

POLITICS OF SAARC

Need For The Will To Do Business

By PARMANAND

Saarc came into existence on 8 December 1985 and, as such, has completed 17 years of its existence. Article 3 of the Saarc Charter says: "The Heads of State Government shall meet annually". That should have ensured 18 summits but given the politics in this region, only 11 summits have taken place thus far. According to convention, Pakistan has set the second week of January 2003 as the time for the 12th summit and has got the consent of Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka for their participation. Bhutan and India have so far not given their consent. Not surprisingly, a great deal of controversy regarding the proposed summit or for that matter the very raison d'être of Saarc has surfaced.

Frequent and useless summits

Obviously, the founding fathers were conscious of the importance of consensus in the functioning of this body. In the event, very few summits have thus far been held without being preceded by one controversy or the other. In fact, the Kathmandu summit of January 2002 itself was delayed against the backdrop of the bloodless military coup in Pakistan in October 1999 and the Indian Airlines plane hijacking in December the same year.

A significant question arises: is it essential to have an annual summit? Can't it be held after longer intervals? After all, the Association of South East Asian Nations, which came into being as early as August 1965, has so far held only six summits, the first having been held in Bali in 1976 after 11 years of the body's formation and the sixth in Hanoi in 1998. And it is said without any dispute that Asean has been the most successful organisation among all such in the Third World.

Instead of concentrating on summits, the group of the 10 South East Asian states — East Timor is likely to join as the 11th member — focus

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their attention on concrete problems and finding tangible solutions. Saarc would probably do well to bring amendments to its charter in this regard.

Other inter-government or regional groupings like the Asia Pacific Regional Cooperation and the European Union are also not very fond of annual summits. Results are more important. When the 11th summit was held in Kathmandu against the backdrop of a serious controversy, Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf arrived in Nepal via Beijing wasting a long time. The summit had to be delayed and many programmes, including the retreat, had to be shortened or cancelled.

On the other hand, when the fourth summit was held in December 1988 in Islamabad and Rajiv Gandhi and Benazir Bhutto were on friendly terms, the two countries stole the show. Others palpably felt neglected. It does not create a good impression on other members, who are neither involved in the Indo-Pak conflict nor can they play the role of an honest broker to resolve their differences, thanks to the existing power equations. It is rarely that India and Pakistan have normal relations during a summit.

Alternatives to SAARC

It is not for nothing that a section of political leaders in Sri Lanka has started focusing on the failure of Saarc and emphasising that the island state should join Asean. Speaking in the Sri Lankan Parliament recently, Naveen Dissanayake of the United National Party, son of a former influential minister, un-

derlined that Saarc had been a failure and stressed that the "missed opportunity" of joining Asean at its inception should be rectified. AN Ram, a former ambassador and a former secretary in the ministry of external affairs, New Delhi, recently suggested "Saarc without Pak".

When India had sought postponement of the 11th Saarc summit in Kathmandu in 1999, the first reason was its being uncomfortable after Pakistan's democracy was derailed by Musharraf's coup. Then followed the plane hijacking. And yet, India participated in the 11th summit while Musharraf was still the Chief of the Army Staff and the country's President.

Indeed, before that India had invited Musharraf to Agra for bilateral talks. On his part, Musharraf chose to assume the country's presidency by sacking the legitimately elected incumbent Rafiq Tarar, before visiting Agra. Even in the present form, the Saarc charter has devices to make it more effective and result-oriented.

It has been provided that the council of ministers "shall meet in regular session as often as possible" and an extraordinary session of the council "may be held by agreement among member states". Hearteningly, the council of ministers has been meeting quite regularly and its meetings have not assumed controversial dimensions. It can be made more result-oriented and purposeful. It is time to think more seriously on these lines.

Another device of the standing committee has been contributing quite significantly to making Saarc as effective as possible in the given

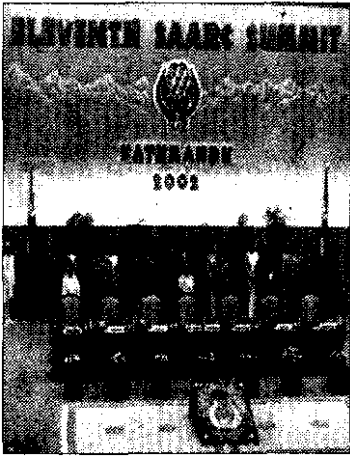
framework. Article 5 mentions the provision of the standing committee comprising foreign secretaries of member states and it is to perform the following functions: overall monitoring and coordination of programme of cooperation, approval of projects and programmes, and the modalities of their financing, determination of inter-sectoral priorities, mobilisation of regional and external resources, identification of new areas of cooperation based on appropriate studies.

Pakistan defies WTO

The very formation of Saarc was delayed for a variety of reasons. After its formation, it has failed to make significant strides in comparison to other regional organisations. True, other regional organisations do not have a problem like Kashmir, but there is the instance of France and Germany having solved the problem of Alsace-Lorraine. There is the example of India and China increasing bilateral trade notwithstanding the existence of the boundary dispute. True, the South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangements became a concrete reality in December 1995, but the South Asian Free Trade Area is yet to be realised. Not only that, Pakistan is yet to accord to India the most favoured nation status, which is incumbent upon it under the World Trade Organisation rules. While the question of Afghanistan's membership remains unsettled, China has, rather intriguingly, expressed the desire to become a member of Saarc.

In brief, Saarc has created more problems than it has solved. The political will to achieve its objectives of promoting the welfare of the people of South Asia and improving their quality of life, of accelerating economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region, providing all individuals the opportunity to live in dignity and to realise their full potential, is missing.

Saarc has seen enough of rhetoric; now is the time to show the will to do business.



SAARC: Pak. to announce new date

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, DEC. 22. The Pakistan Prime Minister, Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali, has said that Pakistan would announce a new date for the proposed South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation meet here, after 'assessing' the recent Indian statement about its willingness to participate in it. He was replying to a specific question about the summit at his maiden news conference in Lahore on Saturday.

Mr. Jamali's statement came two days after Pakistan accused India of indulging in 'deceitful sophistry' on the postponement

of the summit, proposed here in the second week of January.

Responding to a statement made by the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, in Parliament holding Pakistan responsible for the postponement of the 12th summit, the Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman had described Mr. Sinha's remarks as 'deceitful sophistry'.

The spokesman said that even now, while expressing India's willingness to participate in the summit, Mr. Sinha had made it contingent upon progress on the "substantive issues of SAARC".

The spokesman alleged that having caused the postponement

of the summit, the Indian Government wanted to clean up its sullied image.

"Obviously, they know of no better ways than to engage in double-speak". The spokesman said that if India was willing to attend the summit it should say so clearly 'without raising any caveats'. He recalled that to date India had caused the postponement of four SAARC summits.

Mr. Jamali made use of the opportunity to declare that the policy pursued by the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, on Kashmir was clear and his Government would continue it. The Prime Minister told journalists

that his regime would follow all the defence and foreign policies of Gen. Musharraf.

In response to a question about the continuation of the Musharraf Government's policies, he said those that suit Pakistan would continue. Mr. Jamali told journalists that despite having different policies and party affiliations, all politicians must work for the welfare of the country.

International politics, he further said, required facilitation of others. "America attacked Afghanistan only after consulting its allies. When they can facilitate each other, why can't we do so."

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THE HINDU

India never said 'no' to SAARC summit: Sinha

By Anita Joshua

NEW DELHI, DEC. 18. Criticising Pakistan for postponing the SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) summit for "specious" reasons, the Government today said India was "ready and willing to participate" in the meeting — whenever new dates are fixed — provided there was progress on "the substantive issue of SAARC."

Responding to the Congress MP, Priyaranjan Das Munshi's query on the postponement of the SAARC meet, the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, told the Lok Sabha that India had never said "no" to the summit, scheduled to be held in Pakistan in January. Reiterating the country's commitment to the SAARC Charter, Mr. Sinha expressed the hope that fresh dates would be fixed.

The Minister also clarified that the matter was "under our consideration" when Pakistan "unilaterally announced the postponement of the summit" on December 9. Explaining India's position, he said that "the summit is not a formality" and that progress must be made on the Kathmandu summit decision to complete negotiations for the South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement as early as

possible, and the South Asian Free Trade Agreement by the year-end; acceleration of economic growth among member States being the first objective of SAARC.

While negotiations on SAFTA were yet to begin, the SAPTA talks, Mr. Sinha said, had not made much headway because of frequent postponements of scheduled meetings at Pakistan's behest.

Also, it had become evident at the last meeting in November that Pakistan had no intention of extending to India the Most Favoured Nation status on a reciprocal basis.

At the November meeting, Pakistan offered India preferential tariffs on about 250 items of which 146 were on the negative list (as per which India cannot export these items).

And "out of about 6,500 tariff lines, there are only 500 to 600 tariff lines which are on the positive list"; the remaining being on the negative list as far as India's exports to Pakistan are concerned.

Such being the case, Mr. Sinha said that he told his Pakistani counterpart that "he has to come clean" if Pakistan did not have any interest in negotiating SAPTA.

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THE HINDU

Small thinking

SFB Making a farce of Saarc 13/12

Not for the first time, and probably not the last, have bilateral differences put paid to a summit meet of heads of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. Regardless of the nuances of the current round of the blame-game, the harsh reality remains that the leadership of the seven member-states lacks the capacity to divorce domestic interests from those of the region. Those who drafted the Saarc charter would have considered themselves visionaries when they proscribed bilateral issues from the regional grouping's agenda and insisted that only decisions approved by all would have binding effect. They were visionaries only to the limited extent that they foresaw the potential for trouble and tried to insulate the forum they were establishing from getting embroiled in disputes which it was not equipped to resolve. But in the process they also sowed seeds that had small chance of germination. The organisation has existed for some 17 years with little to show except ceremonial events with occasional high-sounding speeches and a secretariat that does not have a great deal to process. Since Saarc was never to be a political grouping the thrust was on economic integration, enhanced internal trade and perhaps the formation of a bloc able to resist commercial exploitation by the industrialised west. That has been a virtual non-starter because there is not too much that the states can import from each other — their economies have a host of commonalities — and each of them is highly dependent on trade relations with other nations. Sure there have been theories advanced of how greater trade within the region would have a healthy impact but they have not sufficed to usher in a true free-trade arrangement. So on both political and economic fronts Saarc has not taken off. What's left? Cultural interaction? Do we need a summit-level forum for that?

The member-states share a common plague — terrorism. India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and now Nepal have it full-blown, Bhutan and Maldives to a lesser extent. But since much of the terrorist-activity is both cross-border and allegedly "sponsored", prospects for genuine cooperation across the board are non-existent, and only a bit of bilateral action is practical. Given the little that can be achieved by Saarc in the context of domestic troubles of member-states, the scrapping of the summit scheduled to be held in Pakistan is no great loss, nor a great surprise. But surely India could have taken a more forthright position: it had a case in that there was little point in meeting when what was agreed at the last summit had not been implemented. It should have said "no" squarely, rather than permit its non-confirmation of participation to become the cause for postponement. That however requires "big thinking."

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A SAARC note

MP12

Agreements like SAPTA would be meaningless if Pakistan does not honour them

PAKISTAN'S postponement of the SAARC summit by side-tracking the real issue — its lack of commitment to decisions it was party to in a multilateral forum — only reinforces the experience that it has not honoured its bilateral agreements — like those at Simla and Lahore — it had freely entered into. Surely Pakistan's rulers understand that if the regional organisation has to survive and help improve the economic conditions in the region, then they must be sincerely committed to the process and practice of regional co-operation. One can understand Islamabad's reluctance to grant the MFN (Most Favoured Nation) status to India, which its elites believe is the country's worst enemy. But agreements like SAPTA, leave alone SAFTA, would remain meaningless if a major partner like Pakistan is going to remain uncommitted to them.

There is, of course, the parallel problem of the nature of bilateral relations that cannot be completely ignored at least in their practical implications. Pakistan, which had been loudly asking for the de-escalation of military confrontation and the consequent threat of war, has not re-

sponded to even the preliminary steps to restore diplomatic relations and communications in spite of unambiguous signals from New Delhi in that direction months ago. While the Indian naval fleet was brought back in July, even the decision to withdraw the military forces from the borders was announced by New Delhi two months ago.

Islamabad owes to the people of the region and its own citizens the responsibility to clearly indicate the progress it has made in implementing past decisions at SAARC. Otherwise, it is difficult to avoid the judgement that external economic assistance that it has been receiving since last year appears to have reduced its stake in improving economic-trade relations with India. Given the problems of economic-trade relations with Pakistan, not to talk of the over-riding political mistrust, India has been building up economic relations with other countries of South Asia bilaterally during the past decade. Pakistan seeking to trivialise SAARC decisions would only lead to lower commitment to regional co-operation in New Delhi. This, of course, would be unfortunate.

NDIAN EXPRESS

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HT-6 SAARC without teeth 11/12

THE ADVANTAGES of a functioning South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) are plain to see. That is why it was established in 1985 in spite of widespread scepticism, given the lack of political conviviality in the region. An effective SAARC could have benefited all member-countries by permitting goods and services to move relatively freely in the region. Intra-SAARC investments may also have helped reduce the cost of capital for member-States. But little of this has come to pass. The indefinite postponement of the SAARC summit by host Pakistan is likely to reinforce the sense that the forum is essentially dysfunctional.

It is hard to shake off the feeling that India-Pakistan differences lie at the bottom of Islamabad's decision. India had expressed its unwillingness to participate since Pakistan was dragging its feet on decisions already taken on the South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement (SAPTA) and the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA). The assessment is likely to be widely shared in

the light of Pakistan's long-standing refusal to accord India the 'most favoured nation' (MFN) status, which makes a mockery of the proposed SAPTA and SAFTA regimes given the size of the Indian economy.

Despite this, the summit could have gone ahead. But Islamabad appears to have decided to seize on New Delhi's reservations to paint it as the spoiler. Till now, SAARC summits have been held as scheduled despite the inability of one or two countries to attend. India's other objection — that Pakistan has not done much to check cross-border terrorism against it — must have also riled Islamabad. The SAARC charter does not permit discussion on bilateral matters. In the main, however, the Pakistani decision appears to be informed by its internal problems. Since Al-Qaeda and other similar outfits are swarming all over the country, and parties sympathetic to them have gained salience in the recent election, a weakened Pervez Musharraf may have doubted his country's ability to provide the needed level of security for the summit.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2002

A SUMMIT POSTPONED

South Asia

THE POSTPONEMENT OF the 12th summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), which was tentatively scheduled for the second week of January, has once again demonstrated that the leaders of the region are unable or unwilling to conceptualise and work for a future in which a wholesome co-existence would replace the unhealthy confrontation of the present. While Islamabad did contribute to this unfortunate development through its tardiness in implementing key economic and trade measures, New Delhi must take most of the blame for failing to preserve the principle that summit-level meetings of the SAARC must be held on a regular basis — irrespective of progress on specific matters — so that the institution's life is sustained. In normal circumstances, summit meetings that produce little can be the subject of ridicule, but not so in the South Asian context where relations *inter se* are usually so poisonous that even gestures of friendliness are of inestimable value. Try though it might, the current political leadership in New Delhi cannot escape censure for its subversion of the rule, that bilateral issues should not intrude into the SAARC forum, through its refusal to engage Islamabad even at this multilateral level on the grounds that Pakistan had not put an end to cross-border terrorism. This is a rule that India had firmly stood by in the past and it was not that long ago — after the informal meeting of SAARC Foreign Ministers on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly session — that New Delhi had reiterated its resolve to insulate the institutionalised regional discussions from bilateral tensions.

After vacillating on the question of whether or not the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, would travel to Islamabad, New Delhi has noted with a touch of smugness that it was Pakistan that had ultimately taken the decision to defer the summit. With India having failed to confirm

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the dates on which it would have been convenient for the Prime Minister to attend the summit the hosts just did not have the lead time of a month to make the necessary arrangements. Neither had New Delhi openly spelt out the reasons behind its hesitancy over attending the summit. For a good part of the time leading up to the summit New Delhi attributed its reluctance to attend to the lack of progress on the South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement (SAPTA) and the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA). However, Mr. Vajpayee let the cat out of the bag a few days ago when he stated that he would not go to Islamabad so long as Pakistan did not put an end to cross-border terrorism. These considerations aside, New Delhi did not want to embarrass itself by allowing its High Commissioner to take station in Islamabad or by requesting Pakistan to permit Mr. Vajpayee to fly by the direct route. Since India has done little to resolve these issues they cannot really be cited as excuses.

The postponement of the summit has occurred at a time when there were indications that progress was being made at the official level talks on a draft treaty framework for SAFTA. While it is unlikely that the draft would have been ready by the second week of January it would not appear unreasonable to presume that the political leadership of the South Asian countries, through their collective deliberations, could have added impetus to the finalisation of the treaty. The fact that lack of agreement over dates has been cited as the reason for the postponement does, technically speaking, leave open the possibility that a summit might indeed be held a few months down the line. Hopefully, all the parties involved will soon realise by that time that enhanced trade, and the multi-layered contacts that will spring up in its wake, could lead to a lessening of the tension that casts a shadow on the full potential of South Asia's development.

THE HINDU

11 DEC 2002

India responsible for SAARC summit postponement: Pak.

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, DEC. 10. Pakistan today regretted what it termed the Indian Government's 'attitude' to the SAARC summit and maintained that India was squarely responsible for its postponement.

The subject figured at a Cabinet meet of the newly installed civilian Government led by Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali. The Cabinet was of the view that Pakistan had little option but to postpone the summit due to the 'Indian attitude.'

"The Indian attitude has resulted in postponement of the meet for an indefinite period," the Information Minister, Sheikh Rashid Ahmed, told a news conference here. The Minister said Pakistan was expect-

ing a positive response from the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, but 'regrettably he refused.' The Minister expressed the hope that India would change its mind as and when the new dates for the summit are finalised.

The Minister said the subject of Pakistan's role in the fight of the international community against terrorism also came up briefly at the meeting. Mr. Rashid said the Jamali Government would fulfil Pakistan's international commitments on the fight against terrorism.

"We will adhere to our commitment with the International community against terrorism," he said. He said the new Government would continue its cooperation with the United States-led coalition in its hunt

for the remnants of the Al-Qaeda and the Taliban.

Opposition to Pakistan's pact with the U.S. was the main election plank of the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), an alliance of six religious parties.

The MMA has been urging the Jamali Government to review what it has dubbed as an imposed foreign policy.

The tussle over foreign policy, particularly the so-called freedom to American agencies to operate on the soil of Pakistan, is likely to continue between the Government and the religious parties. In response to specific question, the Minister maintained that a very small number of U.S. intelligence officials — FBI and CIA — are aiding local forces in their hunt for foreign extremists

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Some hope on the SAARC front

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, DEC. 3. There seems to be some positive development on the SAARC front, but whether this is sufficient or not for the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, to travel to Islamabad for the January summit remains to be seen.

According to sources, as mandated by the SAARC summit in Kathmandu in January, a draft framework for a South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) is almost ready.

Progress on this front was made at a meeting of SAARC officials in Kathmandu at November end. Even the attitude of India's Western neighbour was said to be positive as far as the negotiations on the SAFTA treaty is concerned.

Final touches to the draft are to be given at yet another meeting of concerned SAARC officials from December 27-29 in Kathmandu. So, theoretically, the question of the Prime Minister, A.B. Vajpayee, travelling to Islamabad till that time is an "open" one.

The sources also said that the SAARC Secretariat in Kathmandu had appointed a "consultant" to help prepare the draft treaty agreement.

The consultant's input was expected shortly and this would then be circulated to all the member nations for discussions at the end of the

month in Kathmandu. However, the sources said that officials were keeping their fingers crossed that no last-minute hitches develop and the draft is actually ready for the officials to approve in end-December.

The SAARC summit in Kathmandu had said that the draft treaty framework should be prepared in time for the next meeting of Heads of State/Government. As of now, that appears to be in sight.

This development is likely to meet India's concerns at least part of the way as far giving meaning to the SAARC process is concerned.

In fact, some Indian officials have questioned the SAARC as an organisation itself given the fact that Pakistan was stymying closer economic cooperation within the South Asian grouping.

However, speculation over the Prime Minister going for the SAARC summit is far from over. Concerns over cross-border terrorism remain real and Mr. Vajpayee himself has spoken about these in the SAARC context.

As is known, the non-acceptance of dates by even one country can scuttle an entire SAARC summit. A decision by India on the issue is still some time away.

Difficult for PM to attend SAARC summit: Mishra

NEW DELHI, NOV. 27. In the absence of any "substance" to the SAARC summit in Pakistan in January, it is "very difficult" for the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, to go to Islamabad, the National Security Adviser, Brajesh Mishra, has said, asserting that Pakistan has done "absolutely nothing" to end cross-border terrorism.

If the ideas put forward in Kathmandu during the SAARC ministerial-level meeting were implemented by December-end as agreed to, "we could consider it. But in the absence of any substance to the summit, of course it's very difficult for the Prime Minister to go", he said.

New Delhi has accused Pakistan of blocking progress on SAFTA.

In an interview to Tim Sebastian on BBC World

'Hard Talk' programme to be aired tomorrow, Mr. Mishra made it clear that India was prepared to restart negotiations with Pakistan if it showed sincerity and honoured its pledge to end cross-border terrorism.

"We are ready to begin a dialogue with Pakistan tomorrow if it gives up cross-border terrorism," Mr. Mishra said.

But he said "it (Pakistan) has done absolutely nothing" in this regard.

The Prime Minister's top aide admitted that India and Pakistan were "pretty close" to war in January, following the attack on Parliament as also in May this year in the wake of the terrorist strike on an Army transit camp in Jammu where families of soldiers were living. — PTI

THE HINDU

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Discussion on SAFTA draft important

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, NOV. 19. As the final word on the Prime Minister, A.B. Vajpayee's possible trip to Islamabad for the SAARC summit is awaited, senior officials from the SAARC nations will meet in Kathmandu to discuss

W4 South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) draft treaty.

According to informed sources, senior officials will hold discussions on November 29-30 in Kathmandu on the draft framework, in a bid to meet the deadline imposed by the SAARC summit. "No final

South Asia HD-12 decision has been taken on whether or not the Prime Minister will travel to Islamabad. Progress, or the lack of it at this meeting, will prove to be an important input to the final decision," the sources maintained. India's point has been that Pakistan is thwarting economic

progress within SAARC as demonstrated by its lack of seriousness in the negotiations on SAFTA. And, in such a situation, what purpose will be served by holding a SAARC summit?

The debate on the SAARC front within the Government is intensive. Various pros and cons are still being considered. Should the Prime Minister go to Pakistan at a time when cross-border terrorism continues? How long can the Government hold off talking to Pakistan?

Did not Mr. Vajpayee go to Lahore when "jihadis" continued to attack India and was not the Pakistani President, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, invited to Agra? As the debate continues, it is clear that the focus is not so much on SAARC as the bilateral India-Pakistan "angle" before the proposed January summit in Islamabad. The SAARC process is weak and there is little "push" to move it ahead in a productive manner.

In that sense, if the SAFTA draft is agreed to by the SAARC countries, then the leaders will have something to "show" or talk about at the proposed Islamabad summit.

Pak. preparing for SAARC summit

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, NOV. 18. Pakistan has said that it was going ahead with preparations for the SAARC summit proposed here in the second week of January though it is yet to get confirmation of participation from India and Bhutan.

The Foreign Office spokesman, Aziz Ahmed Khan, told journalists at the weekly news briefing that Pakistan had not set any deadline for confirmation from the two countries. In response to a question, he said any decision about the cut-off date would be taken at an appropriate time.

He recalled that the Foreign Ministers of all the seven member-states who met on the sidelines of the United Nations meeting last September had agreed to the dates but were supposed to get it confirmed by their respective Governments. "We expect all leaders to attend the meeting," he said.

Mr. Khan took serious exception to the reported remarks made by the Afghanistan Ambassador to India that Osama bin Laden was hiding in Pakistan's Baluchistan province.

In response to a question, Mr. Khan said the New Delhi-based Afghan Ambassador seemed to have more information than the U.S. forces which were inside Afghanistan to locate him.

"He (Afghan envoy) is either living in a world of delusion or is affected by the 'Bollywood' (Indian version of Hollywood) movies," Mr. Khan said. He maintained that relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan should not be viewed in the light of the irresponsible statements of one or two leaders. They must be seen in the larger context of 'good bilateral' relations between the two countries.

He claimed that the Afghan Government and its Chairman, Hamid Karzai, have always appreciated Pakistan's cooperation

in fighting terrorism and the people of the two countries also enjoyed cordial relations since long.

In response to a specific question on the alleged acquisition of hi-tech weapons by India, he asked the international community to be mindful of India's acquisition of hi-tech weapons. He argued that needless arms procurement would add to India's "aggressiveness and belligerence".

"We have seen (this) offensive posture against Pakistan," he said with an apparent reference to India's decision to mobilise troops on the borders with Pakistan since December last year.

"We have maintained in the past that acquisition of more and more arms (by India) when it is not threatened by any country meant more aggressive posture towards its neighbours," Mr. Khan said when asked to comment on reports of India's quest of sophisticated

weapons systems.

Commenting on a reported statement of the All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) leader, Mir Waiz Omar Farooq, that the time had come to put down the guns, Mr. Khan reiterated Pakistan's position of resolving the Kashmir issue through negotiations that included representatives of the Kashmiri people. "Dialogue is the only way to resolve all problems," he said.

To a question, he said Pakistan was vigorously pursuing with the Kabul authorities at the highest level the issue of repatriation of the remaining Pakistanis detained in Afghan jails. He hoped for their early return to their homeland.

To another question, he said that about 1.5 million Afghan refugees living in Pakistan had returned to their homeland voluntarily. However, about 20 per cent of them had returned to Pakistan owing to difficult conditions in Afghanistan.

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PM yet to decide on attending SAARC meet

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, NOV. 16. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, today expressed scepticism about the usefulness of attending the SAARC summit (to be held in Pakistan).

Talking to mediapersons at his residence, he expressed apprehension that bilateral issues like Kashmir were sought to be raised at the regional forum. However, he did not fully rule out his participation; he merely observed that "no decision has been taken as yet."

On the reports of differences within the ruling combine on economic matters, he observed that his Government would not pursue policies that could entail "political damage."

He pointed out that "eco-

omic reforms" carried a price for all political parties, including the Congress which ruled in many States.

Disinvestment was a settled policy and there was no intention to go back on it, he said.

He also downplayed the controversy over the Kelkar report, saying it was only a proposal.

Mr. Vajpayee, replying to questions on Jammu and Kashmir, said that in his view perhaps a committee should review cases before detainees were released.

He said he disapproved of the "ad hoc manner" in which the new Government in that State was releasing prisoners, but hastened to add that the decision was the prerogative of the Mufti Government.

Indo-Pak Saarc spat on

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Nov. 12. — Plans for Islamabad to hold the summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation went further awry today when India rejected any suggestions of a 'deadline' for compliance on the proposed dates. It appeared almost certain that the summit, scheduled for the second week of January 2003, would not take place on time because of the squabbling between India and Pakistan.

India objecting as out of hand Pakistan's bid to set a 'deadline' for its acceptance of the summit dates and Pakistan objecting to 'conditions' India has imposed to hold the summit.

According to the terms of the Saarc charter, a summit cannot be held even if one of its member countries decides against participation, because of the emphasis on "consensus."

Which means if New Delhi decides the dates are not convenient, the summit will not be held on schedule.

The Indian external affairs minister, Mr Yashwant Sinha, objected to Pakis-

tan's proposed deadline, saying, "no body can set a deadline. Saarc works on the basis of consensus." "One country cannot set a deadline for another," Mr Sinha said, reacting to a Pakistan foreign ministry statement made yesterday.

According to agency reports from Islamabad, the Pakistan foreign office spokesman, Mr Aziz Ahmad Khan had said that Pakistan, the host of the SAARC summit, would soon set a "deadline" for India and Bhutan to respond on the proposed SAARC summit in January. Islamabad maintains that five of the seven SAARC members have okayed the January 11 to 13 dates proposed by Pakistan for the summit.

Pakistan's foreign office has decided to wait for a few more days for a response from India and Bhutan regarding their participation before a final decision is taken on the fate of the SAARC summit.

The other SAARC nations rightly feel that the entire movement has got bogged down in India and Pakistan's hostilities.

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THE STATESMAN

SAARC MEET / PAK. BLAMED FOR STALLING PROGRESS

India takes dim view of economic cooperation

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, Nov. 7. India is less than enthused at the lack of progress in economic cooperation within the SAARC framework and has begun questioning the efficacy of the Association itself. Hence, it has no hesitation pointing the finger at Pakistan for stalling progress on the economic front in SAARC at Islamabad.

Informed sources said that if Pakistan persisted with the approach it demonstrated at the SAPTA negotiations in Kathmandu then there was little point in the summit meeting in Islamabad. However, no decision has been taken yet about whether or not the Prime Minister, A.B. Vajpayee, would travel to Islamabad. The sources said Pakistan had set a "deadline" (later this month) by which time all member nations have to give their consent to allow the host nation to make arrangements for the

SAARC meeting. Accusing Pakistan of making a mockery of the SAARC process, they said that Islamabad was not even willing to extend the Most Favoured Nation treatment to India. As long as Pakistan did not extend the status to India, preferential trade arrangements meant very little.

Calling upon Pakistan to "revisit" the issue, they said that economic cooperation was at the "core" of SAARC, given the fact that politically contentious issues were outside the Association's framework. Islamabad should take a leaf out of Europe's book.

India was the pivot as far as economic cooperation within SAARC was concerned as was demonstrated by its special relationship with Nepal and the free trade area with Sri Lanka, the sources said. For the moment, Bangladesh had its own problems and was not keen on exporting gas to India.

At the last SAARC summit in Kath-

mandu the Association's leaders had set a goal (end-2002) to formulate a draft treaty for a South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA). When contacted in Kathmandu this evening, the SAARC Secretary-General, Q.A.M.A. Rahim, said they were trying their best to ensure that the draft was prepared by the end of the year. "We are still trying to fulfil the mandate," he told this correspondent, adding that a meeting of the SAARC Commerce Secretaries would be held within the month in Kathmandu.

Asked about Pakistan's "deadline", Mr. Rahim took the view that it was not a "hard and fast rule". Conceding that there were problems, Mr. Rahim said that discussions were going on and he was hopeful that the SAARC summit would be held on schedule.

New Delhi sources, however, point out that apart from styming the progress on economic cooperation, Pakistan is showing no signs of deviating from its

anti-India policies. They specifically pointed out the "highly vitriolic and poisonous statements" of the Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the U.N., Munir Akram.

Among other things, Pakistani press reports have spoken of Islamabad seeking the prosecution of the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, for "genocide". This, the sources said, showed that there had been no lessening of the rhetoric or the "downright negative approach."

Also, the Indian officials are worried over high-profile terrorist strikes before and during the possible visit of Mr. Vajpayee to Islamabad for the SAARC summit.

The rise of fundamentalist forces in Pakistan's political horizon is causing concern to India as at least two of the "political parties" in the right-wing Islamist alliance are directly linked to the promotion of terrorism in India.

