names of some top Ulfa and Bodo militants and their cadres operating from these camps. Ulfa chairman Arabinda Rajkhowa lives in one such camp, while outfit commander-in-chief Paresh Barua often slips into the country from Bangladesh and Pakistan.

Indian officials here feel that in the past, Wangchuk had been dilly-dallying on the kind of approach his government should take towards Indian insurgents operating from within his country. There was no clear commitment, they say. But last month's developments are being seen as "clear signs" of cooperation at the highest level in Thimpu. "This is an indication of positive change and the king appears to be taking personal interest," an official

said. The general assessment here is that Ulfa and the NDFB may not launch strikes against Indian security forces from their camps in Bhutan.

There are unconfirmed reports, however, that recently Rajkhowa and Barua met Pakistani ISI officers at an undisclosed location in southern Holland. They were reportedly asked to create large-scale disturbance, engineer violence and target BJP-AGP candidates and supporters during the Assembly elections in Assam next week.

Fearing Ulfa and Bodo strikes, the Centre has taken steps to deploy army and paramilitary forces to seal the Indo-Bhutan border to prevent infiltration of insurgents.



Wangchuk. (AFP)

Rabbani heat before Russian visit

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, May 2: At a time India is trying to strengthen the anti-Taliban forces in Afghanistan to isolate the ruling student-militia and its main backer Pakistan, fissures have surfaced within the Northern Alliance — the main centre of resistance against Kabul — with ousted President Burhanuddin Rabbani describing Delhi as an enemy and extending a hand of friendship towards Islamabad.

Rabbani's comments come just ahead of Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov's visit tomorrow, when he is expected to hold wide-ranging talks with his Indian counterpart, Jaswant Singh, and other senior South Block officials on a range of issues, particularly on the developments in Afghanistan. India, along with countries like Russia, the US and Iran, has been trying to strengthen the Northern Alliance and its leader Ahmed Shah Masood, seen as the only force capable to mounting a serious challenge to the regime.

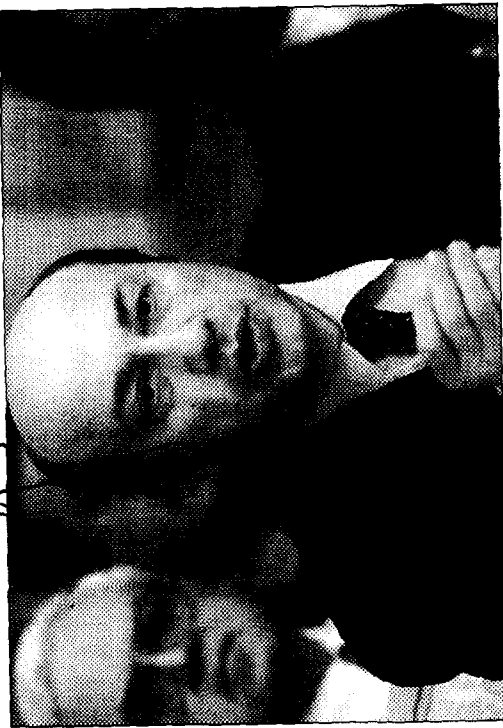
In a recent interview to a Push-tu newspaper, *Wahdad*, Rabbani, who continues to be the chief of the Northern Alliance and is still recognised as the country's president, said: "We are Pakistan's friend and loyal companion. Pakistan supervised our *jihād* for 18 years. We have completely banned anti-Pakistan propaganda in our meetings and forums. In our government, nobody has the right to

Though copies of Rabbani's interview have been circulated in South Block, officially, the ministry of external affairs has not made any comments in an attempt to play down the former Afghan President's remarks. In private, senior diplomats have tried to argue that Rabbani's angry outburst should be seen in the context of Masood's recent successful European tour.

Rabbani feels he is being marginalised and, therefore, is trying to curry favour with old allies like Pakistan in the hope that Islamabad will be able to bring about a truce between him and the Taliban.

India's stand notwithstanding, the remarks from Rabbani at this crucial juncture indicate the fissures within the Northern Alliance and raises serious questions about how far Masood will be able to deliver in the fight against the Taliban.

South Block officials argue that Masood is not only the "best bet" for Delhi but its "only option". As long as the Northern Alliance continues to fight and draws Taliban fire, it gives some respite to countries like India and other central Asian nations, who are facing a serious threat from terrorists trained and based in Afghanistan. The policy therefore, is to play down the anti-Indian remarks and try and garner the broadest possible support to strengthen the Northern Alliance in its fight against the Taliban.



Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov, who is landing in Delhi on Thursday. (AFP file picture)

In its annual report released on Monday, the US state department has accused Pakistan of continuing support to insurgency in Kashmir and failure to take effective steps against terrorist organisations operating from its territory. It also laid stress on the shift of focus of international terrorism, saying the hub has now shifted from West Asia to South Asia, especially the badlands of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

India welcomed the report and expressed hope that groups like the Lashkar-e-Toiba would come under the American scanner and finally be termed international terrorist groups.

speak against Pakistan. Anybody who is doing that is protecting the interest of India and is going to be a great enemy of Pakistan."

Rabbani was further quoted as saying: "India's hostility against Islam and Muslims is not a secret. We cannot forget the oppression and atrocities committed by India in Kashmir."

The remarks gather significance coming at a time when India has taken the initiative to isolate the Taliban and is drawing satisfaction from the fact that the international community has accepted Pakistan's role in supporting terrorist groups in Kashmir and the current regime in Kabul.

Indo-Nepal border security tightened

MAHRAJGANJ (UP), APRIL 20. Security on the India-Nepal border is being strengthened following the arrest of a Pakistani diplomat with 16 kg of RDX in Kathmandu recently and the killing of three Pakistani nationals in Lucknow, a senior police official said.

The SP, Mr. L Ravikumar, told PTI that the decision was following reports of links between Pakistan's ISI agents with Nepal. The 85 km open border with Nepal provided easy access to infiltrators, he said. — PTI

THE HINDU

21 APR 2001

Kathmandu concern over militants' Bihar links

FROM TAPAS CHAKRABORTY

Patna, April 14: The Union home ministry has forwarded to the Bihar government Nepal's request to flush out from the state "mercenaries" who are conducting "training camps" for Nepali militants.

Nepal grew concerned over the Bihar links after a series of Maoist attacks in the country early this month in which over 72 people, including police officers, were killed.

The Centre had verified Nepal's claims before forwarding it to Bihar, according to intelligence sources. The home ministry was told that there had been a steady trickle of Nepali militants into Bihar's two districts — Kaimur and Aurangabad — over the past two years.

Both the districts provide an ideal setting for such camps as they are hilly and are covered by dense forests. Kaimur, being close to Uttar Pradesh, also pro-

vides an easy escape route for the militants.

It is believed that the Naxalites were giving training in landmine-blasts and handling of Kalashnikovs.

The People's War Group (PWG) was the first contact between the Bhari and Nepali militants. The Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) of Bihar, though initially reluctant, agreed to impart operational training.

Police sources said intelligence officers arrested a Nepali citizen, believed to be member of the Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist), from Samastipur in February when he was travelling in a train. The man, still languishing in a jail, was carrying "objectionable literature" and letters of introduction from Nepal Left leaders to their counterpart in Bihar. Police learnt about the Nepal-Bihar Naxalite links after interrogating the man.

On April 6, Leftist militants killed 47 people, including 29 po-

licemen, in an attack in Dailekh district, west of Kathmandu. This was the second strike in quick succession.

Alarmed at the spurt of Leftist attacks, Nepal contacted India at the diplomatic level seeking help to bust the training camps.

"Since there are Naxalites in Bihar they may have links with their Nepal counterpart," said a senior officer in Bihar, adding that the state government was doing its bit.

"But the kind of expertise required to make an in-depth investigation on these links is not available," he said.

Sources said even as Bihar gets into the act, the Naxalite outfits are burrowing deeper in the state's remote areas.

In 1998, the Party Unity of Bihar got merged with the PWG of Andhra, linking the Naxalites in the two states. The PWG is now expanding in Uttar Pradesh and Orissa.

THE TELEGRAPH

15 APR 2001

India to step up surveillance on Nepal border to curb smuggling

By Pratyush Kanth
The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: Senior officials of the external affairs ministry, the home ministry, the Intelligence Bureau, the Research and Analysis Wing and the Department of Revenue Intelligence at a meeting here have decided to increase the surveillance on the Indo-Nepal border and share intelligence inputs with each other on a regular basis.

The arrest in Nepal of a Pakistan embassy official with 16 kg of RDX has not surprised senior DRI officials here. They claimed, "The ISI is masterminding large-scale smuggling at the Indo-Nepal border and the intelligence agencies of India have specific information on this. Young unemployed men from Nepal and India are being used by the ISI in a very organised manner to smuggle arms and drugs across the border."

The DRI officials say that the "face of smuggling" across the Indo-Nepal border has undergone a total change over the past five years. "Earlier there were group of smugglers, mostly Indians, who organised smuggling with the help of the citizens of Nepal. Their common aim was just to make fast and easy money. But with the coming of ISI agents, all these groups are out of scene. The ISI is using the Indo-

Nepal border to promote narco-terrorism in India," a DRI official said.

According to a source, this is not the first time Pakistan embassy officials in Nepal have been involved in criminal activities. "The Indian currency Rs 500 notes are not accepted in Nepal because the ISI had pumped in a lot of fake notes of this denomination. In one case, a senior Pakistan embassy official had given his children's school fees with these fake notes in Kathmandu. Even today fake currency notes of different denominations are being pumped into India through Nepal," he pointed out.

Intelligence officials admit that it is impossible to "seal" the Indo-Nepal border. Almost every day the customs officials are intercepting consignments of various goods, including arms and drugs, headed for the Indian market. "The only way the smuggling can be curbed in this area is by increasing our intelligence level. We have also to sensitise the Nepalese officials as well as police forces of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh to increase their vigil," says an official.

To raise bilateral cooperation to curb smuggling, the DRI officials are keeping the Nepalese government and ministers apprised of the situation through the Indian mission in Kathmandu. "We have given

them information about the ISI using Nepal as a base to destabilise our economy," said a DRI official. Sources in the DRI said that several Indian intelligence agencies are agreed that the ISI activities in Nepal have reached "a dangerous level" and it has to be countered immediately. "Poverty in Nepal, and low living standards and low salary structures of government officials have made it easy for the ISI to make a base in that country by pouring money," said a DRI official.

Nepal's foreign minister reviews ties with India

By Seema Guha

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: Nepal's foreign minister Chakra Prasad Bastola stopped over in the Capital on his way to Europe. He was here on Friday mainly for the release of two books of former Nepali prime minister B.P. Koirala, released by the India-Nepal Foundation.

The English version of *Atmabrittanta* and the Hindi translation of *Jail Journal* were formally released by former prime minister Chandra Shekhar, an old friend and associate of Mr Koirala. Mr Bastola, who worked with Mr Koirala as a young man, said that Mr Koirala and leaders of the Indian freedom struggle worked closely together in the past. "Today the old setting has gone. The new setting has failed, the connectivity between the people is less. There are gaps in our relations which have to be addressed," he said. He called for greater cooperation between the people. The India-Nepal Foundation, set up in 1997 with a kitty of Rs 1.5 crore donated by the two governments, is one such effort to bridge the gap.

Mr Bastola met Union external affairs minister Jaswant Singh on Friday and went through the entire

gamut of bilateral ties. An external affairs ministry spokesman described the talks as "friendly and cordial". Mr Bastola also briefed Mr Singh on King Birendra's recent trip to China. Asked if India was worried about the symbolism of the King's trip and the kind of attention he received in Beijing, the spokesman said, "It does not detract from our relations with Nepal."

Whatever its public position, New Delhi is never easy when Kathmandu flashes its China card. A top analyst on Nepal, however, felt that too much was made in the Nepali press about the King's China visit. "Nothing substantial really happened in that trip for India to get nervous," he said. More significant, the analyst said, was the recent visit of the Chinese army chief to Nepal—the first by a Chinese army chief to the kingdom.

Though India carefully watches Nepal-China relations, especially so because it does not want a Nepal-China-Pakistan axis on its borders, there is some small consolation. "Geography is on our side, Nepal lifeline is through India, not China," a former foreign secretary said.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

2 APR 2001

Nepal row over Chhatre arrest reports

Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, March 27

THE NEPAL Government is seemingly caught in a compromising position following reports in local newspapers that it was the Nepalese police that had handed over Gorkha Liberation Organisation (GLO) chief Chhatre Singh Subba to the West Bengal Government.

The West Bengal police claimed last Saturday that Subba had been caught by them in a midnight raid at Fourth Mile in Darjeeling district, close to Nepal's Ilam district, ending a long search since the February 10 ambush on GNLG chief Subhas Ghising.

Today, all Nepal Home Ministry spokesman G. B. Pandey agreed to say was, "We're still verifying reports about the arrest that have appeared in the local media."

The Nepalese journals said Subba had been arrested at 11 a.m. on Friday from Prem Lal Pradhan's residence on Shanishcharay Road near Birtamod in Jhapa district. Quoting local residents, the papers said a team of plainclothesmen had come and told Subba that they wanted to talk to him. Subba was whisked away in a police van once he came out to meet them.

Nepal was caught in a somewhat controversy about 12 years ago after Tek Nath Rizal, leader of the movement for democracy in Bhutan, was picked up from Birtamod, about 45 km west of Siliguri, and handed over secretly to the Bhutanese police. Rizal came out of jail as recently as last year. Nepal, incidentally, has no extradition treaty with India or Bhutan.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

28 MAR 2001

Indo-Nepal ties reviewed

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 30. The External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, today reviewed all aspects of Indo-Nepal ties with the Foreign Minister of Nepal, Mr. Chakra Prasad Bastola.

Mr. Bastola, who is transiting India en route Europe, called on Mr. Singh this morning. A Foreign Office spokesman said the meeting took place in "a friendly and cordial atmosphere".

After the hijacking of an Indian Airlines aircraft IC-814 at the end of 1999 from Kathmandu jolted the bilateral relations, the two sides have been striving hard to put them back on track.

