

## PAKISTAN KEPT OUT

5/1/0 But not indefinitely 27A

INDIA'S apprehensions regarding Pakistan's membership of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation does have some economic sense to it, the principal one being Pakistan's refusal to accord Most Favoured Nation status to India. But also, anything that transpires between the two countries is bound to have a larger political dimension. On MFN, most Pakistani businessmen would agree that it is necessary in view of the unofficial trade, worth between \$ 1 and 2 billion, conducted between the two countries. But the move is opposed by hardliners in Pakistan's military establishment. The antagonism has become much worse after Kargil.

The other thing that irritates India is the manner in which Pakistan turns every forum, in which the two countries find themselves, into a platform for pursuing its agenda on Kashmir. This happened, for instance, in March 1999, much before Musharraf's coup, when Pakistan tried to get a reference to the Lahore Declaration included in Saarc's Standing Committee report, despite the fact that Saarc's charter explicitly excludes discussions on bilateral issues. No Saarc meeting has been held since Musharraf's coup in October 1999, mainly because of the levels of hostility that prevail between its two biggest members.

One would think that the Rim organisation, being much bigger than Saarc, is less likely to be held hostage to bilateral hostility, but since all regional cooperation associations normally function by consensus, India can easily envisage situations in which the Rim Association's agenda is held up by Pakistan, with some help from its friends in the OIC who will also sit on the IORARC. The MFN issue may hold up Pakistan's membership of the Rim Association, but not indefinitely, primarily because Pakistan is part of the neighbourhood, has friends here who would want Pakistan in. Even if India were to pursue a deliberate policy of containing and isolating Pakistan, it wouldn't work, India doesn't have that kind of influence, even within the Indian Ocean.

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# Russian navy may resume patrolling of Indian Ocean

Fred Weir  
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**R**USSIAN WARSHIPS will patrol the Indian Ocean for the first time in almost a decade, according to an assertive naval doctrine being prepared in the Kremlin.

Two destroyers and a tanker from Russia's Pacific Fleet, based in Vladivostok, will call at Mumbai in mid-February as part of a two-and-a-half month training voyage that will also take them to the former Soviet naval base at Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam.

Analysts say that Russia is anxious to mobilise its former Soviet naval assets to show former friends and adversaries alike that it remains a major sea power.

"President Vladimir Putin is making diplomatic overtures in every direction, particularly in

show the flag."

A draft naval doctrine, presently being prepared in the Kremlin, says Russia's fleet must move beyond coastal defence to project Russian power and deter potential threats on all the world's oceans.

The Russian navy has been largely out of action since the collapse of the USSR. Its image has suffered badly from the accidental loss of one of its newest nuclear attack submarines, the Kursk, during war in the Arctic last August.

A recent report on Russian ships said that only about 15 per cent of the Russian navy's ships could presently be considered combat ready. The remaining are rusting in port, crippled by dire shortages of fuel, crew, spare parts, ammunition and equipment.

## Japanese team

A DELEGATION of Japanese officers visited Russian Pacific Fleet headquarters in Vladivostok on Wednesday, ITAR-TASS reported. Russia and Japan are engaged in negotiations aimed at signing a peace treaty formally ending World War II hostilities.

AFP, Vladivostok.

Asia," says Nikolai Zyubov, an independent political expert. "Military power is an important aspect of that. It is necessary to

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