Saarc summit may be scrapped

Nilova Roy Chaudhury
in New Delhi

Nov. 5. — There are clear signals that the Saarc summit scheduled for Islamabad in 2002 may get scrapped. India holds that there has been no substantive progress on the key issues of terrorism or economic integration and that the Prime Minister, though ready to attend a multilateral summit in principle, isn't interested in a summit — in the words of foreign minister Mr Yashwant Sinha — (just) “to see each other's faces.”

According to the Saarc charter, the non-availability of even one of the seven heads of government means

the summit gets put off. No dates have been finalised for holding the summit, which normally falls due in mid-January.

Officials pointed out while the point of holding a summit was to ensure that initiatives taken are given a fillip, “there has been no progress” on crucial issues. At a meeting in Kathmandu last month, Pakistan claimed it had offered ‘substantial concessions’ by ‘opening up’ and offering 263 items for concessional trade. Of these, however, 146 items were on the negative list, meaning they could not be bought from India, prompting the Indian side.

Also, Pakistan has still not accorded India most

favoured nation status for trade, stalling the entire process of economic integration and the creation of a regional free trade area that Saarc aims to achieve. Similarly, there has been no forward movement on a joint initiative against terrorism which would allow police of one country within the organisation to gain access to wanted terrorists in another Saarc country. All that has been achieved is a joint declaration generally condemning terrorism. Officials also dismissed Pakistani charges of India scuttling the SAARC process by raising “extra-neous” issues, saying the reality was very different.

6 NOV 2002

THE STATESMAN

Pak makes Saarc free trade zone a distant dream

Udayan Nambhoodiri
New Delhi, November 3

WHILE THE armies of India and Pakistan faced each other through much of 2002, the expected happened on the Saarc front. Despite solemn statements made at the Kathmandu summit in January, the dream of a free trade zone in the region remained elusive.

At the official level talks held in Kathmandu last week, Pakistan pulled what Indian sources called a "sick joke". A list of goods proposed for removal of quantitative restrictions by the Pakistani delegates

included many which were already on the "negative" list. These were products which had previously been earmarked for protection.

The Kathmandu Summit ended with a declaration promising the adoption of a draft Saarc Free Trade Zone agreement by December, 2002. Now that looks a distant dream. No wonder, New Delhi is wondering aloud:

"What is the point in Prime Minister Vajpayee going for the Islamabad summit (scheduled for January 2002)?"

To Pakistanis themselves, the Musharraf regime's tricks are hardly unfamiliar. "Trade agree-

ments are perhaps the most convenient tools for Pakistan's commerce ministry to play tricks on the people," wrote noted economist Sabihuddin Chausi in a leading Pakistani daily. Islamabad's regional trade policy, according to him, is full of contradictions.

For instance, the Musharraf regime is mocking the concept of a free trade zone by trying to offer bilateral FTAs with Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. At the same time it has not made a single statement in favour of granting Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status to India, which is an obligation un-

der the WTO. India, however, is not making a big issue out of this double-speak.

Afghanistan, not a Saarc member country, has proposed a triangular, overland trade link with Pakistan and India. This would allow overland trade through the Wagah border and such trade would make the Central Asian republics accessible to India. But Pakistan has shot it down.

"Pakistan's obsession with India has reduced Saarc to a wasteland. Islamabad's policy is to thwart every move towards free trade, as it perceives that India would be the bigger gain-

er. That is why even the South Asia Preferential Trade Agreement (Sapta) did not work," an Indian source said.

Islamabad's dream of having separate FTAs with Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have only ended in frustration. These countries see they have nothing to gain from it except complicating the steps towards a regional Free Trade Area.

As exasperation mounts in Islamabad for the regime's inability to "harm" India's interests, the dream of 1.2 billion consumers of the region to improve their living conditions stays in the backburner.

Sunder-Asia
110-6

No progress in Kathmandu round of SAPTA talks: India

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, NOV. 2. India today said that the final meeting of the fourth round of discussions under the South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement (SAPTA) in Kathmandu had not made any headway on account of the attitude adopted by Pakistan.

As India has previously linked economic progress under the SAARC umbrella to the Prime Minister, A.B. Vajpayee's travelling to Islamabad for its summit in January, the remarks made by the Foreign Office spokesman assume importance.

Briefing presspersons, the spokesman said that at the October 30-November 1 meeting, Pakistan offered 250 items for tariff concession, but of these 146 were found to be on the "negative list" for trade with India.

This, he said, was nothing but a reflection of Islamabad's "duplicitous double stan-

dards" towards SAARC and the future of regional economic cooperation.

Referring to the situation prevailing earlier, he maintained that of the 248 items offered by Pakistan up till the third round, 73 were on the "negative list" for trade with India. In all, he claimed that of the 5,500 items placed on the concessional list under the SAPTA framework, as many as 3,000 had been offered by India.

According to him, the deliberations in Kathmandu revealed that Pakistan was offering "tokenism" as a substitute for substance. India, however, was prepared to have more engagement with Pakistan on economic issues.

If Pakistan had provided a meaningful list, then progress could have been made at the meeting.

It may be recalled that the SAARC summit meeting in January as well as the Foreign Ministers' session in August had called

for speedy progress not just under SAPTA, but also in moving towards SAFTA.

There appears to be little doubt that Pakistan has provided India with a first-class excuse if New Delhi were to decide against the Prime Minister travelling to Islamabad.

Asked if there was any "deadline" for India to respond to the dates proposed by Pakistan for the SAARC summit in Islamabad, the spokesman said no deadlines applied to such things.

In a separate development, he said the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) decision to keep Pakistan suspended from the councils of the Commonwealth was a "welcome decision".

It was welcome because it showed that the Commonwealth and the international community wanted the return of true democracy — as opposed to a caricature — in Pakistan.

3 NOV 2002

THE HINDU

Lanka, LTTE talks inch ahead

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NAKHON PATHOM (Thailand), Nov. 2. — Making steady progress in the peace talks, the Sri Lankan government and LTTE today agreed on military de-escalation and finalised a 19-member panel of top military officials to carry out the task that would also include demining in the island's northern and eastern regions.

On the penultimate day of the Norway-sponsored four-day negotiations here, the two sides also agreed to set up another committee to oversee development of areas ravaged by nearly 20 years of ethnic conflict. "We are giving highest importance" to the 19-member panel which will include nine military officials from each side and a Norwegian member to work on the process of de-escalation, said Mr GL Peiris, Sri Lanka's chief negotiator.

The panel will also look into the withdrawal of government troops from "High Security Zones" besides tackling demining.

While the government team will be led by defence secretary Mr Austin Fernando, the LTTE team will be headed by SP Thamilselvan, a former guerilla commander. The panel is expected to hold its first meeting at Omanthai in Sri Lanka's northern province.

Mr Peiris said the appointment of Mr Fernando to head the team reflected the government's seriousness in approaching the issue of de-escalation.

He said there had been growing tension between the government troops and the LTTE over implementation of the ceasefire that went into effect on 23 February. The key rehabilitation committee will be in charge of developing north and east Sri Lanka. The committee panel will report to the negotiating delegations and will have a secretariat based in Kilinochi, the Tigers' headquarters in the north.

A US-based Tamil academic is expected to be the director of the panel, an official said. The committee will meet later this month to identify projects that require funding from international donors. LTTE chief negotiator Anton Balasingham said he was optimistic about peace as "there is remarkable progress in the discussions" held so far. In another development, President Chandrika Kumaratunga has accused the government of seeking to strip her of powers relating to national security and instead asking her to head a panel to monitor preventive measures against pollution, a report said.

Fundraising meet: Ten nations, including Britain, Japan, Canada and France, have confirmed they will attend a conference in Norway this month to raise funds for rebuilding Sri Lanka's war-ravaged northeast, the *Daily News* said, adds AP.

Amnesty plea: Amnesty International today urged the government to set up an independent body to investigate charges of torture by police and armed forces.



THE STATESMAN

3 NOV 2002

No 'substance' for talks at Saarc meet, says PM

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The Prime Minister answered Pakistani criticism that India was dragging its feet on the Saarc summit on Saturday when he said: "We do not want to trivialise the association through a summit without substantive content. Let us, therefore, first talk of substance before we start focusing on dates."

Mr Vajpayee's remarks at the combined commanders' conference of the armed forces here on Saturday comes in the wake of Pakistan proposing January 11 to 13 as dates for next year's Saarc summit.

Stressing that India's position that regional cooperation in South Asia should not be held hostage by bilateral and political differences between member countries, he said New Delhi had consistently advocated economic cooperation and cultural exchanges as a means of creating a climate conducive for political reconciliation.

Alerting the security forces against "unexpected targets and tactics" of terrorists, he pointed out that chemical and biological weapons could "fall into the hands of non-state actors". He made it clear that India would not hold talks with Pakistan while "terrorist guns are held to our heads," and added that most countries have accepted the valid-



A.B. Vajpayee

ity of India's position that "we can have a meaningful dialogue only if cross-border terrorism ends".

On the decision to pull back troops from the international border with Pakistan, Mr Vajpayee said: "Our military mobilisation sharply focussed international attention on the ravages of terrorism." He told the meeting, also attended by Deputy Prime

Minister L.K. Advani, defence minister George Fernandes and external affairs minister Yashwant Sinha, that the international community has now acknowledged that the brutal killings in Jammu and Kashmir "is not a freedom struggle but naked terrorism driven by Pakistan".

Praising the armed forces for their role during the troop mobilisation after the December 13 attack on Parliament, the PM said India's engagement with the international community over the past year had made it absolutely clear that the world should come together either to persuade or coerce Pakistan to stop cross-border terrorism. Simultaneously, India and Pakistan must sit together bilaterally to resolve all issues between them, including Jammu and Kashmir.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

28 OCT 2002

SAARC summit dates bother Delhi

By K.K. Kalyan

The controversy over the next SAARC summit has taken an unseemly twist — avoidably. The main question is not whether the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, is to take part in the next meeting (in Islamabad under the rotational arrangement) but whether it should be held in January next year or later.

To raise doubts about Mr. Vajpayee's participation is to put India in the wrong by causing ambiguity about its approach — of support — to SAARC. Not very long ago, India had to do a lot of defensive explaining because of its refusal to attend the summit to be held soon after the coup in Pakistan. "Our Prime Minister would not like to be seen in the company of the murderer of democracy" was one argument in so many words. A momentary show of disapprobation of the military leader's presence at the summit barely two months after the coup in a member-country was understandable, but India's "no" for over two years thereafter was not appreciated even by its friends.

There is a strong case to avoid giving the impression that New Delhi is lukewarm to summit participation because of its bilateral problems with the host country. To do so would be to walk into the trap laid by Pakistan, which had been wanting the SAARC to take note of its problems with India, especially when cooperation in South Asia is affected.

To counter this point, New Delhi used to cite the SAARC charter, which excludes bilateral and contentious issues from the pur-

view of the grouping. India would need to take care against mixing the SAARC with a bilateral matter (which is what Mr. Vajpayee's decision not to go to Islamabad for the summit would mean). As a matter of fact, the Minister for External Affairs, Yashwant Sinha, stated as much at the last Ministerial meeting in Kathmandu. That was also the sense of a brief remark by the Union Minister of State for External Affairs, Digvijay Singh, recently. But official "clarifications" tended to create confusion.

While the rotational plan of the summits is not to be tinkered with, there is nothing sacrosanct about the dates. In the past, the heads had met during various parts of the year — in the beginning, towards the end, or in the middle. For Pakistan to make the summit in January next year a prestige issue is somewhat inexplicable. Not all the members have accepted the tentative suggestions for the next meeting and, as such, the matter could be sorted out through quiet consultations. New Delhi is not to be blamed if it is not enthusiastic about the January schedule.

For two reasons. One, the political situation in Pakistan is in a state of flux. The election — or whatever exercise was conducted under this label — produced a hung National Assembly and a viable combination has not emerged despite intense consultations among the party leaders. It may be a government headed by a Prime Minister

from the MMA, the combine of religious groups, or led by the King's party, the Muslim League (QN), or a coalition of anti-Musharraf forces or a national government. India would prefer a Prime Ministerial visit, even for the SAARC summit, to take place in a settled political situation in Pakistan — or, for that matter, any other host country. Also, New Delhi would like to be sure as to who calls the shots in Pakistan. On the face of it, the real power would continue to reside in the President (for the next five years) Pervez Musharraf. Who would represent Pakistan at the summit? The President or the Prime Minister (to be)? Whether or not the Pakistanis themselves regard the transfer of even the limited power, from the military to the civilian dispensation, a genuine affair.

True, these are internal matters of Pakistan — but these will have a bearing on New Delhi's decision on the timing of Mr. Vajpayee's visit.

Two, the post-election scenario in Jammu and Kashmir. As is known, there was a spurt in terrorist activities, mostly sponsored from the other side of the Line of Control, during the Assembly elections. If there is another spurt after the formation of a new government in Srinagar in, say, November, New Delhi would not find it easy to decide in favour of the Prime Minister's visit in January.

If, on the other hand, there is a pause — and it stays for a while — there would be no difficulty in taking a positive decision. But January would be too early even in that case.

NEWS ANALYSIS

27 OCT 2002

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27/10

Not impairing SAARC meet: PM

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, OCT. 26. India today rejected Pakistan's contention that it was impairing the approaching SAARC conference in Islamabad and suggested that a substantial agenda for action should first be finalised before agreeing on firm dates for the meet.

New Delhi had always advocated closer economic and cultural ties among neighbouring countries. But no regional summit to further economic ties could succeed without a firm plan of action.

"It has always been India's position that regional cooperation in South Asia should not be held hostage by bilateral political differences between member countries. We have consistently advocated economic cooperation and cultural exchanges as a means of preparing a climate conducive for political reconciliation. But we have reached a strange situation where every worthwhile proposal for economic cooperation is being systematically sabotaged on irrational fears and political considerations.

Then we are told we are dragging our feet on dates for the summit," the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, said while addressing the combined commanders' conference of the armed forces here today.

The Prime Minister's remarks come days before senior Indian

officials are due to leave for Kathmandu to hold deliberations on the agenda for the SAARC meet, which Islamabad says could be held in early January. India is insisting on solid progress on the agenda, especially SAARC Area Preferential Trade Arrangement (SAPTA).

the forerunner to a free trade arrangement between member countries (SAFTA). Only a positive evaluation could result in Mr. Vajpayee travelling to Pakistan for the conference, say senior officials.

'No talks till Pak. stops terrorism': Page 8

27 OCT 2002

INDIA

India, Pak lock horns over Saarc dates

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 24 OCTOBER

26/10
EF 2

THE brewing row over the dates for the forthcoming Saarc summit is threatening to overwhelm the summit itself. The inevitable war of words between India and Pakistan have spilt over into the multilateral relationship, with India on Thursday dismissing the charge that its officials were deliberately creating confusion over the dates.

"There is absolutely no confusion as far as India is concerned," the MEA spokesman said on Thursday. "Dates are not finalised," he added. The Pakistan foreign office on Wednesday announced the dates of the summit as being between 11 and 13 January.

There appear to be several issues at play here. First, technically, though the dates have indeed been announced, they have to be confirmed by all the Saarc countries, otherwise the dates do not stand.

India's participation is assured but New Delhi wanted to delay announcing it. However, with Digvijay Singh and George Fer-

nandes blowing the whistle, it has fallen to the lot of the foreign office to continue with confusion as a diplomatic tool, regardless of the changed situation.

The reasons for India waiting until later are several. First, New Delhi wants to get a feel of the kind of government that will take over in Pakistan. Pakistan is, according to Indian assessments, entering another phase of instability and uncertainty. Therefore, India wants to wait and see how the internal situation develops in Pakistan before taking a decision.

Second, Pakistan has opposed the meeting of the working group on SAPTA, which India finds as being counter-productive. This prompted foreign minister Yashwant Sinha to say the summit should have something concrete to offer, and not just be an occasion "to see each other's faces."

This is where India suspects Pakistan of using the multilateral forum of the Saarc as a photo-op and then push for bilateral dialogue. It is this wariness that has led the Indian government to hold back on announcing its participation.

25 OCT 2002

The Economic Times

India's terms for attending SAARC meet

By Our Diplomatic Correspondent

NEW DELHI, OCT. 23. India has made attendance in the scheduled SAARC summit in Islamabad next year conditional on solid progress being made on economic cooperation agreements within the regional grouping.

"There has to be something concrete to show as far as progress on SAPTA and SAFTA are concerned," the sources said, adding that crucial meetings at the official level are to take place next week in Kathmandu.

The Commerce Secretary, Dipak Chatterjee, would travel to Nepal for a meeting of the SAARC Committee on Economic Cooperation, sources said. Other interactions are also scheduled.

For some time now, India has pointed to other SAARC members that Pakistan was holding up progress on greater economic cooperation. They acknowledged that a formal letter was received last month from Pakistan through the SAARC Secretariat in Kathmandu proposing January 11-13 as dates for the summit meeting.

After India makes an assess-

ment of the progress at the Kathmandu meetings, a decision would be taken whether or not the Prime Minister, A.B. Vajpayee, will travel to Islamabad for the SAARC summit. The sources maintained that India was likely to decide next month whether or not the dates were suitable for the Prime Minister to visit Pakistan.

They made it plain that India was concerned about the possi-

bility of high-intensity "terrorist strikes" in the run-up to the SAARC summit or even during the course of the meeting.

Such a concern, clearly, is a real one given the fact that Pakistan-based terrorist groups have been targeting innocent civilians both within and outside Jammu and Kashmir.

Asked whether some countries had sent in their consent to the dates proposed by Pakistan,

the sources replied in the affirmative. They also pointed out to the fact that no government had taken shape in Pakistan as yet and New Delhi was still watching the situation.

There is little doubt that given the "high-voltage" media coverage being given to Pakistan, India and the SAARC summit, "this controversy will not die down till New Delhi decides one way or the other."

Bid to create confusion, says Pak.

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, OCT. 23. Pakistan today accused India of trying to create 'confusion' about the SAARC Summit scheduled to be held here.

The spokesman of the Pakistan Foreign Office, Aziz Ahmed Khan, asserted that Islamabad had already proposed to the SAARC Secretariat January 11-13 next as dates for the summit and duly conveyed it to all the member states.

He was responding to reports in the India media regarding the dates of the meeting.

It is for the second time in less than a week that Islamabad has gone public about its proposal to hold the summit in the second week of January. Last week the Pakistan Foreign Office had claimed that a decision about holding it here in

January was taken in August at the meeting of the SAARC Foreign Ministers. The spokesman said that at this meeting in New York on September 14, on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly, Islamabad proposed January 11-13 as the dates for the summit. He had claimed that the Foreign Ministers agreed to get back to the SAARC Secretariat about their consent by September 23. The statement issued by Mr. Khan today was in response to the supposed comments made by the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, accusing Pakistan of 'repeatedly postponing' SAARC meetings.

Calling Mr. Sinha's remarks "misleading and unwarranted," he said in the statement that, "obviously Indian officials were trying to create confusion in a matter, which was quite clear."

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THE HINDU

11-12 SAARC Retreat 2002

That defence minister George Fernandes should have deemed it fit to give prime minister Vajpayee a clearance to go to Islamabad for the SAARC summit in January 2003 indicates how far the regional organisation has drifted from its original charter. Whether we like it or not, SAARC has, in fact, become a platform for raking up bilateral issues — particularly between India and Pakistan. This is underscored by the fact that the defence minister, instead of the external affairs ministry, has taken the lead in the matter, in effect tagging the SAARC summit with cross-border terrorism and resumption of the Delhi-Islamabad dialogue. Nearly 20 years after it was founded, SAARC is being reduced to irrelevance not only because it has remained hostage to India-Pakistan tensions but also because all seven members are too mired in domestic discord to find time for meaningful regional cooperation. The fault lies not with the vision of SAARC; economic development through more trade and business enabling all seven countries to grow rich together is a commendable objective in a region that is home to the largest population of the world's poor.

However, though regional cooperation is essential for economic emancipation, neither India — the self-proclaimed regional superpower — nor the other members have moved closer towards SAARC's objectives. How can India motivate neighbourhood cooperation when it cannot get two states within the Union to agree on sharing Cauvery waters? Pakistan is far too obsessed with India and keeping the Kashmir dispute alive to start a dialogue on new areas of cooperation. Bangladesh, although floating on oil and gas and blessed with the potential for an economic boom, is in the grip of fundamentalist parties with links to terror groups; their competitive politics has made the country a haven for Islamic militants and other lawless elements, such as arms smugglers. Nepal, which launched a democratic experiment less than 12 years ago, is caught between monarchic revival and a Maoist uprising. In Sri Lanka, efforts to end the Tamil-Sinhala war are making rapid progress, but the power struggle between president Chandrika Kumaratunga and prime minister Ranil Wickremesinghe can wreck political stability. In short, SAARC is going nowhere. Every SAARC summit is marked by a retreat when the leadership takes a break from on-stage deliberations. With SAARC in a state of suspended animation, it would perhaps be best for all member countries to have an extended retreat to introspect before they even think of another summit.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

23 OCT 2002

19/10

U.S. hopes for India-Pak. talks

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, OCT. 18. The decision to pull back troops from the border by India and Pakistan is a "very welcome development" and a "very major step in the right direction", the United States Ambassador to India, Robert Blackwill, said here today.

Talking to *The Hindu*, Mr. Blackwill said the U.S. had hoped for months that such a "substantial de-escalatory step" would take place. "We were worried that an incident could occur and you could have escalation."

In response to questions, he said the elections in Jammu and Kashmir were "positive, credible, successful" and the U.S. had made this clear in public. "But, of course, we hope, and it's my impression that the Government of India has the same view, that the quality of governance for the ordinary citizens of J&K can be substantially improved." He hoped that in the context of the de-escalation, the J&K elections and the naming of a new Pakistani Prime Minister soon, a dialogue would begin between India and Pakistan.

The U.S. was expressing its preference on what should be done, just as India did about American policies, he said and called for a "sustained, serious,



Robert D. Blackwill

specific" India-Pakistan dialogue. The U.S. could not "decide outcomes" on the issues that divided the South Asian neighbours.

Asked if Washington had a view of a final Kashmir settlement, Mr. Blackwill said: "No. That question can only be answered by the Governments of India and Pakistan. There are no blueprints in Washington... no maps... no prescriptions in Washington on this score."

He was all for the resumption of sporting and people-to-people contacts between India and Pakistan. "These are not high politics. People getting on trains going back and forth; meeting their relatives on the other side of the line... these will be useful steps."

Identical views: Page 11

19 OCT 2002

Dates not yet finalised for SAARC meet

By Our Diplomatic Correspondent

NEW DELHI, OCT. 17. India today clarified that no dates had as yet been finalised for the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit in Islamabad in January 2003.

The matter would be considered after the dates are finalised, the new Foreign Office spokesman said.

When the Minister of State for External Affairs, Digvijay Singh, was asked about the matter, he reportedly told a television channel that the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, would travel to Islamabad for the SAARC meeting.

Separately, the Minister for External Affairs, Yashwant Sinha, was quoted by PTI as saying that Mr. Vajpayee would go to the SAARC summit if it was held. A decision on whether Mr. Vajpayee would travel to Islamabad would be taken at the "appropriate time," Mr. Sinha said.

"If the SAARC summit is held, the Prime Minister will definitely attend it. But the summit should have an objective and it should not be just to see each other's faces," he said.

Mr. Sinha said there had been no progress in SAARC on account of the "rigid stand" taken by Pakistan. "If there is no progress there is no point in holding the summit."

India has legitimate concerns about Pakistan standing in the way of implementing the South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement (SAPTA) and moving ahead with the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA).

It appeared that if a decision was taken that the Prime Minister should not travel to Islamabad then the timeframe agreed to address different issues by the SAARC Foreign Ministers in Kathmandu in August might become a factor.

As far as the dates for the meeting are concerned, India had proposed a "band of dates" that all future summits should take place in January — beginning with the meeting in Islamabad.

18 OCT 2002

SAARC for degree of uniformity in laws

By Our Staff Correspondent

JAIPUR, SEPT. 21. The ninth international conference of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation in Law (SAARCLAW) began here on Friday with a call to bring a degree of uniformity in laws in SAARC countries to promote interaction, facilitate entrepreneurship and protect the human and social rights of their citizens.

The three-day conference on the theme "Law as an instrument of social and economic change" was being attended by a galaxy of legal luminaries from South Asia, including the Chief Justices of Supreme Courts of the SAARC countries, except Bangladesh. Over 80 delegates

have come from outside India to participate in the meet.

They discussed various aspects of the role of law in bringing about socio-economic changes in the South Asian region that has cultural affinity and a common historical heritage. The SAARC region, which has 20 per cent of the world population, has been confronting new challenges on the legal front during the last decade following globalisation of economy.

The subjects being discussed include new perspectives of corporate governance, intertwining of law and socio-economic change, methods of alternative dispute resolution, direction of judicial review and

judicial activism, and dialectics and dilemma of environment and growth. The objective of the meet was to find a credible legal vehicle and framework for policies of the SAARC countries.

The Chief Justice of India, Justice B.N. Kirpal, inaugurating the conference, called for reinterpretation, recasting and change of laws that were out of tune with the globalised scenario. "The liberalisation demands changes in the redundant laws and the recent technological revolution necessitates creation of new laws."

He said the problems of the people of SAARC, such as poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition and poor public utilities could be solved only by affirmative pol-

icies of their Governments with an optimal combination of law and changes in society. "A systemic change will also alleviate social tensions."

The president of the SAARCLAW and Secretary, Ministry of Justice, Sri Lanka, Dhara Wijayatilake, said the interactions of the legal fraternity of South Asia would help identify common issues and evolve solutions. She said the SAARCLAW had been established with the aim of building up trust and cooperation among the member countries, even as there was room for greater creativity.

The Rajasthan regional subchapter of SAARCLAW — the second in the country — was also formally launched.

22 SEP 2002

THE HINDU

SAARC: Pak willing but India isn't

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ISLAMABAD, SEPTEMBER 23

EVEN AS PM Atal Behari Vajpayee was non-committal about attending the SAARC summit in Pakistan next year, Islamabad today said it was hopeful that all members would participate in the meet.

The dates for the summit were being finalised and "we hope all member states who are interested in making SAARC a success would be attending," Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman Aziz Ahmed Khan said.

PM Vajpayee, who is on a visit to Maldives, said "the dates for the summit are being con-

sidered by us and we shall convey our views in due course."

On the reported Indian proposal to make SAARC an active forum to

fight terrorism, he said all member states have the right

to express their views. "If the ideas are submitted in a formal meeting we have to look at suggestions and respond."

Reacting to Vajpayee's remarks that India has no plans to hold talks with Pakistan even after the Jammu and Kashmir polls as

there was no change in Pakistani stand, Khan alleged India was dishing out excuses

to avoid talks.

"Pakistan's stand throughout is that there should be reduction of tension. There is need peaceful resolution of issues, need for a dialogue and a permanent durable solution to Kashmir issue in accordance with the wishes of Kashmiri people. This has been Pakistan's stand throughout and we will continue to remain firm on it," Khan said.

"I do not see a change in India's stand. They still continue to threaten and deploy forces, believe in policy of intimidation and avoid dialogue," Khan said.



24 SEP 2002

INDIAN EXPRESS

Atal matches Pervez, blast for blast

K.P. NAYAR

New York, Sept. 13: With the world adopting India's long-standing agenda of the fight against terrorism, Atal Bihari Vajpayee today asked the General Assembly to take the next logical step: use the instruments of the UN to act against "states known to be sponsoring, sheltering, funding, arming and training terrorists".

Addressing the General Assembly in Hindi, the Prime Minister said the UN's Committee on Counter-Terrorism should move beyond compiling information to enforcing compliance by states of their commitments not to harbour or train terrorists.

The Prime Minister also turned the tables on those who have been crying wolf about an imminent nuclear war in South Asia, accusing Pakistan of using nuclear blackmail as an instru-

ment of state terrorism.

"In our South Asian region, nuclear blackmail has emerged over the last few months as a new arrow in the quiver of state-sponsored terrorism. Dark threats were held out that actions by India to stamp out cross-border terrorism could provoke a nuclear war. To succumb to such blatant nuclear terrorism would mean forgetting the bitter lessons of the September 11 tragedy," Vajpayee told world

leaders gathered here.

He made it clear that while no one in India wants war, the country was determined to end cross-border terrorism "with all the means at our command. Let there be no doubt about it in any quarter".

The Prime Minister appears to have been encouraged in making such an unequivocal statement by his meeting with President George W. Bush yesterday.

At that meeting, which took

place a few hours after Musharraf attempted to portray violence in Kashmir as the result of a freedom struggle, Bush told the Prime Minister that there could be no alibis for terror. The US President later conveyed the same message to Musharraf at their bilateral meeting.

Vajpayee surprised delegates to the General Assembly by devoting more time than any Prime Minister in recent memory to Pakistan, rebutting

Musharraf's allegations of a massacre of Muslims in Gujarat and references to Hindu militancy elsewhere in the country.

"Yesterday, we heard yet another patently false and self-serving claim that in India, Muslims and other minorities are the target of Hindu extremists. With 150 million, India has the second largest Muslims population in the world, more than in Pakistan," Vajpayee reminded world leaders. "We are proud

of the multi-religious character of our society."

Vajpayee accused Musharraf of "adjusting" voting and counting procedures and achieving constitutional authority by simply rewriting Pakistan's constitution. The unexpectedly strong attack on Musharraf's version of democracy is seen as a reply to the general's very public campaign here throughout the week against the poll process in Jammu and Kashmir.

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THE TELEGRAPH

14 SEP 2002

SAARC full agenda seems to be elusive

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, AUG. 29. Is being able to meet together an achievement? Or is imparting content to meetings more important? Senior diplomats attending the recent SAARC Council of Ministers meeting in Kathmandu took the view that the very fact that the SAARC summit took place in January and the Foreign Ministers met last week is in itself an achievement.

The fact that the SAARC process was derailed following the October 1999 coup in Pakistan is well known. It took nearly three years for the SAARC presidency to pass from Sri Lanka in 1998 to Nepal in 2002 - the 10th SAARC summit was held in Colombo in July 1998 and the 11th in Kathmandu in June 2002.

While meeting in itself is welcome, what about the content of the declarations that are issued from time to time by the wise men and women of South Asia? That the SAARC process is weak in content and SAARC leaders are content to tread the beaten path was evident from the fact that the formal meetings attended by the Foreign Ministers and the Foreign Secretaries tended to last for but a few hours - a

full-agenda seemed to be elusive.

"There is no need for the Foreign Secretaries and the Foreign Ministers to meet for two full days each. All these meetings can be telescoped into one-day affairs," a diplomat who has been associated with the SAARC process for long said. "After all, we are poor countries and it costs a lot of money to host these meetings," the diplomat added.

It is instructive to look at some of the detailed declarations issued by the SAARC leaders over the years. At the 11th SAARC summit held in January this year, the leader said: "The Heads of State or Government reaffirmed their commitment to the promotion of mutual trust and understanding and, recognising that the aims of promoting peace, stability, and amity and accelerated socio-economic co-operation may best be achieved by fostering good neighbourly relations, relieving tensions and building confidence, agreed that a process of informal consultations could prove useful in this regard."