During the visit of the Prime Minister, Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala, here last year, a number of decisions were taken to revive the momentum of the expansive engagement between the two nations. The two Foreign Ministers today reviewed the progress since

Mr. Koirala's visit. But the efforts to revitalise the bilateral ties appear to be under the shadow of growing political instability in Nepal. The Opposition parties demanding the resignation of Mr. Koirala have paralysed the functioning of the legislature over the last several weeks.

Meanwhile, the divisions in the ruling Nepali Congress remain acute as ever and feed into the political uncertainty. Many of the Government's recent political initiatives — to initiate devolution of powers to the regions and the creation of special armed police to combat the growing menace of Maoist insurgency — have been grounded because of the instability in Kathmandu.

There is some concern here that the political paralysis will have a negative impact on the relations with India and prevent forward movement on mutually beneficial cooperation.

THE HINDU

31 MAR 2001

Bhutan may flush out Ulfa, NDFB militants

HT Correspondent
Guwahati, March 19

THE BHUTAN Government might well initiate military action to oust the Ulfa and NDFB militants holed out in its soil, which are showing no signs of leaving the hill country till they reach their objectives, said the Bhutan Home Minister on Monday.

"We have faced many problems in the past but this threat is so grave that our national sovereignty is at stake," the Minister said. He said both the militant groups had expressed their stand on not leaving the Bhutanese soil in the near future. He said the Bhutanese Government had tried various strategies to make the militant groups leave Bhutan, but the only response they got was the ultras would not leave until they achieved their objectives.

"That means, until the Ulfa get their independence and the

NDFB their Bodoland. Since these are both impossible objectives, it just means they plan to remain indefinitely in the Bhutanese soil," the Bhutanese national newspaper quoted him as saying.

"The Ulfa and NDFB militant problem is hovering over Bhutan like a dark cloud at a time when the country is enjoying an unprecedented era of peace and prosperity," said the Bhutanese Minister.

"The militants appear to believe the Bhutan Government and the Royal Bhutan Army would not take any action against them. Unlike the past, they have started moving around in the open, fully armed, through Bhutanese villages and towns," he said. Last year the Bhutan National Assembly had resolved to use force against the militants if all other efforts to make them leave failed.

According to the Bhutanese Home Minister the Government

had stopped supply of ration to militants and started taking action against Bhutanese citizens who harboured militants or helped them.

In the past four years the Bhutan Government has deployed nine RBA units, 3,000 soldiers, along the Assam-Bhutan border.

Following a massive drive against the Ulfa and NDFB militants by the Indian Army, the ultras had fled to Bhutan in 1991 and set up bases in the hill country, especially in the dense jungles of Southern Bhutan, close to the Bhutan-Assam border.

The Bhutan Government says it came to know of the militant bases on its soil only in 1994. Since then it has been trying to persuade them to leave the country but to no avail.

The Bhutan Government held two meetings with Ulfa leaders in 1998 and 1999, but could manage to meet the NDFB leaders only once.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

20 MAR 2001

'India should not let destruction of statues affect ties with Afghanistan'

By Siddharth Varadarajan

KABUL: Finally laying to rest any last glimmer of hope about the fate of the Bamiyan Buddhas, the Taliban on Wednesday said that although 100 per cent 'work' has not yet been completed, the statues have more or less been destroyed.

In his first meeting with journalists since the controversial order to destroy the statues was issued, Taliban foreign minister Wakil Ahmed Muttawakil said dynamite was being used since artillery fire was not enough. "In some portion, cement and steel rods are there. Though I cannot say exactly, a greater portion of statue is no longer left." Muttawakil added that the edict has been under consideration for six years and pertained to all statues depicting life form. However, he gave an assurance that this would not apply to statues which might be worshipped by Afghan's small Hindu and Sikh communities inside their temples.

Muttawakil parried questions on how the Taliban would react if a country like Spain, where there are no Muslims, were to destroy ancient mosques in Cordoba and Granada. "The Spanish law might not allow such destruction," he said. But what would happen if Spain were to change its laws, he was asked. Muttawakil finally admitted that "the situation will have to be judged then, but obviously we will be unhappy". Shifting ground, he then attacked the international community for focusing only on bad news from

Afghanistan. Asked whether the destruction of the statues was good news or bad, he said: "It depends. For them it is bad for us good."

Speaking later to *The Times of India*, Muttawakil said the Indian government should not link its diplomatic policies towards Afghanistan with the statues issue. He said the Taliban had gone out of their way to help India during the Kandahar hijacking. He denied even a commitment to India that the hijackers would be arrested; they were allowed to go because some compromise had to be made. "The plane first landed in India, they should have been arrested there."

He admitted hijacking is a crime but refused to accept the hijackers were criminals. "If they were tried they might have been found guilty because opposing a government is one thing, but killing innocent persons is another." Nevertheless, they had some arguments too, that they are waging jihad. "I am not a Mufti. It is not my job to judge."

On Kashmir, Muttawakil said the Taliban supported the militants fighting there, but only in nominal terms. He denied there were any militant training camps on the Afghan side. However, he acknowledged that there were Arabs and Pakistani "volunteers" who have been fighting alongside the Taliban against the Opposition. Asked about the numbers, he said "the numbers cannot and should not be counted. These are volunteers, they come and go".

THE TIMES OF INDIA

1 MAR 2001

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MPs for emergency U.N. session

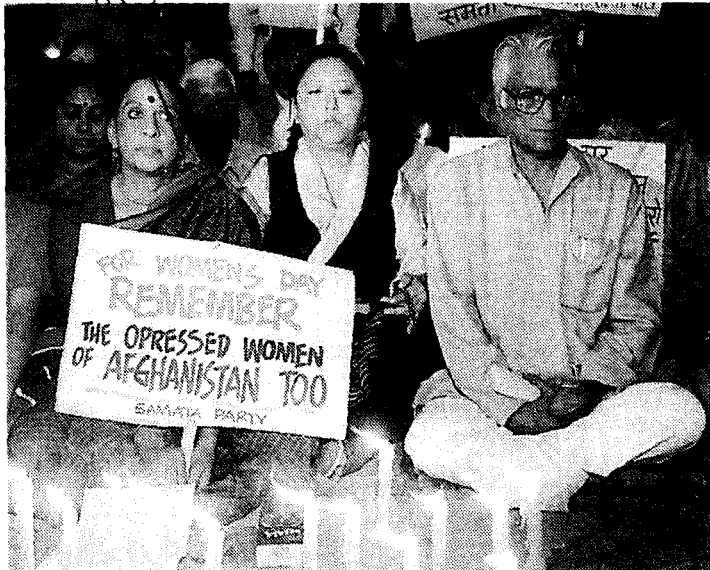
By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 7. Protests against the destruction of Buddha statues by the Taliban militia in Afghanistan continued here today with several MPs demanding an emergency session of the UN Security Council to take measures for preventing the 'destructive forces' from committing further outrage.

A group of eight MPs urged the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, and stressed the need for India to play a decisive role in uniting and mobilising international forces to checkmate extremist elements running wild in different parts of the world. The signatories to the letter to the Prime Minister included Mr. Eduardo Faleiro, Dr. Raja Ramanna, Dr. Biplab Dasgupta and Mr. C.M. Ibrahim. Condemning the fanaticism and religious intolerance demonstrated by the Taliban in destruction of archeological treasures, the Muslim Women's Forum and the Women's Initiative for Peace in South Asia (WIPSA) said the Taliban had committed crimes against humanity.

The Muslim Women's Forum said the religion propagated by Taliban "is not in consonance with the teachings of the Quran or the Sunnah of the Prophet." It said that Islam preached universal sisterhood and brotherhood and believed in compassion and deference to all religions. The Forum appealed to all sane elements to condemn the act of the Taliban and ensure that it did not happen again. The appeal was signed by Begum Saeeda Khurshid, Ms. Sughra Mehdi, Ms. Nahid Jahan, Ms. Safia Raza, Ms. Shama Iqbal, Ms. Shaukat Siddiqui and Ms. Anees Ahmed.

The WIPSA, in its statement,



The Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, and the Samata Party chief, Ms. Jaya Jaitly, leading a protest demonstration in New Delhi on Wednesday against the destruction of Buddha statues and the oppression of women by the Taliban rulers in Afghanistan. — PTI

termed the Taliban's action as "destructive and reprehensible."

"While civil society, especially in South Asia, has been striving against the oppressive forces of liberalisation, globalisation and privatisation in as much as they are inimical to the interests of the poor and marginalised this evil deed has nullified all efforts and pushed us backwards," it said. The statement was signed by Ms. Nirmala Deshpande, Ms. Mohini Giri, Ms. Syeda Hameed and Ms. Meera Khanna.

Taliban asked to stop destruction

UNITED NATIONS, MARCH 7. Criticising as "incomprehensible and wanton" the destruction of Buddhist statues by the Taliban regime

in Afghanistan, the United Nations Security Council has asked the Islamic militia to stop the campaign. In a statement, the Council said the U.N. had not given up the hope of saving the priceless statues.

The Council President, Mr. Volodymyr Yu Yelchenko, who read the statement to reporters, said the latest information was that the Taliban had started destroying the statues, but no confirmation had been received that they had actually been destroyed.

The Metropolitan Museum of New York is reported to have offered to remove the statues from Afghanistan at its own cost but so far the Taliban has not reacted positively. But an attempt is being made through intermediaries to persuade the Taliban to allow the statues' removal. — PTI

THE HINDU

- 8 MAR 2001

Dawood's Nepal trip worries Delhi

Shishir Gupta
New Delhi, March 6

DAWOOD IBRAHIM quietly visited Nepal last month. In the three days he spent there, he got the Government to allow back into business the TV network that had triggered the Hrithik Roshan row, setting off anti-India riots.

New Delhi is worried, and keeping a close watch on developments in the Himalayan kingdom, a senior government official said. For, right from the moment Dawood got off the Karachi-Kathmandu flight, it was clear how much his clout has grown in Nepal.

HF-1 713
The cable TV network had had its licence scrapped by the Nepal Government in early January. The official reason was the company's failure to honour its contract. Also, a three-member Nepalese probe committee had given a clean chit to Hrithik, implying that the controversy was plotted by groups looking to harm India-Nepal ties. But the network was allowed to go back on air last week. The Minister behind the crackdown on the network, Information and Communications Minister Jayaprakash Prasad Gupta, was shifted to Agriculture and Cooperatives last month. Even the bureaucrats involved in cancelling the TV

company's licence have reportedly been shown the door.

The same month, a Minister with alleged ISI and underworld links was rehabilitated in the Government. The ISI left its fingerprints on the anti-India riots in Nepal. The controversy broke soon after the arrest of Nasim Rizvi, producer of the film Chori Chori Chupke Chupke and alleged henchman of Dawood's lieutenant Chhota Shakeel.

New Delhi isn't sure who were the people Dawood met in Kathmandu, but it has reason to worry. When the ISI and the don got together last time, the result was the hijack of an Indian Airlines flight from Kathmandu.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 7 MAR 2001

'THEY ARE NEITHER CIVILISED NOR TRUE MUSLIMS'

Vajpayee hits out at Taliban

By Sarabjit Pandher

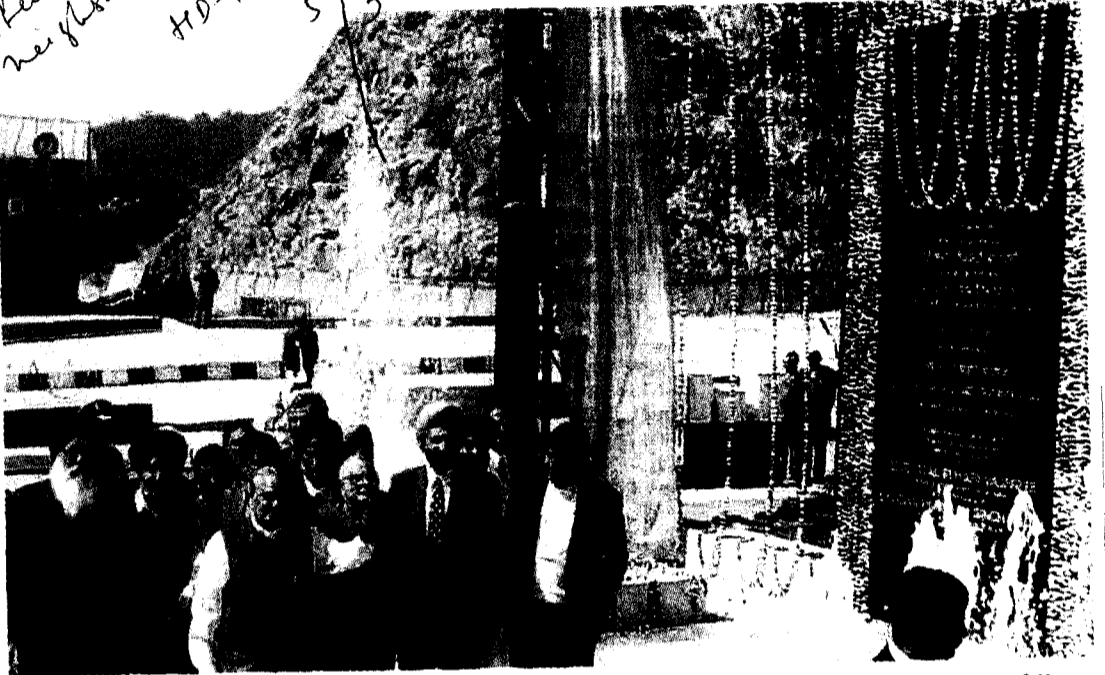
SHAHPUR KANDI (Gurdaspur), MARCH 4. The Taliban rulers of Afghanistan are acting with an obsession to convert the world into a battlefield, the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, said today. The decision to destroy the historic statues of the Buddha had exposed that such acts of shamelessness were being carried out by those who were neither civilised nor true Muslims.

Addressing a public rally here, where he inaugurated the Rs.3800-crore multi-purpose Ranjit Sagar Dam project, Mr. Vajpayee recalled an opportunity when he had seen the Bamiyan statues, which were "aesthetic and magnificent." The decision to destroy them could have only been taken by one who was uncivilised and had no respect for human values.