While the declaration in Kathmandu is unexceptionable, this is what South Asian leaders said after the 10th summit held in

Colombo in 1998: "The Heads of State or Government reiterated their commitment to the promotion of mutual trust and understanding and, recognising that the aims of promoting peace, stability and amity...." And, this is what the Ninth summit declaration said in Male in 1997: "The Heads of State or Government recalled their commitment to the promotion of mutual trust and understanding and, recognising that the aims of promoting peace, stability and amity...." Clearly, what we are seeing here is a case of more of the same.

Once agreed upon, the diplomats of the SAARC countries are quite content to repeat the same formulation by altering a word here or there.

Negotiating fresh phraseology would require considerable time and effort and so repetition is an easy way out.

The people of South Asia deserve better. If regional cooperation has to have meaning, SAARC must have more content.

Here, economic content is most important - will SAARC be able to agree on an eventual economic union? Or is the organisation condemned to repeating the same phrases year after year?

30 AUG 2002

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27/8

Saarc limps on

The latest meeting of SAARC Foreign Ministers, held in Kathmandu the other day, once more brings us face to face with the problems of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. Saarc has not a great deal to its credit, despite all the meetings that have taken place under its banner since 1985, when it was launched with high expectation.

Its depressing vulnerability to bilateral disputes in the region has been revealed again and again, principally but not exclusively Indo-Pak disputes. Yet the ministers and heads keep meeting.

Clearly, despite all the problems, they find it worth their while to get together periodically. Normally, Saarc meetings generate considerable goodwill and genuine intent to move ahead and strengthen cooperation in the region. However, conference-room friendliness has proved evanescent and has seldom been transformed into any kind of sustained policy. Even so, despite repeated disappointments, nobody is ready to give Saarc its final quietus.

Saarc was born at a time when regional organisations had acquired a new prominence. Countries were banding together to pursue their collective interests, and for any country to be without access to any such grouping seemed risking being left out in the cold. The Association of South East Asian Nations was the big example to be emulated, serving as a direct stimulus to South Asia.

Much has happened since then and advancing globalisation requires countries to seek new partners and adopt new strategies but the basic rationale for bodies like Saarc remains valid.

Another part of it, necessarily unstated, is the wish of the smaller countries to pool their strength in dealing with the regional super power, India. The idea is to develop a regional collectivity which could restrain and influence New Delhi. There is a vague parallel in the relations between Asean and China. The apprehension that the others might "gang up" against us has meant that Saarc has always had its Indian detractors.

Also, India has been careful to insist from

the start on a decision-making procedure that does not expose it, or any other member, to the pressure of the rest working as a group.

The secretary-general has only limited executive authority. Saarc thus does not impose decisions on its membership: it can

wide angle

SALMAN HAIDAR

cannot leave them immune.

They may not be able to do much to cool things down but they have tried, notably at a summit a few years, to make an effort to let Saarc evolve into a forum where regional disputes could be discussed informally. That initiative

nothing to do with South Asian trade.

Pakistan is unwilling to permit economic cooperation with India, even under multilateral aegis, unless it gets some satisfaction on what it calls the "core issue". There are voices in Pakistan that see this as damaging to their own interest and so they call for a separation of their country's economic and political policies but the political imperative to block such moves is presently unshakable.

In these circumstances, one is reduced to looking for small mercies at the Kathmandu meeting. The foreign ministers of India and Pakistan met and exchanged civilities.

It says something about the current state of relations that a smile and a handshake between them should have attracted as much attention as it did. Both made it plain that there was nothing more that transpired, no separate talk, no dialogue.

Still, their civil tone was welcome after the strident exchanges we have been hearing for so long. India and Pakistan remain in confrontation on the border and we may have got somewhat used to this situation but it represents a danger that cannot be ignored. It's a pity the two ministers were not able to use their presence in Kathmandu to talk about it.

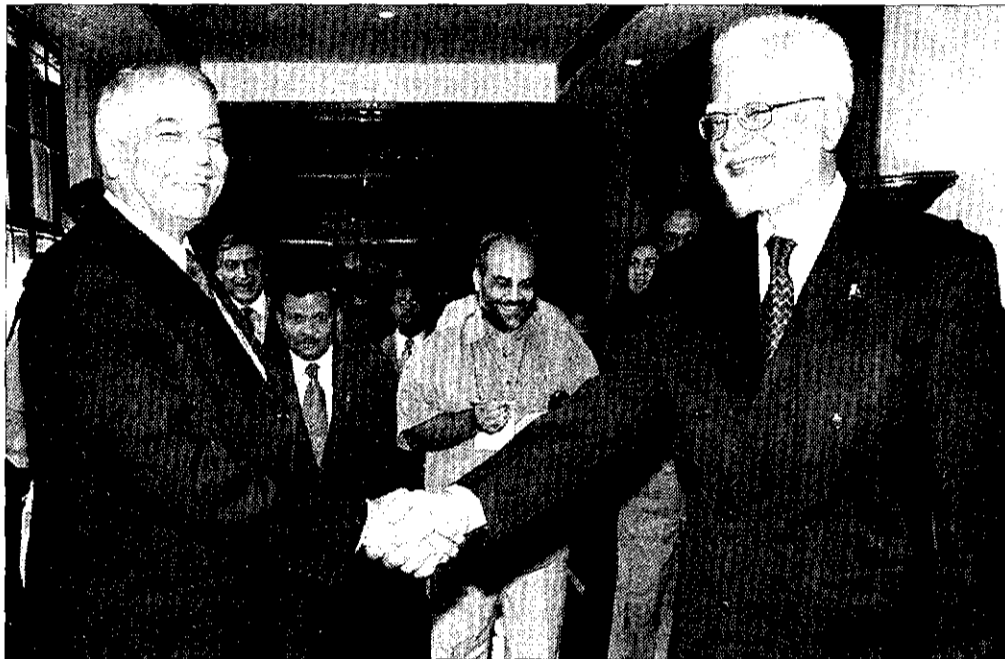
In a sign of continued hopefulness about the prospects for Saarc, the meeting decided to accept an Indian proposal that the annual summit should take place in

January each year. It was Rajiv Gandhi who took the initiative in calling for annual rather than biennial summits, to strengthen the organisation.

Now there is expectation that Mr Vajpayee will attend the next one in Islamabad.

This shows that even in its moribund state, Saarc can serve a useful purpose in permitting communication and exchange between its members. There is thus every reason for India to persist with the effort to make it a stronger and more effective body.

(The author is a former Foreign Secretary.)



Indian Foreign Minister Yashwant Sinha shakes hands with Pakistani Foreign Minister Inamul Haq after the opening ceremony of Saarc's ministerial meeting in Kathmandu last week. — AFP

exhort, urge, persuade, but it cannot insist.

The lack of any real substance in the Kathmandu conference has revived calls for us to turn away from Saarc and concentrate on bilateral ties with other South Asian countries.

This is seen as a way of freeing us from Pakistan's stalling and providing an alternative route to regional cooperation. But the smaller countries that have taken the initiative in Saarc's affairs would not wish to see the organisation consigned to limbo. They are all too aware of how developments between India and Pakistan affect them: nuclearisation, tension and the risk of war

came to nothing but it did reveal the views of smaller members about the impact of interdependence within the region and the way problems between two members can affect the entire group. The fact is that South Asia is indeed linked in a number of ways and there is no neat way of bypassing this reality.

Kathmandu once more focused attention on the long-established aim of establishing a South Asia Preferential Trading Area (Sapta), as a step towards a South Asia Free Trade Area (Safta). Unfortunately, this eminently useful project seems to be on hold, as a result of Indo-Pak problems which have

27 AUG 2002

More than a photo-op

SAARC stake: regional co-operation could help improve Indo-Pak relations

IT is clear that the cordiality and civility between the foreign ministers of Pakistan and India extended beyond a photo op at which both shook hands in an apparently friendly manner. What is to be welcomed is the substance of what has been agreed upon at the SAARC Council of Ministers' meeting in Kathmandu and the indication of the direction in which to proceed in future. Given the central issue between Pakistan and India being cross-border terrorism, or its alternate formulation from across the border, it is remarkable that the ministers agreed to the Indian proposal to organise a SAARC ministerial level meeting on terrorism. Similarly, the agreement to a Pakistani proposal to strengthen the 1987 SAARC Convention on Terrorism is a parallel achievement. These could provide an avenue for future dialogue at the multilateral level to control and roll back terrorism in the region.

The challenge for Pakistan and India, not to talk of the other members of SAARC, would be to translate these agreements into policy steps otherwise the prevailing cynicism about the value of SAARC as a vehicle for regional co-operation would perhaps deepen. This is why it becomes important to ensure that implementation of the South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement is expedited. Similarly, the countries of the region need to move toward concluding the South Asian Free Trade Agreement at

an early date. By agreeing to a block of dates in January next for a SAARC summit to be held in Pakistan, India has conveyed an implicit assumption that dialogue at the level of the heads of governments of Pakistan and India may be possible. The prospects of any such dialogue would no doubt be affected by the nature and trend of developments on the ground between now and then.

The controlling factor in this process would be the winding down of terrorist violence in J&K and successful elections in the state free of any fear of violence. Successful elections also cannot be seen as an end in itself, but only as a means toward governance by the elected representatives of the people. At the same time, developments within Pakistan, especially its progress toward the limited democracy being permitted by the army, would be the other major factor. It is not yet clear what form these developments will take, but if the religious hardliners in Pakistan gain in influence because of the tussle for power between the army and political leadership, the prospects of a more peaceful future could recede rapidly. New Delhi, therefore, has to remain fully prepared against any worsening of the situation while preparing for a better future. The coming months are likely to be extremely crucial for the future of the 1.3 billion people of the region. Islamabad has an opportunity of the century to shape that future.

24 AUG 2002

Pak. not averse to joint patrolling

By Amit Baruah

KATHMANDU, AUG. 22. While favouring neutral monitoring of the Line of Control, Pakistan is not averse to considering the Indian proposal of joint patrolling of the LoC if tensions come down and confidence is built between the two countries.

Addressing a largely Indian press corps, the Pakistani Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Inam-ul-Haq, went out of his way to call for the resumption of talks, saying that the two countries must build up an atmosphere of trust and confidence.

Pakistan, which had rejected the idea of joint patrolling when put forward by the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, at Almaty on June 5, saw more merit in the proposal today even as Mr. Haq said there was some confusion about the Indian suggestion.

"The Indian Prime Minister did propose that. The same day, we saw a statement from Mr. (George) Fernandes saying that there was no way a joint patrolling mechanism could be established... In a situation where more than a million men are staring at each other across the LoC, it is rather difficult to imagine a situation where they will have sufficient confidence in each other to start joint patrolling," he said.

"And, we don't really see why the LoC should not be monitored by a neutral mechanism because there has to be a climate of confidence between the two countries, a situation of normalcy before such proposals can be seriously addressed... Let us create a climate where the two countries are talking to each other. Such proposals can be examined once tensions go down

and confidence is built in both countries..." Mr. Haq said. The measured, reasonable Mr. Haq answered all questions from the Indian press with due deliberation. At the back of his mind, he was probably aware that the United States Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage, will arrive in New Delhi tomorrow and then go to Islamabad.

See also Page 11

SAARC is different: Sinha

By Amit Baruah

KATHMANDU, AUG. 22. The External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, today said that he would not speak on India-Pakistan relations on Nepalese soil and repeatedly stressed that ties between New Delhi and Islamabad should not hamper the SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) process.

Disclosing that an Indian proposal to have annual SAARC summits in January had been agreed upon, Mr. Sinha said that for the next summit in Islamabad, New Delhi had proposed that the meeting be held anytime between January 5 and 20. The exact dates would be worked

out through diplomatic channels. Instead of having a debate on dates every year, the SAARC Council of Ministers had agreed to recommend to the next summit that the Heads of State/Government meet, say, from the second Monday or second Saturday of January every year.

Asked if the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, would travel to Pakistan if cross-border terrorism continued, Mr. Sinha said that one should be able to distinguish between SAARC and India-Pakistan issues. "You keep India-Pakistan out of it," he said at the end of the two-day meeting of the SAARC Council of Ministers.

23 AUG 2002

Let's not cloud SAARC process: Sinha

By Amit Baruah

KATHMANDU, AUG. 22. The External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha — here to attend the two-day meeting of the SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) Council of Ministers — today declined to comment on India-Pakistan issues, saying that it had been India's endeavour not to allow bilateral issues to thwart or cloud the SAARC process.

When repeatedly plied with questions on Indo-Pak. issues, he pleaded with the press corps to change their mindset and not allow this matter to cloud the SAARC process. And on why he had not met his Pakistani counterpart, Mr. Sinha said bilateral meetings took place on the margins and it was not necessary that all the Foreign Ministers should meet on the sidelines.

Dispelling the impression

that India was out to obstruct the SAARC process, Mr. Sinha said New Delhi was fully committed to the regional organisation and wanted it to become a "powerful instrument" of cooperation. Both the meeting of the SAARC Council of Ministers as well as the Foreign Secretary-level discussions had taken place in a cordial atmosphere and no contentious issues were raised.

India's proposal that SAARC organise a Ministerial meeting on terrorism had been agreed upon. A Pakistani proposal to have a meeting of senior officials along with legal advisers to draft an additional protocol to the 1987 SAARC Convention on Terrorism had also been agreed upon. And the Ministerial meeting would discuss the draft of the additional protocol.

Mr. Sinha said that the issue of terrorism was dealt with

comprehensively by the SAARC Council of Ministers. Asked about the delay in the implementation of the South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement and agreeing upon the draft text of the South Asian Free Trade Agreement, he said India had called for a speedy agreement on both the issues. These were the bedrock of cooperation as far as the SAARC nations were concerned. Mr. Sinha, who begins a bilateral visit to Nepal from tomorrow, will call on King Gyanendra, the Prime Minister, the Home Minister and hold talks with the Foreign Secretary. A banquet will be held in his honour by the Prime Minister tomorrow.

The Minister, who leaves for Dhaka on Saturday, has also been meeting with a cross-section of political leaders in Nepal. Separately, the SAARC Council of Minister received a

Nepalese suggestion to hold a meeting of senior officials immediately after a summit meeting in order to draw up an action plan on the decisions taken at the summit. A statement from Nepal, which is the current chair of SAARC, said this evening: "A concept of troika/core group at the senior officials level from the past, present and future SAARC chairs has also been put forward to ensure timely implementation and follow-up on the decision(s). Nepal has been asked to further explore the concept of troika/core group and present it to the next Council of Ministers. The proposal has also underlined the need for augmenting the institutional capacity of the SAARC Secretariat to enable it to respond adequately to the emerging challenges as regional cooperation activities gather pace."

Shut off terror tap before talks, Pak told at Saarc meet

Kathmandu: Asserting that infiltration and cross-border terrorism were still continuing in Jammu and Kashmir, India on Wednesday rejected Pakistan's fresh offer for the resumption of a dialogue without pre-conditions, saying "appropriate conditions" for it did not exist.

"Infiltration is continuing," external affairs minister Yashwant Sinha told reporters on the sidelines of the Saarc foreign ministers' meet, which opened here on Wednesday. He added, "We have said that Gen Pervez Musharraf must fulfil his commitments to end it. If it is not under his control (to do so), he should tell us clearly, so that we can do something together."

Mr Sinha was reacting to the remarks by Pakistan's minister of state for foreign affairs Inamul Haq that Islamabad was "ready to start the dialogue today" if New Delhi agreed to it.

Mr Sinha said that India would like to see evidence of the fulfilment of the commitments

which Gen Musharraf had made. "The appropriate conditions for talks will arise only thereafter," he said.

The Pakistan minister emphasised that while his country hoped a dialogue would begin soon, it had to be held "without any pre-conditions". Conceding that infiltration could be taking place from Pakistan, Mr Haq said, "We have always said there is no way absolutely to seal the border. Individuals, some rogue elements and renegades might be crossing the Line of Control."

Mr Sinha said he had exchanged pleasantries with Mr Haq. "Civility is a sign of culture and there is no reason for anyone to depart from cultural traditions, especially for an Indian. There was nothing more than that."

Discounting the suggestion that the friendly handshake could be construed as breaking the ice between India and Pakistan, Mr Haq said, "I don't think there will be any bilateral discussions during this meet." PT

SAARC meet identifies 'core areas' for cooperation

By Amit Baruah

KATHMANDU, AUG. 21. The Nepal Prime Minister, Sher Bahadur Deuba, said today that eradication of poverty, promotion of a free trade area and social uplift had been identified as "core areas" for regional cooperation within the SAARC framework.

Inaugurating the 23rd session of the SAARC Council of Ministers, Mr. Deuba said the enhancement of competitiveness and the promotion of complementarity in the region were the primary goals. "They reinforce our economic strength against the adverse effects of globalisation. Globalisation places a great demand on all of us to be bold enough to look beyond the present," he said.

"I believe an enhanced level of cooperation within the framework of SAARC and shared feelings and understanding would ensure peace and prosperity in

the region and help realize its vast potential," the Nepalese leader stated. "While we have made good progress in a number of areas, there is much to be desired in consolidating regional economic cooperation."

In the Eleventh (SAARC) summit, "we had agreed to a long-term vision of a South Asian Economic Union in order to fulfil the shared aspirations of our peoples for a more prosperous South Asia..." he said, calling for a speedy conclusion of trade negotiations and urged the SAARC Council of Ministers to "inject dynamism" into the process.

He said terrorism was the latest menace to the region and the world at large. "Its resurgence in new forms and viciousness in the region and beyond is indeed a matter of great concern to all of us. During the Kathmandu summit, we had reaffirmed the determination to double our efforts collectively and individually to prevent and suppress

terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. The Council of Ministers may deliberate on the mechanism of strengthening the implementation of the SAARC Convention on Suppression of Terrorism and enhance the effectiveness of cooperation in line with the changing demands of the day."

"SAARC has given us new awareness and helped project our regional identity. Moreover, it has brought together the people in a cooperative framework. South Asia is known for its contrasts. If we are acclaimed for our great resources and potential, we are also known for hosting the largest number of poor in the world. Similarly, if we are known for the largest pool of technical manpower, we are also the lowest in social indicators. Therefore, our challenge today is how to consolidate the positive gains that we have made so far and make progress in the areas where we lag behind," Mr.

Deuba added, noting presspersons on the meeting, the Indian Foreign Ministry spokesperson said the Foreign Ministers had agreed to hold a Ministerial meeting on terrorism though no dates had been fixed.

She said the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, also had bilateral meetings with the Maldivian, Bhutanese and Bangladeshi Foreign Ministers, Fathullah Jameel, Jigme Thinley and Morsheed Khan on the sidelines of the SAARC meeting.

India-Pakistan relations came up for discussion in the meeting with Mr. Ja-meel. The Maldivian Minister stated that issues between India and Pakistan should be settled bilaterally. The Bhutanese Minister told Mr. Sinha that "maintenance of good relations with India was the cornerstone of Bhutan's foreign policy" while the Bangladeshi Minister said he was looking forward to Mr. Sinha's visit to Dhaka from August 24-25.

22 AUG 2002

Sinha rules out meeting with Pak. counterpart

21/8 By Amit Baruah

KATHMANDU, AUG. 20. "We have neither sent a request nor have we received a request" for a meeting with the Pakistani Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Inam-ul-Haq, on the sidelines of the SAARC Ministerial meeting, the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, said today.

In a brief chat with presspersons, Mr. Sinha was responding to a question on whether India had received a request for a meeting from the Pakistani side or whether New Delhi was not "entertaining" such requests.

Ruling out a meeting with Mr. Haq, who also arrived in the Nepalese capital this evening, Mr. Sinha said he would, however, have bilateral meetings with other Foreign Ministers. "We have received some requests from SAARC Foreign Ministers for bilateral meetings."

Asked whether India-Pakistan tensions had cast a shadow on the SAARC, Mr. Sinha said under the SAARC charter bilateral issues are not to be discussed. All bilateral issues, whether they

are between India or Pakistan or other countries, are to be kept outside. "Consequently, India-Pakistan issues should not have an impact on SAARC. What we have to do regarding regional cooperation must be accomplished urgently."

Separately, SAARC sources said they were pleased that the work of the Association, which had been badly hit in the aftermath of the coup in Pakistan, had got going. "At least SAARC Ministerial and summit meetings are taking place," they said, pointing to the fact that the January Kathmandu summit took place soon after the December 2001 attack on India's Parliament House. They don't believe any hurdles will crop up in holding SAARC meetings and are hopeful that all countries will agree to the dates for the next summit in Pakistan.

The Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, Tyronne Fernando, will not attend the summit on account of political compulsions in Colombo. Instead, the Deputy Foreign Minister, Lal Gamage, is expected to attend.

21 AUG 2002

SAARC to draft additional protocol on terrorism

By Amit Baruah

KATHMANDU, AUG. 20. The Foreign Secretaries of the seven SAARC nations have agreed to update the 1987 SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism by drafting an additional protocol to the 15-year-old agreement.

Talking to *The Hindu* today, the Foreign Secretary, Kanwal Sibal, said the convention would be updated in the light of the U.N. Security Council Resolution 1373 on combating terrorism and the International Convention on Suppression of Financing of Terrorism.

Mr. Sibal said a need was felt to update this convention and work on drafting the additional protocol would be done by the legal advisers to the SAARC nations.

While SAARC has been criticised on many fronts, the 1987 Convention was quite ahead of its times given the current focus on fighting terrorism after the September 11 attacks against the United States.

Mr. Sibal said the Foreign Secretaries had also discussed the possibility of having a networking arrangement among SAARC police chiefs, whose third conference is to take place in Kathmandu at the end of the month.

The police chiefs are expected to discuss the problem of terrorism in a comprehensive manner, including its linkages with drug trafficking, organised crime, money-laundering, human smuggling and intolerance.

He said that a considerable amount of time was

spent in the meeting on discussing ways and means to alleviate poverty in the SAARC region. Most delegations, he said, stressed on the importance of implementing the South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement (SAPTA) and agreeing on a South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) draft text. The SAARC nations, he said, had agreed to hold the second meeting of the Committee on Economic Cooperation in the third week of September to discuss the SAPTA draft text. Subsequently, they will meet at least once a month. The deadline for an agreement is the end of 2002; it was extended by one year in 2001.

On World Trade Organisation issues, the Foreign Secretaries agreed to hold a special session at the level of Commerce Secretaries in Dhaka. It was also agreed to set up a working group at the level of senior officials to discuss WTO-related matters.

In response to the concerns expressed by SAARC delegations on health concerns such as HIV-AIDS, India had offered to expand the scope of the Ministerial meeting on traditional medicine to address such issues. Fresh dates would be proposed by India for this meeting. In order to promote tourism in the SAARC region, India had offered to host a senior officials meeting and subsequently a Ministerial meeting. Both the suggestions were accepted, Mr. Sibal said.

He said the Foreign Secretaries had agreed to set up an advocacy group of women personalities from the SAARC region in order to address gender-related issues.

21 AUG 2002

No talks with Pak on Saarc sidelines

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Aug. 19. — The possibility of bilateral talks with Pakistan on the sidelines of the two-day Saarc meeting of foreign ministers in Kathmandu has been ruled out with India saying the present climate is not conducive to any such interaction.

"There is no question of meeting the Pakistan minister of state for foreign affairs, Mr Inamul Haq, in the present circumstances, when infiltration from across the border is continuing," the external affairs minister, Mr Yashwant Sinha said. Mr Sinha, who leaves for Kathmandu tomorrow to attend the 23rd Saarc ministerial meeting beginning on Wednesday, said Indo-Pak ties have failed to show any betterment as Islamabad continued to support cross-border terrorism.

Maintaining that no meeting between Mr Sinha and the Pakistan minister at Kathmandu was envisaged, officials said for any dialogue to resume, Pakistan had to clearly deliver on its pledges to permanently end



Mr Yashwant Sinha

cross-border terrorism and dismantle terrorist infrastructure, including training camps.

Mr Sinha would hold bilateral meetings with Nepal on 23 August before flying to Dhaka for a two-day official visit there beginning on 24 August. The Saarc meeting is expected to consider the dates for the next summit scheduled to be held in Islamabad.

Officials said a host of regional issues are likely to figure at the two-day meeting, including terrorism affecting the region, various plans of action on media and information, etc.

20 AUG 2002

Cloud on Pak Saarc summit

PRANAY SHARMA

Kathmandu, Aug. 19: India might skip the next Saarc summit scheduled to be held in Islamabad in April if its strained relationship with Pakistan continues. Pakistan will be the chairman of the forum next year.

Though the heads of government of all the seven member-countries traditionally attend the summit, indications suggest that unless there is a dramatic improvement in bilateral ties, it may have to be called off.

"We have never said we will not attend the Saarc summit if it is held at a particular capital," foreign secretary Kanwal Sibal said, but argued that a "lot" depends on the political situation. "If the tensions continue, then it may create a problem for India to attend the summit."

In the past, too, scheduled summits had to be called off because of strained India-Pakistan relations. The Saarc charter demands that all the heads of government of the member nations attend. If any one of them is unable to do so, it has to be rescheduled.

Sibal, who arrived here yesterday, attended the meeting of the foreign secretaries of Saarc nations today to streamline several proposals, including a protocol on terrorism, issues relating to a children's development and enhanced economic cooperation among the South Asian neighbours. The members also stressed on setting a deadline for

7-6-2008
implementation of the South Asian free trade area and preferential trade arrangements.

The Indian foreign secretary exchanged pleasantries with his Pakistani counterpart, Riaz Khokhar. But there was no attempt from either side to arrange an exclusive meeting on the sidelines. This clearly indicates that when foreign minister Yashwant Sinha arrives tomorrow, he too will not make an attempt or respond to any gesture from Inamul Haq, the Pakistani minister of state for foreign affairs, for a one-to-one meeting.

But to ensure that their strained relationship does not cast a shadow on the progress of Saarc, the Indian delegation has put forward a number of suggestions for closer interaction among the member-countries. One proposal is for Saarc to come up with a protocol to strengthen the convention on terrorism.

For this, the members have to bring about amendments and improve their existing domestic laws to fight the menace. Member countries have been asked to designate senior officials to deal with issues like exchange of information on counter-terrorism and to be in touch with the Saarc monitoring office in Colombo.

Senior police officials of the Saarc will meet here next month to discuss ways of improving communications so that they can tackle terrorists and other criminals operating in the region.

20 AUG 2002

India for setting up South Asian free trade area

By Our Special Correspondent

Chatterjee
12/8

NEW DELHI, AUG. 12. The first annual meeting of the South Asia Business Forum (SABF) got underway today with the key functionaries of the four Governments — India Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh — sharing their perception on how to boost trade and investment in the region and India reiterating its commitment to the establishment of a free trade area in all of South Asia.

Even as the Bangladesh Commerce Secretary, Suhel Ahmed Choudhury, wanted India to grant duty-free access to goods produced in Bangladesh on a non-reciprocal basis, his Indian counterpart, Dipak Chatterjee, said non-tariff barriers and high transaction cost appeared to be an important determinant for very significant levels of informal trade in the sub-region.

Highlighting the issue of informal border trade while addressing the two-day meet of the forum, which comprises partner chambers of commerce and industry of the four coun-

tries which plan to work closely with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the four Governments, Mr. Chatterjee said the private sector should work to reduce transaction costs and help formalise informal trade. He agreed that the cross-border movement of vehicles through more liberal transit arrangements would be a measure not only to reduce informal trade but also foster greater sub-regional cooperation.

On the Indian commitment to enhance sub-regional cooperation and work for a free trade area covering the whole of South Asia, he said the country had already taken several initiatives offering unilateral concessions to its neighbours.

Mr. Chatterjee underlined the importance of quick yielding, low risk projects, which would help build confidence in the process and enable the private sector to emerge as the most important stakeholder. The necessary thrust in this regard had to come from the SABF even as efforts were made to turn the focus on intra-country

investment projects in infrastructure, power, tourism, food processing and construction.

Pleading for duty free-access for goods from Bangladesh, Mr. Choudhury said India, being the largest economy in the region, had enhanced market access facility to smaller economies on a non-reciprocal basis in the WTO spirit but this facility was not extended to his country. Expressing the hope that India would act in this direction, he said there was an urgent need to develop a dispute settlement mechanism within the region to facilitate quick settlement of disputes which would further trade.

Delivering his special address, the Minister of State for External Affairs, Digvijay Singh, said the potential of a large common market and huge untapped trade and investment opportunities had not been utilised because of distortions in the trading relationships of the countries in the region. These distortions would now be attended to urgently with the help of the SABF, he said.

13 AUG 2002

THE HINDU

Lanka calls for Pak talks, silent on terror

PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Aug. 8: Sri Lankan foreign minister Tyrone Fernando has raised quite a few eyebrows in South Block with his assertion that the current standoff between India and Pakistan was a matter of serious concern and the two sides should return to the dialogue table to bring down the temperature in the region. But the absence of any reference to cross-border terrorism in his remarks has surprised many in the Indian establishment.

Fernando, while expressing concern over the current Indo-Pak hostility, said that their relations were having an adverse impact on the smaller nations in South Asia.

"India and Pakistan must discuss and settle this not only for the sake of those two countries but also for smaller people like us," the Sri Lankan foreign minister said during an interaction with the media at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of India here this afternoon.

He hinted that the current military standoff could lead to a nuclear war as both India and Pakistan were nuclear powers. "We are very concerned because both the countries have nuclear weapons," Fernando said.

Later in the day, he briefly met his Indian counterpart, Yashwant Sinha. The Sri Lankan foreign minister is here on a private visit.

Fernando said he had apprised Sinha on the progress in the peace talks between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

The Lankan foreign minister pointed out that the Sri Lankan government had expressed some of India's concerns to Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf

during his recent visit to the island country, but maintained that Colombo was not trying to play the role of a mediator between the two sides. He also said he would discuss with Sinha Musharraf's recent visit to Colombo.

"As a small country with 20 million people, we have hardly any role to play," Fernando said. He clarified that Colombo supported India's stand that its differences with Pakistan had to be sorted out through bilateral negotiations.

Though surprised by Fernando's comments, New Delhi is not viewing them as a shift in Sri Lanka's position on the issue.

During Sinha's visit to Colombo last month, Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe shared India's views that cross-border terrorism had to end before New Delhi could normalise ties with Islamabad.

South Block was more willing to see today's remarks as Fernando's personal views rather than that of the Sri Lankan government.

Officials in the foreign ministry said Fernando during his talks with Sinha did not raise Colombo's concern over the current tension or the resumption of dialogue between India and Pakistan.

Foreign ministry spokesperson Nirupama Rao said the Sri Lankan foreign minister's meeting with Sinha this afternoon signified the close rapport, understanding and cooperation between the two governments and people.

Rao said Fernando's visit was in the tradition of close dialogue between New Delhi and Colombo, keeping each other informed of developments of mutual concern and interest.

THE TELEGRAPH

9 AUG 2002

My agenda for Powell: dump the dictator, talk democracy

DEMOCRACIES don't fight wars or promote international terrorism. During the Pakistan leg of his South Asian visit, empowering

consequences are dictatorship for the very people on whose doorstep the forces of extremism gathered strength during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.



SPECIAL TO THE EXPRESS

BENAZIR BHUTTO

the Pakistani people should be at the top of US Secretary of State Colin Powell's agenda.

Since September 11, the international community has focused on eradicating the Taliban regime, destroying Al Qaeda, building a stable government in Afghanistan and reducing tensions between nuclear-armed India and Pakistan. While the world community dealt with the threat from Al Qaeda and its worldwide cells, Pakistan's coup leader General Musharraf's junta was steadily eroding Pakistan's democratic institutions. With elections for a new Parliament scheduled for Octo-

Aimed at securing freedom, the US-led war against terror is undermined when the consequences are dictatorship for the very people on whose doorstep the forces of extremism have gathered strength

ber 10, the military regime is ensuring that the electoral outcomes are predetermined. Exploiting Afghanistan's strategic importance to the United States, it aims to consolidate dictatorship through massive rigging of Pakistan's electoral process.

As friendly as General Musharraf may have been to America's War on Terrorism, he has failed to offer hope to the masses of disenfranchised in Pakistan. The perception that he is a foreign backed dictator who cares little for the Pakistani peoples' rights is disturbing. The war against terror aimed at securing freedom, is undermined when the

Secretary Powell's visit allows the United States the opportunity to support the democratic and fundamental rights of Pakistanis. These rights are the tools which can marginalise the forces of extremism.

Specifically, Powell should:

1 Ask Musharraf to withdraw controversial constitutional amendments stealing power from the legislature and concentrating it in an individual. Giving the President's dictatorial powers including the unilateral dismissal of the Prime Minister, the Cabinet and parliament without elections is a prescription for extremism.

2 Establish an international election monitoring force ensuring that the elections on October 10 are transparent and open to all parties and candidates. The General's officials are personally intimidating opposition candidates and using a new absentee law decreed with retrospective effect to disenfranchise popular choices. During the recent referendum to elect the President, the military regime allowed eight year-olds to vote while commandeering busloads of coerced "citizens" to different polling stations for voting numerous times in numerous places.

3 Pressurise Musharraf to free political prisoners and allow the return of political exiles who are victims of a discredited and politically motivated process. The so called accountability law is a farce. Those joining Musharraf are freed—even when convicted—and allowed back home. Those not convicted are kept under arrest even when freed by courts by inflicting new charges against them.

Secretary Powell can make it clear that the world's greatest democracy predicates future financial support to the holding of transparent and internationally verified elections



WATCHING HIS STEP: Powell and his wife Alma, arrive in Islamabad on Sunday. Reuters

respect the political and human rights of the Pakistani people.

Security in South Asia—since September 11 showed, severity for the world—is in grave jeopardy. Pakistan has the conditions that make it a breeding ground for terrorism. It will continue to be so for years—unless the international community supports the building of a society based on pluralism, tolerance and democracy. Only a democratic Pakistan can eradicate the

ing public opinion in this direction.

Political parties represent the broader public beyond the Army, the man on the street. Moreover, the brief interludes of true representative rule saw poverty diminish and the standard of living improve. Reining in poverty and giving hope tackles the causes of anger and frustration that can be exploited in a deadly manner.

Washington may see the military best-placed to orchestrate the crackdown against

to calibrate events on the border. When the bombing on Tora Bora gets heavy, or when the noose on Al Qaeda tightens in Pakistan's tribal areas, a militant strike complicates relations with India.

Islamabad faces a grave crisis that needs overcoming with international support as well as domestic involvement. The Musharraf regime held unrestrained power for nearly three years. They coddled the

Pakistan has all the conditions for becoming a breeding ground for terrorism unless the world supports the building of a society based on tolerance and democracy. Pakistanis, when they have been given the opportunity in brief interludes of democratic rule, opposed policies that promoted extremism in Afghanistan and tension with India

forces of extremism, militancy and terrorism. The Pakistani

people when given the opportunity brief interludes of democratic rule, consistently oppose policies that promoted extremism in Afghanistan and tension with India.

Militants are regrouping in Pakistan. Since their defeat in Kabul last year, a series of devastating suicide attacks has taken place in Pakistan. The decline of the politics of extremism, militancy and terrorism is necessary for South Asian domestic peace and stability. Political parties can play an important role in mobilis-

extremists in Pakistan. Washington could also see that without public involvement, the

administrative clampdown could turn into an empty victory.

As the Presidential referendum held in April demonstrated, public discontent in Pakistan is high. A representative Parliament provides the right forum for involving people in the national debate. It makes them participants in the direction of their own destiny. A rigged electoral process plays into the hands of the militants.

Moreover, under Mushar-

Taliban until President George Bush asked countries to count as "friends or foes". Their leadership coincided

with nearly three mutual conflicts with India over disputed Kashmir.

The world walked away from Afghanistan when the Soviets withdrew in 1989 without promoting the politics of consensus. That neglect contributed to the rise of the Taliban and Al Qaeda. The world could learn the lessons of history and determine to support the restoration of democracy through the holding of transparent elections in Pakistan.

Powell pledges to push ^{South Asia} ~~paal~~ Pak

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, July 27: Faced with a host less accommodation than last time, secretary of state Colin Powell today tried to pacify India by hinting that America could use its persuasive powers to make President Pervez Musharraf honour his pledge to stop infiltration.

"The US is used to making its friends honour their pledge," Powell told foreign minister Yashwant Sinha this evening.

The US secretary of state, who will meet Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee tomorrow, will leave for Islamabad the same day to hold consultations with Musharraf.

Powell, who is here to break the deadlock between the neighbours and nudge India to the talks table, tried to convince Delhi that Musharraf has already taken steps to stop cross-border terrorism.

But Sinha, who met Powell today for the first time after assuming charge of the Indian foreign ministry, remained sceptical of Musharraf's intention.

During the hour-long talks at Hyderabad House, Sinha told Powell that a large number of terrorists was waiting on the other side of the border and cited evidence of fresh terrorist camps on Pakistani territory.

Powell then assured Sinha he would make a renewed effort to convince the Pakistan President to honour his pledge.

"There is growing recognition, not only in the US but also among the world leaders, that President Musharraf must honour his pledge. We cannot be involved in diplomatic games of bluff," foreign ministry spokesman Nirupama Rao said while briefing reporters on the meeting between the two leaders.

The US secretary of state had told journalists accompanying him that there was no "sure way" of assessing the level of in-

filtration. His comments were seen as either an attempt to dispute the Indian claim that infiltration across the LoC had gone up over the past few weeks or to convince Indian leaders that Pakistan was taking steps to deal with terrorists.

Powell said he was also trying to assess when the two hostile nuclear neighbours could return to the negotiation table.

"Will it be when the escalation goes down? Will it be when there is greater assurance that there is no cross-border infiltration? Or will it be when elections in Jammu and Kashmir are over?" he asked.

The secretary of state said all these "are possibilities that I will explore with the two sides and see if we can even begin talking about talks at some point in the near future."

Sinha, however, ruled out the possibility of early resumption of talks between India and Pakistan. "India has always held that if the necessary conditions for talks are created, we will have talks. But we do not think that necessary conditions exist at present," the foreign minister said before the talks with Powell began.

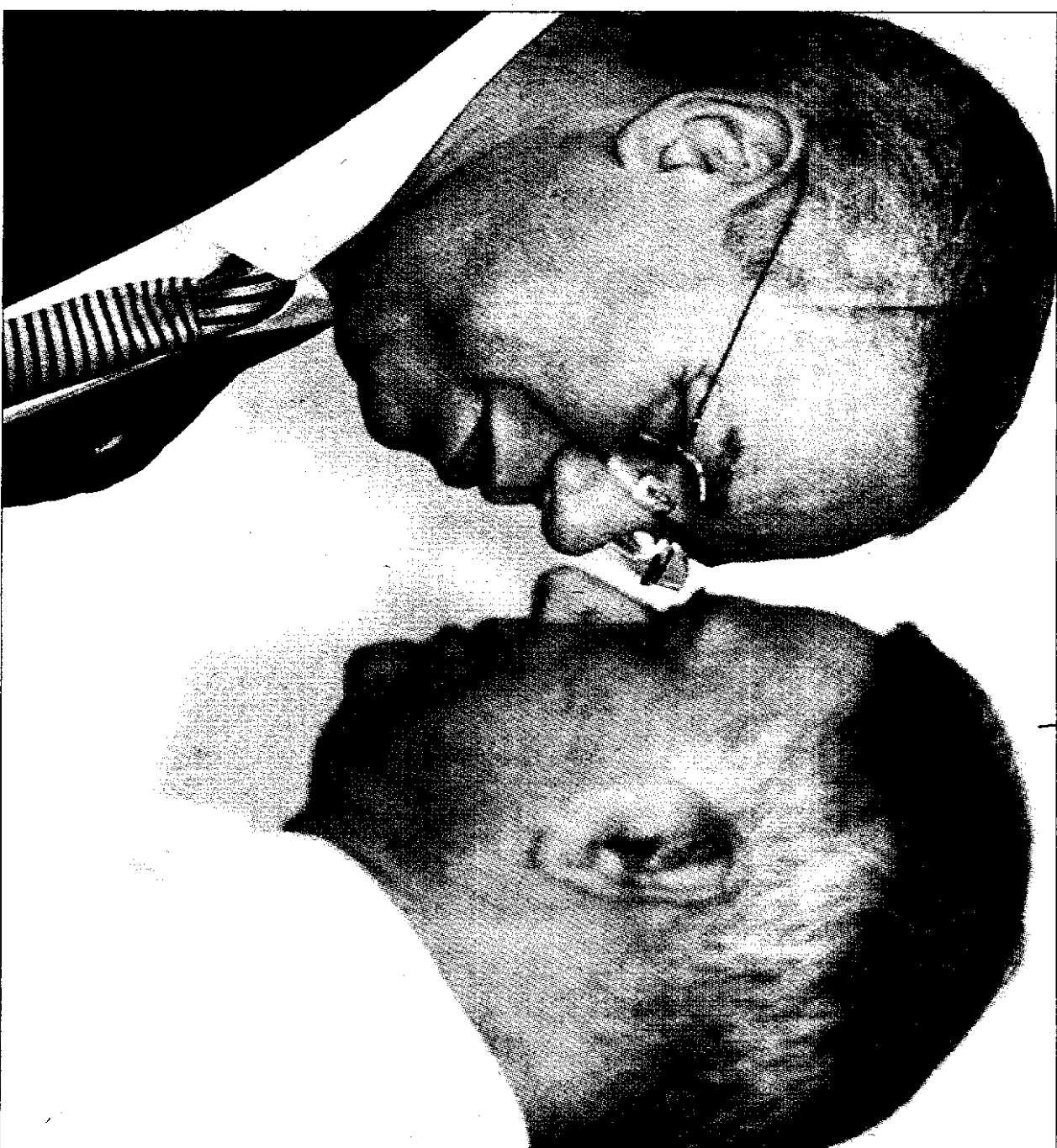
Hours before Powell's arrival, militants struck near Srinagar, killing four civilians in a grenade attack on a crowded market.

The US secretary of state said he was not expecting a "breakthrough yet of the kind that one saw a month or so ago".

"I just want to make sure we are not just stopped and I want to see what both sides might be willing to do to keep going down that escalatory ladder," Powell added.

He said that "ultimately, we have to get to dialogue or else we will just be stuck on a plateau which would not serve our interests. We do not want to be back where we were a few months ago, a few months from now."

Powell will also meet deputy



Colin Powell with Yashwant Sinha at Hyderabad House in New Delhi on Saturday. (PTI)

Prime Minister L.K. Advani and national security adviser Brajesh Mishra tomorrow morning.

Besides Powell, the American side was represented at

today's talks by the assistant secretary of state for South Asia, Christina Rocca, and Elizabeth Millard of the US National Security Council.

foreigners based in India would be allowed to go to Jammu and Kashmir when elections are held. However, the government may not invite international observer groups to the state.

Sinha had said earlier that

Cut Pak funds line, Delhi to tell Powell

Udayan Namboodiri and
Mubashir Zaidi
New Delhi/Islamabad, July 26

HIT PAKISTAN where it hurts by threatening economic sanctions and labelling it a terrorist state, India will tell Colin Powell after he arrives in New Delhi tomorrow evening.

As the US Secretary of State embarks on his mission to end the South Asian standoff, there is no sign that Delhi and Islamabad are ready to yield an inch.

In Islamabad, a defiant Pervez Musharraf today said Pakistan "cannot be blackmailed in the name of peace". He refused any more concessions until India agrees to resume talks.

Musharraf, say sources in Pakistan, has reverted to the view that New Delhi will come to the negotiating table only if it is made to bleed in Kashmir. The General apparently believes that it was the suicide attacks by militants that forced India to initiate the Agra peace process.

In New Delhi, where Powell will meet Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee at 10.45 am on Sunday, India will provide him with evidence that Islamabad has done little to end cross-border terrorism.

Delhi will tell Powell that in June alone, 224 people were killed in 232 terrorist attacks in Jammu and Kashmir. India will also maintain that Pakistan has done nothing to close the terrorist camps in PoK.

New Delhi believes that Musharraf's promises of a clampdown on jihadis were made to the US Government and, therefore, India need not make further concessions. "Ending terrorism is not negotiable," a source said.

When Powell flies to Pakistan on Sunday, Musharraf is expected to argue that India's

refusal to begin a dialogue despite a drop in infiltration means that Pakistan can no longer offer more concessions to its neighbour.

The General will tell Powell he cannot guarantee that infiltration will not resume by early August, a senior Pakistani official said.

The Musharraf Government realises that if the October elections in Jammu and Kashmir are held peacefully, Pakistan will be the sole loser. According to Pakistani monthly *Herald*, Islamabad has already begun the process of merging all the militant outfits into a single organisation headed by United Jihad Council chairman Syed Salahuddin.

With both neighbours equally belligerent, few Western diplomats expect a breakthrough during the Powell visit. The Secretary will mainly try to "accelerate the bargaining" between the two sides, the diplomats said.

Powell's main task will be to "listen" to the arguments of both sides and try and sniff the air for elements of a future deal. Implementation, if any, will be left to his deputy Richard Armitage, who is expected to visit the region in mid-August.

Powell's job will be difficult. "Pakistan wants peace in the region but cannot be blackmailed in the name of peace," Musharraf today said at the concluding ceremony of the 10-day war games by his armed forces at the National Defence College in Islamabad.

On the other hand, India has taken a poor view of recent State Department statements asserting the US wants to "work" with India and Pakistan "as they seek a dialogue".

Powell is likely to be accompanied by Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia, Christina Rocca.

South Asia ✓

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27 JUL 2002

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

5225/150
7/23/10-11

'Ball in Pak. court'

By C. Raja Mohan

NEW DELHI, JULY 22. India has conveyed to Britain that the next steps in the current peace process with Pakistan must come from Islamabad, which should implement its promises of ending infiltration and disbanding the infrastructure of terrorism on its soil.

Summing up the two rounds of talks over the weekend with the British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, India today said it would not make additional moves towards reduction of tensions until it saw more action on the ground from Pakistan.

"We have told very clearly to the British Government that any further movement on the de-escalation front would depend on the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, keeping his promise to end infiltration and cross-border terrorism," the spokeswoman of the Foreign Office,

Nirupama Rao, said today.

Mr. Straw had travelled to the subcontinent to restore political confidence between India and Pakistan and nudge them to keep the process moving forward.

Islamabad is arguing that it has done what it could and New Delhi must respond by agreeing to talks on Kashmir. New Delhi on the other hand insists that dialogue could only follow a complete cessation of cross-border terrorism.

Britain apparently would like to see Gen. Musharraf take additional steps on cross-border terrorism and India respond by diplomatic and military de-escalation.

Britain and the United States, which are brokering the current peace process between India and Pakistan, suggest that the appropriate sequence is to end terrorism, reduce military tensions and begin political dialogue.

The process is now stuck somewhere between the first and second stages. Britain does not expect an immediate resumption of full-blown dialogue between New Delhi and Islamabad. But it does believe that renewed diplomatic contacts at the ambassadorial level could help open channels of communication between the two sides.

23 JUL 2002

Signposts for peace in South Asia

By L. Ramdas

FORTUNATELY, INDIA and Pakistan have stepped back from the brink of war and nuclear holocaust. But the danger remains and the two sides remain at the mercy of events they cannot fully control. Fundamentalist elements in Pakistan bent on violence directed at India and matched likewise by right wing groups in India, both of whom aim to provoke war, hold the future of the region in their hands. They will continue to do so unless the two Governments institute measures to de-escalate the current confrontation and get down to a dialogue.

The following objectives are interlinked and must be achieved: To stop permanently infiltration from Pakistan into the Indian part of Jammu and Kashmir; to stop all forms of human rights violations by militants and security forces alike; to resolve the Kashmir issue peacefully, keeping in mind the legacy of Partition and the ground realities at present: the existence of the Line of Control as a virtual boundary since the Shimla Agreement of 1972; to identify a process for ascertaining the wishes of the people of Jammu and Kashmir regarding their future; to defuse nuclear tensions and eliminate the risk of nuclear war; and to open up the two countries to normal movement of people and trade and create a climate, socially and politically, that would promote good relations between the people of India and Pakistan as well as in South Asia.

The elements that would pave the way for resolving these long-festering issues could be as follows, keeping in mind the history of the various agreements that India and Pakistan have signed or almost signed, but have so far failed to implement. The approach also factors in the new and overwhelming reality in South Asia — that the acquiring by India and Pakistan of nuclear arsenals means the threats of conventional and nuclear war are now inextricably linked. If Indian and Pakistani leaders want

peace, which is more than the absence of war, resolving the issues of the relationships between the people and in the communities within countries with equality, tolerance and friendship is necessary for a sustained peace.

Pakistan has pledged to stop the infiltration into Kashmir permanently. This will require monitoring. India has proposed a joint patrolling of the border. This has not been agreed to by Pakistan. The situation is further

Line of Control (LoC) as the international border between the two countries. There is no denying the fact that the people of Jammu and Kashmir have suffered a great deal due to the India-Pakistan 'tug of war' over five decades. They seek peace and a cessation of all forms of violence. As a first step in this direction and as a gesture of honest intent, India and Pakistan must reduce the levels of their security forces on the border in Kashmir. Pakistan should also close

issues between them peacefully and not resort to war, proxy or otherwise. This formulation should meet the concerns of the two countries adequately. This means, first of all, a ceasefire along the LoC. Pakistan should agree to a policy of no-first-use of nuclear weapons, which India has already adopted. This is the equivalent of a nuclear ceasefire. India and Pakistan could tap their best and deepest traditions and not only avert war but make a real peace between themselves. They could verifiably de-alert all nuclear weapons with bilateral or SAARC monitoring and, in that context, invite all other nuclear weapons states to do the same and together take up leadership in the cause of global nuclear disarmament.

Only sustained peace can lift the clouds of war and the threat of nuclear incineration of South Asia. At the dawn of the nuclear age, Albert Einstein called on humanity to develop a new way of thinking or perish. Leaders in the West have recklessly failed to heed that warning and remain on the edge of a nuclear abyss, with the U.S. and Russia maintaining between them more than 4,000 nuclear warheads on hair-trigger alert, though they claim to be friends and at peace.

In a recently concluded workshop 'Initiative for Peace - Focus on Kashmir' at the United World College in Singapore, 40 young people from India and Pakistan came together for a week, and agreed on an inspiring Statement of Common Ground. The final paragraph of the statement reads: "We believe that we have the power to make this generation and the generations to come, the best ever in the history of humanity, or the worst. The choice is entirely ours; we have made the choice for a better and peaceful world." This, rather than the perpetual state of quasi-war that the countries are now maintaining, would befit the region that gave the world Badshah Khan and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and the most unique freedom movement the world has known.

As a gesture of honest intent, India and Pakistan must reduce the levels of their security forces on the border.

complicated by India's 'allergy' to any big power/third party interference in the Kashmir question. However, a substantial role is already being played by the United States and others in facilitating a communication between the leadership of the two countries. It is therefore proposed that a force drawn from among the members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) under a mutually agreed leadership could provide the necessary compromise for the monitoring to be established. This force could be provided with technical data gathered by other countries, including the U.S., to better perform its duties. As a first step, India should show its goodwill by beginning to reduce its forces along the border and restoring all communication links including road, rail and air traffic between the two countries. The aim should be to bring the forces at the border to the pre-December 13 levels as rapidly as possible.

There are three parties to the Kashmir question — India, Pakistan and the people of Jammu and Kashmir, and it is essential that India recognise this. By the same token, India and Pakistan must understand the ground reality of a *de facto* partition of the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir by the acceptance of the

down all militant training camps on its soil.

Central to any solution to the "Kashmir problem" must be a process of ascertaining the wishes of the people of the entire erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir, keeping in mind the ground realities of the *de facto* partition of the State.

To facilitate the emergence of peace in the region as early as possible, the following process as a *via media* could be considered: First, Kashmiris on both sides of the border should be given the choice of being the citizens of either India or Pakistan, and, if they want to move from one side to another, be given the opportunity to do so in peace and security. To implement this, both countries should agree to some form of international supervision. This role could be performed by a SAARC monitoring team as proposed earlier. Second, the people displaced from their lands and homes by the current conflict, such as the Kashmiri Pandits, should be allowed to return in peace and security. Third, the border between India and Pakistan in Kashmir should be kept porous to enable Kashmiris on both sides to cross it for personal, family and business reasons without too many hassles.

Both countries should reaffirm the pledges to negotiate all outstanding

Manipulating nuclear deterrence

By V.R. Raghavan

410-10 297

NUCLEAR WEAPONS remained the central determining factor in the standoff between India and Pakistan. The deterrence effect of nuclear weapons has played a major part in both the creation and management of the crisis being played out between the two states. Public focus has remained on the steps taken by the two countries and the role played by the United States. The reality is that nuclear weapons with India and Pakistan determined the parameters of both the crisis and its containment. Nuclear deterrence was manipulated by all the three countries to serve their individual needs.

As the probability of war is lowered to becoming a possibility, positions are being taken on the gains made from manipulating nuclear deterrence. India and Pakistan have both claimed victory. The Indian Government has claimed a victory without fighting a war. It is believed in New Delhi that its nuclear weapons deterred Pakistan. Across the border, Pervez Musharraf and his Ministers had threatened a nuclear strike if India launched a military offensive. Later, under the pressure of being seen as a nuclear weapons brandisher, he said it was his conventional military capability that deterred India.

There are divergent voices in India about who deterred whom. The Prime Minister said war was imminent at a point of time, and that his Government was prepared for a nuclear war, if it were to come about. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam has stated that without nuclear weapons on the scene, war would have been a certainty. The former Army chief, V. P. Malik, disagreed and asserted that nuclear weapons neither eliminated nor reduced the risk of outbreak of hostilities. Some of India's strategic analysts are divided between two di-

Attempts by India and Pakistan to repeatedly work up crises with nuclear underpinnings will lead to a range of adverse spin-offs.

vergent positions. One group advocates getting out of the defensive trench mentality and calling the Pakistani nuclear bluff by going on the military offensive. Others point out that nuclear war cannot be a bilateral affair and would impact on other countries, who in turn will insist on a role in the standoff.

India has deployed its full military power for war against Pakistan. Pakistan chose to threaten a nuclear strike in the face of Indian military advantage. India has nuclear "no-first-use" as part of its doctrine. The Government therefore quite clearly chose to make Pakistan seek a nuclear exchange, if it did not wish to abide by Indian demands. If that was not the case, it was in fact manipulating the nuclear deterrent through fears of triggering a nuclear exchange from Pakistan. This effectively forced the U.S. and other major powers into playing a defining role to pressure Pakistan to change course on Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistan too similarly manipulated the deterrent to create massive nuclear war anxieties amongst major powers, to obtain for itself a firebreak from the escalating situation.

During the Cold War standoff between the two superpowers, a phrase often used by both sides was nuclear blackmail. Each accused the other of resorting to blackmail. The Soviets in deterring the West used the word *sderzhivaniye* which meant restraining, but called Western deterrence of them intimidation or *ustrasheniye*. Whether India and Pakistan bluffed or blackmailed or deterred each other, and did the same to major powers, would be speculated upon for a long while. This question is rein-

forced by India and Pakistan recently stepping back from their earlier positions. There are claims being put forward that war was never part of the plan in New Delhi. In Pakistan it is claimed that its military capability alone was adequate to deter India from going to war. After manipulating nuclear deterrence to raise fears of a nuclear exchange to gain a relative advantage, both sides have portrayed themselves as rational nuclear states.

Nuclear blackmail continues to be used both as rhetoric and reality even after the end of the Cold War. Nuclear blackmail need not any longer be one of using nuclear weapons. It is enough if conditions for their likely use are created, to bring about a response from the major powers. That was adequately demonstrated in the India-Pakistan standoff of the last six months.

What have been the gains for India and Pakistan from the manipulative nuclear exercise. India has obtained a promise from Gen. Musharraf to the Bush administration on ending cross-border terrorism. It has obtained breathing space to proceed with its political initiatives towards elections in Jammu and Kashmir. It obtained U.S. commitments to keep Gen. Musharraf on track, to come down on terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir. Gen. Musharraf has obtained the critical advantage of India's plans on going to war being put on hold. He has already begun to chafe against the compulsions placed on him. The U.S. has obtained Indian willingness to accept it as a facilitator to finding a solution to the Kashmir question. It has certainly ended the high probability of war in

the immediate future by its exertions. It has extended its presence in Pakistan and Afghanistan to that of a guarantor of peace between India and Pakistan.

If India does not have the option of war, its officially proclaimed policy of fighting a limited war stands repudiated. Pakistan apparently cannot fight such a war without triggering a nuclear exchange. The choice for the two Governments therefore gets extremely limited. Nuclear deterrence forces upon nuclear states only one choice. That is of confining the practice of war to a theoretical exercise. India and Pakistan have now been forced to admit that reality. That does not mean their geo-political compulsions will make them inactive. They will in all likelihood take recourse to crisis-making as a substitute for war-waging. In the present crisis, neither side wanted deterrence to fail even as each tried to manipulate it to its advantage. Crises will therefore become the future test of deterrence between India and Pakistan, unless of course deterrence fails both through dangerous manipulation.

Attempts by India and Pakistan to repeatedly work up crises with nuclear underpinnings will lead to a range of adverse spin-offs. India can ill afford to be seen as unpredictable or irrational in nuclear matters. Its claims to being a stabilising influence in and outside the South Asian region will come under doubt. Its ability to manage its strategic interests in cooperation with other major powers will be questioned.

Above all, its attractiveness as an economic, political and strategic partner would be substantially affected. As for Pakistan, it had paid that price through its Kargil fiasco, within a year of going nuclear. India needs to steer clear of that self-defeating model of military and nuclear brinkmanship.

3 JUL 2002

THE HINDU

US assures Delhi Pervez was lying

Subh
HT/1
25/6 ✓

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, June 24

AS THE US today rejected Pervez Musharraf's claim that he had never promised to put a permanent end to infiltration into Kashmir, India warned Pakistan against going back on its pledges.

"Deputy Secretary Armitage was given assurances by President Musharraf on June 6 that ending of infiltration across the Line of Control would be permanent," a US Embassy spokesman said today, refuting Musharraf's claim in an interview to *Newsweek*.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Nirupama Rao, accusing Pakistan of resorting to "verbal calisthenics", said in New Delhi that if Musharraf reneges on his pledge to permanently end cross-border terrorism, India would have to take a "closer look" at what needs to be done.

India expects "action" on the commitments made by Musharraf to end terrorism, stop infiltration and dismantle the infrastructure of terrorism in that country, she told reporters here this evening.

"It has been conveyed to us (by Washington) in categorical terms that commitments about permanently ending infiltration of terrorism across the Line of Control have repeatedly been given by General Musharraf," she said.

However, Musharraf told *Newsweek* that all he had assured Bush was that nothing was happening across the Line

Pak move on flights

PAKISTAN IS considering allowing Indian commercial airliners to fly over its territory, Pakistani Foreign Ministry spokesman Aziz Ahmed Khan said. But he gave no indication when the ban might be lifted.

AP, Islamabad

of Control at present but he could not guarantee "nothing will ever happen".

The US spokesman contradicted this, adding: "We have seen positive results from that commitment and we have also seen significant positive steps by India since then.... Pakistani actions on the camps are an important follow-up step to keep this process moving forward."

Rao ducked a question on whether Musharraf's comments could be construed to mean that Indo-Pak relations were "back to square one".

Asked to comment on the "contradictory" comments by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee who said there was no abatement in the level of infiltration and Defence Minister George Fernandes who contended that infiltration was almost negligible, Rao said: "We are yet to see on the ground a permanent trend that suggests that infiltration is tapering off and is coming to a definite end," she said.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

25 JUN 2002

THURSDAY, JUNE 20, 2002

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COSTS OF MILITARISATION

THE CLOUDS OF war over South Asia have begun to clear, but the negative impact on the Indian economy of the build-up to war will stay longer. There is the short-term effect of the heavy financial cost of past and continuing full-scale mobilisation which will have to be paid for. There is the medium and long-term outcome of India being imprinted in the minds of foreign buyers, investors and tourists as a hotspot destination that is a very risky place to do business with or visit. This episode of what has come to be called "coercive diplomacy" has enjoyed widespread support among the urban middle and upper-income classes. But such support, which has verged on war hysteria, is going to cause a self-inflicted wound on the business prospects and employment opportunities of this economic class in urban India.

The Government has been less than open about what the high-alert mobilisation since December 2001 has cost the exchequer. While unofficial analysis, which takes as a basic premise the need for an armed confrontation with Pakistan, has sought to demonstrate that these costs are minimal, the more well-informed reports in the media suggest that mobilisation has already cost the Government Rs. 4,000 crores — more than what the Government hopes to collect this year from its 5 per cent security surcharge on income tax. It has also been suggested that even a limited conventional arms conflict could cost no less than Rs. 10,000 crores. But when it comes to a war, no price is seen as too high to pay and the Union Finance Minister, Yashwant Sinha, has said on more than one occasion that the Government can bear the cost of a war. This is not a responsible position to take, though part of the Government's calculus has always been that a war or a preparation for a war would financially hurt Pakistan more than India. By far the bigger negative impact on the Indian economy has been the beating that India's image has taken in the

global market place. While it is more than likely that the western powers deliberately whipped up global fears about the possibility of a war, as part of a strategy to make both countries sheath their sabres, the Government of India should not have been surprised about this strategy or for that matter the outcome. Tourist arrivals have plummeted, foreign businessmen have cancelled their visits and insurance premia on exports have risen sharply. Indian software exporters claim they have not lost business, but those in the fast-growing business process outsourcing (BPO) activities have begun to talk of investing in 'redundancy centres' to deal with destruction of their main centres in the event of a war. Such contingency plans, meant to assure foreign businesses, will add to costs and reduce India's competitive advantage in one of the few fields that Indian expertise is sought after. Too much should not be read into the record inflow of foreign investment funds in 2001-02 or the approvals granted last month. Both were the outcome of proposals made before India and Pakistan came close to war.