Mr. Vajpayee said the entire international community, including the Muslim countries, had criticised the decision. Respect for one's own religion was one thing but insulting the symbols, deities and holy men of others, was an act of shamelessness. India stood for respect for all religions and peaceful coexistence.

Underscoring the importance of naming a major development project after Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Prime Minister said despite the greatest efforts, it was impossible to erase the marks of civilisation. It was during the regime of the Maharaja, whose empire extended up to Afghanistan and Tibet, the Hindus and Sikhs settled in those areas. Amid applause, he said India would usher in a day when these people, who were forced to flee Afghanistan, were able to return and live with the respect due to them.

Mr. Vajpayee said politics had undergone some irreversible



The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, waving to the crowd during the inauguration of the Ranjit Sagar dam at Shahpur Kandi on Sunday. — PTI

changes, with coalition politics coming to stay, though every political party had the right to work for achieving a majority on its own. Referring to his meeting with the Chief Ministers on Saturday, he said it was clear that political dif-

ferences must not be allowed to come in the way of economic development.

Mr. Vajpayee advised Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, to sort out their contentious issues, as was done in the south to

resolve the Cauvery waters dispute and offered Central help.

Stressing the need to create a competition among States to speed up development, Mr. Vajpayee said there was an urgent need to take up new projects and ensure that they were completed in the stipulated period. He expressed concern that about 400 irrigation schemes were being delayed due to lack of adequate funds and preparedness. However, the Centre would provide all assistance for the early completion of the Shahpur Kandi project, which is downstream the RSD project on the Ravi river. The Prime Minister took pride that the nation united under one flag to face the grave crises during the Kargil conflict and the Gujarat earthquake.

Badal's praise: Page 9

Anti-aircraft weapons used

KABUL, MARCH 4. Taliban soldiers blasted two towering ancient statues of Buddha with anti-aircraft weapons, according to the first eyewitness account from the area today. Other statues throughout the country were being demolished with rockets, tanks and explosives, ridding the nation of reminders of its pre-Islamic past.

Residents of Central Bamiyan, where the two ancient statues of the Buddha hewn from a cliff face in the third and fifth centuries are located, said Taliban soldiers began attacking the statues at least three days earlier. "I could see the Taliban soldiers firing anti-aircraft weapons at the two statues. That was three days ago," said Safdar Ali, a resident. — AP

More reports on Page 13

THE HINDU

- 5 MAR 2001

PARLIAMENT DECRIES CULTURAL VANDALISM

Missiles fired at Buddha statues

KABUL, MARCH 2. Afghanistan's ancient Buddha statues in the central Bamiyan province came under a barrage of rocket and tank fire from the ruling Taliban militia today as the world watched in horror. Taliban and Opposition officials said militia fighters were attacking the two giant stone Buddhas — 50 metres and 34.5 metres tall — estimated to have been built between the second and fifth centuries A.D., with rockets, tanks and automatic rifles.

"They have started attacking the Buddhas with guns and tank-shells... with whatever arms they are carrying," a militia source said, declining to be named. "People are firing at them out of their own sentiments." Fatah Taliban soldiers yesterday started destroying all statues throughout the country in compliance with a decree issued on Monday by their supreme leader, Mulla Mohammad Omar.

Mr. Omar said the decision was in line with a fatwa from local Islamic clerics designed to prevent the worshipping of "false idols". Explosives had been brought to Bamiyan from the surrounding areas, scene of heavy fighting recently, the Afghan Islamic press reported.

Carved into a sandstone mountain, the Buddhas have been off limits to journalists since fighting broke out in Bamiyan last month, and now the Taliban has barred even local residents from the area. Appeals to spare the Afghan relics have come from the United States, France, Germany, Thailand, Japan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Iran, Pakistan, Germany, Russia, India, Malaysia, the European Union, the United Nations and many museums and Buddhist organisations.

U.N. warns against outrage

The chief of the United Nations' political wing in Afghanistan has warned the Taliban against the demolition of the statues, saying the militia's move would provoke international outrage.

Mr. Francesc Vendrell, U.N. Special Mission chief, discussed the Taliban's edict calling for the destruction of all pre-Islamic statues and shrines with the militia's Foreign Minister, Mr. Wakil Mohammad Muttawakil.

'Bring statues to India'

NEW DELHI, MARCH 2. Parliament today expressed unanimous condemnation of the Taliban's intent to destroy the two Buddha statues in Bami-

yan, Afghanistan. In a unanimous resolution adopted by both Houses of Parliament, India condemned "in the strongest possible terms" the Taliban's decision to destroy the statues. It also offered to bring these monuments to its soil.

The tough resolution described the Taliban's intent as an expression of "religious fundamentalism and terrorism against human culture and civilisation". The destruction of the 2,000-year-old statues would constitute "an appalling act of cultural vandalism". Condemning the "barbarism and anti-civilisational intent" behind the decision, the resolution urged the world community and the U.N. to prevail upon the Taliban regime "to desist from this senseless, destructive act".

The outcry cut across party lines. The Deputy Chairperson of the Rajya Sabha, Dr. Najma Heptulla, termed it the "blackest day in history" and said the act was being perpetuated by "so-called protectors of Islam". Mr. Sharifuddin Shariq (National Conference) termed the development unfortunate: "the act went against the spirit of Islam".

The Congress chief whip, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, said words were not enough to condemn the act of religious fundamentalism and cultural terrorism. Mr. Ahmad Patel, also of the Congress, in a statement appealed to the Islamic nations to restrain the Taliban.

Cries of 'shame'

Amid cries of "shame-shame", the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, prior to the adoption of the resolution, stated that the Taliban appeared bent upon committing not only a "grave wrong" but a "sacrilege to humanity".

In a separate statement, Mr. Singh said that India was willing to bring the Bamiyan Buddhas from Afghanistan at its own cost.

PM writes to Annan

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 2. In a bid to mobilise international opinion, the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, has written to the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and the leaders of the five permanent members of the Security Council to rescue the ancient statues of the Buddha in Afghanistan. Besides the U.S, the U.K, France, Russia and China, the Prime Minister also sent messages to other countries, mainly in South East Asia, with a large Buddhist population. These include Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, Sri Lanka and Laos.

In his letter, the Prime Minister described the Taliban's decree as a "disquieting development" and a manifestation of "obscurantist regression." Urging the withdrawal of the order, Mr. Vajpayee said "the collective voice of humanity" should be raised in order to make the Taliban "see reason."

THE HINDU

MARCH 2001

The 1950 India-Nepal Treaty is obsolete. It's time for a new one that reflects the realities of 2001

Takes two to tango

BY A.G. NOORANI

THE DISTURBANCES in Kathmandu last December were brazenly mounted by elements hostile to India and, indeed, to Prime Minister G.P. Koirala. They fabricated remarks Hrishik Roshan had never made. But the campaign could not have made the headway it did were it not for the fact that some resentment against India exists in the Nepali psyche. It is not of recent origin. But India has been insensitive to the depth of the hurt and the justification for it.

As it happened, the 27th volume of the *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* appeared only a month before the Kathmandu riots. It contained Nehru's note dated November 17, 1954 to Foreign Secretary R.K. Nehru on changes in the treaty India had signed with Nepal on July 31, 1950 when it was ruled by the Rana dynasty. Earlier, on May 6, 1954, the Prime Minister told the Foreign Minister of Nepal, D.R. Regi: "It was clear that the old treaty between Nepal and Tibet has no force or relevance today. It might be considered to have lapsed. Normally, this should give place to a new treaty or agreement between the two countries and, sometime or other, this would have to be done."

Nearly half a century later, Nepal is still knocking at India's doors for the treaty's replacement, a demand rooted in a strong national consensus. But, instead of reaching out to Nepal to address itself to its grievances, successive governments in New Delhi have tended to behave like respondents to Nepal's application.

The state of his fatuous play was reflected in the MEA spokesman's remarks on January 31, 2001, on the conclusion of the talks which Nepal's Foreign Secretary Narayan Shamshere Thapa had with Foreign Secretary Lalit Mansingh. India has an 'open mind' on the review and is prepared to discuss all the aspects in a 'candid manner' bearing in mind 'perceptions, concerns and interests of both sides'.

Along with the treaty, identical letters were exchanged in secret which Prime Minister Nehru revealed on November 27, 1959. An understanding on import of arms by Nepal was recorded in an exchange of letters on January 30, 1965. Nepal's objections centre on four points. First, the undertaking "to inform each other of any serious friction or misunderstanding with any neighbouring State likely to cause any breach in the friendly relations" between India and Nepal (Article 2 of the treaty). Second, neither side "shall tolerate any threat to the security of the other by a foreign aggressor" and both would "consult with each other and



ONLY A FLASHPOINT: Nepali students burn Hrishik Roshan's effigy in December

devise effective counter measures" (paragraph 1 of the 1950 letter).

Third, Nepal would be free to import arms from or through India but according to an agreed procedure (Article 5 of the treaty) and with India's "assistance and agreement" (paragraph 2 of the letter). In 1965, India undertook to supply arms "for the entire Nepalese army on the basis of a total strength of about 17,000 men". Nepal was free to import arms "from or through" India but under an agreed "procedure". It was subject to review. Lastly, neither side would employ "any foreigners whose activity may be prejudicial to the security of the other" (paragraph 5 of the letter).

If obsolescence and inequality are writ large over these obligations, inherent inequality in size and strength make Nepal ask for continuance of some other 'unequal' provisions. The treaty obligation to give "national treatment" to each other's nationals in regard to "participation in industrial and economic development" and grant of concessions and contracts (Article 6) was modified in Nepal's favour by conceding its need to accord its own nationals "protection from unequal treatment" (paragraph 3 of the letter). It proceeded to bind Nepal to give first preference to India, if the terms are equal, in receipt of foreign assistance for "development of the natural resources of, or any industrial project in Nepal."

Finally, both agreed to grant to each other's nationals reciprocally "the same privileges in the matter of residence, ownership of property, participation in trade and commerce, movement and privileges of a similar nature" (Article 7). Nepal baulks at strict 'reciprocity' in these matters. To accuse it of inconsistency is to make a point preposterous even by the standards of a school debate. On, both, security and economic issues, India's legitimate concerns can well be met in the context of the present times without affecting Nepal's sovereignty or economic well-being.

It is not widely known that on March 31, 1990, India presented to Nepal a draft agreement. Though not officially published, its text was published in Nepal in 1992 and in India in 1994 by Avtar Singh Bhasin in a compilation of documents on Nepal's relations with India and China.

Having served in the MEA for 30 years, his comments merit respect: "Events moved fast (thereafter) and the emergence of a new democratic order in Nepal deservedly dealt the draft a death blow. The Indian draft smacked of neo-colonialism, to use a haggard cliché, as it sought to bind Nepal in an unequal relationship more tightly than even the 1950 treaty had envisaged. Apart from affirming the 1950 treaty, the draft sought to recreate a defence arrangement of a binding nature and sought to obtain for

India a monopoly control on Nepal's natural resources thus closing all options for Nepal once and for all. If the 1950 treaty, after more than four decades, still haunts the Indo-Nepalese relations, the draft, if accepted by a beleaguered regime, would have been a constant source of friction."

Nepal's Foreign Secretary, Kumar Gyawali, presented the draft of a new treaty to India's Foreign Secretary K. Raghunath on September 12, 1997, in New Delhi. It had received the support of all parties in Nepal five days earlier.

The MEA's statement of January 31 makes it all too clear that little progress was made in the dialogue since 1997. It is equally clear that what is required is a major policy decision at the highest level to replace a manifestly obsolete treaty of 1950 by one which reflects the realities of 2001. We have seen how Bangladesh allowed the treaty of 1972 to lapse in 1997. Not one political party there favoured its continuance.

Nepal is unlikely to accept that treaty's formulation of mutual consultations in the event of attack or threat of attack against either country by a third country. But is it necessary? Such a formulation will inject a jarring note in the cordial relations between India and China. Besides, if the unthinkable were indeed to happen, no one can be in doubt as to India's response.

On the other hand, everything is to be gained by India coming forth to allay Nepal's concerns by proposing a draft which Nepal can realistically be expected to accept. This is a challenge worthy of Vajpayee's skills. He is unlikely to find a more responsive interlocutor than Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala.

The issues have been crystallised and so have the points on which redress can be given. We can give Nepal all the assurance a treaty possibly can. Incorporate in the text, rather than in the preamble, a commitment to respect the five principles of *Panchsheel* and 'the purposes and principles' of the UN Charter and add to these the two commitments common to all friendship treaties between neighbours — neither shall "enter into or participate in any military alliance directed against the other party 'nor' allow the use of its territory for committing any act that may cause military damage to or constitute a threat to the security or independence of the other".

References to a 'special relationship' or consultation in the event of a threat from a third State must be eschewed. A treaty need not mention the unspoken or unspeakable. For the rest, as de Gaulle said: "Treaties, like roses and pretty girls, last only so long as they last."

Bhutan braces for backlash over flushout

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

Guwahati, Feb. 16: Bhutan may at last be bracing for a military confrontation with the Ulfa and Boroland militants with the king warning people of six border districts to be prepared to face "any emergency situation".

The state-owned *Kuensel* newspaper quoted King Jigme Singye Wangchuk as saying that the royal government was making arrangements to build up reserves of food stock for the six eastern *dzongkhags* (districts) as a face-off with the rebels will make it impossible for the people of the kingdom to travel to Assam.

"If hostilities with the militants break out...it will result in a complete blockade of goods and supplies which come into Bhutan through Assam," Wangchuk told the people's representatives of Trashigang, a border district.

Bhutan's fear of a backlash by Assam militants stemmed mainly from the attacks on Bhutan vehicles and killing of Bhutanese travellers to Assam in December. As many as 14 Bhutanese nationals were killed by suspected NDFB rebels in Assam.

Though Thimphu is not keen on military action against the rebels, it has been forced to rethink its hands-off policy as "Bhutan is running out of peaceful options" to make the rebels leave the Himalayan kingdom.