Economic globalisation is built on assured communication and timely supply of goods and services — both endangered by a mere threat of military confrontation. It should therefore be obvious that even if the West's travel advisories are withdrawn, the new negative view of India in the global economy will stay in the medium-term. Global business' new and worried perceptions of India may be exaggerated, but the outcome in terms of investment decisions will be real. The urban educated and entrepreneurial groups stood to gain most from closer integration with the global market and should therefore have been more aware of the impact of a military confrontation on the economy. But they were not and instead supported the build-up to a war. They will, unfortunately, now feel the direct impact of the military standoff between India and Pakistan.

20 JUN 2002

THE HINDU

Initiative in backdrop of S. Asia crisis

Big powers sew security curtain

FROM K.P. NAYAR

Washington, June 18: India and Pakistan may in future crises be restrained from going to war by a collective security apparatus formally put together at the initiative of the US and involving the participation of Russia, China, Japan and Europe.

Such an arrangement is at the heart of top-level discussions now going on in the White House, drawing on the lessons of international diplomacy, which successfully prevented a conflict from being triggered in South Asia.

At the centre of the ongoing discussions in the White House and Washington's strategic community on the policy of "pre-emption", however, is not India.

Such a policy is the core of President George W. Bush's new national security strategy of deterring terrorist groups from acquiring nuclear weapons. It is also part of Bush's determination to oust President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

But the timing of these policy discussions coincided with American, Russian and other international diplomatic efforts to stop a war between India and Pakistan. The two countries being nuclear powers, their military crisis has been jacked up into the agenda of this brainstorming by a combination of chance and fate.

Bush's national security adviser Condoleezza Rice described the emerging arrangement in an interview to *The New York Times* as "a common security framework for the great powers", in which they "share a

common security agenda".

She specifically referred to how Russian President Vladimir Putin and Bush worked together during the latest India-Pakistan crisis and added that if such efforts continued "this would be a much more stable world".

Sources privy to these discussions, to which analysts outside the administration and consultants have been called, said Pakistan is much more central to the new policy than India.

These discussions, for instance, have focused for hours and hours on how the US should react if jihadi elements in Pakistan seized that country's nuclear weapons, a fear which is aired time and again in private by influential elements in the administration.

Having gone into considerable detail in talks with his key aides such as defence and state secretaries Donald Rumsfeld and Colin Powell, Bush is now sharing elements of the new policy with Congressional leaders like Senator Joseph Biden, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Analysts here say that many times in the past, US Presidents have considered pre-emptive action against adversaries in specific instances.

During the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, President John F. Kennedy considered strikes against Soviet missile targets in Cuba before starting negotiations with Moscow. His successor, Lyndon B. Johnson, wanted pre-emptive strikes against China to prevent Beijing from deploying nuclear weapons, but did not pursue the plan.

As the discussions on the

new policy gather momentum, there have also been warnings about the dangers of such a strategy. *The New York Times* quoted Peter Galbraith, former US ambassador to Croatia, as saying: "No place is the risk greater than in South Asia. If India adopted the American doctrine of pre-emption, it risks a nuclear war, with devastating consequences for the world. It's a tricky business." Galbraith is considered to be the real author of the legislation on Pakistan's nuclear programme, which has come to be associated with the name of former Senator Larry Pressler.

Sources said three case studies are being analysed as part of the efforts to evolve a coherent policy of pre-emption.

These consider the possibility that Israel may be encouraged by the US yardstick to tighten the screws on the Palestinians to deter them from more suicide bombings and other threats to the Jewish state.

The second scenario considers whether India could launch a pre-emptive strike on Pakistani nuclear facilities, citing the US doctrine justifying such an attack when America feels a threat. The third case study deals with China using the doctrine to go after Taiwan's high-stakes military facilities.

Sources said the new policy, which Bush first referred to in an address to the German Bundestag last month, is expected to be formalised by August or September. But before that, the experience of the latest South Asian diplomacy will be analysed in much greater detail and factored into the new doctrine.

THE TELEGRAM

19 JUN 2002

India, Pakistan aware of risks, says Rumsfeld

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PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

WASHINGTON, June 15. — After visiting India and Pakistan to step up efforts to ease their tension, US defence secretary Mr Donald Rumsfeld said both countries are aware of the risks posed by conflict and more diplomatic talks are required to defuse the crisis.

"I think both are sensitive to the risks... I was impressed when I talked to them and I think both are asserting their leadership in a positive way," he told reporters while flying from Pakistan to Bahrain on Thursday.

He said India and Pakistan "recognise that it is proper to fire in self defence" and to prevent territorial infiltration, but beyond that, less artillery shelling and more diplomatic talk would be desirable.

Asked if he had discussed nuclear weapons with Indian and Pakistani leaders, he said: "I am not going to talk about nuclear weapons. I think... that subject is past us and both Musharraf and Vajpayee are managing their affairs the way people responsible for weapons of that power ought to manage them."

THE STATESMAN

18 6 JUN 2002

Rumsfeld sings Delhi tune in Pak

Mubashir Zaidi
Islamabad, June 13

US DEFENCE Secretary Donald Rumsfeld told President Pervez Musharraf today that India would not pull back its troops from its borders with Pakistan until it was convinced that infiltration had ended once for all.

A Foreign Ministry source said Rumsfeld appreciated Musharraf's pledge to stop infiltration, but advised him to give New Delhi's proposal for joint patrol of the borders a serious thought.

Islamabad was expecting US guarantees that India would withdraw some troops and Washington would pressure Delhi into accepting international monitoring of the LoC.

But Rumsfeld told Musharraf that he would not pressure India for any of this. The US had no magic wand, he told a news conference.

"Ultimately, the two countries have to sort their problems out on their own. They can do it with some help," he said, ignoring Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar, who interrupted him to comment that Pakistan was expecting more from the US.

Rumsfeld did not divulge the details of his talks with Musharraf, but told a subsequent news conference that he had not brought any proposal to end the six-month-long standoff between the South Asian neighbours.

However, the US Defence Secretary struck an optimistic note, saying some progress had been made in reducing tensions between the two countries.

But snapping travel and communication links would definitely hurt the economies of both countries, he said. The US-Pak relationship, he stressed, was important to Washington even without the international coalition against terrorism. He described his visit and talks with Pakistan's leaders as "good". During his talks with Musharraf, he had got the impression that the latter was determined to ensure de-escalation in the region, Rumsfeld said.

On monitoring the Line of Control, he said the US would be willing to provide technical manpower. Firing across the LOC was killing innocent people, he pointed out.

On the recent confidence-building measures announced by India, he said the ground situation was still much the same — in a state of "reasonably high alert". However, the steps taken by the two sides indicated that both sides wanted tensions to ease, he said.

Meanwhile, India said today that two of its Army officers and a civilian had been killed in Pakistani firing. Pakistan said Indian attacks had killed two women and a 10-year-old on the Pakistani side of the LoC.

More reports on Page 9

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

14 JUN 2002

Almaty took the right decisions, although there was no thaw between I

Pressures and promise

J.N. DIXIT

The conference on international cooperation and confidence-building measures in Asia convened by Nursultan Nazarbaev, the president of Kazakhstan, concluded on June 4. What was supposed to be a summit meeting of the major Asian powers focussing on macro-level security issues was overshadowed to some extent by the tensions generated by the current India-Pakistan confrontation and the resulting stand-off.

Nazarbaev's initiative was primarily to deal with developments related to Asia's security after the ouster of the Taliban from Afghanistan and to chart out a role for Asian countries to deal with problems arising out of international terrorism and the relative political uncertainties affecting most Asian countries. The impact of deliberations at the conference has to be assessed in two dimensions. First, the decisions taken regarding multi-lateral interstate cooperation in the region in the spheres of security, political interaction and economic efforts. The second dimension is that of examining the manner in which these deliberations and the high-level discussions were held between heads of government on the tense situation in the south Asian subcontinent.

There are reasons for India to be satisfied about the collective decisions taken at the Almaty conference as reflected in the Almaty declaration and agreement. The final documents of the conference clearly acknowledge the threat posed to international security by extremism and terrorist violence. There is also the collective decision to take individual as well as collective initiatives to counter the phenomenon of international terrorism. The Almaty documents stressed the importance of preventing the disintegration of pluralistic societies and the states, of the need to collectively ensure the stability of states in the region, of the relevance of increasing mutual economic and developmental cooperation, and of the need to work together against externally-sponsored subversion. These are points responsive to India's concerns and interests and are equally supportive of Indian policies on these issues.

It was equally significant that barring the protagonists in the subcontinental crisis, India and Pakistan, none of the other world leaders expressed value judgments on the India-Pakistan stand-off. It was, however, gratifying for India that in the major policy statements, clear opposition was expressed towards cross-border terrorism and subversion of state structures, particularly democratic state structures. It must be mentioned in parenthesis that the outcome of the

The author is former foreign secretary of India

conference on Asian security organized by the International Institute of Strategic Studies, London and that of the Almaty conference, both reflected an understanding of Indian concerns, and by implication, India's security predicaments.

It is the second dimension of the Almaty conference mentioned earlier which is of more direct interest to India. Pervez Musharraf, contravening the normal conventions at multi-lateral conferences of not raising specific bilateral issues, raised the issue of Kashmir. His policy stance at the conference was inevitable and unavoidable from his point of view. He had to prove to his domestic constituency that he has not and he will not succumb to the incremental international pressure generated on him to stop being supportive of the phenomenon of terrorism.

Even though the other leaders did not openly state the ground reality that Pakistan remains the refuge for al Qaida and other extremist religious terrorist cadres and organizations, all the other leaders were aware of this fact and in discussions on the margins of the conference, must have urged Musharraf to fall in line with the general orientations of the international community to take decisive steps against terrorism within the framework of assurance which he has given in his public pronouncements on January 12 and May 27 this year. He also had to project Pakistan's image of being part of the mainstream of international attitudes on this issue.

At the same time, he had to project himself as a reasonable leader willing to negotiate with India without eroding his image as a tough head of government capable of coping with any challenges that he may face from India or due to international pressure. His remarks about a strong and determined reaction if any war is imposed on Pakistan reflected this latter point.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee's response was equally firm, clear and categorical. The two main points made by Vajpayee were that India would resume a dialogue with Pakistan only after there is clear and verifiable evidence that Pakistan has stopped supporting cross-border terrorism, and that once this happens India would be willing to have negotiations with Pakistan including on the issue of Jammu and Kashmir. Vajpayee also implied that if cross-border terrorism did not stop, India retained all relevant options to counter this pernicious phenomenon.

The expectation that the general objective of this high-level summit of encouraging cooperation and forging meaningful confidence-building measures would generate political pres-

ures on both the leaders, leading to a thaw in the subcontinental situation, was not fulfilled, proving that speculative media anticipations and interpretations were just wishful thinking. Both Vajpayee and Musharraf met the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, and the Chinese president, Jiang Zemin, separately. There were anticipatory assessments that these meetings, particularly the meeting between Putin and the subcontinental leaders, might result in some kind of a break-

Moscow with Russia as the go-between, and that he would be willing to come to Moscow. The Indian response to this suggestion was that while India welcomed Russian concerns in resolving the issue, India did not need to go to Moscow for such a meeting. The meeting could be held either in Pakistan or in India. Putin was practical and realistic. While he has agreed to receive Musharraf in Moscow, he was not inclined to pressurize Vajpayee to come to Moscow. In the event, the result was



‘Musharraf raised the issue of Kashmir, although raising bilateral issues in multilateral meets contravenes convention’

through. There were reports about Putin extending an invitation to both Musharraf and Vajpayee to come for talks under Russian auspices (like the Tashkent meeting of 37 years ago in 1966) in Moscow. In actual fact, no such formal proposal was made. Putin only offered to help in the matter if both the leaders were agreeable.

Both Putin and Jiang Zemin advised India and Pakistan to act with restraint and de-escalate the situation. Putin, of course, was more direct in underlining to Musharraf that an India-Pakistan dialogue could be resumed meaningfully only if Pakistan stopped supporting cross-border terrorist subversion against India. Jiang Zemin articulated the traditional Chinese stance about the need for India and Pakistan to resolve the Kashmir issue, which is an inheritance from the colonial past. But interestingly, he emphasized that terrorist violence is not the means to solve this problem.

There was a suggestion from Musharraf to Putin that an India-Pakistan dialogue may be organized in

that Musharraf would have discussions in Moscow and Putin could continue the process during his official visit to India later this year.

Given this context, the Almaty conference made only a marginal impact on the current state of India-Pakistan relations. Both Musharraf and Vajpayee acknowledged on their return to Islamabad and New Delhi that the deliberations in and outside the conference in Almaty did not change the India-Pakistan stand-off materially. The results of the Almaty conference from India's point of view would be summed up as follows:

India and Pakistan

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The decisions of the conference as embodied in its final documents shared India's concerns and India's stand on cross-border and external subversion. None of the participants, heads of state or government showed any inclination to mediate between India and Pakistan. They emphasized the importance of India and Pakistan resuming a direct dialogue as early as feasible. There was an agreement among them that such a dialogue could be resumed only if there was tangible proof of Pakistan's pulling back from its support to cross-border terrorism.

Both in the conference and in bilateral meetings, the advice to India and Pakistan was to rapidly de-escalate the military confrontation because of the danger of such confrontation leading to a military conflict which could escalate into the use of nuclear weapons. The important powers did not take sides on the substantive issue of Kashmir. Even Russia was comparatively impartial, emphasizing that the problem should be resolved by the initiation of and continuation of a political dialogue.

In bilateral discussions Musharraf was given clear enough messages that he had to do something more to fulfil the general assurances, which he has given to the international community, about countering terrorism based in Pakistan.

India's participation in the Almaty conference has ensured that India will have an active and substantive role to play in future security and confidence building arrangements in central Asia and south Asia. The conference was also significant in that Vajpayee met the Chinese president, Jiang Zemin, for the first time in his capacity as the head of the Indian government.

What India should monitor now is the political and diplomatic moves that Russia, the United States of America and China undertake to follow up on the discussions held between Vajpayee and the leaders of these countries. Hopefully, Musharraf may ultimately respond to the pressure of important powers on him to abandon his adversarial stance, at least in terms of sponsoring terrorism, if not on the Kashmir issue. India should also anticipate incremental pressure to de-escalate the military situation and to resume the dialogue with Pakistan.

The coming six weeks to two months would be characterized by critical developments. India has to cope with the challenge of remaining firm about its security interests and territorial integrity while at the same time preventing a war with Pakistan to the extent feasible. Musharraf has a special responsibility in this regard because if he sponsors or connives at further terrorist incidents, India's option to remain restrained will be decisively diminished.

MUSHARRAF ACTION ON LIST OF 20?

We can revive proposal for joint patrolling of LoC: PM

By Atul Aneja

ALMATY, JUNE 5. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, has proposed joint patrolling by India and Pakistan to verify the termination of cross-border infiltration along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir.

Addressing a press conference hours before his departure to New Delhi — after attending the 16-nation Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) on Tuesday — Mr. Vajpayee said that instead of involving a third country, India and Pakistan could jointly patrol their borders as had been accepted by them on an earlier occasion. "Joint patrolling had already been accepted (in the late 1980s). Both countries can revive it. The terrain is mountainous and it is difficult for third countries to carry out verification," he said. Joint patrolling could be undertaken to identify infiltration and steps taken to counter it.

Pointing out that India had got unprecedented support on the need for Pakistan to curb infiltration across the borders, Mr. Vajpayee said he preferred a diplomatic solution to end

cross-border terrorism. International pressure appeared to be working on Pakistan, as was evident from its recent statements on the issue. Global pressure on Islamabad could acquire an economic dimension as well, and the international community had already started discussing the possibility. International activism against terror appeared to be fulfilling the objective of the Agra summit, which was to seek an end to cross-border terrorism.

Spelling out a road map for a rapprochement with Pakistan, Mr. Vajpayee said de-escalation on the borders would follow af-

ter India had satisfied itself that Pakistan had implemented its pledge on curbing infiltration. India was ready for a dialogue if Pakistan agreed to drop terrorism as an instrument of state policy. But it would put the Pakistani pledge on countering terrorism to test before reciprocating.

The Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, had told the Russian President, Vladimir Putin — whom he met on Tuesday — that Islamabad was looking at the possibilities of extraditing individuals on the list of 20 fugitives that New Delhi had handed over, Mr. Vajpayee said.

India was ready to consider any list of fugitives that Pakistan might present to it subsequently.

Referring to his talks with the Chinese President, Jiang Zemin, he said both the sides had discussed the question of terrorism. The Government sources said Beijing and New Delhi were looking at giving more teeth to the draft convention on terrorism, being discussed in the United Nations, by incorporating a provision for imposing financial curbs on countries involved in promoting terrorism.

Making a special mention of the Almaty Act adopted by the CICA, which describes separatism as "one of the main threats and challenges to the security and stability, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of a state," Mr. Vajpayee said it would contribute significantly to the international debate on the ways and means to counter the menace of global extremism.

With a view to engaging entire Central Asia, India has proposed a multi-dimensional "Silk Route Initiative" that will cover all the countries in the region.

Unlikely to work: Pak.

ISLAMABAD, JUNE 5. Pakistan today rejected the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee's proposal for joint patrolling along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir to stem the infiltration of militants, saying it was nothing new and "unlikely to work."

"The proposal is not new," a statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said. "Given the state of Pakistan-India relations, mechanisms for joint pa-

trolling are unlikely to work."

The Armies of India and Pakistan were already patrolling their respective sides of the LoC.

"Pakistan has also expressed its willingness to accept neutral monitoring of the LoC," the statement added. India has ruled out third-party monitoring of the border, as it is against "internationalisation" of the bilateral dispute. — Reuters

'Situation unchanged'

ISLAMABAD, JUNE 5. The situation in South Asia remains unchanged even after Almaty, the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, said on his return from the Kazakh capital after attending the first 16-nation Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building in Asia (CICA).

"I think the situation remains unchanged. Whatever tension was there remains as it was," Gen. Musharraf told CNN, referring to the Indo-Pak standoff, last night. Asked about the diplomatic failure at the summit, he said "we were hoping that it (tension) will be defused. But, I do not think it will escalate further."

On curbing cross-border infiltration, Gen. Musharraf said "of course, at the moment the whole (Indian) Army is deployed everywhere and therefore it is easier to ensure this. At the same time, the blame for



whatever happens in Jammu and Kashmir should not be put on Pakistan as there is a freedom movement going on there. The unfortunate part is whatever happens there, they accuse Pakistan of patronising it."

To a question on the extent of domestic pressure on him

Gen. Musharraf said: "It is not a matter of losing. One has to be practical. Pakistan has its honour and dignity to guard. We are for peace. But in preventing war, we cannot compromise on our honour and dignity... the bottomline is our honour and dignity." The public in Pakistan did not want a war. "But no one in Pakistan will say that do not go to war and compromise your honour and dignity."

Because of conventional deterrence, "there will be no situation where resort(ing) to nuclear option could ever be contemplated," Gen. Musharraf said.

"We do not think of these things, because I consider it unthinkable, that ever a moment will come when we have to launch nuclear attacks. And therefore, I do not really discuss it with anyone."

— PTI

Bush rings up PM, Musharraf

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, JUNE 5. The United States President, George W. Bush, has urged the leaders of



India and Pakistan to reduce tensions and the risk of war. Mr. Bush made separate telephone calls to the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and the President of Pakistan, Pervez Musharraf, this morning, the White House said. According to the White House spokesman, Ari Fleischer, Mr. Bush impressed on the two leaders the need for a dialogue.

Details on Page 11

Almaty matters

THE ALMATY conference has underlined the continuing stalemate in India-Pakistan relations. If the meeting of Asian leaders (and of Russia) has achieved anything, it is to exert a bit more pressure on Pakistan than on India. Beyond that, the situation remains virtually unchanged both on the border and in the capitals of the two countries engaged in perhaps the most dangerous confrontation in their history. Even then, there may be a slight movement forward considering that Pakistan is now fully aware that its lies are no longer effective. It has been caught out so often that bland assertions of the kind made by Pervez Musharraf to stop Pakistani soil being used by terrorists are no longer believed.

When Atal Bihari Vajpayee told the conference, therefore, that 'past record' had made India wary about the promises made by General Musharraf, few would have disagreed. Perhaps aware that his pledges are no longer taken seriously, the Pakistani leader stepped up his rhetoric on the 'oppression' of the Kashmiri people by India. But here, too, he may have

been on slippery ground since, as Mr Vajpayee said, the killing of innocent people by the terrorists "cannot be defended by invoking any of the alleged grievances, underlying causes or attendant circumstances". Beyond the scoring of debating points, however, what the Almaty conference must have told Pakistan is that its repeated attempts to turn attention away from cross-border terrorism to the resumption of Indo-Pak dialogue are no longer as successful as before.

Earlier, the world used to believe that a dialogue was sufficient to reduce tension. Pakistan preferred this path because it enabled it to appear reasonable without forcing it to stop the *jihadis*. But now that India's insistence that the terrorists must be targeted first has much wider acceptance, Pakistan is evidently in a quandary. It also knows that mere advice to the *jihadis* to lie low for some time will not do since Big Brother has pointed out that terrorism cannot be turned on and off. As he returns from Almaty, General Musharraf may be more concerned about how to tame his fundamentalist friends-turned-enemies at home than about the threat from India.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

05 JUN 2002

Pull-out call to put pressure

SNS & AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, June 1. — Western nations like the USA and Britain are trying to pressurise Pakistan and, more subtly, India to back down by issuing advisories to their citizens to defer travel to the region and by asking non-essential staff to leave the countries.

The USA today despatched the first batch of about 50 non-essential staff members and their dependents at its embassy here. A US embassy spokesman said a batch of 50 non-essential staff members, including diplomats and their dependents, left for home this morning after Washington decided to move out such people amid fears of a war. "More non-emergency staff members of the US embassy and their dependents are expected to leave in the next few days," he said.

The UN, Germany and Japan today issued advisories to remove their non-essential staff from India,

Pakistan and Afghanistan. Germany has advised family members of diplomatic staff at its embassy here and consulate in Mumbai to leave the country. It has urged its nationals to defer non-urgent travels to the region.

Diplomatic sources said the UN will evacuate families of its staff in the subcontinent.

Lange defies warning

WELLINGTON, June 1. — The former New Zealand Prime Minister, Mr David Lange, plans to leave on Monday for a holiday in India, defying a government warning to avoid travelling to the sub-continent, it was reported today.

— Agencies

Russia is not in a hurry to evacuate its nationals as there are only "50 per cent" chances of a war in the region, *Radio Mayak* reported.

India, for the moment, is not succumbing to this pressure. It has declined to comment on decisions of other "sovereign nations".

■ US-Russian talks on peace, page 11

0 2 JUN 2002

THE STATESMAN

Straw asks Pak to match words with action

By Mahendra Ved
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

South Asia

New Delhi: India's case against Pakistan received a boost on Wednesday when visiting British foreign secretary Jack Straw declared that Gen Pervez Musharraf's assurances on stopping cross-border terrorism had to be matched by action on the ground.

"The UK stands four-square behind India in its fight against terrorism. We back India comprehensively in its fight against terrorism," Mr Straw told media-persons after his meeting with external affairs minister Jaswant Singh. Implicitly rejecting Gen Musharraf's claim that the violence in Kashmir was a "freedom struggle", Mr Straw said that Britain was against all terrorism, including "terrorism that is dressed up as freedom struggle".

Mr Straw, who also met home minister L.K. Advani, said Gen Musharraf must ensure that the Line of Control (LoC) with India was effectively sealed and that there was no infiltration from his side.

"I began my conversation with Mr Advani by reiterating the British government's unambiguous views against terrorism in all its forms, including cross-border terrorism and the terrorism that is dressed up as freedom struggle," he said. About his meeting with Gen Musharraf on

11/20/02

Tuesday, he said, "I believe Gen Musharraf is serious about controlling terrorism. The test of any statement of a country or a leader of a country should be by measurement of the action on the ground."

Diplomatic circles noted that Mr Straw spoke a language identical to the one he used in Islamabad, leaving no ambiguity about where his government stood on the ongoing crisis.

During his daylong parleys with the Indian leadership, he met PM Atal Behari Vajpayee, defence minister George Fernandes, national security adviser to the PM Brajesh Mishra and leader of the opposition Sonia Gandhi.

Kamaljeet Singh



External affairs minister Jaswant Singh with British foreign secretary Jack Straw in New Delhi on Wednesday.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

30 MAY 2002

WEDNESDAY, MAY 29, 2002

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SEMANTICS OF WAR AND PEACE

THE PAKISTAN PRESIDENT, Pervez Musharraf, seems to have decided to keep both India and the major powers unsure, at least for the present, about how he really intends to defuse the escalating crisis in Islamabad's relations with New Delhi. This might explain Gen. Musharraf's indifferent manner of addressing the latest concerns of India, no less than those of a global power like the U.S., without actually spelling out any decisive initiative at this critical stage. Known for his recent exercises in exuberant public diplomacy, the Pakistan President has certainly disappointed, if not also confounded, those looking for some clues to his current thinking on a subject of immense relevance to the present international order. Outwardly, Gen. Musharraf's latest televised address to his nation may even rank as a non-event but for the determined effort by him in urging the global community to "ask India to move towards normalisation of relations" with Pakistan. On balance, the importance of his speech lies in the sound bytes of semantics on war and peace involving New Delhi and Islamabad in the unresolved context of the latest terrorist strikes against the Indian psyche itself. Significant, therefore, is the timing of the Pakistan leader's latest public intervention as regards the ongoing international discourse on the explosive situation along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir.

Given Islamabad's historical estrangement with New Delhi, Gen. Musharraf has certainly not resiled from his country's entrenched political positions on issues such as anti-India terror and the status of Jammu and Kashmir. It was only a few days prior to his latest speech that his administration implicitly indicated that Pakistan-occupied Kashmir as also the territory of Pakistan itself would be put out of bounds for those seeking to export terrorism to any part of the world. If this had appeared to signal a move by Pakistan towards the de-escalation of extraordinary tensions with India

at this time, Gen. Musharraf has not followed up with any specific initiatives during the course of his new speech. However, two aspects of his reinforced "message to the world community" at this juncture need to be welcomed. He is emphatic in pledging that his country "does not want war" with India and that Islamabad "will never allow the export of terrorism (to) anywhere in the world from within Pakistan".

Noting that he had taken "very bold steps" since January 12 this year when he first spoke of his anti-terror credo, Gen. Musharraf has now asserted that "Pakistan is doing nothing across the Line of Control". India's response is that these statements amount to "mere verbal denials" about Pakistan's "lethal export of terrorism". Increasingly relevant to this perceptual dispute between India and Pakistan is a topical and specific comment by the U.S. President, George W. Bush, that "it is very important for President Musharraf to... stop the incursions across the Line of Control". It is equally important, in Mr. Bush's view, that "the Indians know that he (Gen. Musharraf) is going to fulfil that promise". These and other similar messages to Gen. Musharraf from Mr. Bush raise questions about Washington's real stakes in the fragile equation between New Delhi and Islamabad, irrespective of whether or not the U.S. might begin to see Pakistan's present India-centric activities as being critical to the success or failure of America's own anti-terror agenda. Not only that. Some major Western powers and Russia have joined the U.S. in expressing enormous concern over the widening gulf between India and Pakistan. Even as Gen. Musharraf wants them to exert pressure on New Delhi, he might himself come under increased pressure to address India's anguished concerns, if Mr. Bush's recent statements are any guide. Given these new realities, it is a good sign at this moment that New Delhi has kept its cool over Pakistan's latest series of ballistic missile tests.

THE HINDU

2 2 1 1

Pak. must first end cross-border terrorism, says Britain

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, MAY 27. In a sign of a new hardening of its attitude towards Pakistan, the British Government today indicated that it expected Islamabad to make the first move in de-escalating the tension in the region by putting an end to cross-border terrorism.

The Foreign Office Minister, Ben Bradshaw, said that Britain had made clear to the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, that he must do more to stop infiltration across the Line of

Control. "When he does that, we will ask India to de-escalate," he said at a press conference here this morning as the Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, prepared to visit India and Pakistan.

Mr. Straw is expected to deliver a tough message to Gen. Musharraf, echoing the U.S. President, George W. Bush's criticism that he has not done enough to check terror attacks on India. Mr. Bradshaw's remarks were considered significant as they were seen to place the onus for the current crisis

on Pakistan. Observers said this was the first time that a British minister came so close to reflecting the Indian position.

"This is a pleasant departure from the balancing act that seemed to equate the two sides," one India-watcher said. In the Commons last week, the Prime Minister Tony Blair, while asking Pakistan to stop support to any form of terrorism, had emphasised that at the same time India must be prepared to offer "a proper system of dialogue to resolve all issues between the countries, includ-

ing disputes over Kashmir."

The hardening of British stance was attributed to a lack of any effort by Pakistan in recent days to defuse the situation. The timing of the missile tests by Pakistan was also condemned, with critics describing it as "provocative" and in "defiance" of American and British efforts to cool down the temperature. The former Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, said the situation was "very grave and very worrying" amid signs of growing anxiety in government circles over the shrill rhetoric from both India and Pakistan. Gen. Musharraf's threat to take the "offensive into Indian territory" in the event of a war and the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee's remarks that India's patience was running out heightened fears of a military confrontation.

Mr. Straw, during his visit, was expected to discuss the security mechanism with the two sides to prevent a nuclear accident. There is a view here that India and Pakistan do not have sufficient safeguards to avoid triggering a nuclear mishap.

Even as Britain was in the thick of diplomatic efforts to avert a war, sources admitted that the "real" player in the region was the U.S. whose own campaign in Afghanistan could be undermined in the event of an India-Pakistan confrontation. The visit of the U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage, was seen to be far more crucial than Mr. Straw's.

'No suspension of Hawk deal'

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, MAY 27. Amid speculation and confusion over the future of arms supplies to India and Pakistan, the British Government today insisted that there was no arms embargo nor had any decision been taken to freeze the one billion pound Hawk deal with India.

At a press conference this morning, the Foreign Office Minister, Ben Bradshaw, firmly contradicted media reports suggesting that the deal had been "blocked" as part of an embargo on arms sales to India and Pakistan in view of the tension in the region. He attributed the reports to a "misunderstanding" and when asked specifically whether the Hawk deal was off for now, he said: "No". The reports were also denied by Defence Ministry sources and the Department of Trade and Industry which handles arms exports licences.

Mr. Bradshaw clarified that there was already a "consolidated" European Union criterion which prohibited issuing of arms exports licences in sit-

uations where there was a risk that the weapons would be put to aggressive use. This was applied on a case-to-case basis and a whole range of items not regarded as aggressive were exempt. The Trade and Industry Department said: "There are no plans for an arms embargo. However, the situation in the region is taken fully into account in considering export licence decisions."

Defence Ministry sources were quoted as saying that Hawks were jet trainers and did not fall into the category of aggressive weaponry. An official with BAe Systems which manufactures Hawks said that even if a decision to suspend the deal was taken it would not affect them because in any case supplies would be able to go out only in 2004.