Kuensel reported that the kingdom was, however, worried that military intervention would lead to loss of lives and "disruption of all development activities in the affected districts".

The King expressed concern that if Bhutan was left with no option but to send its armed forces to evict the militants, it would mean a war. He, however, assured the people that the royal government would every effort to persuade the militants to leave the Himalayan kingdom through dialogue which, he said, must be pursued.

On the steps taken by the royal government, the newspaper quoted the King as saying "the government would buy agricultural produce which farmers usually sell in Assam and divert them to other markets in India". He also said the royal government would bear the loss incurred by the people.

Trashigang district alone imports food items worth 49 million in Bhutanese currency from Assam and exports agricultural produce ranging from 30 to 40 million annually.

A new storage facility with a capacity of 800 metric tonnes would be built in addition to the godown at Khngma and two others at Trashigang town. Similar facilities would be extended to Samdrup Jongkhar and Mongar, the newspaper added.

Counsellor for the Royal Bhutan Embassy at New Delhi, Thinly Penzor, however, refused comment on the developments. "The royal government of Bhutan believes in peaceful co-existence but when peace and security of the country is threatened, the government cannot remain a mute spectator," he said.

The Ulfa and NDFB rebels had set up camps in the jungles of the kingdom, bordering Assam, after Delhi launched military operations in the state in 1991. Since then, the militants have entrenched themselves in that country. Apart from training camps, the rebels have also build up well-stocked arsenal with heavy firepower.

Militants killed

Three persons, including two suspected activists of the People's Liberation Army, were killed in militant-related incidents in Manipur since last night, adds PTI.

Official sources today said a passer-by was killed and another injured when a bomb, planted by militants, went off at the crowded Chingmeirong area here this morning. The two suspected PLA men were killed in an encounter.

THE TELEGRAPH

17 FEB 2001

Army doctors treat Masood loyalists

SPINJOY CHOWDHURY
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Feb. 12. — Indian Army doctors are working in a "secret" hospital on the Afghanistan-Tajikistan border to treat Afghan soldiers loyal to Ahmed Shah Masood, the rebel leader fighting the Taliban.

The hospital, largely for Masood's men and also, for local Tajiks, began operating about a year ago. About two dozen Indian doctors and male nurses are working there in civilian clothes. One Army doctor recently returned after serving there for a year. Top government officials said the

Army does not pay for the maintenance of the 20-bed hospital; the Centre provides the finances.

The hospital, located at Farukhor, about eight to 10 km from the border and south of the Tajik capital, Dushanbe, has been described as "modern" with good equipment to treat those wounded in the fighting. Many have lost their arms or legs and need artificial limbs. Despite the casualties, Masood's soldiers are believed to be in good shape and their morale is considered high.

India does not recognise the Taliban and still recognises the earlier Afghan govern-

ment. But no one is ready to speak on record about the hospital. Official Army sources refused to comment on the subject.

The big question is why the hospital has not been bombed or shelled by the Taliban forces as yet. There has been some stray shelling though. One reason why the Taliban has not intervened firmly is the presence of the 201st Russian Motorized Division in the area, sources said. The Taliban, already international-pariahs, do not want to make even more enemies by taking on the Russians.

India is helping to run the hospital as helping Masood is

the equivalent of helping the enemy's enemy. Pakistan is very strongly involved in the fighting between the Taliban and Masood's forces. It is felt that if the ISI is more involved in Afghanistan because of Masood, there will be less pressure on Jammu and Kashmir.

Ahmed Shah Masood fought the Soviet army during its occupation of the country from 1979 to 1986 and received a lot of coverage in the Western press. He was even called the Lion of Panjshir. There is talk in some government and military circles

■ See MASOOD: page 8

MASOOD:

(Continued from page 1)

about direct help to Masood. Otherwise, it is feared that the Taliban with Pakistani army help will eventually overrun his troops. "He has had some setbacks but the front has settled down with the winter. We will know next summer," a senior official said.

But internationally, there is still hesitancy about supporting Masood. There is a realisation that he has fought valiantly and is more "progressive" than the Taliban, but there is also some caution in other countries.

Jeevraj Alva dead

BANGALORE, Feb. 12. — JD-U National vice-president and former Karnataka minister Jeevraj Alva (53) died today. He was suffering from meningitis and admitted to Manipal Hospital yesterday. — UNI

Flight timings

NEW DELHI, Feb. 12. — Indian Airlines has rescheduled its two morning flights from Delhi to Mumbai, IC 167 and IC 657, due to air field closure at Mumbai till 18 February. According to the new schedule, IC 167 will now leave Delhi at 8 a.m. while IC 657 will leave Delhi at 10 a.m. — SNS

India and Nepal: beyond the Hrithik imbroglio

Talking turkey

THE latest round of Indo-Nepalese foreign office consultations were concluded last weekend. Nepalese foreign secretary, Narain Shamsher Thapa, led a four-member delegation to exchange views with Lalit Man Singh, our foreign secretary. This is part of the annual exercise in bilateral consultations which India has with countries it considers important. The significance of the latest round of bilateral talks, given the negative undercurrents that had beset it recently, can hardly be over-emphasised.

Nepalese relations with India are particularly subject to the impulses and pressures of domestic politics in Nepal. The roots of this phenomenon go back to the early 1950s, when India was significantly influential in buttressing the authoritarian rule of the feudal Ranas. This created an apprehensive undercurrent in public opinion about India's potential to interfere in Nepal's domestic affairs. The shared cultural identities between India and Nepal, together with India's size, compounded this apprehension and still constitute an important ingredient of the ordinary Nepalese's perception of India. There is another factor. Nepal is landlocked and its only easy access to sea and trade routes is through India. This constitutes a dependency on this country which the Nepalese do not relish.

The restoration of democracy in Nepal in the early nineties should have brought some degree of stability to Indo-Nepalese relations. This did not happen because the political parties of Nepal had to cope with broadly shared apprehensions about potential Indian domination. India should appreciate Nepal's geographical constraints, sandwiched as it is between China and India. While India had apprehensions over Nepal drawing nearer to China, particularly in the area of defence cooperation, the architects of Nepal's foreign policy from the begin-

ning of the sixties did not show any inhibition about playing the China card, vis-à-vis India. To an extent, Nepal's close ties with Pakistan added to Indian concerns.

The return of the Bhattarai and Koirala governments in the 1990s generated expectations about a qualitative improvement in Indo-Nepalese relations. But no matter which government is in power, it was subject to continuous pressure from other political parties about succumbing to Indian influence. Consequently, little progress could be made in furthering the relationship. To add to the problem was the constant surfacing of fresh irritants. The agreements on the utilisation of water resources and for hydro-electric projects like the Tanakpur and Mahakali

these people. While India did make a general suggestion to Bhutan, it regards the issue as a bilateral one between Bhutan and Nepal. The more recent development of the governments of Bhutan and Nepal creating a joint fact finding mechanism to deal with this question is therefore welcome.

As if all this was not enough, the increase in anti-Indian operations by the Pakistan's ISI from Nepal has added another significant and disturbing dimension to Indo-Nepalese relations. The hijacking of the Indian Airlines aircraft from Kathmandu in December 1999 was a manifest indication of such clandestine activity. Pakistani intelligence agencies, in collaboration with anti-Indian elements in Nepal, are



J.N. Dixit

This round of Indo-Nepal talks is significant given the recent anti-India agitation in the Himalayan kingdom. Clearly, the ties between the two nations need to be stabilised

projects have not taken off. Nepal is still upset at India not granting additional transit routes to Bangladesh through its territory. One of Nepal's major demands over the last decade is the one seeking to replace the Indo-Nepalese Treaty of 1950 with a new treaty or, failing this, extensively modifying the old one to address the feeling that it diminishes Nepal's sovereignty.

Nepal's desire to reclaim the Kalapani area by demanding an Indian pull out from here, is also a sore point. Then there is Bhutan's expulsion of a large number of Nepalese from its territory. Nepal would like India to pressurise the Bhutanese government to take back

active in fomenting anti-Indian feeling in that country as was proved when large-scale anti-Indian agitations broke out in Nepal recently against anti-Nepal remarks allegedly made by Indian film star Hrithik Roshan. This was a successful exercise in psychological and propaganda warfare against India which mercifully did not last long.

It was against this background that the Indo-Nepalese foreign secretaries' level talks were held in the last week of January. The agenda of the discussions was rooted in these critical developments. Among the main items which are specific to Indo-Nepal ties were discussions on the revision of the

Indo-Nepal Treaty; the issue of Kalapani and the further steps to be taken for the implementation of the Mahakali agreement. Broader issues included developments related to SAARC and the feasibility of sub-regional cooperation. India's security concerns in terms of externally-sponsored subversive activities was an item of special attention. Full details and the trends of discussions and the resulting decisions were not made public. Naturally so, because requirements of transparency have to be tempered with the sensitivity of the issues which impinge directly on the interests of both nations. Indications, however, are that the discussions were marked by a constructive and practical approach.

India is not averse to revising or replacing the 1950 Treaty by a general agreement which governs inter-state relations. But then Nepal should accept that the special relationship and the facilities which presently characterise Indo-Nepalese relations will also become irrelevant if the relationship is to be formalised and replace the special one that had lasted for nearly 50 years. On Kalapani, India has emphasised the legitimacy of its presence in the area and its logic, in historical, legal and strategic terms. On other issues, both sides seem to have agreed to evolve practical solutions, keeping in mind the substantive concerns of each other.

This round of talks, therefore, is significant in the context in which they were held. It is clear that the relationship between the two countries needs to be stabilised in the context of the recent tensions that have marked it. Indian policy makers are conscious of the country's special responsibility for fulfilling this objective but any progress here also depends on Nepal's capacity to respond to India's concerns, especially its security concerns. This can by no means be a one-sided exercise.

INDIAN EXPRESS

INDIAN EXPRESS

- 8 FEB 2001

India tells Nepal it has open mind on 1950 treaty 11-8

The Times of India News Service
NEW DELHI: India told Nepal on Wednesday that the government had an open mind on the 1950 treaty of peace and friendship. Nepal, however, is yet to build a national consensus on the changes it wants.

When the Communists were in power in Kathmandu, they had created a stir by talking of revoking the treaty, later there was talk of changes in the existing agreement. Kathmandu has been pressing for changes on the ground that certain clauses were no longer relevant—yet the national consensus has been elusive.

When Prime Minister Koirala was in India last year, he and Prime Minister Vajpayee had directed their two foreign secretaries to take up the issue within six months. The issue did come up, during the intensive consultations that Lalit Mansingh and his Nepalese counterpart Narayan Shumshere Thapa had in New Delhi. Spokesman of the external affairs ministry Raminder Singh Jassal said the two

sides agreed to consider various dimensions of the treaty keeping in mind "perceptions, concerns and interests of both sides and the close and friendly relations between the two countries."

With a friendly government in Nepal, both sides want to reach an amicable solution to an issue which could help the anti-India elements in Nepal. New Delhi is sitting pretty, having told Nepal it is willing to consider the changes suggested. "India believes that the issue can be solved through engagement and discussions," Mr Singh said.

Anti-India sentiments are a fact of life in Nepal and the recent riots triggered by totally false comments attributed to film star Hrithik Roshan is an indicator. Mr Mansingh also took up the issue of safety of Indian residents in Nepal.

The two countries agreed to intensify cooperation to control unauthorised trade and work closely to fight terrorism. Both sides renewed their commitment not to let their territory be used for anti-national activities.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

2 FEB 2007

Nepal denies India constructing dam on its border

Kathmandu, February 1

NEPALESE MINISTRY of Water Resources officials Thursday denied opposition charges that India was constructing a dam along the Indo-Nepal border in western Nepal.

"Only additional technical studies are being carried out which are required to prepare the joint detailed project report of the Pancheshwor multi-purpose project in both Purnagiri and Rupaligad areas," the ministry said in a statement.

Purnagiri and Rupaligad are two options where a re-regulation dam for the

Pancheshwor project, 475 kilometres (296 miles) west of here, could be constructed under the Mahakali Integrated Treaty signed by Nepal and India in 1996 on sharing the river.

Indian embassy officials in Kathmandu vehemently denied the MPs' charges, calling their report 'completely absurd'. A group of main opposition Nepal Communist Party-United Marxist and Leninist (NCP-UML) MPs Wednesday said they had inspected the Purnagiri dam under construction along the Indo-Nepal border last week.

According to the MPs the dam could inundate thousands of hectares of land and dis-

place more than 20,000 people.

Party youth activists and local people in the district had allegedly thrown a drilling machine and other survey equipment into the Mahakali river earlier this week.

The MPs urged the governments of Nepal and India to immediately stop construction of the Purnagiri dam which they claimed was being built by India 'unilaterally'.

The 12-member NCP-UML team included former National Planning Commission vice chairman Mangal Siddhi Manandhar who had said the dam posed a grave threat to the area's physical infrastructure, apart from destroying timber worth more than 1,000

million rupees (13.6 million dollars) while livestock worth millions of dollars would be killed by floods during the monsoon season. Water ministry officials said only survey works were being carried out and that Purnagiri was unlikely to be the site of the proposed dam since it was 'economically not feasible'.

The Purnagiri dam was to generate 920 megawatts of electricity upon completion in two years.

Local villagers had warned the government against constructing the dam at Purnagiri, emphasizing it would result in massive inundation in their villages. (AFP)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

2 FEB 2001

Future of friendship

INDIA HAS done well to convey its willingness to examine all options on the future of the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship with Nepal. This has been the upshot of the meetings which Nepal's Foreign Secretary Narayan S. Thapa had with his Indian counterpart in New Delhi in the past couple of days. The treaty, which defined the 'special' nature of the relationship between the two countries, has long been the subject of a controversy in the Himalayan kingdom. Often, the critics in Nepal spearheaded by the Leftist and other extremist elements had used it to whip up anti-Indian sentiments among the local people. They sought to present it as proof of New Delhi's 'hegemony', and even legitimate concerns such as those about the activities of the ISI were projected as attempts to infringe on the 'sovereignty' of the Himalayan kingdom.

The critics of the treaty have been demanding that it be replaced by one based on the principle of equality rather than continue with the emphasis on a 'special' relationship. A bilateral treaty can be only as good as the commitment and sincerity of the two sides. No matter how high-minded the intentions of the framers of the treaty might have been, the reality was that it had become the subject of frequent distortions and was perceived by many in Nepal as an unequal document. This, despite the fact that often the boot was on the other foot. Indian citizens in Nepal, for example, did not enjoy the kind of treatment received by Nepalese citizens in India as envisaged in the treaty.

On the other hand, the deterioration in the relationship over trade and allied matters in the late Eighties earned India considerable criticism. In any case, a review was long overdue and it is best that an exercise to bring the treaty in line with the current realities is taken up at the earliest. If relations between the two South Asian neighbours are to be defined in terms of the principle of equal reciprocity, as is often demanded in Nepal, New Delhi should not mind the new interpretation so long as the principle is fully and sincerely adhered to by both sides.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

2 FEB 2001

Indo-Nepal treaty 'finally on the table'

By C. Raja Mohan

NEW DELHI, JAN. 31. India today conveyed to Nepal that it was prepared to consider all options on the controversial bilateral treaty on peace and friendship, including its abrogation by mutual consent. Informed sources here say that the future of the five decade-old-treaty, about which both sides have big gripes, may be "finally on the table". They also point to "a new level of candour" in the exchanges between India and Nepal that was not often seen in the past.

The Treaty of Peace and Friendship signed by the two countries in 1950 figured prominently in the discussions between the visiting Nepalese Foreign Secretary, Mr. Narayan S. Thapa, and his Indian counterpart, Mr. Lalit Mansingh.

At the end of the consultations, India in-

formed Nepal that it has "an open mind" on what to do with the friendship treaty, that is widely seen as an unequal agreement in the Himalayan kingdom. There has also been a growing sense in India that the treaty, on its implementation over the decades, has become a "one-way arrangement" with only India honouring its obligations.

According to a spokesman of the foreign office, the discussions took place "in a candid and open manner, keeping in mind the perceptions, concerns and interests of both sides, and their close and friendly relations".

Having long pressed for a review of the treaty, the Nepalese side should have good reasons to be satisfied with the clear Indian signal that it is prepared to consider "all options" on a treaty that is hugely unpopular in Nepal.

Although the Indian and Nepalese Foreign Secretaries have discussed this difficult issue before, it is believed to be first time that India has officially conveyed it has an "open mind" on the future of the treaty. India has also suggested that it was upto Nepal to choose what kind of a relationship it wanted with India. And that if Nepal does want a special relationship, there must be an appropriate balance between mutual obligations and privileges.

The modernisation of the political framework guiding the complex interdependence between the two neighbours was urgent and necessary. But it may not be an easy task. As they embark on a comprehensive review of the treaty, informed sources here say, India and Nepal will have to consider "all the possibilities and consequences" of changing the basis of their ties.

1 FEB 2001

India, Nepal discuss Hrithik

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Jan. 31: Bollywood heart-throb Hrithik Roshan today figured in the annual foreign office-level consultations between Nepal and India.

The two foreign secretaries, Lalit Mansingh and Narayan Shumsher Thapa, who met along with other senior officials, talked about a whole range of issues from the fate of the Indo-Nepal Treaty to the Mahakali Agreement and the way Chinese goods were sneaking into Indian markets through Nepal.

According to sources, Mansingh asked Thapa why Kathmandu had erupted with such violence over remarks falsely attributed to Hrithik.

The Nepalese capital and

other parts of the country were rocked by furious demonstrations following reports that Hrithik had made derogatory remarks against Nepal and its people.

Though the film star and the Indian government categorically denied the remarks, Nepalese students and youths went on a rampage burning video cassettes of films starring Hrithik and attacking shops and business establishments owned by Indian nationals.

"The genesis of the problem and how similar incidents can be prevented in future came up for discussion between the two foreign secretaries," Indian foreign ministry spokesman R.S. Jassal said.

Jassal added that the Nepal government has set up a commis-

sion of inquiry to probe who instigated the violence and suggest steps to bring the guilty to book.

Indian officials, sources said, wanted to know what steps Nepal was thinking of to ensure the safety and security of Indian businessmen as well as problems they were facing on the labour front in Kathmandu and elsewhere.

Many felt the recent violence was encouraged by pro-Pakistan elements.

The two sides reiterated their resolve to cooperate on combating terrorism and not to allow their territories to be used for activities inimical to the other.

The Indo-Nepal treaty of 1950 also came up for discussion. A few years ago, Kathmandu had wanted the treaty to

be abrogated. Jassal, however, refused to give specific details and only said: "All aspects of the treaty" were discussed.

The problem regarding the amendment of the treaty appears to lie more with Nepal than India.

After demanding its abrogation, Kathmandu has softened its stand considerably. But till date it has been unable to find a political consensus on which aspects of the treaty it wants to amend.

The demarcation of boundaries, which includes the contentious issue of the river Kali's origin, also came up for discussion.

Both countries agreed to meet shortly to complete their examination of the alignment of the boundaries.

THE TELEGRAPH

1 FEB 2001

Bhutan turns the heat on Ulfa

HT Correspondent
Guwahati, January 29

KING OF Bhutan Jigme Singhe Wangchuck reiterated his Government's decision to initiate military action against ULFA and NDFB militants if they did not leave the country. He said that military forces would be used to flush out the ultras from Bhutan if no other options were left.

"Once armed forces are deputed to remove the militants, we have to fight a war against them," the King said, addressing a gathering of people from the Sarpang and Sandrup Jongkhar districts recently. According to reports in Kunesel, Bhutan's national newspaper, the King urged the people to be prepared for hardships and make sacrifices when the Government launches a full-scale military action.

Both ULFA and NDFB have several training and base camps in the

Come clean, CPM tells AGP

THE CPI (M) has demanded a clarification from Assom Gana Parishad regarding its ties with the BJP. With this the simmering discontentment between the ruling AGP and its alliance partner CPI (M) has come to the fore.

Addressing a press conference, CPI (M) politburo member Prakash Karat asked the AGP to clarify ties with the BJP. Karat's demand is reportedly prompted by the possibility of an AGP-BJP alliance during the ensuing Assembly elections. He had made a similar demand at a public rally on Sunday. The politburo member said that instead of considering any ties with the BJP, the AGP should join the Third Front. He accused the AGP of maintaining double standards. He said that the CPI (M) would snap ties with AGP if it supports BJP.

Karat criticised the BJP Government at the Centre for its anti-farmer policies. He expressed hope that talks between the ULFA and the Centre would take place soon and a lasting solution would be found.

HTC, Guwahati

dense jungles of South Bhutan. Most of the camps are located in Sarpang and Sandrup Jongkhar districts. The militants started shifting their bases to Bhutan in the early 90's when military action

was launched against them in Assam.

The 78th session of the Bhutan National Assembly had taken the resolution to use military force against the militants if they refused

to leave Bhutan peacefully. The Bhutanese Government had held two rounds of talks with ULFA and another with NDFB. But nothing came out of them. No further meetings have taken place, as the leaders of these outfits are unwilling to come for talks in Bhutan.

The King told the people's representatives of Sarpang that resorting to military action was the worst option and would not be an easy choice.

The armed attack might cause loss of lives as well as damage to the country's developmental centres and facilities, the King warned.

As the cadres of both the militant outfits are people of Assam, people and vehicles of Bhutan traveling through the state might face danger, he said.

Though the possibility of making the militants leave Bhutan through talks was slim, efforts must be made for their peaceful departure from the country, the King said.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

30 JAN 2001

India keeps tab on Afghan scene

Shishir Gupta

New Delhi, January 22

INDIA IS closely monitoring developments in Afghanistan and has had wide-ranging discussions with representatives of the US and Turkey in the aftermath of UN sanctions against the Taliban.

While Ambassador Aydemir Erman, the Turkish President's special envoy to Afghanistan, had extensive consultations in the External Affairs Ministry today, the US representative exchanged notes last week.

Highly-placed Government sources said Jeffrey Lundsted, Director (Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan), US Department of State, came to New Delhi and held talks with his counterparts on UN sanctions on the Taliban.

Before coming to India,

Lundsted spent a week in Pakistan in a bid to assess the situation in that country before enforcing UN sanctions on January 19, this year.

Islamabad watchers say that one of the emerging views is that UN sanctions against Taliban should be imposed in such a way that it does not have a political fallout in Islamabad. The idea is to enforce sanctions without damaging the position of Pakistan's military ruler General Pervez Musharraf vis-a-vis the religio-political Islamic groups in that country.

The general assessment is that Gen Musharraf still has the clout to take on *jehadi* elements in Pakistan as his equation with Pakistan's powerful Corps Commanders is comfortable.

The plan that has gained currency is that sanctions would have to be enforced very carefully, using

unobtrusive and discreet mechanisms such as electronic and satellite surveillance of the Afghanistan-Pakistan arc. There is convergence on the view that UN inspectors should not be positioned in Pakistan to enforce sanctions as it may be used by *jehadi* elements to rally the people behind their cause.

The sanctions against the Taliban call upon the militia to wind up terrorist camps in areas under their control in Afghanistan. Sources said in case there is evidence to indicate that the sanctions regime is being violated, then UN inspectors will be flown in to tackle the issue.

However, they maintain that sanctions are not a means to end the civil war. It is a way to encourage a negotiated settlement, which lives up to the aspirations of all ethnic groups in Afghanistan.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

23 JAN 2001

Scrapping the treaty with Nepal?

By C. Raja Mohan

NEW DELHI, JAN. 28. "Treaties", Napoleon said, "are observed as long as they are in harmony with interests". Agreements between nations cannot outlast the circumstances and interests that produced them in the first place.

The time is now for India to ask itself a big question about Nepal. Should we hang on to the 1950 treaty of peace and friendship that our Himalayan neighbour dislikes so intensely?

The recent explosion of anti-Indian violence in Nepal triggered by absolutely baseless rumours about film star Hrithik Roshan has only underscored what was well known. The once close relationship between the two nations is rapidly turning sour.

There is no greater symbol of the profound Nepali resentment against India than the five-decade old treaty of peace and friendship with New Delhi. There is a strong view in Nepal the treaty is an "unequal" one and reflects Indian "hegemony" over Nepal.

Nepal objects to restrictions in the treaty on procurement of arms and military equipment from sources other than India, as well as the requirement for consultations with New Delhi on projects involving non-Indian foreign aid and investment.

India has its own grievances. Many of the security gains New Delhi was supposed to get from the treaty have long been ignored by Kathmandu. New Delhi believes the treaty has become a "one-way street" over the years.

While disregarding India's security concerns, Nepal continues to expect special concessions on many issues from India. New Delhi believes that the key provision in the treaty for "national treatment" of each other's citizens is now being observed only on the Indian side.

Despite the deep disappointment about how the treaty is being implemented by Nepal, India has been hesitant to bite the bullet and proclaim the treaty a dead letter. India finally agreed in the mid-1990s to consider Nepal's demand for a review of the treaty.

The two Foreign Secretaries were assigned the task of handling the review. After a couple of meetings and exchange of some non-papers, Kathmandu believes New Delhi is a "reluctant negotiator".

The Foreign Secretary of Nepal, Mr. Narayan S. Thapa, is coming here tomorrow for consultations with his Indian counterpart, Mr. Lalit Mansingh. The review of the 1950 treaty is certainly expected to be one of the items on the agenda.

The political mood in New Delhi, however, might be changing. New Delhi, it is believed, is ready to consider all options on the treaty seriously, including its abrogation by mutual consent. The new "open mind" in New Delhi about the future of the treaty has not come a day too soon. The bilateral context as well as the international environment of the treaty

DIPLOMATIC NOTEBOOK

between India and Nepal has radically altered over the last five decades. Instead of holding on to the treaty, India should seek a new framework for bilateral relations that is more in tune with the international situation and political sentiment in Nepal.

New Delhi must leave it to Kathmandu to define what kind of a relationship it wants. India and Nepal certainly cannot run away from each other. But any give and take between them can only be sustained if Kathmandu is prepared to claim ownership to such an arrangement and carry it with the Nepali people.

Staying with Nepal for another moment, relations between the two civil societies have reached such a sorry pass that the Congress and the BJP decided not to send representatives to the political convention of the Nepal Congress a few days ago.

The political prickliness in Nepal was believed to be so strong that the two parties were advised to avoid the occasion. Given the his-

toric links between the Nepal Congress and the Indian political establishment the decision does not appear to have gone down well in Kathmandu.

Delegates from the Chinese Communist Party were there to grace the occasion, but no one from the mainstream Indian political parties! That sums up the Indian political dilemma in Nepal: damned if you do and damned if you don't.

The National Security Adviser, Mr. Brajesh Mishra, is travelling this week to Paris for the next round of the Indo-French strategic dialogue established after the nuclear tests in May 1998. The French connection was very handy for India in beating back much of the negative international reaction to Pokhran-II. Mr. Mishra must now try and inject some life into the dialogue that appears to have lost some of its momentum in recent months.

Mr. Mishra will also travel to Munich, Germany to attend the annual conclave of top defence officials and academics from the United States, Europe and Asia. The hot topic this year will be the controversial plans of the Bush Administration for national missile defence (NMD).

India was invited for the first time last year to attend this very important gathering. Mr. Mishra represented newly nuclear India. He will have an opportunity this year to reach out to the top officials of the Bush administration, including Mr. Donald Rumsfeld, U.S. Defence Secretary, who will be present at Munich.

India is gratefully accepting offers from every part of the world for assistance in coping with the human tragedy in Gujarat. No churlish rejection of international relief this time. In being more graceful, the Government is aware that not all offers of assistance will be immediately necessary. The urgent priority is for sniffer dogs, electronic devices that can locate survivors under the rubble, equipment that can cut concrete, and mobile surgical clinics among others.

THE HINDU

29 JAN 2000

Afghanistan seeks better ties with India

ISLAMABAD: Afghanistan feels India has been carried away by lies over Taliban's support to trans-national Muslim militant fundamentalist groups but stands by its "moral support" to militant groups in the "liberation" of Kashmir.