Earlier, Indian diplomatic sources said nothing had been communicated to them. "We have seen reports and are trying to get the details from the departments concerned." "If the reports are true we are obviously disappointed at the implications of a delay in defence supplies at this crucial stage," a senior diplomat said.

THE HINDU

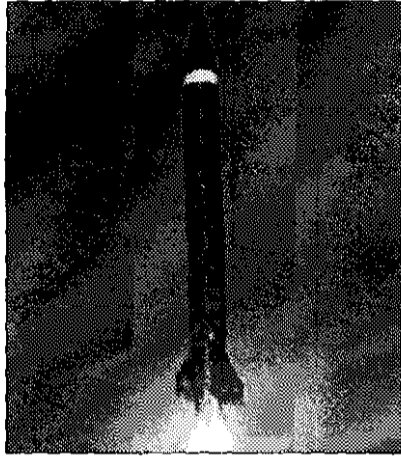
28 MAY 2002

Hatf-III test rings global alarm bells

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 26 MAY

WHILE India reiterated that it was "not impressed" with Pakistan's missile antics, concerns rang out from the international community, including the US and Russia, as Pakistan test-fired a second missile, the short-range Hatf-III, capable of carrying nuclear warheads. India's considered response to the two tests so far has signalled that it is well aware of the development of Pakistan's missile programmes and their capabilities. Though officials here refused to say anything, it is certain that India has been developing anti-missile systems specifically to counter the Pakistani arsenal. "We have already said earlier that we are not impressed with these missile antics, particularly when all that is demonstrated is borrowed or imported ability," an MEA spokesperson said.

India is, in fact, viewing the successive test-firings as clear signs of nervousness on the part of Pakistan, aimed more at the its domestic audience. The test-firing has come at a time when General Musharraf is desperately trying to bolster his image. Earlier this week, Opposition parties boycotted a meeting that he had



UPPING THE ANTE

convened to seek their views on a response to rising tensions. Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee said in Manali on Saturday he did not consider the test-firing a serious development. The international condemnation on Sunday, however, was sharper. US President

George Bush joined his Russian counterpart to express reservations over the tests and urged India not to see the recent missile tests as a "provocation." Urging General Musharraf to curb Islamic militancy, Mr Bush said: "We are concerned about the rhetoric. It is very important for President Musharraf to... do what he said he's going to do... that is, stop the incursions across the line," Mr Bush said.

A defence spokesperson said there is no need to respond since India has been following a well-thought out schedule as far as its missile programme is concerned. In fact, this had been indicated by defence minister George Fernandes on Saturday in an interview to CNN. Mr Fernandes also contended that Pakistan may be vainly trying to unnerve India by signalling that it is readying its delivery systems keeping the nuclear option in mind. The Hatf III series, a solid fuel ballistic missile also known as Ghaznavi, is said to have the capability of carrying up to 500 kg payload. It has a range of 290 km. On Saturday, Pakistan test-fired the medium range Hatf-V series, Ghauri-II, with a range of 1,500 km. The Hatf-V series has already been inducted, according to chairman of National Engineering and Scientific Commission Samar Mubarak Mund.

THE STATESMAN

27 MAY 2002

Bush, Putin shift focus to South Asia

Russian President moots India-Pakistan talks in June

St Petersburg, May 25

PRESIDENT BUSH and Russia's Vladimir Putin, their own weapons treaty just signed, shifted their focus to trying to calm the mounting tension in South Asia. Bush urged Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf to fulfil his pledge to stop militants from carrying out raids in the Indian-controlled sector of disputed Kashmir.

"It's very important that President Musharraf... does what he said he was going to do in his speech on terrorism and that is to stop the incursions across the border," Bush said.

India blames Pakistan for attacks by Islamic militants in Jammu and Kashmir, its only Muslim-majority state, and further afield. The nuclear neighbours have massed more than a million men along their border, raising fears of their fourth war since independence from British colonial rule in 1947. "We are spending a lot of time on this subject," said Bush, whose summit with Putin moved to Russia's former imperial capital Saturday from Moscow.

"We are making it very clear to both parties that there is no benefit in war, there is no benefit in a clash that could lead to wider war. We are deeply concerned about the rhetoric. "There is a lot of diplomatic effort going into bringing some calm and reason to the region," he said.

The two leaders said that they were alarmed by events in the region, including the testing of a Pakistani missile on Saturday.

"Of course the testing, while there is escalating tension, has really aggravated the situation and I'm concerned about that,"

Putin said. He suggested the two South Asian leaders try to sort out their differences at a regional conference on confidence building measures in Asia early next month.

"I hope they will come so that we can together discuss and prevent a further escalation of the conflict," Putin said.

Regional leaders will meet in the Central Asia republic of Kazakhstan on June 3-5.

In St. Petersburg, Putin's home town, the two leaders rounded off their summit with mostly sightseeing, spending an hour and a half in the afternoon answering questions from students.

They started their schedule in the morning with a solemn wreath-laying ceremony at the Piskaryovskoye memorial cemetery for the 600,000 who died in the German army siege of the city during World War II.

"Bush was jolted first of all by the large number of people buried in a single place. He said it was very important for young people because there are fewer and fewer veterans around now," Liliya Markova, deputy director of the memorial said.

"When I spoke that times were so turbulent and that we have to be friends, he said: 'Yes, we also had victims on September 11.' He listened very carefully."

Elderly St Petersburg residents give vivid accounts of the city's encirclement for almost 900 days and the bitter cold and hunger that killed more than half a million.

Several dozen anti-globalisation demonstrators denounced Bush in a city centre protest without incident. Other protests were planned later in the day.

Reuters

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

26 MAY 2002

Ghauri targets India patience

More missile tests in the pipeline

HT Correspondent
Islamabad, May 25

PAKISTAN TODAY test-fired the Ghauri, its medium-range, surface-to-surface ballistic missile, causing concern in major Western capitals and derision in New Delhi.

A proud Gen Pervez Musharraf declared the success of the test while addressing a two-day conference of clerics here in Islamabad. The experiment was only the first of a series of tests scheduled to continue till May 28 and would be followed tomorrow by the test-firing of the Shaheen III missile and a similar test with the Haider I at a later date, he announced.

The Shaheen III has a 2,500-km range, while the shorter-range Haider I can strike targets 500 km away. All three

PM to cut short holiday

HT Correspondent
Manali, May 25

ATAL BIHARI Vajpayee may end his holiday in Manali on May 27, two days ahead of schedule, sources have said. The Prime Minister is likely to meet visiting British foreign secretary Jack Straw on May 29. On Saturday in Manali, Vajpayee again cautioned Pakistan that India's patience was running thin. The country had been waiting for a long time for Islamabad to end cross-border terrorism, he said.

Related report on Page 8

missiles can carry nuclear payload.

"The missile reached its target with great accuracy," Musharraf told his applauding audience. He congratulated his scientists on this "proud achievement".

But the "achievement" produced a thinly disguised smirk in Delhi when Minister of State for External Affairs Omar Abdullah told a private TV channel, "We understand which audience he is trying to address. He's not addressing us because our Intelligence agencies and scientists know what capabilities Pakistan's missile programme has. This is a message to his own domestic audience and he's a politician more than a general now, so he's free to send whatever message he wants".

Musharraf was visibly upset with Delhi's response. "Indians say that they are not impressed. Let me tell them I am not impressed either with the two-week or two-month deadline they have set us," he said.

But the test caused grave concern in Washington. "We are disappointed. Given the current situation, the focus should be on steps to reduce tensions in the region," State Department deputy spokesman Philip Reeker said.

8/22/04
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HIO-11

We take Musharraf's word seriously, says Rice

2/5

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, MAY 21. The Bush administration says that there is a "lot of active diplomacy" on the India-Pakistan front even as the State Department made a formal announcement that the U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage, will be travelling to the region.

The National Security Adviser, Condoleezza Rice, said the U.S. took the statements of the Pakistani President, Pervez Musharraf, seriously and expected them to be fulfilled. She said that neither India nor Pakistan would "benefit" from war.

Briefing reporters on the U.S. President, George Bush's coming trip to Europe, including Russia, she made the point that Moscow had been "helpful" in some of the diplomacy in South Asia.

"Let me just say that there's a lot of active diplomacy on the India-Pakistan front. We take the assurances and the commitments that President Musharraf made — not just to the President but in an open speech — that they would end activity across the Line of Control from the territory of Pakistan, that they would deal with the infrastructure of terrorism. We take those quite seriously, expect them to be fulfilled," Dr. Rice said.

"We expect the Indian Government to recognise that war will help no one here; that neither side — Pakistan nor India — is going to benefit from war. And we recog-

nise the statesman-like stance that India has taken in recent months, starting with the attack on Indian Parliament. And the President had a chance to communicate that to Prime Minister Vajpayee just a few days ago," she said.

At the State Department, its spokesman, Richard Boucher, made the formal announcement that Mr. Armitage will be travelling to the region "in the near future". But he pointed out that the senior administration official was not being "rushed" to the region.

"I don't think we are rushing Deputy Secretary Armitage out there. He has been involved in this situation in the past. He has gone there before... Our Deputy Secretary has been involved and will remain involved," Mr. Boucher said.

The administration has once again reiterated its concerns about the potential of a conflict between India and Pakistan. "We have been working with both those Governments to try to see if we can't use the excellent relations that they each have with the United States to contribute in some way to an easing of the tensions," he said on Monday.

"We think the surest way to lower tensions and resolve disputes between neighbours is through more dialogue between them, not less. That makes it important to keep their channels of direct communication open," he remarked.

This was a reference to the recent development where New Delhi has asked Islamabad to withdraw its top envoy from India.

Without getting into the specifics, Mr. Boucher said the Secretary of State, Colin Powell, had talked to Gen. Musharraf on Sunday. "I'm really not at this point prepared to go into specific details of their discussion other than to say that whenever he talks to his counterparts in the region, whether it is Foreign Minister (Jaswant) Singh or in the case of Pakistan he talks frequently with President Musharraf, he's always looking for what the United States can do and how we can help ease the tensions between them," Mr. Boucher said.

Asked if the administration was satisfied with Islamabad's efforts to crack down on militant groups involved in the attacks in Kashmir, Mr. Boucher, among other things, referred to the January 12 speech of Gen. Musharraf adding that the Pakistani leader himself would not think that the process was over.

"...He's taken a number of very specific steps with regard to the groups. But I think he himself would say that process is by no means over. It's an ongoing process and there's a lot more to do. And so as he proceeds down that road, we remain very interested in the steps he's taking to carry out the January 12 speech," the spokesman noted.

THE HINDU

What it needs to secure their future

The member states of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation parties to the present convention

NOTING that a quarter of the world's children live in south Asia and many of them require assistance and protection to secure and fully enjoy their rights, and to develop their full potential and lead a responsible life in family and society;

BEARING IN MIND that parents or legal guardians, as the case may be, have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child;

RECOGNIZING, therefore, that the family, as the fundamental unit of society and also as the ideal nurturing environment for the growth and well-being of children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume and fulfil responsibility for its children and community;

RECALLING the common proclamation of their nations in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that childhood is entitled to special care and assistance;

REAFFIRMING their adherence to the Declaration of the World Summit for Children and their commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;

RECOGNIZING the efforts of SAARC towards building a regional consensus on priorities, strategies and approaches to meet the changing needs of children, as embodied in the Rawalpindi Resolution on Children of South Asia 1996, and noting the significant progress already made by the member states in the field of child survival and welfare;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT, the declaration of the years 2001-2010 as the "SAARC Decade of the Rights of the Child";

BEARING IN MIND that the development of the full potential of the south Asian child is a critical concomitant to the region's collective march towards solidarity, justice, peace and human progress;

ACKNOWLEDGING that regional solidarity and cooperation through sharing of experience, expertise, information and resources are eminently useful in galvanizing

Extracts from the SAARC convention on regional arrangements for the promotion of child welfare in south Asia, 2002

the efforts of the south Asian nations to fulfil and protect the rights of children;

REALIZING further that, together, the member states of SAARC can move towards a comprehensive south Asian vision for the well-being of their children;

Hereby agree as follows:
Part I — Definitions, purpose and guiding principles

Article I. Definitions: For the purposes of this convention; "Rights of the Child" shall mean the rights of chil-



Protect the young

dren embodied in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. "Child" shall mean a national of any member state of the SAARC, below the age of eighteen years unless, under the national law, majority is attained earlier.

Article II. Purposes and objectives: The purposes and objectives of the present convention shall be to:

1. Unite the states parties in their determination of redeeming the promises made by them to the south Asian child at the World Summit for Children and at various other national and international conferences and successive SAARC summits;

2. Work together with commitment and diligence, to facilitate and help in the development and protection of the full potential of the south Asian child, with understanding of the rights, du-

ties and responsibilities as well as that of others;

3. Set up appropriate regional arrangements to assist the member states in facilitating, fulfilling and protecting the rights of the child, taking into account the changing needs of the child.

Article III. Guiding principles: For the establishment of regional arrangements, states parties shall be guided by the following principles:

1. States parties to this convention shall consider survival, protection, development and participatory rights of the child as a vital pre-requisite for: a) Accelerating the process of their peoples' realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and b) Achieving economic and social development in south Asia.

2. States parties shall reaffirm the right of the child to enjoy all rights and freedoms guaranteed by the national laws and regionally and internationally binding instruments.

3. States parties consider the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as a comprehensive international instrument concerning the rights and well-being of the child and shall, therefore, reiterate their commitment to implement it.

4. States parties shall uphold "the best interests of the child" as a principle of paramount importance and shall adhere to the said principle in all actions concerning children.

5. States parties, while recognizing that the primary responsibility of looking after the well-being of the child rests with the parents and family, shall uphold the principle that the state has the right and authority to ensure the protection of the best interests of the child.

6. States parties shall consider this convention as a guiding force for all national laws and bilateral or multilateral agreements that are entered into in the field of child welfare.

7. States parties shall always consider gender justice and equality as key aspirations for children, the realization of which, collectively by the governments, would enhance the progress of south Asia.

TO BE CONCLUDED

THE TELEGRAPH

1 E MAY 2002

Rocca ends tour with talks sermon

Mubashir Zaidi
Islamabad / New Delhi, May 15

US ASSISTANT Secretary of State Christina Rocca today said that the United States is working with both India and Pakistan to help defuse the tension and urge both the countries for early resumption of dialogue.

"We continue to urge both sides to reduce the rhetoric and take steps to defuse the tension," Rocca said at a Press meet after holding talks with President Pervez Musharraf this evening. She said US is very focused on this region and remained hopeful that it would be able to defuse the tension between the two countries.

Rocca made it clear that Kashmir is an issue for India and Pakistan to mutually solve. "Which is why we call for dialogue", she said. Rocca said she did not want to characterise her visit to the region as a success or a failure as she came here only to explore ways to defuse the tension.

"I had very frank and open discussion on both sides of the border and all the issues were raised in the discussions," she told newsmen while refusing to divulge the practical steps US is

Pak denial

PAKISTAN ON Wednesday denied allegations that it was involved in Tuesday's terrorist attack in Jammu. A spokesperson said whenever something happens in Kashmir Pakistan is accused without any evidence.

HTC, Islamabad

contemplating to defuse the tension between the two countries.

This is not a work of one trip, she said insisting that the focus of US has not distracted due to other happenings around the globe.

When asked whether the US has asked for the de-escalation on the borders, Rocca said that dialogue is the only solution to de-escalate the tension.

She said US shaves good relations with both the countries and continue to work for reduction of tension in the region.

Earlier in the day, Rocca left New Delhi with a gentle message for the Indian Government: The United States would use all the weapons in its diplomatic arsenal to prevent the "unintend-



General Musharraf with US Assistant Secretary of State Christina Rocca in Islamabad on Wednesday.

ed conflict" between the nuclear neighbours it much fears and get the two sides to talk again.

"My current mission to reduce tension between India and Pakistan is a separate issue from our campaigns in Afghanistan",

fixed stand that dialogue can

Rocca visit row

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, May 15

THE VISIT of US Assistant Secretary of State Christina Rocca to discuss the Indo-Pak face-off has already kicked up a controversy.

Saying that there is no scope for third party intervention in Kashmir, Congress leader K M Khan today expressed concern on the matter. Raising the issue in the Rajya Sabha, he said, "It is an effort of US indulgence in our internal affairs. They are showing unusual interest in Kashmir. This is a serious matter since Kashmir is only a bilateral issue." Khan said Rocca's visit was contrary to the accepted foreign policy. He added that the US was late showing concern over Tuesday's attack in Jammu.

Mission staff harassed

THE LOK Sabha was informed on Wednesday that 10 cases of harassment and assault on Indian High Commission employees in Islamabad had been reported so far. The number of such cases was 22 in 2000 and 18 in 1999. External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh told the House.

HTC, New Delhi

Rocca reserves scowls for Pak

Udayan Namboodiri
New Delhi, May 12

WHEN US Assistant Secretary of State Christina Rocca arrives this week, she will have two sets of messages: one for New Delhi, and another for Islamabad.

She will be in India for the second time in two months. Her brief is clear. She will be placatory with India, but with Pakistan she will be firm.

At the moment, Washington is more concerned that General Pervez Musharraf's support for the campaign against the al-Qaida-Taliban elements holed up in the country's northern areas may be waning. Tuesday's

Karachi blast is feared to have shaken Musharraf's overconfidence that Pakistanis will wholeheartedly support his campaign against fundamentalism.

Rocca will thus carry a stern message for Musharraf. If Pakistan does not smoothen the process for American troops to operate on its soil, Washington would have to withdraw the over-arching support it extended for the General's spurious designs to give himself democratic respectability in October.

For India, however, the scope of the talks will be wider. With Secretary of State Colin Powell himself having met no luck in persuading New Delhi into scal-

ing down its rhetoric and returning to the talks table, it is unrealistic to expect an official of the Joint Secretary rank - like Rocca - to push India further on this score.

It will be a chance for her to get a political understanding of the India's intentions on Jammu and Kashmir ahead of elections in the State.

The recent military exercises along the border may have been picked up by American satellites and interpreted as sufficiently hostile.

Indian officials are preparing for Rocca a full account of the ISI's refusal to part with Kashmir as a *cause celebre*.

The post-modern world & South Asia

By M.K. Bhadrakumar

149-10 9/5
ASPECTRE haunting international relations is that of a new internationalism and a new doctrine of humanitarian intervention, which would place limits on state sovereignty. In a nutshell, the doctrine can be characterised as the capitalist world's version of Trotskyism. Seductive in its simplicity, it holds the potential of re-charting international life and current history.

In the debates over the doctrine in recent weeks, an outraged left has labelled it as the Magna Carta of a new liberal imperialism for the 21st century, and a justification for double standards in foreign policy. But the fact remains that the doctrine is being relentlessly advanced as evident from the strategy on Afghanistan or in faraway lands such as Zimbabwe and Iraq.

The most coherent insight into the thinking behind the doctrine is available in an essay titled "The post-modern state" written by a serving senior British diplomat, Robert Cooper. Mr. Cooper has been regarded as the foreign policy guru of the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, and Mr. Blair has doubtless steered Britain's trans-Atlantic ties with successive U.S. administrations to new heights.

The doctrine predicates that the world order, which came into being after the Thirty Years' War of 17th century Europe and prevailed until the collapse of the Soviet Union, is inexorably giving way to a new pattern. The old order was chiefly based on nation-states rooted in the principles of state sovereignty within well-defined geographical jurisdiction. Balance of power or hegemony provided the underpinning for these states to preserve international order through the centuries. Whenever counter-balancing alliances failed to deliver, disorder prevailed. Implicit in the balance-of-power system was the constant threat of a relapse into chaos but even within this inherent instability, the stasis of nation-states survived. That is, until the cataclysm of 1989.

Out of the debris of the post-Soviet space in international life, the doctrine analyses, three new types of states emerged. To quote Mr. Cooper, "there are now states — often former colonies — where in some sense the state has almost ceased to exist; a 'pre-modern' zone where the state has failed and a Hobbesian war of all against all is under way", for example, countries such as Somalia or Afghanistan. "Second, there are the post-imperial, post-modern states which no

Cooper explains: "The threat from the modern world (eg., India, Pakistan or China) is most familiar. Here, the classical state system... remains intact, and continues to operate by the principles of empire and the supremacy of national interest. If there is to be stability it will come from a balance among the aggressive forces. It is notable how few are the areas of the world where such a balance exists. And how sharp the risk is that in some areas there may soon be a nuclear ele-

ues. This can be in the nature of the 'voluntary imperialism of the global economy' enforceable through instrumentalities such as an international financial institutions. "Aid theology today increasingly emphasises governance."

In the South Asian region, there could be more than one country which does not match the altered substance of the post-modern states, or more appropriately put, which poses a challenge to the post-modern vision of "cooperative empire" — an empire where governing principles are not ethnic but legal, an empire where a "secret race" for nuclear weapons is a perverse act, an empire where each state would have a share in the Government of the other, in which no single country dominates, a commonwealth where the amorality of Machiavelli's theories of statecraft have been replaced by a moral consciousness both in international affairs as well as in domestic affairs.

Mr. Cooper's essay acknowledges Afghanistan as a first serious case study of the efficacy of the doctrine of new imperialism. He calls it "defensive imperialism", euphemistically of course since the most logical way to deal with such chaos as the Hindu-kush breeds would have been outright colonisation, as "the opportunities, perhaps even the need for colonisation is as great as it ever was in the 19th century". What are the elements of strategy in Afghanistan? The Bagram air base, north of Kabul, housing 7,000 troops of NATO powers. The terrorist syndicates; countless, nameless aberrations such as drugs or crime endemic to any failed state; a country too weak to secure its home territory — is there need to go too far to justify intervention? And, equally so, through this troubled land will eventually run the Trans-Caspian gas pipeline. Like Rome, the post-modern world feels obliged to provide the Afghans with some of its laws, some coins and the occasional road.

(The writer is an IFS officer who has served in Islamabad, Kabul, Tashkent and Moscow.)

In the South Asian region, there could be more than one country which does not match the altered substance of the post-modern states.

longer think of security primarily in terms of conquest." Examples are not difficult to seek since they are few and can be counted on the fingertips — member-countries of the European Union, Canada, Japan and the United States despite its reservations over global interdependence or its unilateralism. Mr. Cooper says, "and, third, of course there remain the traditional "modern" states which behave as states always have, following Machiavellian principles; one thinks of countries such as India, Pakistan and China".

In this neat compartmentalisation, given the reality that the locus of power is overwhelmingly wielded by post-modern states, it will be edifying to assess their value system. First, they do not recognise any distinction between domestic and foreign affairs; second, they are votaries of mutual interference in (traditional) domestic affairs; third, they reject the use of force to resolve disputes; fourth, they consider national boundaries as irrelevant in an increasingly global village; and finally, they insist on transparency, mutual openness, interdependence and mutual vulnerability in the conduct of international affairs.

The abhorrence with which these post-modern states would regard the goings-on in the corpus of nation-states becomes self-evident. Mr.

ment in the equation."

The cutting edge of the new doctrine of liberal imperialism lies in its frank admission that the post-modern world has a right, even an obligation, to intervene in the modern and pre-modern states in this era of global interdependence. Arguments of resistance or protestations in terms of state sovereignty or inviolability of established territorial boundaries cannot be allowed to come in the way whenever intervention is deemed necessary. In this serious business, ethnic domination or ethnic exclusiveness (cultural nationalism) or centralised absolutism of the nation-states will not deter the post-modern world either. What are the forms that such intervention by the post-modern states can assume? Mr. Cooper says, "when dealing with more old-fashioned kinds of states outside the post-modern continent of Europe, we need to revert to the rougher methods of an earlier era — force, pre-emptive attack, deception, whatever is necessary to deal with those who still live in the 19th century world of every state for itself. Among ourselves, we keep the law but when we are operating in the jungle, we must also use the laws of the jungle." Preferably, what is called for is evidently a new kind of imperialism, which is acceptable to a world of human rights and cosmopolitan val-

THE HINDO

8 10/10 2002

Tap SAARC trade potential: Pant

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 9. The Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, K.C. Pant, today urged the SAARC countries to give serious thought to the 'untapped potential' of intra-SAARC trade. He was making a presentation as leader of the Indian delegation at the third meeting of the SAARC Finance-Planning Ministers on 'poverty alleviation' here.

The observations of Mr. Pant came after the Pakistan President, Gen. Musharraf, in his inaugural address said trade among SAARC countries accounted for less than five per cent of the total volume.

"It is often argued that we have similar trading baskets and that this basket is limited. But consider the enormous mutual benefit that has accrued through the development of Bhutan's hydroelectric resources," he said.

Mr. Pant said poverty eradication was high on the agenda of each SAARC country. Maintaining that deprivation and suffering, represented a challenge to humanity, he said "we cannot let political and ideological differences blunt our sensitivity and circumscribe our efforts at lending a helping hand".

He said India stood fully committed to this principle and was willing to do whatever it could within its limited means. "We have demonstrated our commitment with a number of our neighbours, but as the saying goes — you cannot clap with only one hand".

Asking SAARC countries to step up co-operation to counter "deleterious case laws" through appropriate interventions in the World Trade Organisation (WTO), he said the "WTO is being increasingly driven by case laws, which have had the effect of the modulating the original intent of the various agreements, frequently to the detriment of developing countries. We need to keep abreast of these to assess their implications on our development efforts. We also need to co-operate on countering the more deleterious case laws through appropriate interventions".

Mr. Pant said that though South Asia made some tangible progress, it was nowhere near the target set by the SAARC countries to eradicate poverty by 2002. "South Asia still represents the largest concentration of the poor in the world and at the present rates of progress, will continue to do so in the foreseeable future."

Stating that it was an "unconscionable" situation, he said the countries in the region should ensure that the task of poverty eradication touched every aspect of their national policies.

Mr. Pant said an Independent Poverty Alleviation Commission had been set up to take a fresh look at the poverty related issues and programmes and come up with new recommendations.

He also referred to "Monteury Consensus" reached at the International Conference on Financing for Development at Monteury in Mexico which set the future agenda for the development co-operation.

One of its dimensions was the possibility of linking international development assistance to conditionalities such as patterns of public expenditure and to governance.

"We have all, at one time or the other, been exposed to the rigorous and difficulties that accompany conditionalities, but we cannot wish them away. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure that there is synergy between internationally led efforts and our own national priorities and policies of poverty eradication", he said.

Later in an informal chat with Indian correspondents, Mr. Pant did not agree with the perception that the allocation of the bulk of funds to sectors such as defence at the expense of human resource development affected the poverty alleviation strategy. He argued that for a country of India's size and responsibilities, defence expenditure accounted for less than 2.5 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product.

He did not agree with the proponents of the thesis that conflicts among SAARC members had affected the grouping. He said that despite the South East Asia crisis, the oil price rise and slow down in world economy, South Asia had registered a growth rate of 5.4 per cent.

"This is an indication of the dynamism and resilience of the economies in the region. However, there are differences between countries and even within the countries between the rural and urban population. All these aspects have to be kept in mind in evolving a strategy to counter poverty".

Neighbour's blood-letting

view - to get money is difficult but not impossible.



Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf makes his way back to his chair after shaking hands with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee during the 11th SAARC summit in Kathmandu. — PTI

In the last seven years, heroin production witnessed a massive shift from the Golden Triangle to Afghanistan and its immediate environs. In October 2000, S Fredrick Starr of the Central Asia-Caucas Institute told the US National Intelligence Council about "Narcotrafficking and the rise of Independent Militias". He said, "Afghanistan and, increasingly, adjacent areas of Pakistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Xinjiang produces and/or processes 85 per cent of heroin consumed in Europe and also meets a rapidly growing percentage of Asian, mainly Chinese, demand. Ninety per cent of the raw product derives from Afghanistan."

In December 2000, America's Central Intelligence Agency published a report "Global Trends 2015" which scientifically predicted the major trends and drivers for the next 15 years. It mentioned that the threat of regional conflict between India and Pakistan would overshadow all other regional issues in the next 15 years. By then Kashmir, experts said, was the world's major flashpoint and based on most indicators, it overtook the dangers in the Middle East. This report was much before 11 September when Afghanistan was a pariah state. The report said, "Continued turmoil in Afghanistan and Pakistan will spill over into Kashmir and other areas of the subcontinent, prompting Indian leaders to take more aggressive, pre-emptive and retaliatory actions."

This was no ordinary prophecy and six months after WTC, this single line from among the premier Intelligence agencies was spine-chilling. It also said India would evolve into a thriving economy, despite its sectarian differences, and compared the situation with Pakistan which apart from being heavily dependent on international financial funding would be simmering with regional and sectarian violence. Now Afghanistan, the war against terror, the duplicity of the Pakistani President and India's own inability to strike back and hold its nerve, after the 13 December attack on its Parliament, has made the CIA's prediction grotesque. Osama bin Laden, who made 9/11 a watershed in modern history, is still at large. It is speculated that he is anywhere — in Afghanistan's southern mountain ranges, Pakistan, Pakistan occupied Kashmir or Kashmir.

Till he is found dead or alive, he will be the single-largest reason for this region being the focus. If dead the terror cells he spawned, along with Egyptian physician-turned Islamic Al Jihad founder Ayman Al Zawahiri, from America to the Philippines, will continue to be the most lethal elements to traumatise the civilised world. For these terror actors, despite global efforts to cut down their funding, the fact remains that this region holds the key in producing and trafficking narcotics. From a terrorist organisation's point of

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Terrorism has made us a nation at a pause in history, pregnant with opportunity. We have a choice to continue to be referred to as the land of invasions or a country that has infused spirit in its blood and steered its nerve in the course of becoming the world's intellectual and economic powerhouse. First, India has to adopt a counter proxy war strategy as a national policy, writes STANLEY THEODORE

ISI killed crucial evidence against the main players. By the late 1990s, he began pursuing his plans to earn. Nawaz Sharif, in his second tenure as Prime Minister brought in a strong Anti Terrorism Act. Former RAW official B Raman, at present with the South Asia Analysis Group, wrote that Gen Musharraf thwarted every effort to implement that law. "Between October 12, 1999, when he came to power, and September 11, 2001, Musharraf had arrested and got convicted only one so-called terrorist under this Act - Sharif himself - the democratically elected Prime Minister. "During his trial by a kangaroo court, Sharif tried to testify orally about his differences with Musharraf over cooperation with the US in capturing Bin Laden but was disallowed by the court. Thereupon, Sharif decided, on his lawyer's advice, to submit a statement to the court and simultaneously release it to the press. A day before it was to be submitted, his lawyer was gunned down in Karachi by unknown gunmen, who also destroyed or removed all the papers in the lawyer's office, including those pertaining to Bin Laden. For Gen Musharraf and South Asia, Karachi was the turning point. He was in a position of absolute power - Army Chief of Staff, Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff and Strategic Commander of Nuclear Force. From this position, he enlisted Bin Laden's support to build the tunnels and trenches in Karachi, which escaped military intelligence and satellite surveillance. Then he asked Bin Laden's mercenaries to support the Pakistan Army

US observations on Pak support to terrorists



One of the tragedies of the war against terror has been that the USA, for serving its own interests, has sided with Pervez Musharraf. George W Bush has thrown himself open to accusations that he sided with a man known to aid and abet terrorists for his own short-term gains while ignoring India's open and unconditional offer to assist the USA in whatever way it wants. Worse America, despite its trauma of 9/11, is sluggish in seeing India's point of view that it is at the receiving end of terrorism. What is even more terrible is, Gen Musharraf's activities that destabilise the region are not ambiguous but real, hard copy with the US government.