Here on a mission to mobilise international opinion against the impending UN sanctions on Afghanistan, its foreign minister Wakil Ahmad Muttawakil met the two Indian journalists based here to convey his views on the issue and his government's desire to improve relations with India. He said the Afghan government has instructed heads of all its missions abroad to meet Indian envoys in those countries to express ruling Taliban's militia's desire to improve relations with New Delhi.

Despite several attempts none of the foreign missions were able to meet the Indian diplomats because they were not being allowed, he said, adding Taliban tried its best to explain to India its viewpoint.

Stating that New Delhi was carried away by the "lies" being spread by the Russian government over Taliban's "support" to encourage trans-national Muslim militant fundamentalist groups, he said Taliban ex-

tended only moral support for the "struggle to liberate Kashmir" but never encourage terrorism of any kind.

"We extend only moral support to the struggle to liberate Kashmir. That is all. For us, the more important issue is to rebuild our country," he said, adding the support was to groups which believed in liberation of Kashmir through 'Jihad' as long as there was "repression and atrocities by the Indian forces."

The Afghanistan's foreign minister said India has no cause for complaint on the Taliban handling of the Indian Airline plane hijack case in December 1999. "It was in the presence of the India's foreign minister that the deal with the hijackers was struck. We had nothing to gain by helping India during the crisis," he added.

He said the Taliban made a distinction between 'Jihad' (holy war) and terrorism. While terrorism was to be condemned, 'Jihad' which meant a liberation struggle should be supported. Kashmir was a problem between India and Pakistan. Yet both the countries maintained diplomatic relations. "Why should our view on Kashmir come in the way of normal relations. I fail to understand the logic behind the anti-Taliban policy of India," he said. (PTI)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

18 JAN 2001

Don't be influenced by false propoganda: Afghan Minister

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, JAN. 16. The Afghan Foreign Minister, Mr. Wakil Ahmad Muttawakil, has urged India not to be influenced by the 'false propoganda' of the Russians and come to the rescue of the Taliban regime in fighting the imposition of tougher sanctions by the United Nations.

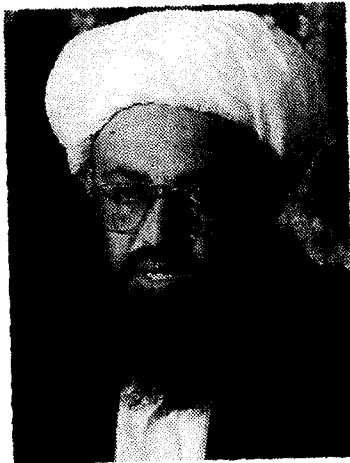
In a rare interview to two Indian journalists at the Afghan Embassy here this evening, Mr. Muttawakil was at pains to emphasise that despite the best efforts of his Government in the last few months to befriend the Government of India, there has been no response from New Delhi.

"I simply fail to understand the logic behind the attitude of the Indian Government towards the Afghan Government. If India and Pakistan could have diplomatic relations despite the Kashmir conflict, why should our position on Kashmir come in the way of normal relations between us," he asked with a straight face.

It was clearly a public relations exercise by Mr. Muttawakil with just three days left for the fresh sanctions imposed by the U.S. Security Council to come into force. He has been camping in the Pakistan capital for the last three days in a bid to mobilise public opinion from all over the world through the international media.

ready with an answer to even the most provocative questions.

For instance when the Indian journalists wanted to know as to how he could expect India to befriend the Taliban particularly after the Indian



Mr. Wakil Ahmad Muttawakil

Airlines hijack incident in December 1999, he simply threw up his hands and said "don't you remember India actually thanked us for all the co-operation we extended to ensure safe release of the passengers".

"The hijackers were released in the presence of the Indian Foreign Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, and we had nothing to do with it. In fact, we wanted the plane to leave our soil at the earliest but allowed it to

continue only when Indians begged us. They complimented us for our help and later on changed their mind. Only they can answer why," he said.

On Kashmir, the Minister said Afghanistan extended 'moral and diplomatic' support to those engaged in the struggle for the right to self-determination and there is no material help. "Yes we do support the groups which believe in liberation of Kashmir through 'jehad' as long as there is repression and atrocities by the Indian forces."

He said there was so much common between India and Afghanistan that there is no reason why they should not come together. "The people of the two countries breathe, eat and drink from the same hemisphere. There are more Muslims in India than in Pakistan. Our teachers are from the Deoband school of thought in India and there are so many Afghan refugees in India. You are good in computer science. We are young and we like young things."

The Minister said there was no truth in the allegations that the Taliban exported 'jehad' and destabilised the neighbouring countries. He said Afghanistan had been in touch with countries like Pakistan and China to prevail upon the international community to lift the sanctions and save the people from misery.

THE HINDU

17 JAN 2001

NEPAL AND INDIA

Misguided Nationalists In The Kingdom

By PARMANAND

FROM the violent controversy surrounding the fabricated statement allegedly made by a popular Indian actor, Hrithik Roshan, to seeking a vote of no-confidence against Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala in the Nepali Congress Parliamentary Party, politics in Nepal has assumed several dimensions — neither good for bilateral ties with India nor for its domestic politics.

India, it is true, has remained a constant factor in Nepal's foreign policy ever since the landlocked kingdom emerged as a unified entity in 1769 because of the efforts made by the then ruler of Gorkha, King Prithvi Narain Shah — who became the first Shah King of the Himalayan state. Because of its geographical position — Nepal is surrounded by India in the south, east and west — it is also called an India-locked state. The former Indian Ambassador to Nepal and currently secretary (East) in the ministry of external affairs, Krishna V Rajan, during his tenure in Nepal would describe Nepal as an "India-linked" state.

Not that Indian foreign policy vis-a-vis Nepal, its implementation or Indian diplomacy can claim to be infallible. But, by and large, India has tried to be as accommodating as possible. Since the days of the 1923 Treaty between the two, however, India has been sensitive to Nepal's sovereign status. In truth, India did not accord the same status to its other neighbours.

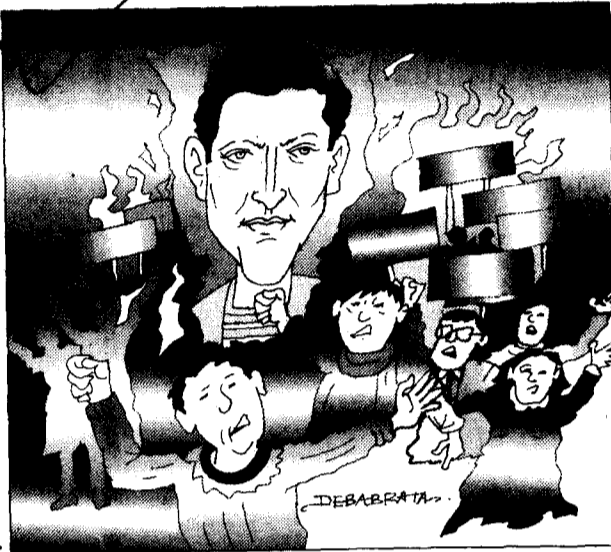
DISTURBANCES

A large number of people, particularly in India, are never tired of enumerating commonalities between India and Nepal. The disturbances in various parts of the kingdom — which were pronouncedly anti-India, and which resulted in the killings of several people — showed that commonalities in various spheres are not necessarily supposed to make the Nepalese forget about their nationalism. Indeed, unlike India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, Nepal had never been part of the British colonial system. It is, however, shocking to find that, wittingly or unwittingly, Nepali nationalism appears mostly based on anti-India feelings.

Unfortunately, this happened during the recent disturbances in which a large number of people of Indian origin were attacked. In fact, a person belonging to this category, Khushi Lal Yadav, was killed and another, Mahendra Chaudhary, was seriously wounded in Rajbiraj, a south-eastern town in Nepal's Terai, on 31 December. They were participating in a peaceful demonstration of the Nepal Sadbhavana Party under its national president, Gajendra Narayan Singh. This organisation is, significantly, known as pro-India, articulating the interests of the people of Indian origin, called the *Madheshis*.

Misguided Nepali nationalists of the left variety — particularly those bereft of any popular support — are said to have been used in a very systematic

manner by external vested interests. Could one say that Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence has used these misguided nationalists. Of course, the ISI has been allegedly trying to harm India in every possible way through its various and varied operations in Nepal. True, this is yet to be probed but His Majesty's Government has appointed a Commission to find out who was really behind these orchestrated disturbances.



Girija Prasad Koirala, significantly, told Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee telephonically on 28 December that these incidents appeared to be a part of a conspiracy aimed at harming the traditionally close bonds of friendship between the two neighbours. Not less significantly, Nepal's Ambassador to India Bhekh Bahadur Thapa said on 29 December that Nepal would take to task the elements responsible for anti-India activities there. Thapa added that Nepal would not allow its territory to be used against India.

The two countries are so close geographically that some irritants are not unnatural. The ties based on a sound footing should not be taken for granted by either side. Misguided nationalists in Nepal should also consider the consequences of their anti-India activities. It is not that only India should be sensitive to the sentiments of Nepalis. The same is expected of Nepalis. It is incumbent on Nepali leaders of various political parties to educate their supporters properly on this.

NO-TRUST MOVE

On the internal front, things happened in a rather undesirable manner. The rebels within the ruling Nepali Congress, led by former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, registered a motion of no-confidence against GP Koirala. Indeed, the motion was in the offing for some time. However, its timing was quite inappropriate. Amiya Kumar Yadav, president of the Siraha District Committee of the NC and an MP, said in an exclusive interview that the timing was very wrong. He insisted that at this juncture there was no alternative to Koirala.

It has been constantly said about the NC in power that with its overactive rebels it hardly needs external elements to oust its government. Several prominent rebels joined together in 1960 to create circumstances when it became very easy for King Mahendra to dismiss the first-ever elected BP Koirala ministry on 15 December of that year. Indeed, thanks to the rebels, Mahendra found the circumstances conducive enough to do away with the multiparty parliamentary

system itself. In 1994, too, the fall of the GP Koirala government was entirely the handiwork of the NC rebels.

For a long time several elements in the NC — of course, with the active cooperation of former Prime Minister and former NC President KP Bhattarai — have been insisting that Koirala should abdicate power in favour of someone from the *dosro pusta* (second generation). Girija Babu constantly emphasises that leadership of the party or its presidency is not a gift to be handed over to anyone.

In the event, when it came to the crunch at the NC Parliamentary Party meeting on 4 January, 69 MPs — out of a total of 113 — voted for Koirala in an open ballot. Significantly, Koirala has obtained the same number of votes when he was elected NC leader on 18 March last year. One significant difference, though, was that this time the ballot was held in the open, forcing

Deuba and his supporters to walk out.

During these disturbances, the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) (UML) — the main Opposition Party — remained relatively passive thinking that the NC government would fall under its own weight because of the differences and conflicts among its leaders.

LAW AND ORDER

As a result, the Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist-Leninist) and several other groups took to the streets demanding the resignation of GP Koirala. The UML restricted its demand to the resignation of Home Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Ram Chandra Poudel because of the failure of the government to tackle the law and order problem.

The Nepal Sadbhavana Party, on the other hand, has an opportunity to mobilise the Madheshis further. The Madheshi psyche, it is true, was hurt more seriously than ever in the past. The NSP, despite its best efforts, has not been able to get more than 4.10 per cent of votes and six seats in the Pratinidhi Sabha elections since 1991. Analysts feel that multiparty competitive politics — supposed to be more transparent and accountable in comparison to the panchayat politics — has not been able to solve the problems of Madheshis.

Maoist terrorism since 1996 has adversely affected the Kingdom's economy. Then came the hijacking of the IC 814 plane in December 1999. It substantially reduced the flow of Indian tourists, adversely affecting the kingdom's tourism industry — the backbone of its economy. The recent disturbances targeting Indians and people of Indian origin have alarmed many investors from India.

It is time that Nepalese politicians of all hues tried to focus more on the rules of the political game rather than indulging in power politics and street demonstrations. A decade of multiparty competitive policies and three general elections should have made them more accountable; unfortunately, this has not been the case.

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

Bhutan worries about military action

Plans new strategy to tackle menace of Ulfa, Bodo militants

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

Guwahati, Jan. 14: The Royal government of Bhutan is apprehensive about launching any military operations to evict the Ulfa and Bodo militants from its territory. This has been indicated by the home minister of the Himalayan Kingdom, Mr Lyonpo Thinley Gyamtsho, the *Kuensel* reported on Saturday. Mr Gyamtsho, however, reiterated the resolve of his government to drive out the militants from their territory.

Regretting the killing of 15 Bhutanese nationals in Assam recently, Mr Gyamtsho said: "The unprovoked killing of 15 Bhutanese travellers in Assam on December 20 and 21 was a grim forecast of what could happen if Bhutan had to take up arms to

evict the militants from the Bhutanese soil."

"The killing was nothing compared with what could happen in the event of a real military operation," the home minister warned adding: "It could mean loss of thousands of lives."

He pointed out that the National Assembly had decided on a four-pronged strategy to tackle the Ulfa-Bodo militancy problem: peaceful dialogue with the militants, cutting off all rations and supplies, prosecuting all those who assist the rebels, and as the last option eviction of the militants through a military operation.

The home minister said Bhutan had so far conducted three "unproductive and inconclusive" rounds of talks with the militants — two with the Ulfa and one with the Bodo outfit.

But they had used various pretexts, excuses and conflicting proposals to stall the talks.

However, the Royal Government was confident of solving the problem, either through a dialogue and other peaceful means or through military operation, the home minister said.

The minister called upon all Bhutanese people to support the King and the government at a time when the country was facing a grave security threat from the illegal presence of the Ulfa and Bodo militants.

The home minister, who was supported by his council of ministers, was addressing the Eighth Plan mid-term review meeting early this week.

The Bhutan government had recently blamed the Bodo Liberation Tigers for the attacks on

Bhutanese nationals in Assam. However, New Delhi has denied the claims of the Bhutanese officials.