US Secretary of State Colin Powell gave detailed accounts of Pakistan involvement with terrorist groups in Jammu and Kashmir and Afghanistan in his department's annual report on Patterns of Global Terrorism in April 2000.

It says, "The Government of Pakistan increased its support to the Taliban and continued its support to militant groups active in Indian-held Kashmir, such as the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, while ignoring India's open and unconditional offer to assist the USA in whatever way it wants. Worse America, despite its trauma of 9/11, is sluggish in seeing India's point of view that it is at the receiving end of terrorism. What is even more terrible is, Gen Musharraf's activities that destabilise the region are not ambiguous but real, hard copy with the US government."

Two: "Pakistan's military government, headed by Gen Pervez Musharraf, continued support of the Kashmir insurgency, and Kashmiri militant groups continued to operate in Pakistan, raising funds and recruiting new cadre. Several of these groups were responsible for attacks against civilians in Indian-held Kashmir, and the largest of the groups, the Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, claimed responsibility for a suicide car-bomb attack against an Indian garrison in Srinagar in April 2000. Three: "In addition, the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, a designated foreign terrorist organisation, continues to be active in Pakistan without discouragement by the Government of Pakistan. Members of the group were associated with the hijacking in December 1999 of an Indian flight that resulted in the release from an Indian jail of former Harkat-ul-Mujahideen leader Maulana Masood Azhar."

And four: "In South Asia, the United States has been increasingly concerned about reports of Pakistani support to terrorist groups and elements active in Kashmir, as well as Pakistani support, especially military support, to the Taliban, which continues to harbour terrorist groups, including the Al-Qaida, Egyptian Islamic Jihad, al-Cama'a al-Islamiyya, and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan."

infiltrate the Indian border. By then Gen Musharraf was against any attempt to crack down on terrorist groups.

America sought Mr Sharif's help to track Bin Laden down and Gen Musharraf made every attempt to scuttle it. The divide between them grew and finally in October 1999, he overthrew Mr Sharif. It is widely believed that if Gen Musharraf had his way, he would have hanged Mr Sharif but the Saudi royal family, Mr Sharif's friends, threatened to stop millions of dollars of aid if Mr Sharif was not exiled to Saudi Arabia. Undoubtedly, the concept of bleeding a country through proxy war is closest to Gen Musharraf's heart. He, however, plays to the gallery, which is predominantly referred to as his "skillful PR". At Agra, he hogged the limelight by engaging the Indian media.

Later, after his speech during the SAARC summit in Kathmandu, he walked over and shook hands with Atal Behari Vajpayee. He wanted to give the impression that he is sincere in his friendship with India and this was beamed to millions of television viewers around the world. But nothing could be farther from the truth. He is presiding over a country, which by his own admission is not functioning under the rule of law. There are several reports on how homed terror groups are getting independent of their Pakistan masters.

In South Asia, Sri Lanka is dealing with the LTTE, Nepal with Maoist insurgency and Islamic fundamentalism is rising in Bangladesh. But it is India and Pakistan that hold the key to the region. One is a democracy and the other is not. And Gen Musharraf is the man in focus. Mr Raman in another article, "Countering Proxy War", published on 9/11 by the SAAG wrote, "In the absence of a meaningful and effective response from our side, it is India, which has been bleeding at the hands of this Army of Islam, with the Pakistan Army remaining untouched. Until the Pakistan Army is made to realise that a proxy war is a game which two can play and that India can play it more effectively and conclusively than Pakistan, there is going to be no respite from the ravages of this war."

"Till now, we have been restricting ourselves to the conventional counter-terrorism strategy based on the principle of passive defence in our own territory in response to Pakistan's proxy war. This strategy has not brought this war to an end and is unlikely to do so. We have to adopt a counter proxy war strategy based on the principle of active defence through a mix of overt and covert actions."

Terrorism has made us a nation at a pause in history, pregnant with opportunity. We have a choice to continue to be referred to as the land of invasions or a country that has infused spirit in its blood and steered its nerve in the course of becoming the world's intellectual and economic powerhouse. The USA has done well to protect its interests and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is showing what his nation can do when terrorism becomes a tool of statecraft.

India needs to stop its bleeding and a comprehensive "counter proxy war strategy" as a national policy.

Ironically, war is fought for peace and India has to show that it takes two to play the game.

(The author is The Statesman's Hyderabad-based Special Representative.)

SAARC meet adopts plan to activate SAPTA

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By B. Muralidhar Reddy mabad in the first week of March clearly demonstrates that SAARC is not hostage to the love-hate relationship between India and Pakistan", said a senior Indian diplomat. The action on SAPTA is good news for the captains of industry and merchants of trade in both India and Pakistan who wish to enhance trade and liberate it from the "core problems" (Kashmir) that has cast a shadow on all other spheres of co-operation.

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 10. The just-concluded SAARC Finance and Planning Ministers meet on 'poverty alleviation' has endorsed an action plan for full operationalisation of the South Asia Preferential Trade Agreement (SAPTA) and move faster towards the South Asia Free Trade Agreement.

The Indian delegation, led by the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, K.C. Pant, sees the action plan as a major step forward in expanding intra-regional trade and capital flows within the SAARC region as decided at the 11th SAARC summit held in Kathmandu in January. The plan enhances the potential for increased trade and commerce between India and Pakistan notwithstanding the SAPTA and a faster movement ups and downs in their political ties. "The current meeting pledged with the SAARC Information and Ministers meeting held in Islamabad

under its export-import policy, Pakistan permits import of only 600 and so items from India.

Four rounds of negotiations have already been completed on SAFTA. The fourth round was held last month and it was decided to include in the basket items highly traded and potential items. The SAARC expert group, which is working on the switch over from SAPTA to SAFTA, is mandated to submit its report by the end of the year. The report will come up for consideration at the SAARC summit scheduled next year.

The Indian side has noted with satisfaction that in their report, the Finance and Planning Ministers have reflected a number of Indian "experiments" in the sphere of poverty alleviation. These include social security nets and monitoring of poverty indices.

On external policies, it has been decided to work with developed countries to increase Over-

seas Development Assistance (ODA) to 0.7 per cent of the Gross National Product through formulation of common positions at relevant international fora and frequent consultations among member states on issues of finance and international investment.

The Ministers have agreed to seek increased market access in developed countries through joint positions to address the biases against developing countries in WTO-related issues, removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers, joint positions against creeping protectionism against the exports of developing countries and flexibility for developing countries in Intellectual Property Rights.

Another interesting formulation adopted relates to unbearingly past "inflows of illegal and tax-evaded" money originating from SAARC countries and controlling them in future through institutional mechanisms.

100 200 THE HINDU

It is up to Pak., says Pant

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 9. The Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission and the Prime Minister's 'pointman' on Kashmir, K.C. Pant, said today that the "ball was in the court" of Pakistan for resumption of the stalled dialogue between the two countries.

Approached for his reaction to the statement made by Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, in his first referendum campaign speech at Lahore that whatever was going on in Kashmir was indigenous struggle, Mr. Pant said: "What is new in it. He had said this in his February 5 speech to the joint session of Pakistan Occupied Assembly and Council".

He reiterated that Islamabad has to create a conducive atmosphere by addressing concerns of New Delhi for normalisation of ties.

"We urge Pakistan to see that Pakistan-based cross-border terrorism ends."

Mr. Pant, who is here to take part in the three-day SAARC Finance and Planning Ministers on 'poverty eradication', repeated that "we feel that going through the motion of dialogue would not be productive unless conditions for its success are created".

He said the Pakistan of today was a partner of an international alliance against terrorism and it was committed to eliminating terrorism wherever it existed. "It is committed to destroying

the support structure of terrorists, their finances, supply of arms and training.

"It has taken the position that there is no justification for terrorism anywhere. Gen. Musharraf has endorsed these ideas in his January 12 address to the people of Pakistan. It is only reasonable that a country which has proclaimed to act against terrorism or fundamentalism within should also ensure that its territory/ territories administered by it is/are not used for launching or supporting terrorism in India", he said.

Substantiating the point, he said that India has handed over a list of 20 fugitives to Pakistan and demanded their extradition but there has been no response

to the list from Islamabad.

He said of the 20 on the list, the Interpol has issued red corner notices to 16 persons.

"Apart from evidence given by the Government of India from time to time (on those mentioned in the list), some of the evidence against them has been provided by the Pakistani media itself," he said.

Mr. Pant argued that India was always committed to peace as well as dialogue within the framework of the Shimla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration.

"There is no change in the position even today but conditions have to be created for a meaningful and result-oriented dialogue."

Focus on HRD, Musharraf tells SAARC nations

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

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9/13

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 8. The people of South Asia deserved peace and prosperity and it was possible only if the focus shifted towards greater human resource development, the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, said today.

Inaugurating the third meeting of the SAARC Finance/Planning Ministers on poverty alleviation here, Gen. Musharraf made no bones about the perpetual conflict faced by countries in the region in the allocation of the limited resources. The reference was clearly to the allocation of huge funds to defence at the expense of social welfare programmes.

Throughout his 40-minute speech, Gen. Musharraf was remarkably restrained in his comments, barring some stray observations in the beginning. He avoided any reference to bilateral issues and his pet theme was the need for SAARC to expand its charter to include the resolution of bilateral disputes.

He started his address with the assertion that Pakistan favoured an active role by SAARC in all spheres and was opposed to the disruption of its activities for whatever reason. At another stage, he said the people of the SAARC region, confronted with conflict and instability, deserved peace and prosperity.

In contrast to the recent SAARC Information Ministers conference that was dominated by the ongoing tension between India and Pakistan, today's event was business-like. Even the Pakistan Foreign Minister, Shaukat Aziz, and the newly elected SAARC Secretary-General, Q.A.M.A. Rahim, confined their observations to the theme of

the meeting. Though Gen. Musharraf skirted bilateral and contentious issues, he could not resist the temptation to dwell at some length on the various achievements and experiments of his Government in poverty alleviation since he took over the reins two and a half years ago.

He asserted that his regime had ushered in a "silent revolution" in the country through the partyless local bodies election held last year and devolution of power to the lowest level. Gen. Musharraf proudly proclaimed that the credit for dismantling the British legacy of Commissioners and Maharajas should go to his Government.

In an indirect reference to politicians who had looted money and stashed it away in foreign countries, he said, "there is a requirement for evolving steps to prevent loot and money-laundering. We need to get this capital back. Once we get back this money we will wipe out our debts." It can be construed as a reference to the former Prime Ministers, Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, who were accused of indulging in massive corruption. Gen. Musharraf said the SAARC region as a whole had become synonymous with poverty, conflict and instability. "The perception of the world is that the reforms would not be fruitful unless our countries address the social gap and governance of deficit individually and the stability collectively," he said.

He also spoke of the conflict faced by the developing countries on whether to invest in human resources or fast track development.

The conference attended by Ministers and officials of the SAARC countries was expected to come up with a declaration tomorrow to eradicate poverty in the region.

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THE HINDU

Visit has nothing to do with bilateral ties: Pant

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Shaukat Aziz

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 8. The Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission and the Prime Minister's 'pointman' on Kashmir, K.C. Pant, had a face-to-face with the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, at a tea ceremony after the inauguration of the SAARC Ministerial conference on "poverty alleviation".

As the tea session lasted over half-an-hour, waiting reporters became curious about the ceremony. Approached by reporters about the details of his discussion with the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, Mr. Pant said the discussion took place in the presence of other Ministerial delegations from the SAARC countries and that the exchange of views was strictly in the context of the theme of the meeting.

"It was a useful interaction. Gen. Musharraf was giving details of the various initiatives taken by his Government in the spheres of poverty alleviation and devolution of power at the grassroots level. Nothing less and nothing more", he said when a reporter wanted to know if any issue in the context of the Indo-Pak tension figured.

Asked if he had brought any message from New Delhi to end the current stalemate, Mr. Pant said he was here to attend the



The Pakistani Finance Minister, Shaukat Aziz, receives K.C. Pant, head of the Indian delegation for the meeting of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, in Islamabad, on Sunday. — AFP

SAARC Ministerial conference in his capacity as Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission. "My visit has nothing to do with Indo-Pak relations".

When the reporter persisted if New Delhi was not interested in peace, Mr. Pant replied, "I am here to attend the conference".

Earlier on his arrival for the inaugural ceremony, Gen. Musharraf shook hands with Mr. Pant and other delegates.

Indian officials insist that as of now that there is no plan for a

one-on-one meeting between Mr. Pant and any other functionary in the Musharraf administration.

The Finance Minister of Pakistan, Shaukat Aziz, had expressed his desire in the course of a press conference that he would like a bilateral meeting with the Indian delegation, but till now nothing concrete has been planned. Mr. Pant is to return to Delhi in the early hours of Wednesday.

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On home turf, Musharraf doesn't talk of Indo-Pak issue

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ISLAMABAD, APRIL 8

In sharp contrast to the high-profile raking up of Indo-Pak issue at the SAARC fora in Kathmandu and later here, Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf today refrained from raising bilateral issues at the grouping's ministerial meeting urging the member countries to launch a war against poverty.

Chief interlocutor on Kashmir and Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission K.C. Pant told the two-day SAARC Finance and Planning Ministers'

Conference on Poverty Alleviation that India would do whatever it can within its means to fight poverty.

"India stands fully committed and is ready and willing to do whatever it can within its limited means" to reduce poverty, Pant said.

After delivering a sedate speech outlining his vision on development and poverty eradication in the South Asian region, Musharraf quietly settled down for a little chat over tea with Pant and other SAARC ministers to discuss the issues of mutual interest.

Earlier, soon after his arrival

his inaugural speech on the three-tier concept of regional development to effectively deal with grinding poverty of the region.

Musharraf said Pakistan would oppose any disruption to the SAARC process and that Islamabad firmly stood for its continuity.

"We would oppose to any effort to discontinue this process," he said adding that "the process that has been started must go on till our main goals have been achieved in a sustainable manner."

Musharraf, who was formally scheduled to launch his poll

campaign tomorrow from Lahore to win the national referendum to be held next month, spoke strongly in favour of launching a regional initiative against corruption in high places, which he termed as "loot and money laundering."

"There is a requirement for evolving steps for loot and money laundering. We need to get this capital back. Once we get back this money, we would outdebtt problems," he said in a veiled attack on former Prime Ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, who were accused of indulging in corruption.

'Who is Commonwealth?'

■ ISLAMABAD: Pakistan questioned the Commonwealth's right to criticise President Pervez Musharraf's referendum plan, saying no one has the right to interfere in the country's internal matters. "Only the people of Pakistan have the right to support or oppose the referendum and no one from outside Pakistan has any right to interfere in internal matters of the country," Defence Spokesman Major General Rashid Qureshi said, reacting to the Commonwealth's comments that the referendum was not part of the road map announced by Musharraf to restore democracy in the country. PTI

at the venue, Musharraf shook hands with Pant and other delegates attending the meet.

Indian officials later clarified that there was no one-to-one meeting between Musharraf and Pant nor they discussed any

bilateral issues. Pant is heading a four-member official delegation at the meeting.

Bylying all speculation that he might rake up Indo-Pak issues ignoring the SAARC charter, Musharraf devoted most of

'Sort out terrorist list issue through talks'

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, MARCH 29. The Bush administration has maintained that its demand for the handing over of Omar Saeed Sheikh for killing Daniel Pearl and India's demand to Pakistan to hand over 20 terrorists are two different things.

It has once again called on Islamabad and New Delhi to sort issues out through dialogue.

"They're two entirely different situations. That's the simple

answer to that," the deputy spokesman of the State Department, Philip Reeker, said at the Washington Foreign Press Centre. "In terms of those who have been charged, indicted in Pakistan as well as those who have been indicted in the U.S. for Pearl's murder, we want to see justice done and we're very much in agreement with Pakistan on that aspect of it," Mr. Reeker said.

The legal processes involving the U.S. and Pakistan would

have to be worked out. "We've made clear that we would like to have him and try him (Omar Saeed) under the charges that our own Justice Department has brought. Pakistan has legal requirements. We'll continue to work that as a legal process," Mr. Reeker said.

On India's demand to Pakistan to hand over 20 terrorists, Mr. Reeker said "we have encouraged both sides to work together. I think when the Secretary travelled in the region

he said that he thought both sides could resolve all of the issues through dialogue, and that includes this one."

In line with the administration's change of stance towards Pakistan, Mr. Reeker praised the Pakistan Government's stand on terrorism and the President, Pervez Musharraf's initiatives to tackle the menace.

"Gen. Musharraf has spoken strongly against terrorism", he said.

THE HINDU
30 MAR 2002

The South Asian stalemate

By Michael Krepon

One central purpose of serious diplomacy must be crisis avoidance. This cannot happen in the absence of a sustained and substantive dialogue.

THE RISK of war and nuclear dangers feed on misperceptions. By this measure, South Asia remains a very dangerous place. One need look no further than the present, elongated crisis between India and Pakistan for confirmation of how poorly New Delhi and Islamabad appear to understand each other. To complicate matters further, Washington also has great difficulty "reading" the tea leaves in South Asia. New Delhi and Islamabad have maintained their armed forces on a war footing for over two months now, and Indian officials assert that their forces will remain in the fighting corridors for another few months, until they are able to gauge whether or not the Government of Pervez Musharraf has been faithful to its stated commitment to turn away from jihad.

How has this message been received in Pakistan and the United States? Does it mean that, if the level of infiltration is not sufficiently reduced, the Government of India would be obliged to teach the Pakistani military and Gen. Musharraf a lesson? Since previous lessons against the jihadis have been confined to India's side of the Line of Control and have not had the desired effect, does New Delhi's message also mean that new lessons would have to be meted out on the Pakistani side of the LoC? Many in Washington seem to think so, which is why the CIA chief, George Tenet, has declared that the possibility of another war in the subcontinent remains high. Other South Asia specialists in the U.S. argue that India's mobilisation constituted "play acting". In this view, the threat of war is nothing more than diplomatic coercion on Pakistan to rein in the jihadi groups, as well as an indirect means to pressure Washington to lean on Gen. Musharraf to take additional steps against terrorism. Both of these explanations could well be wrong. A resort to war might not happen in this case, but not for lack of adequate preparation. Indeed, the steps taken by India's armed forces hardly resemble playacting. There may be considerable truth, however, in New Delhi's supposition that pre-

paring to fight a war would provide dual leverage on Islamabad and Washington. But this leverage waned greatly after Gen. Musharraf's speech on January 12 reaffirming the Quaid-e-Azam's vision, and after Pakistan's military mobilisation. Subsequent Indian threats completely missed their mark because New Delhi misread both capitals. The Bush administration lavishly praised Gen. Musharraf after January 12, not only for the markers he laid down, but also to give him added time and space to implement his initiatives. By publicly lauding Gen. Musharraf, Washington was affirming messages sent to New Delhi via diplomatic channels to avoid war.

Even after January 12, Washington took India's threats seriously; Pakistani military leaders did not. Instead, they do not think that a war with India is likely because they have called India's bluff by positioning their armed forces to counter Indian military strikes across the LoC dividing Kashmir and along the international border. Is Washington right? Or is Islamabad?

New Delhi and Washington do not have a monopoly on misperception. Pakistan's confidence might well be misplaced. After all, Gen. Musharraf publicly expressed the view that India mobilised troops primarily for reasons of domestic politics, and that demobilisation would follow quickly on the heels of the election in Uttar Pradesh. New Delhi has now disabused Gen. Musharraf of this idea. At the same time, those in India who might have hoped to reap electoral dividends from the mobilisation were certainly disappointed. No one has established an enviable record in this crisis for predicting the future. Everyone's crystal ball is clouded.

To muddy the waters further, Indian officials have not been consistent about their requirements for de-escalation. The avoidance of war, they say, would require either the complete cessation of infiltration across

the LoC, or its dramatic reduction. In the northern reaches of the LoC, infiltration has stopped, due to seasonal conditions. In the southern sectors of the LoC, some infiltration apparently continues. It would be reasonable to expect that Gen. Musharraf would seek to reduce infiltration, especially by groups that he has banned. It is also reasonable to expect that infiltration will not cease. Pakistan's military leadership is not in the habit of giving everything in return for nothing. Thus, as long as the Government of India stipulates that a resumption of dialogue hinges on unlikely outcomes, the conditions for war would remain in place. Is this what New Delhi really wants? If not, the Government of India has placed itself in the awkward position of either de-escalating without acknowledging satisfaction, or punishing Pakistan for not gaining sufficient satisfaction.

The second oft-repeated demand of the Government of India for de-escalation is that Pakistan must extradite at least some of the 20 truly reprehensible individuals named on its "most wanted" list. Even had this demand been made privately, it is difficult to envision Pakistani compliance if, as India asserts, these individuals have many embarrassing tales to tell. By making this demand public, and central to the satisfactory resolution of the current crisis, the Government of India has greatly increased the likelihood that its bluff would be called. At issue here is not India's right to retaliate against provocation, but the utility of the retaliatory actions taken against terror. An attempt by India to punish Gen. Musharraf for not doing enough to combat terror might be understandable, but would it be wise? Here there is much room for misunderstanding between New Delhi and foreign capitals.

Washington and other capitals would have great difficulty understanding how an attempt by India to

punish Gen. Musharraf would improve performance on matters that New Delhi has asserted are crucial indicators of good faith. It remains possible, of course, that a particularly egregious act of terrorism could provide the spark that generates warfare between two armies that are quite prepared to fight. The absence of this spark over the next few months might well suggest that Gen. Musharraf is serious about clamping down on the jihadi outfits. It might also suggest collusion between the Musharraf Government and those groups it has "blacklisted". Here, too, perceptions might vary greatly, since both scenarios support the very same outcome.

The current crisis is laden with the potential for tragic miscalculation. False assumptions and misperceptions abound. New Delhi, Islamabad, and Washington read current developments quite differently, and since these developments lend themselves to divergent explanations, greater clarity is likely to elude decision makers for the duration of the crisis. Worse still, the denouement of this crisis is likely to confirm views that are misleading, wrong, and mutually reinforcing. Just as the Kargil war contributed to the current crisis, this crisis can easily lead to the next confrontation.

The hard reality of a nuclearised South Asia is that crises are more likely, and that crises do not lend themselves to mutually satisfactory outcomes. Grievances as well as false certainties are therefore generated, which are then manifested in the next crisis.

Serious diplomacy is needed to break this vicious cycle — not the diplomacy of empty rhetoric, not diplomacy that conceals collusion with acts of terror, and not coercive diplomacy that relies on the threat of war. One central purpose of serious diplomacy must be crisis avoidance. This cannot happen in the absence of a sustained and substantive dialogue centred on escalation control, nuclear risk reduction, and the Kashmir issue.

(The writer is founding president, Henry L. Stimson Center, Washington.)

26 MAR 2002

SAARC upbeat on free trade draft

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 20. The SAARC today exuded optimism about finalisation of the draft for a free trade agreement by December 2002 and further hinted at the move to step up efforts towards establishment of an independent commission for poverty alleviation which forms part of the agenda for the SAARC Ministerial Conference to be held next month at Islamabad. Incidentally, the Deputy Chairman

of the Planning Commission, K.C. Pant, who is the Centre's interlocutor on Kashmir, will attend the conference on India's behalf.

Interacting with newsmen after meeting Mr. Pant, the visiting Secretary-General of SAARC, Q.A. M.A. Rahim, said the first draft of the free trade agreement has already been prepared. "I am hopeful that the final draft will be ready by the mandated deadline of December 2002."

THE HINDU

21 MARCH 2002

11-10 SAARC in the Dark *gunk*

Bitter irony marked the proceedings of last week's SAARC information ministers' conference in Islamabad. Ministers attending the SAARC conference — purportedly to enhance South Asian co-operation and people-to-people contacts — were forced to take the most circuitous routes to reach the venue. Why? Because SAARC's two most influential member states, India and Pakistan, engaged in a military and diplomatic stand-off, had suspended all road and air links, and curbed free movement of people across their borders. To make matters worse, representatives of the two estranged neighbours also hijacked the conference agenda. Hence, far from serving as a forum for addressing multilateral issues of concern to the South Asian region, it became an arena where Indian and Pakistani delegates indulged in political grandstanding. Ever on the alert for an opportunity to be one-up on India — especially at international conferences — president Pervez Musharraf, magnanimously suggested widening the ambit of SAARC to include "bilateral" issues and restart the stalled peace dialogue with the Indian government. Upset over the 'good' general utilising the SAARC forum to advocate a bilateral peace formula, the Indian representatives rejected the offer; instead they linked the resumption of dialogue to Pakistan handing over the 20 terrorists wanted by Delhi. To be fair, official India could not have responded differently given Pakistan's outright rejection of India's demands and Islamabad's role in promoting terrorist violence. Moreover, seeking to convert SAARC into a forum for resolving bilateral issues militates against both the letter and spirit of the grouping and would only make the other five South Asian countries hostages to the India-Pakistan conflict.

Even without being formally involved in the India-Pakistan imbroglio, time and again SAARC conferences have been mired in avoidable controversies of concern only to Delhi and Islamabad. This has had the effect of making SAARC increasingly irrelevant as a forum for regional development and co-operation. Consequently, the other member-states have been left with no option but to pursue their common interests at the sub-regional level. One would have expected the SAARC members to use the forum for launching a combined assault on the crushing levels of poverty, under-development, and rising levels of unemployment and illiteracy that make this region home to the largest number of the world's poor. To create conditions for such an effort, it is imperative to end sectarian conflicts and extremist violence that undermine the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the SAARC countries. Indeed, if SAARC is to emulate other formations for regional co-operation, like the European Union or ASEAN, its role requires to be redefined. However, expanding the "restrictive scope" of SAARC to include "bilateral disputes" as General Musharraf has proposed is unacceptable. Though the proposal may be well-intentioned, it is not practicable and would have been rejected by the SAARC states. For one, it would have allowed member states the licence to meddle in one another's internal affairs, resulting in new scenarios of tension and spawning a whole new culture of suspicion and distrust. If anything, SAARC countries should endeavour to retain the organisation's multilateral character and return to basic issues, such as an agenda for social action, strengthening civil society, lifting visa restrictions and allowing the free movement of people and observers from the media, curbing extremist violence and above all using SAARC as a platform for promoting peace and regional development.

Face Value

Pak. planning SAARC Interior Ministers' meet

By B. Muraidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, MARCH 11. Pakistan is planning to hold a conference of Interior Ministers of SAARC countries to discuss a host of issues of common interest, including terrorism, extremism, drug and human-smuggling, border control and visa restrictions.

Though currently a global campaign is on to tackle issues such as terrorism, extremism and drugs, the SAARC countries should also independently make a concerted drive and evolve a joint strategy to deal with them, an official was quoted as saying.

The SAARC Interior Ministers' meet, if it materialises, would provide an opportunity for the Union Home Minister, L.K. Advani, and the Pakistan Interior Minister, Moinuddin Haider, to have a face-to-face meeting, if not a formal or bilateral get-together.

There was some controversy last week when Mr. Haider claimed to have extended an invitation to Mr. Advani through the Information and Broadcasting Minister, Sushma Swaraj, to visit Pakistan for discussions on contentious issues. Ms. Swaraj, however, has denied that any 'oral' invitation was conveyed to her.

There is a stalemate in the talks between India and Pakistan since the Summit between the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, and the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, at Agra in July last year.

While India is insisting that Pakistan should address its concerns on cross-border terrorism and infiltration, Islamabad wants talks to begin for paving the way for more action on the ground, in addition to the ban on the militant groups.

The Pakistani official, however, believed that India would in all probability oppose the Interior Ministers' meet but the proposal would get wider support from other SAARC countries as most of them faced similar problems.

THE HINDU

12 MAR 2002

SAARC eases travel curbs on journalists

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, MARCH 10. The third conference of the Information Ministers of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation will be held in the first quarter of 2003 in India.

The decision was taken at the second SAARC Information Ministers' meet which concluded here after three days of deliberations. The Information Minister, Sushma Swaraj, and Ministers from all the other six member-countries took part in the conference.

Various measures adopted included the decision to curb visa restrictions to permit free movement of journalists within South Asia, the establishment of a media development fund and the promotion of frequent interaction among the information establishments of the region.

"There was tremendous sense of harmony in the conference and that is why we have taken the decisions unanimously to promote cooperation in the field of information and technology," the Pakistan

Media Minister and new chairman of SAARC Information Ministers, Nisar A. Memon, said at a press conference.

Asked whether the journalists would also be able to go to Kashmir, he said free movement of newsmen had been agreed to by easing visa restrictions. "We all want to go to Srinagar because it is a beautiful place," he said, hoping that continuous interaction among the Information Ministers would help resolve contentious issues.

The meeting had also decided to establish a "SAARC Media Fora" in all the seven member-countries with a view to facilitating a meeting of editors and working journalists every year. Bangladesh had expressed its willingness to host such a meeting in Dhaka. Besides, the SAARC secretariat would organise at least six training programmes for journalists each year. These would be held in radio and TV academies as well as the information academy, Mr. Memon said.

It was also decided to establish a model trans-satellite

broadcasting technology system for greater collaboration in the field of satellite research. "This will help us to have free flow of information."

Mr. Memon said a SAARC Information Centre would be set up at the SAARC secretariat to provide information on the member-countries. An audio-video exchange committee would also be established to telecast live joint programmes during prime time on the television networks in the member-states.

Pakistan had offered to give away awards, on a regular basis, to artistes of folk music, the Minister said. "The good thing about this conference is that we have set dates for compliance to have increased cooperation in the field of information."

Replying to another question, he defended the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf's reference to the differences between India and Pakistan during the inauguration. Gen. Musharraf had "rightly" pointed out that the objectives of SAARC could be achieved only if there was peace in the region.

THE HINDU

11 MAR 2002

KASHMIR THROWS UP IFs & BUTs AT SAARC MEETING

Pakistan ready to de-escalate

Muhammad Najeeb
ISLAMABAD 10 MARCH

PAKISTAN IS ready to start talks with India to defuse the border tension and may consider withdrawing troops if New Delhi promised to follow suit. "Islamabad will take the lead in troop withdrawal if New Delhi agreed to follow suit," Pakistan foreign minister Abdul Sattar told reporters at a dinner for information ministers of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) countries, on Saturday.

Mr Sattar also reaffirmed Islamabad's willingness to start a dialogue with India on an extradition treaty. He said the talks will address New Delhi's repeated demands for handing over Indian criminals, allegedly hiding in Pakistan. India has ruled out dialogue with Pakistan till the latter stops supporting terrorists in Jammu & Kashmir.

"We are not averse to signing with New Delhi a treaty providing for the extradition of criminals," Mr Sattar said. He referred to India's repeated calls for Pakistan to act on its list of 20 criminals and terrorists. "Going back in history would serve no purpose," he said. Some cases went as far back as over 20 years, he added.