The foreign affairs ministry had also been mounting pressure on the Royal government to drive out the militants from their territory. Meanwhile, security sources said here on Sunday that the delay in military operation against the Ulfa and Bodo militants by Bhutan were posing a serious threat to the nation's security as well. Sources pointed out that the Bhutanese government should not ignore the fact that Pakistan's Inter Service Intelligence was trying to spread its network all over the Southeast Asian countries. Presence of these militant outfits will only provide a breeding ground for such subversive forces in the Himalayan Kingdom.

THE ASIATIC AGE

15 JAN 2001

Bhutan resolves to flush out militants

Utpal Parashar
Guwahati, January 14

SIX MONTHS after the National Assembly of Bhutan adopted a resolution to use force against Ufa and NDFB militants operating from the country, the Government has reiterated its resolve to flush out militants.

The National Assembly had resolved last July to use force against militants if they failed to leave Bhutan peacefully.

Despite the resolution, both Ufa and NDFB rebels are still operating several important training camps in the dense jungles of south Bhutan bordering Assam. Last month, suspected NDFB ultras gunned down 15 Bhutanese nationals in Assam,

kidnapped two officials and destroyed several Bhutanese vehicles.

The attacks were believed to be in retaliation against increased security presence in south Bhutan in connection with King Jigme Singhye Wangchuck's visit to those areas.

The Bhutan Government's resolve to carry out military exercise against the militants was reiterated by Home Minister Lyonpo Thinley Gyamtsho while addressing the Eighth Plan mid-term review meeting.

The minister asked all Bhutanese to support the Government's move and be "ready to sacrifice their lives to safeguard the nation's security", stated a report appearing in Kuensel, Bhutan's national newspaper.

The minister cautioned the people that in case of a military offensive to drive out the militants, thousands of civilians might have to lose their lives.

"The killings that took place in December were nothing compared with what would happen in the case of a real military operation.

There will be a loss of thousands of lives and there will be other major problems beyond our imagination," he said.

Till date, Bhutan has conducted three "unproductive and inconclusive" rounds of talks with the militants, two with the Ufa and one with NDFB.

Further talks on the militants leaving Bhutanese soil got stalled because of various pretexts used by the militants, the minister said.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

15 JAN 2001

Fate of Indian school teachers in Nepal hangs in balance

Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, January 10

47-12
111

A CONTROVERSY has arisen over the demand by about 1,200 Indian school teachers working in Nepal for regularisation of their services on the basis of a 1990 understanding between Delhi and Kathmandu.

Balji Pandey, president of the Bharatiya Shikshak Sangh (Nepal), claimed that Nepal has issued notices terminating the services of a number of Indians, some of whom have been teaching in various government-aided schools for over 20 years.

Nepalese education secretary K. Basnet said, "Only those teachers who have been directly recruited by the Govt can be absorbed as permanent staff." He added, "Many teachers are appointed by school committees on their own to teach particular subjects. Their salaries are borne by the committees themselves. Employment laws do not allow regularisation of services of such teachers."

Refuting the Govt's claims, Pandey, who is among those likely to be fired soon, said: "All of us are appointed by the Govt." He rued, "Despite our repeated requests to the Indian embassy for help, we're on the verge of losing our jobs."

Officials from the embassy said they have again taken up the case with the Nepalese Government.

According to Pandey, joint communiqués signed in 1990 (after a meeting between Nepalese and Indian Premiers K.P. Bhattarai and V.P. Singh in Delhi), 1997 (during PM I.K. Gujral's Kathmandu visit) and 1999 (when Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh visited Nepal) had agreed to resolve the issue "with a humanitarian approach." He added: "The 1990 communique even promised to put Indian teachers on par with Nepalese nationals."

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

11 JAN 2001

Unhappy Anniversary

KESHAV PRADHAN
INVESTIGATES THE
ANTI-HRITHIK
PROTESTS AND
THE ANTI-INDIA
RIOTS THAT
WRACKED NEPAL
AROUND CHRISTMAS,
A YEAR AFTER THE
HIJACKING OF INDIAN
AIRLINES IC-814

FOR THREE days, Kathmandu rioted. The target: Posters of Bollywood heartthrob Hrithik Roshan and People of Indian origin. It got so bad even the Indian embassy personnel were forced to move about in unmarked cars or with police escorts. Caught in the crossfire were the hordes of tourists who had come to enjoy the year-end magic of the idyllic Himalayan kingdom.

It wasn't a mere coincidence that the anti-Hrithik protests began exactly a year after the hijacking of an Indian Airlines plane to Kandahar from Kathmandu. Also, it came close on the heels of the underworld's vain attempts to make the star (and his actor-producer father Rakesh Roshan) bow to their commands.

Clearly, some vested interests were at work, triggering the unrest and then taking advantage of it. There are several clinkers to the 'intrigue' aspect voiced by the Indian embassy among others. Prior to the anti-Hrithik rumours, trouble had erupted in Bharatpur and Biratnagar — headquarters of Morang (Prime Minister Koirala's home district). Clashes between police and pro-Left supporters forced the towns to close for several days.

Angry protesters shouted anti-India slogans as they took to the street at Navalparasi, close to the Uttar Pradesh border. A second round of protests started in the south-central town of Chitwan, the place that reported the first anti-Hrithik protests on December 15.

Whodunnit?

ALL THIS could not have happened merely on the basis of a TV interview, which not one protestor has owned up to have actually seen. Obviously, there are several intriguing aspects that need to be probed thoroughly:

* How did the rumours travel from a remote town like Bharatpur to Morang and Navalparasi, and then to Kathmandu — each of the last three has a huge population of people of Indian origin?

* How did the rioters identify shops owned by the people of Indian origin even in crowded market places, that



too when they were already closed? Was it a planned strike against them?

* From where did the protesters get so many old and discarded tyres to burn at every major intersection and road in Kathmandu almost at the same time for two days - clockwork

precision?

* Were the attacks on Indian shops a well-thought method to scare the owners only, as hardly any looting followed?

Chitwan Post, a small Nepalese daily from Bharatpur, carried the

first report of an anti-Hrithik rally on December 15. Editor Dharmaraj Aryal says he isn't responsible for the ensuing violence. "Some teenagers from my locality came and gave me a picture of their demonstration against Hrithik. They said the actor

told *Star Plus* on December 14 that he does not like Nepal and the Nepalese people."

The Plot Thickens

BUT WHAT the *Chitwan Post* report did not mention was the presence of

two men who apparently walked with the so-called teenagers in the protest rally. Aryal insists he was not aware of their presence. Nor has the Nepal government managed to identify them yet.

More intriguing is the time-gap of 10 days between the first and second rally - and that too in Morang, the PM's constituency. This agitation, on December 24, did get splashed in the Kathmandu-based dailies. And it immediately sparked off similar protests all over the kingdom.

Anyone who wanted to do some rabble rousing or had some axe to grind — be it a student leader, politician or an artiste - jumped on the 'hate Hrithik' bandwagon. Min Acharya, a pro-Left student leader, admitted later his union reacted to the news reports and that he, himself, had not seen the supposedly damning interview.

Unheeded SOS Calls

SO, WHAT really happened in the usually fun-loving Kathmandu? The situation started hotting up around Christmas afternoon.

But for the majority, it was party-time. Most people were either unaware, or indifferent, about some hot-heads threatening to take to the street of the Himalayan kingdom's capital. This, in spite of that morning's newspaper reports about angry protest marches held the previous day (December 24) in Morang — Nepal prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala's home district.

But by evening, Kathmandu was burning and the Indian embassy was flooded with SOS calls from panic-stricken tourists and traders. Instead of bonfires celebrating the Yuletide, rampaging pro-Left students were burning effigies and videocassettes of Bollywood's latest heartthrob. They were joined by *Parivartan*, an artistes' organisation. The police chose to watch the proceedings from a distance.

Passion spread, and so did the propensity to make political capital. Intra-party rivalry between prime minister Koirala and KP Bhattarai, the man he had ousted, soon had the Nepal Vidyarthi Sangh (a wing of the ruling Nepali Congress) going about telling cinema hall owners not to show Hrithik films.

Koirala on Backfoot

UNNERVED BY the worsening violence the next day and the mounting attacks on his government, the Nepalese PM tried to buy peace by, first, hastily seeking an apology from Hrithik, and, second, banning all his films.

Both decisions boomeranged, however, and, in fact, acted as firewood. Soon, agitators waving communist and Nepalese national flags went berserk attacking business establishments owned by people of Indian origin.

"Koirala's move lent credence to what the people had read about Hrithik in the Nepalese media. The government should have acted only after confirming whether the news was true at all," rued Nepal Sadbhavana Party (an organisation of Hindi-speaking Nepalese people) chief GN Singh whose supporters later bore the brunt of attacks by anti-Hrithik demonstrators. Singh has categorically stated that the Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) masterminded the spreading of the anti-Hrithik rumours.

Passive Politics

THE GOVERNMENT left us at the mercy of raiders for 72 hours, and the Indian embassy looked equally helpless," complained a prominent businessman of Indian origin.

All the while, Koirala dithered, trying his best to stave off a no-confidence move by dissidents within his own Nepali Congress. For the party rebels, the violence came as a blessing in disguise. It wasn't seen as an ethnic riot. Rather, the politicians

attributed it to people's ire against Koirala's "inefficient and corrupt rule."

Deputy Prime Minister RC Poudyal suspects "elements who are against democracy and healthy relations with India fomented trouble with the help of rumours." When asked why his government banned Hrithik's films, if whatever the protesters said about the actor were only



based on rumours, he says, "We did not so only to pacify the people. We can't reject his denial as he has repeated it many times."

Fixing Blame

FORMER PRIME Minister KP Bhattarai was quick to blame the year-end violence as "expression of people's pent-up anger against Koirala's rule." The senior-most Congress leader, who is leading a rebellion against Koirala who had ousted him as Prime Minister after the IA plane hijack in December 1999, said, "People are fed up with Koirala's inept and corrupt rule. They feel he should not get support from India."

Speaking on similar lines were the major opposition Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) leaders, whose supporters were initially at the forefront of the anti-Hrithik stir. "The people are so unhappy with the Koirala government that they turned against it even when an Indian film actor supposedly said something that they could not stomach."

Buried amidst all the political posturing lies the million-dollar question: How long can the rival cliques in Nepal keep playing the India card — and to what result? And, Hrithik might want to know, why must anybody want to ruin his honeymoon?

BHUTAN'S BUSINESS

Tackling Assam militants Bhutan's prerogative

IT is entirely Bhutan's business if it hesitates to flush Ulfa and Bodo militants from its territory. It must have a compulsive reason for not taking action though its National Assembly endorsed a resolution for a military offensive. Moderate members were said to have expressed fear that such action might invite reprisals against Bhutanese nationals. Nor has the tactful policy of pressuring the militants to leave on their own helped. The killing of 14 Bhutanese in a series of incidents last month merely underlines Bhutan's helplessness and concern. As if this is not enough, Prafulla Mahanta has joined issue with Thimphu over the killers' identity. While Bhutan asserts it has concrete evidence to prove the involvement of Bodo Liberation Tigers, Mahanta counters by blaming National Democratic Front of Boroland militants hiding in Bhutan. That Dispur must defend the BLT is only to be expected as the outfit is now engaged in talks after the ceasefire.

Mahanta's ire over Bhutan's inaction is uncalled for. He once accused the Bhutanese King of having breakfast with Ulfa leaders in their camp. This is neither confirmed nor denied, but even if the King did so, it must have been for a valid reason. He has no quarrel with Ulfa or Bodos, he probably wanted to persuade the militants to leave with goodwill. The situation calls for a tactful solution and the King cleared himself when he told the assembly that 'the Ulfa and Bodo problem is not just the case of a few thousand militants hiding behind trees... it is part of a regional political imbroglio with complex connotations, the most significant being Bhutan's relation with Delhi and Assam'. Thimphu's reluctance to act tough must be seen in this background. Besides, Bhutan cannot afford to precipitate a crisis, which will throw it into a perpetual conflict with militants, a situation that neither funds nor manpower permit. //

THE STATESMAN

6 JAN 2001

1 The Kathmandu protests signify deeper frustrations. It's time we restore faith across the open border

Friends indeed

BY KESHAV PRADHAN

9.12.2000
HF 12
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THE YEAR 2000 has ended on a bitter note as far as Indo-Nepal relations are concerned. This, despite the fact that the year marked the golden jubilee of the Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship that gives equal status to Nepalese and Indians in each other's country.

For the first time since the integration of Sikkim into the Indian Union in 1975, street violence against the people of Indian origin, hit the Nepalese capital for three days since Christmas. On both occasions, the Nepalese reaction was related to something that affected their social psychology more than anything else. Earlier, they had resented the 'Sikkim-takeover' as an expression of India's 'expansionist designs' over its smaller neighbours. And 25 years later, they found their national pride bruised by unsubstantiated and misquoted reports about current Bollywood star Hrithik Roshan.

Attempts are now being made in both Kathmandu and Delhi to find out whether the anti-Hrithik demonstrations (that eventually turned into an anti-India campaign), were a genuine expression of popular feeling or a sinister design to malign India. Was it an attempt to upstage the kingdom's fledgling multi-party democracy or a fallout of internecine power struggles among various Nepalese parties?

Given the complexities of Indo-Nepal ties and the kingdom's internal politics, it is difficult to arrive at a consensual conclusion.

This happened during the hijacking of an Indian Airlines flight from Kathmandu to Kandahar by Pakistan-based militants. Even now, most Nepalese refuse to accept that the hijackers got into the plane in Kathmandu. Instead, they, far from recognising India's security concerns, accuse India of trying to bring Nepal under its Big Brother security umbrella.

Now that Delhi has suspected the ISI hand in the recent violence, the Nepalese can once again react in a similar fashion. For what suits Indian politicians and bureaucrats may not suit their Nepalese counterparts. Nothing can best explain this than the composition of the anti-Hrithik demonstrators — they included supporters of communist factions and the Nepali Congress.

If the Reds used the occasion to project Nepal's desire to have an identity distinct from India, Congressmen, though identified as pro-India, could not ignore it as they feared that the anti-Indian mood might turn against its own Government.

Showing signs of nervousness, the Congress Government banned the screening of all Hrithik films and withdrew Hindi services from Radio Nepal and Nepal Television without verifying what the actor had actually said in his interview. As if this was not enough, it even sought an apology from him. All this, to a great extent, lent credibility to what the Nepalese media had reported about the interview.

Having realised its mistake, the Nepal Government is now trying to make the Nepalese media a scapegoat. Newspaper reports may be the instant cause of the trouble, but the reasons lie much deeper. Essentially, it is the failure of India and Nepal to get rid of contradictions and confusion in bilateral agreements, especially the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship, which is at the root of this lingering hostility.

Political considerations alone cannot guide the relationship between any two nations which are as closely bound together by nature, history, culture, tradition and religion as India and Nepal are. Moreover, the latter's economic survival depends completely on the former.

Thousands of young Nepalese mountain-people join the Indian Army and fight for India's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Yet, time and again, they find their compatriots turning against the very country they are committed to defend. There cannot be any contradiction greater than this. India and Nepal will do more harm to their relationship if they do not resolve this attitudinal conflict.

No matter how loudly politicians boast about the brotherly relationship between India and Nepal, there have always been an undercurrent of tension, animosity and resentment at the ground level. Perceptions differ. India, as a country of a billion people, can absorb contradictions to a large extent. But Nepal, with just over two million people, may find a conflict many times bigger than what it actually is.

Article VII of the 1950 treaty allows unrestricted movement and settlement of Nepalese and Indians

in each other's territory. Though both sides have violated it, the violation by Nepal is more serious. Way back in 1962, Kathmandu introduced the Land Reforms Act that barred all non-nationals, including Indians, from owning land. This was meant to avoid an adverse change in its demography.

This deprived Indian nationals of the right to settlement given by the treaty. Later, India too restricted the entry of Nepalese nationals to Sikkim, Darjeeling and the North-east which have the bulk of Nepali-speaking Indians.

Just as the news of attacks on people of Indian origin evoked a sharp reaction from Delhi, the frequent appearance of reports in the Nepalese media about the harassment of Nepali-speaking people in India, especially in the North-east, has created mistrust about India. Moreover, India is seen as a stumbling block in the repatriation of about one lakh Nepali-speaking refugees to Bhutan from their camps in Nepal.

Nepal, however, has not been so generous when it comes to the problems of Hindi-speaking Nepalese people (derogatorily called *madhesias*), who dominate the Terai border area. This may be because of its strong desire to contain what the Nepalese call 'Indian lebensraum' (living space). The community bore the brunt of the attacks during the anti-Hrithik demonstrations.

For decades, the Terai Nepalese have been clamouring for equal job opportunities, Hindi-medium schools and citizenship rights for several lakh members of the community. There is a tussle between the Nepalese from the hills and the Terai over the demand for travel regulations through the 2,000-km open border. The latter feels that such restrictions are impractical as they will seriously disturb their social, cultural and economic life which is inter-linked with Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

In view of the huge trans-border migration, Nepal's attempts to modify the 1950 treaty have remained half-hearted, no matter how much it dislikes the provisions like seeking India's consent for

buying arms from a third country. Communists and royalists, who have not forgiven the open support India lent to the Nepalese movement for democracy from 1960 to 1990, feel that the treaty has turned their country into an extension of Bihar and UP.

The success of entrepreneurs of Indian origin, who control 70 per cent of the kingdom's major businesses, has also made the Nepalese feel more frustrated. As a result, the Nepalese find every economic pact signed with Delhi heavily loaded in India's favour.

India's basic insensitivity towards the Nepalese people's sensibilities has also soured bilateral relations. Till this day, Nepal has not taken kindly to the false allegations against a Nepali passenger in the IA hijack by the Indian media on the basis of reports fed by intelligence agencies. Following this, its tourist trade, which is also the backbone of its economy, dropped by 30 per cent. Adding fuel to fire, the intelligence agencies supplied information to an Indian magazine painting a number of Nepalese businessmen and politicians, including a Nepali Congress heavyweight, as ISI collaborators. Neither India nor Nepal have investigated these allegations.

Since then, Nepalese journals, though unable to match the prowess of the Indian media, has sharpened their attack on India. Be it the tussle for Prime Ministership, the territorial dispute over Kalapani, the controversy of the import of Chinese goods or the issue of Nepalese sex workers in India, the Nepalese media is always ready to join their politicians in spewing venom against India and Indians.

The demand for a ban on Hindi films in the wake of the Hrithik episode has also brought into focus the resentment against the invasion in the Nepalese market by Bollywood movies and Indian journals. There was widespread condemnation of Hrithik Roshan by Nepalese artists. Communists have also campaigned to block this brand of 'cultural imperialism'.

Hrithik, whom Nepalese teenagers adore much more than their local celluloid idols, suddenly became the subject of anger and hatred because of a misunderstanding. Likewise, a lack of respect for each other's sensibilities may degenerate the friendship between India and Nepal into a vicious cycle. It's time the friendship matures into a balanced plane of self-dignity, mutual respect and trust. Or else, another outburst might vitiate the relations for all time to come.



GOVT., PARTY DISOWN 'ACCESSION' THEORY

Malkani's line on Nepal sparks row

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 31. Even before the Hrithik Roshan controversy, which led to anti-India rioting in Nepal, has died down, a senior Bharatiya Janata Party leader has exploded a bombshell prompting the party and the Ministry of External Affairs to rush in with statements denying that they have anything to do with those views.

Mr. K.R. Malkani, a veteran BJP leader and one-time editor of *Motherland*, a Jan Sangh mouthpiece, which was shut down during the Emergency in 1975, said in a chat with the web edition of *India Today* that the then King of Nepal had offered to "accede to India" during the early Fifties, but Jawaharlal Nehru had declined. He suggested that Nehru had made a "very serious, very foolish mistake" as "he was more concerned about world opinion (*usko duniya ki chinta zyada thi*)".

While Mr. Malkani offered no proof of Nehru having said this, he added that the "offer" by King Tribhuvan of Nepal was common knowledge at that time. "We should have accepted the accession of Nepal to India when it was offered to us by King Tribhuvan," Mr. Malkani said confirming that what he meant was that if this "mistake" had not been made by Nehru, Nepal today would be much like Sikkim, a part of India.

The spokesperson of the External Affairs Ministry today said that Mr. Malkani's remarks "do not, in any way, reflect the views of the Government of India." He asserted that "India has long-standing, close and friendly relations with Nepal and the Nepalese people based on the fullest respect for each other's sovereignty and national aspirations."

The Government was eager to "avoid any misunderstanding and misperception" and was keen to "work to strengthen the traditional ties of goodwill and friendship between the peoples of the two countries."

I'm sorry, says Malkani

NEW DELHI, DEC. 31. In a damage control exercise, the BJP leader, Mr. K.R. Malkani, tonight withdrew his controversial remarks on Nepal that upset the Nepalese Government.

"What I have stated is my personal opinion but I withdraw my remarks if they have hurt my good friends in Nepal," Mr. Malkani told PTI, adding that he was "extremely sorry". — PTI

The BJP was equally apologetic and ready to dissociate itself from Mr. Malkani's views. The party president, Mr. Bangaru Laxman, described Mr. Malkani's views as "unfortunate" and added that they "no way reflect the views of the BJP."

Elaborating further, he said "the BJP is committed to strengthening ties of goodwill and friendship between India and Nepal" while it "fully respected Nepal's sovereignty and cultural identity." Further, Mr. Laxman called upon Nepal to remain "vigilant" to ensure that "nothing is allowed to come in the way of the close and cordial relations between our two countries."

Mr. Malkani said Nepal had a "pro-Pakistan tilt" which was "very short-sighted." His charge was that Nepal thought it was in a better position to deal with India and bargain harder, if it had Pakistan support, and that Pakistanis have a free entry point to India via Nepal.

Mr. Natwar Singh, Congress leader and former diplomat, charged that Mr. Malkani had given "no proof and no evidence" for what he had said and there was "nothing further to comment".

Expressing concern over the recent events in Nepal, the two Left

parties said it was unfortunate that anti-India sentiments had been aroused over the alleged remarks of Mr. Hrithik Roshan.

In a statement here, the CPI(M) and the CPI said that Nepal and India had traditional and historically close ties. "We are aware that there are certain irritants in Indo-Nepal relations. All the democratic forces in India who wish for harmonious ties between the two neighbouring countries want all outstanding problems between India and Nepal resolved amicably. The problems are not of such a nature which cannot be resolved through joint efforts," the statement said.

Nepal protests

Reuters reports from Kathmandu:

Nepal has lodged a strong protest with India today over the remarks of Mr. Malkani. "Nepal has lodged a strong protest with India through diplomatic channels over the alleged remarks made by Mr. K.R. Malkani," Nepal's Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Ram Chandra Poudel, told reporters. — Reuters

2 die in police firing

KATHMANDU, DEC. 31. Two people were killed today in police firing in southeastern Nepal while the homes of three leaders of the ruling party became the target of bomb attacks, officials said.

At least two people were killed and three injured in police firing at Rajbiraj, 275 kilometres southeast of Kathmandu, when activists of the pro-India Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP- Goodwill Party) were holding a demonstration. The NSP had staged demonstrations to protest against the attacks on businessmen of Indian origin living in Nepal in Tuesday's anti-India agitation. — AFP

THE HINDU greets its readers a Happy and Prosperous New Year

THE HINDU

1 JAN 2001

Now, Malkani adds fuel to Nepal fire

HT
(u)
'Accession offer should have been accepted'

Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, December 31

EVEN BEFORE its fury on Bollywood star Hrithik Roshan could die, Nepal is again up in arms against what it describes as a challenge to its sovereignty by a senior BJP leader.

There was a furore in political circles and among citizens today after local papers prominently displayed BJP ideologue K.R. Malkani's interview to the website 'The News Today' on Friday in which he reportedly said: "It would have been better if Nepal had been a part of India, like Sikkim."

Deputy Prime Minister R.C. Poudyal said, "We have taken up the matter with India through diplomatic channels. We have instructed our ambassador to find out."

However, in an obvious damage control exercise later, Malkani withdrew his remarks. "What I have stated is my personal opinion but I withdraw my remarks if they have hurt my good friends in Nepal," Malkani told PTI tonight, adding that he was "extremely sorry".

Regarding the Hrithik controversy, Nepal's Deputy PM said, "We have accepted Hrithik's denial. He himself repeated it many times and the TV channel which telecast his interview also denied he ever commented on Nepal." He said the government was preparing a report on the origin of rumours about the actor and the subsequent violence.

Angry student supporters of the Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist Leninist) along with other students' unions have decided to take out a protest rally and burn Malkani's effigy.

The Communist Party of Nepal (ML) said, "We strongly condemn repeated efforts by Indian leaders to spread their expansionist design over Nepal."

2 killed; ministers' houses bombed

HT Correspondent
Kathmandu, December 31

TWO HINDI-SPEAKING demonstrators were today killed in police firing in south-central Nepal while the houses of a minister and two senior ruling Nepal Congress (NC) leaders were damaged in bomb attacks here.

Bombs were thrown at the residences of Education Minister D. Badu, former Home Minister G. Joshi, who quit his post two months ago, and NC general secretary Sushil Koirala, cousin of Prime Minister G. P. Koirala. Congress leaders, however, said no one was injured in the explosions.

While Badu and Joshi live at Patan, the NC general secretary, whose house was attacked a few months ago also, resides in Baneshwar.

The police are trying to ascertain the identity of the attackers.

In another incident in Rajbiraj, near the Nepal-Bihar border, Nepal Sadbhavana Party (an organisation of the Nepalese of Indian origin) president and former minister G. N. Singh said two party supporters, Mahendra Chaudhury and Khushilal Yadav, were killed when the police opened fire during a demonstration. The demonstration was in protest against the recent attacks on Nepalese of Indian origin during anti-Hrithik protests. Singh said five persons were injured in the incident and had to be admitted to hospital.

The party president claimed that total bandh was observed in at least 10 border districts, including Saptari, Dhanusha and Sarlahi.

Earlier, deputy Prime Minister R.C. Poudyal said there was tension in some border districts because of demonstrations by Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP) supporters.

Govt distances itself

THE CENTRE on Sunday disassociated itself from the remarks made by senior BJP leader K.R. Malkani that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru should have accepted the accession of Nepal to India when it was "offered to us by King Tribhuvan". "Malkani's remarks do not reflect the views of the Government of India," an External Affairs ministry spokesman said.

Detailed report on page 13

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THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

1 JAN 2001

CHANGE OF HEART

Help from across the border to tackle insurgency in the Northeast is turning out to be more complicated than expected. Bhutan has now declared its unwillingness to use military action against the extremists who have set up camp within its borders. These are mainly training camps and hideouts run by the United Liberation Front of Asom and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland. This is a serious breach of trust that will have alarming repercussions on the crisis in Assam and the neighbouring states. Bhutan has been making vaguely collaborative noises for some time now, even as insinuations have been made on this side of the border about Bhutan's ambivalent relations with extremist groups. The last session of its national assembly had resolved to move towards military intervention as part of a larger strategy to deal with the terrorist presence. This latest backtracking comes with an official rationale from Bhutan's home secretary, Mr Dasho Prema Wangchuk. Using military force against the Assamese — for that is how these rebels must be regarded by a foreign country — would be unfair, and might spark off a severe backlash against the Bhutanese. Therefore, only peaceful talks may be conducted. Further, the NDFB rebels in Bhutan do not seem to be doing much harm to the Bhutanese. Only the Bodo Liberation Tigers, according to Mr Wangchuk, are attacking his people and deserve to be confronted with any firmness. But this outfit does not have camps in Bhutan.

This peculiar and sinister logic could end up aiding the ULFA in making the situation in Assam worse than it is already. Their terrorism against "immigrants" — especially the killings in the Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills, where the ULFA works with the United People's Democratic Solidarity — could become impossible to control with the withdrawal of this sort of cooperation. With the assembly polls coming up in Assam, the various militant outfits would want to push the state into a corner from which the president's rule option would have to be agitated over yet again.

THE TELEGRAPH

1 JAN 2001