Mr Sattar said, the list forwarded by India had nothing to do with the December 13 attack on Parliament. Five terrorists were involved in the attack in which nine people were killed. India blamed the attack on two Pakistan-based terrorist groups and ordered a major military mobilisation along the Pakistani border. There was a similar response from Islamabad, giving rise to fears of war. "Any extradition case is a complicated legal process, involving a lot of documentation to support the case," Mr Sattar said. — IANS

Pak stand on terrorism hit Agra Summit

K.J.M. Varma
ISLAMABAD 10 MARCH

INFORMATION AND broadcasting minister Sushma Swaraj has attributed the failure of the Agra Summit to Pakistan's refusal to denounce "cross-border terrorism" and its excessive emphasis on Kashmir to be recognised as the "core issue" in Indo-Pak talks.

"Our position was that Kashmir was one of the issues and if it was made a core issue then we would go to the core of the core issue. Then there would be no end to it," Ms Swaraj, who was here to attend the Saarc Information Ministers Conference, told Pakistan daily Dawn.

She also disagreed with a perception that some "hawks" in the Indian Cabinet were responsible for keeping Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee from signing on an "agreed draft" during the summit. "There are no hawks or doves in the Indian Cabinet and there is always a consensus on decisions," she added.

Ms Swaraj denied that her visit to Pakistan was to test the waters for de-escalation of tensions. She said there was no widespread opposition in India on the steps taken by the Indian government against Pakistan. "It is a popular move because you see people in general like their governments to ensure protection of life and property of their citizens,"

she added. On the communal riots in Gujarat, she said both Hindus and Muslims were being killed and the entire nation was concerned about the outbreak. "There's no question of the Indian Muslims losing confidence in their country as the riots were brought under control within three days... They were reassured as they saw that police, while defending them, had shot dead Hindus," she pointed out. — PTI



SUSHMA: TALKING TOUGH

'Pak. must address India's concerns'

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, MARCH 10. The Information and Broadcasting Minister, Sushma Swaraj, has said that the minimum India would expect from Pakistan for resumption of the process of dialogue is a communication from Islamabad on the concerns expressed by New Delhi.

In separate interviews to Pakistani dailies on the last day of her stay here in connection with the SAARC Information Ministers' conference, Ms. Swaraj said India could consider the resumption of the stalled dialogue if Pakistan was prepared to hand over seven to ten persons from the list of 20 wanted criminals and terrorists given by India.

India would also expect "considerable reduction" on the ground in cross-border terrorism.

In an interview to *The News*, Ms. Swaraj said "India will wait and see the change on the ground situation before agreeing for talks and if Pakistan hands over seven to ten fugitives wanted by us and brings down cross-border terrorism by 30 to 50 per cent, then the relations can be normalised".

She also accused the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, of going back on his pledge to crack down on militancy by declaring the Kashmir movement a "freedom struggle".

Referring to steps taken by Gen. Musharraf against reli-

gious extremism and ban on 'jehadi' outfits taking part in militant activities in Kashmir, she said "if he considers the Kashmir issue a freedom struggle, there is no use of all those steps that you have mentioned". She argued that such steps only benefited Pakistan. "Yes, a change in Pakistan's policy has come after September 11 and December 13, but it has been Pakistan-specific and not related to cross-border terrorism." Ms. Swaraj did not feel the ban on the Jaish-e-Mohammad and the Lashkar-e-Taiba had in any way affected cross-border terrorism.

When pointed out that there was no extradition treaty between the two countries to hand over the wanted persons to India, she said "our External Affairs Ministry will consider it, if your Foreign Office says that it is considering the list of fugitives wanted by India".

She said that Gen. Musharraf during his visit to India last year, positively responded to the Union Home Minister, L.K. Advani's proposal to have an extradition treaty between the two countries, but backed out when he was asked to hand over Dawood Ibrahim.

Regarding the list of wanted persons handed over by India, she said New Delhi had provided necessary evidence about their involvement in various crimes in India. Also, "India was not averse to extraditing the persons wanted by Pakistan."

THE HINDU

11 MAR 2001

Sushma reality bites for Pak

Kumkum Chadha
Islamabad, March 9

IF PRESIDENT Musharraf used the Saarc platform to score points against India, Information and Broadcasting Minister Sushma Swaraj did one better. She went live on PTV and said exactly what the Pakistanis did not want to hear: Home truths about the Indo-Pak relation, Pakistan's doublespeak and the fact that it is Pakistan and not India which sabotaged the peace process.

Except that Sushma did not follow Musharraf's flamboyant style; or violate the Saarc charter to debate contentious bilateral issues. She was what a decent guest should be despite provocation on alien ground. It was one of the rare times that she seemed defenceless: Not because she did not have the answers but because she had to wait for the right forum.

She opted to abide by the rules of the game rather than run amok or follow Pakistan's style of — to quote President Musharraf — "taking the bull by the horns". While inaugurating the Saarc conference, Musharraf had criticised India's move to ban overflights. Even though Sushma's failure to match Musharraf's bluster came as a bit of a disappointment for the Indian delegation, in hindsight it was a strategy that worked well.

For the media reports that followed, while praising Musharraf for his bluntness, conceded that the Indian Minister had conducted herself "with dignity".

But the PTV repartee, through Newshour which is telecast live, was a different ball game altogether. Here, even while practis-



Union I&B Minister Sushma Swaraj greets her Pakistani counterpart Nisar Memon at the Saarc Information Ministers' official dinner.

ing restraint, which has been the ebullient minister's hallmark all through her visit, Sushma did some plain-speaking to end misgivings about India's "hardline" on contentious issues.

With the facts on her fingertips, she matched barbs with content, allegations with evidence and perceptions with ground re-

ality: "If you show us one side of the picture, be prepared to see the other side: one which is real and bitter," she said.

In addition to using phrases like "*apne gireban mein bhi jhanko*" (search your conscience) or "*Be-adbi karna mere mulk ki tehzeeb nahin hai*" (to be impolite is against the culture of

my nation), she alternated between speaking chaste Urdu and quoting Hindi poet Ramdhari Singh 'Dinkar'.

The show did yet another thing: It reinforced the notion that decisions in democratic India were collective, rather unlike knee-jerk reactions of lifting flight bans "here and now".

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

10 MARCH 2002

SATURDAY, MARCH 9, 2002

110-10
COLD-SHOULDERING PEACE 9/3
South Asia

THE PREDICTABLY NEGATIVE response of the Vajpayee administration to the latest peace overture by the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, suggests an absence of creativity in its diplomatic thinking. New Delhi's stony attitude is bad enough, surely, as a baffling sign of inept public diplomacy. Much worse, in fact, is official India's unwise inflexibility as policy towards Pakistan. Now, Gen. Musharraf's new initiative is undeniably a question of subtle timing rather than anything intrinsically innovative. Yet, the truth is that there can be no forward movement towards the normalisation of India-Pakistan relations without a de-escalation of the present warlike tensions on the bilateral front. It is this aspect that Gen. Musharraf has deftly invoked while inaugurating a South Asian conference of Information Ministers in Islamabad on Thursday. At a basic level, New Delhi seems angry that he should have utilised a forum of the seven-nation South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation to articulate a formula to ease the escalating estrangement between India and Pakistan. In taking a dim view of this development, New Delhi is allowing itself to be guided by a blinkered vision of the technicality that the SAARC Charter prohibits any discussion of contentious bilateral issues. Lost sight of in the process is the substance of Gen. Musharraf's offer.

Given the abnormally high tensions along the India-Pakistan frontier since the savage terrorist attack on Parliament House in New Delhi on December 13, Gen. Musharraf appears to have outlined his proposals in a noticeably non-provocative style. One of his suggestions, aimed at reviving the languishing people-to-people contacts on the margins at least of the bilateral front, relates to Pakistan's stated readiness to restore air links between the two countries on a quick and reciprocal basis. In a sense, it is quite natural that the Pakistan President should have called for the restoration of flight paths whose absence had forced the SAARC Ministers, includ-

ing India's Sushma Swaraj, to take time-consuming alternative routes to reach Islamabad. The air transportation links in question were suspended in tit-for-tat decisions in the context of the terrorist strike on India's Parliament House.

New Delhi has often found itself dismayed over what it tends to regard as Gen. Musharraf's penchant for designer diplomacy. But the Vajpayee administration should know that the gravity of the current India-Pakistan standoff brooks no complacency on any count, real or imaginary. Anchored to the unexceptionable idea of a cohesive SAARC is Gen. Musharraf's call for reciprocal withdrawals of troops from strike-threatening forward locations along the India-Pakistan border. In his reckoning, "both sides have the potential to indulge in adventurism". While this underscores the need for a military de-escalation by the two countries, he thinks that the pullback itself can be accomplished only through "mutual understanding". New Delhi's response is a waffle in the form of Ms. Swaraj's flat insistence that the ground situation remains unchanged. Within the past several weeks, the Vajpayee administration has consistently cold-shouldered all well-meaning calls from within India itself for a military de-escalation. Although New Delhi deployed military forces within striking distance of Pakistan in the wake of the outrage on December 13, several factors emphasise the need for an Indian pullback that might lead to a matching demobilisation by Pakistan. It is heartless to play a chess-game of "coercive diplomacy" by keeping troops in battle-readiness for long. A complete stoppage of cross-border terrorism from Pakistan — a stated objective of India's military deployment — is a qualitative index that will take considerable time to measure. The way forward is to de-escalate and re-engage Pakistan, given Gen. Musharraf's reported willingness to respond. His strategic moves are being watched by the international community, and this is a factor that New Delhi should not ignore.

THE HINDU

9 MAR 2002

Sweet and SAARC

This forum needs a new direction if it is to be relevant

THE SAARC Information Ministers Conference, which ends today in Islamabad, once again seems to underline the irrelevance of the organisation as it has functioned in recent times. For instance, the need for more relaxed rules for the exchange of information at a time when information flows have been globalised does not appear to have received serious attention. Sheer geography defines most issues of South Asia in bilateral terms and historical experiences do not produce sufficient confidence in evolving acceptable co-operative measures beyond the cosmetic. Continuing terrorist violence in India, promoted and supported from across the borders in the name of religion for a decade and a half, could hardly provide the framework for even a dialogue leave alone any serious co-operation between the two largest countries of the subcontinent. This has had an inevitably debilitating influence on SAARC, with its already limited agenda. It is not surprising, therefore, that some of the countries have in the meantime sought sub-regional co-operation for mutual benefit. This only re-emphasises the need to rejuvenate SAARC.

But the challenges that the people and the governments of the region face are in most ways not very different. Devoting total energies to a rapid improvement in the levels of human development, especially increasing gainful employment and improving health and education access, are only some of the priorities for the region. But peace is a precondition for any human development process to gather momentum. The world has just witnessed the rise of religious extremism and the pursuit of the culture of violence with consequences for

peace and development that have reverberated across the globe. This culture has been fed on transnational crime, especially narcotics trafficking and proliferation of small arms. The subcontinent is flanked by two of the world's three largest narcotics growing areas of the world and with the changes taking place in Afghanistan, this may well get internalised. The decline of human development in Pakistan is sufficient evidence, if it is indeed needed, to emphasise the potential for the rise in religious extremism and violence.

The challenges of today and tomorrow cannot be effectively managed without international co-operation. But the formula that General Musharraf proposes to expand the "restrictive scope" of SAARC for resolution of "bilateral disputes" is fundamentally flawed and even raises serious questions of credibility. If he believes that harmony is not possible in the face of political disharmony, then he owes it to himself to search for the causes and processes that should lead to that harmony. At the core of that search he would find that harmony is the core of the peace imperative and vice versa. The agenda for peace in civil society should form the foundations of a new agenda for SAARC. This would include co-operation in effectively dealing with narcotics trafficking and other transnational crime, international terrorism and non-interference in the domestic affairs of other states. It also needs to be said that events in Afghanistan over the past quarter century have had a profound impact on peace and development in the region, not the least on Pakistan. The time has come, therefore, to seriously expand the scope of SAARC to include these countries, even if initially only as observers.

Some stirring at last

INDIAN EXPRESS

9 MAR 2002

THURSDAY, MARCH 7, 2002

Sushma to attend Saarc meet in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: Amid expectations of a thaw in the Indo-Pak relations, information and broadcasting minister sushma swaraj arrives here on Thursday to attend the Saarc information ministers conference, to be inaugurated by Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf.

She will arrive here via Dubai as the air, train and road links between India and Pakistan remain suspended. There are no indications that Ms Swaraj, dur-

ing her three-day stay here on Thursday, would meet any Pakistani official other than those concerned with the conference, but official and media circles feel that her visit could kick start a dialogue process for de-escalation of tensions. Though no official meeting has been planned between Ms Swaraj and Mr Musharraf, the two leaders would come face to face at the inaugural session of the conference on Thursday. (PTI)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

7 MAR 2002

New directions for South Asia

By T. K. Oommen

South Asia

HP-S
4/

THE SOUTH Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is not expected to discuss bilateral issues in its meetings. But most tensions and conflicts in the region are bilateral and their source is cultural. Of the two prominent dimensions of culture — language and religion — it is the latter which foments most of the persisting tensions in South Asia. Therefore, an important step to substantially reduce conflicts in the region is to de-officialise religion. Conversely, language is often a cementing force even when those of the same linguistic community are distributed across boundaries of sovereign states.

Most polities in the world today are multi-religious, the common pattern being one majority religion and a few minority ones. This holds true for South Asia too. There are three majority religions in SAARC countries — Buddhism in Bhutan and Sri Lanka (70 per cent); Hinduism in India (82 per cent) and Nepal (90 per cent); Islam in Bangladesh (86 per cent), Pakistan (97 per cent) and the Maldives (100 per cent). In all the SAARC countries except India the religion of the majority is privileged. While in Sri Lanka Buddhism is declared the 'national' religion, the religion of the majority is state/official in all other SAARC countries.

Two observations are pertinent here. One, the usual tendency to perceive some religions as more accommodative, catholic and tolerant is not necessarily correct; if so, Buddhism would not have been privileged in all the Buddhist-majority countries. Two, the widely held perception that democracy is more conducive for nurturing religious pluralism is not sustainable. The first democratic nation in the world, the United Kingdom, still has an official Church. Among the SAARC countries, Sri Lanka has the best record of democracy (India's internal emergency partially tainted its record) and yet it has privileged Buddhism as national religion.

However, among the positive fea-

tures of democracy are: (a) avoiding a majoritarian hegemony, (b) providing for equal citizenship entitlements to the minorities and (c) respecting the cultural specificities, identities if you will, of the minorities. While the majority does not need state patronage and protection, the urge to sustain the cultural specificity of the majority is also natural and cannot be denied either. That is, democracy willy-nilly

If durable peace is to prevail in SAARC countries, the notion of state or national religion should be abandoned by the members.

implies the respect for the cultural specificities of all communities, including the majority. But when the values and institutions specific to the majority are privileged as official and/or national by the state, it necessarily leads to a majoritarian hegemony and alienation of the minorities. This is the danger in officialising majority religions. Therefore, if durable peace is to prevail in the SAARC countries, the notion of state or national religion should be abandoned by the members.

If religion is to be de-linked from the polity, language should be brought to centre stage. This is so because language is an inevitable feature of all societies. Religion is an optional element in human life in that one can be an atheist, agnostic, secularist and/or rationalist. That is, while there are alternatives to religion, no one can live without language. There is yet another interesting fact to be noted here. While the possibility of alternatives exists in the case of religion, it is non-accommodative of these alternatives. No one can be a "true" Hindu and a Muslim, notwithstanding widespread religious syncretism and liminality, or an atheist and a believer, at the same time. In contrast, the space for accommodation is substan-

tial in the case of language; one can learn several languages without necessarily diminishing the importance of one's mother tongue.

It is important to recognise here that most of the cultural attributes do not have much bearing on religion although the tendency to link the two is perennially present. For example, literature, music, architecture, food, dress or language get 'communalised'

the tactics and stratagems of unscrupulous politicians.

I must now spell out the rationale in invoking language as the major basis of politico-administrative units. All the existing/persisting secessionist movements in South Asia combine religion and language to sustain their mobilisational vitality. This is a lethal combination from the perspective of escalating conflicts in the region.

Cultural features are more common to linguistic regions than religious communities. For example, there is a greater commonality between Pakistan Punjab and Indian Punjab or Bangladesh and West Bengal in terms of food, dress, music, literature and architecture than say Pakistan Punjab and Sindh or Indian Punjab and West Bengal.

Experience the world over clearly demonstrates that in order to bring about participatory development, effective communication with people is an imperative. Adequate communication is possible through the mother tongues.

Most languages, irrespective of their graphemic status, are capable of effective communication in the context of everyday life — primary education, religious worship, transactions in the market place, expression of emotion and love.

My suggestion then is wherever it is feasible based on population size, financial viability and territorial concentration, it is desirable to establish politico-administrative units based on language. These units could be panchayats, zillas, autonomous regions and provincial states vertically layered in a federal state.

However, urban settlements, particularly metropolitan centres, are bound to be multi-lingual in some of the SAARC countries. The local self-governments of these settlements will have to be designed keeping this in mind. That is, political federalism and linguistic diversity are two sides of the same coin.

(The writer is Professor of Sociology, School of Social Sciences, JNU.)

THE HINDU

4 FEB 2002

South Asian countries becoming poorer

HTC-4
19/2

MORE THAN half a billion people in South Asia, or 40 per cent of the total population of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Maldives, have only become poorer under globalisation.

But the fault is not with globalisation, according to United Nations Human Development Report 2001, it's their Governments who are to blame.

Macro economic indicators don't tell the entire story. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has grown in all except Pakistan. But deficits in fiscal, trade and current accounts remained negative during the 1990s. India's position was the least difficult, however.

The poor were not considered by the world's powerful when embarking on globalisation. The report says, "It is only recently that the IMF, World Bank and the regional development banks have started sensitising their lending policies towards human development and poverty reduction".

Taking an overall look at India's experience during the 1990s, the report said that structural adjustment has failed in vital areas. This is reflected in the poor performance of Indian exports and the fall in India's share of world trade.

"There is now substantial evidence that India's success at reducing the incidence of poverty during the 1970s and 1980s was halted, if not reversed, during the 1990s", the report said. The rich-poor and urban-rural divides only widened.

HTC, New Delhi

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

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FUTURE OF SAARC

Some Bad Precedents, But Hopeful Signs As Well

S.S. & all

By PARMANAND

Sankar Anir

No Saarc summit had been held amidst so much controversy or, for that matter, against such a controversial background. Some analysts feel that the very fact that the 11th summit could be held should be considered a big achievement.

When Saarc emerged as a concrete reality on 8 December 1985 in Dhaka, well meaning South Asians had heaved a sigh of relief, thinking that better days had begun for the region. But 13 years later, Saarc's core state, India, and its second most important state, Pakistan, went nuclear, suggesting that bilateral confrontation was not a matter of the past. Continuing the bilateral processes of the 1940s, 60s and 70s, they indeed, faced a "warlike situation", if not a war itself, in 1999.

Bad precedent

In any case, Saarc remains far behind regional bodies like the European Union or Asean or even the Arab League, the Organisation of American States or the Organisation of African Unity. Going by the provisions of Article 3 of the Charter of the Organisation — which emphatically states: "the heads of state or government shall meet annually" — Saarc should have by now held 18 summits.

The circumstances under which the Kathmandu summit was held had all the potential for setting bad precedents — and it did set some. For the first time, the duration was curtailed at the eleventh hour. Instead of being held for three days (4-6 January) as scheduled, it was held only for two days. It should not, though, be mistaken that all preceding summits had three days' duration. Indeed, the Colombo summit of 1991 — 6th in the series — was held for only one day on 27 November.

The Dhaka summit of 1985, the Bangalore summit of 1986, and again the Dhaka summit of 1993 each had two days' duration.

What is important is that no summit's duration had been tampered with at the last moment. It will remain an open question whether President Pervez Musharraf tampered with the schedule by contriving to arrive much behind schedule from Beijing or whether it was unavoidable. Probably, like other heads of state or government, he would have done well to leave Beijing a day earlier to reach Kathmandu on 3 January.

In any case, it was the first opportunity for Musharraf to participate in any Saarc summit, and he failed to give a good

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account of himself — as Benazir Bhutto, Nawaz Shrif, Farooq Ahmad Khan Leghari or the late General Zia-ul Haq had done. President Musharraf might have succeeded in attracting attention, but it was certainly for bad reasons.

The Kathmandu summit also saw the mechanism of a retreat being done away with. The device of a retreat had become very useful since it provided a good opportunity for informal get-togethers of heads of state or government in a relaxed atmosphere. It should again be hoped

In the case of Sri Lanka, the very existence of the state is threatened by the demand of the Tamil Eelam (homeland). The Indian state — the most democratic and resource-rich of all South Asian states — is faced with terrorist challenges on a number of fronts.

Hearteningly, India's initiative in making fight against terrorism a priority issue in the Kathmandu Declaration did not meet with any opposition. In fact, Pakistan did not indulge in hair-splitting by differentiating between what it calls

quite painful. The IPKF was facing a difficult task in Sri Lanka. Representatives of Saarc member-states, it was agreed upon at the just concluded summit, would meet at Colombo to make suggestions to make the Convention on Terrorism more effective and result-oriented. Terrorism might not end because of rhetoric but there never was so much consensus on the importance of its eradication. Will it see the South Asian region more peaceful in the new millennium?

Economic cooperation

Needless to stress, economic cooperation has been the most significant thrust of the Saarc's Charter adopted in 1985. Among the objectives mentioned in Article 1 of the Charter are promotion of the welfare of the South Asian people, acceleration of economic growth, social progress and promotion of active collaboration and mutual assistance in the economic, social, cultural, technical and scientific fields.

The situation on this front, though, is far from satisfactory. Intra-Saarc exports thus far have reached the figures of only 4.3 per cent. Intra-Saarc imports have by now reached only the figure of four per cent of the total imports. This despite several concessions having been given under the Sapta — which has been effective since 1995.

It is worth mentioning that the intra-regional exports share have reached 22 per cent in Asean, 51 per cent in the Nafta and 64 per cent in the EU. Also, intra-regional imports are on the increase in other regional arrangements.

Serious efforts seems to have been made to make the South Asian Free Trade Area a concrete reality by the end of this year as also to make the South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangement more effective and beneficial. Saarc leaders have directed the Council of Ministers to expedite the next round of trade negotiations under Sapta and also broaden its scope. The leaders also decided to accelerate cooperation in the core areas of trade, finance and investment to realise the goal of an integrated South Asian economy.

The overall impact of the declaration will be felt when details are worked out and translated into reality. But many fail to be optimistic about Saarc in its present form because of Indo-Pak relations. But the overall framework may lead to more sub-regional cooperation under the core leadership of India. If economic relations between India and Bhutan, India and Nepal, and India and Sri Lanka are any guide, a beginning has already been made in that direction.



that this is not repeated.

The background against which the Kathmandu summit was held had hardly left any doubt that there would be a great deal of stress on the eradication of terrorism in the region in the Kathmandu Declaration. Relevantly, every summit finally produces a declaration. It is no coincidence that three South Asian states — the core state, India, the host state, Nepal, and the southern state, Sri Lanka — are facing serious challenges from various terrorist outfits.

Terrorism

In the case of Nepal, the very political system is the target. Maoist guerrillas have been harping on the abolition of the constitutional monarchy and the establishment of a republic. At most they were ready to settle for a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution, quite hopeful that such an assembly would recommend abolition of the constitutional monarchical framework.

"freedom fighters" and terrorists. Not only consensus but unanimity was visible on this issue at the meetings of the Council of Ministers and the standing committee (comprising foreign secretaries) that preceded the Kathmandu summit.

Five full paragraphs were devoted to the problem of terrorism in the Declaration issued on 6 January. The heads of state or government have "affirmed their determination to redouble efforts, collectively as well as individually, to prevent and suppress terrorism in all its forms and manifestations". The seven South Asian leaders also promised to "accelerate" the "full implementation" of the 1987 Saarc Convention on Terrorism "within a definite time-frame".

Coincidentally or ironically, the 1987 Convention on Suppression of Terrorism was adopted at the Kathmandu summit of Saarc — the first in Nepal. It was stressed by the then Sri Lankan-President, Junius Richard Jayewardene, that terrorist activities of the LTTE had become

THE STATESMAN

21 JAN 2002

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Powell Power 9-10

So, India and Pakistan are to embark on another honeymoon and America plans to go along. Of course, all three actors know they are play-acting. Pakistan will call for US intervention in Kashmir, India will bristle at the suggestion, and the Americans will hasten to reassure us that intervention is the last thing on their mind. And all this even as the world's only superpower gently arm-twists the two nuclear neighbours into following its prescription. For Pakistan, it is abjuring its violent past and choosing a path of moderation. For India, it is learning to be more accommodating of, what we are assured is, its once errant but currently reforming neighbour. As of now, India should have no quarrels with the way things have turned out. General Musharraf's path-breaking January 12 address and the far-reaching domestic reforms he has initiated are both a direct result of American pressure. And if Pakistan relents and agrees to hand over the non-Pakistani terrorists on the Indian list, that achievement too would go to the credit of American interlocutors. More importantly, US secretary of state Colin Powell has expressed agreement with the Indian position that General Musharraf's words must translate into firm action on the ground. Mr Powell also conceded that it is for India, as a sovereign democratic country, to determine whether or not that action is sufficient to restore confidence between the two countries. There can hardly be clearer enunciation of the US position than this.

When General Musharraf stated that no political cause justified terrorist violence in respect of Kashmir and followed that up by banning the Lashkar and Jaish organisations, in effect he conceded the Indian case on cross-border terrorism. In short, the ball is still in his court and it is for him to exercise control over terrorism directed from his country towards India, including Jammu and Kashmir. Out of the Indian list of 20 most wanted terrorists, 14 of are well known Indian mafia bosses and criminals, against many of whom red corner Interpol warrants exist. They are not political asylum seekers in Pakistan. Nor has Islamabad any explanation for their continued residence and activities in Pakistan. Presumably to save their own face they have to ask for more evidence and India has obliged. All of which leaves Pakistan with little option but to comply with the Indian request. When the US demanded the extradition of Pakistani citizen Mir Aimal Kansi, in connection with the killing of three CIA operatives, Pakistan acted without a murmur. General Powell is a former chairman of joint chiefs of staff and should understand that armies can be deployed eyeball-to-eyeball without escalation, as happened for four decades in NATO. His emphasis has rightly been to establish communication between the two sides and that depends on confidence generated. While exercising utmost diplomatic discretion, the US secretary of state has left the world in no doubt that General Musharraf had to do more on the ground to satisfy India that sufficient action has been taken to resume dialogue.

Magical Realism

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Handwritten scribbles

Summit Asia

58-9
1891 **Not enough** ✓
India needs more to end standoff

When US secretary of state Colin Powell comes to New Delhi, one hopes the ideas that he says he will discuss with the Indian leadership are genuinely new, and not those articulated by General Musharraf with his prior approval, that it is up to India to demobilise its troops now that he has made his speech. That was a statement of intent and it has been reciprocated by similar expressions on India's part. As far as action is concerned, however, there is a basic asymmetry to be overcome. The actions undertaken by Musharraf so far are all quickly reversible — bans on *jehadi* groups, arrests of their leaders and activists. In response, India is expected to reverse its mobilisation of troops, an exercise which took four weeks and cost more than the Kargil war, in money if not in lives — which, therefore, will be difficult to restore if promises made are not kept. A recent example of Islamabad's duplicity is Masood Azhar's brother being arrested in his place, amends being made only when Delhi pointed this out to the Americans.

There are also the mysterious fires which break out in government archives in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, whenever the government undertaking a change of policy: a fire at army headquarters incinerated records of involvement with the Taliban when Islamabad turned its back on them; likewise the fire that swept the Shaheed-e-Millat secretariat in Islamabad four days after Musharraf's speech which burnt down, according to a Pakistani newspaper, records of the government's relationship with newly banned organisations. It is possible that this is a good omen, and the government intends no further relationship with the banned organisations; equally, Musharraf's "historic" speech contained no acknowledgement of the Pakistani role in sustaining terror in India, hence there is no guarantee it will not continue. If the Indian deployment of troops is expensive for India, so is it for Pakistan and its economy can afford it even less, which makes it a legitimate means of keeping up pressure. A single irreversible move on Pakistan's part, such as giving up the 20 wanted terrorists India has asked for, should be reassuring evidence of good intentions, and New Delhi could consider demobilisation at that point. Short of that, and this should be the message to Colin Powell, it has no option but to wait for a while to gauge Pakistani intentions, by monitoring such things as whether the crackdown on *jehadis* is being sustained, and whether militants are still being helped across the LoC by an obliging Pakistani army.

THE STATESMAN

11/8 JAN 2002

11/8 JAN 2002

Peace, pressure on parallel tracks

FROM K.P. NAYAR

Washington, Jan. 13: In the diplomatic chess game between New Delhi and Islamabad, which has begun following General Pervez Musharraf's address to the nation on Saturday, India will not de-escalate the military situation along the border or ease pressure on Pakistan on the ground.

But India will match Musharraf word for word in being conciliatory because it does not want to give the wily general the advantage that he is seeking in good public relations on the world stage.

During extensive analysis of Musharraf's speech at the highest levels of the Indian government today, there was acknowledgement that Pakistan's President had scored handsomely in

showmanship.

Hence external affairs minister Jaswant Singh's statement that "should the government of Pakistan operationalise its intention and move purposefully towards eradicating cross-border terrorism, the government of India will respond fully and resume the composite dialogue process" with Islamabad.

The unequivocal offer to resume the dialogue, the government believes, will preempt those world leaders who may pile pressure on New Delhi following Musharraf's speech to start talking to Pakistan.

This morn-

ing, President George W. Bush talked for five minutes each on telephone to Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Musharraf.

According to White House spokesman Sean McCormack, Bush discussed Musharraf's speech with Vajpayee, but did not go into details.

But the President complimented Musharraf for his promise to crack down on terrorists. The spokesman said both Vajpayee and Musharraf "agreed to continue to work to reduce tension in the region".

While the ministry of external affairs and

the Prime Minister's Office recognise that Musharraf has caught the imagination of those who are concerned about the course of events in South Asia with his showmanship, they are of the view that it has given Islamabad very little by way of substance.

Virtually every world leader who responded yesterday and today to his televised address ignored Musharraf's call for UN intervention in Kashmir.

"Let human rights organisations, Amnesty International, the international media and UN peacekeepers be allowed to monitor activities of the Indian occupation forces," Musharraf thundered yesterday.

There was not even a nod of acknowledgement from any world leader of any standing to this demand.

QUOTE

The major portion of the address of the President of Pakistan yesterday relates to reforms to modernise Pakistan. We wish the people of Pakistan well in this endeavour

JASWANT SINGH

THE TELEGRAPH

14 JAN 2002

General opens new

HT Correspondent
Islamabad, January 12

IN AN unprecedented speech ripping apart the fundamentalism eating into Pakistan's foundation, President Pervez Musharraf tonight banned Jaish-e-Mohammad and Lashkar-e-Tayyeba as part of a general policy to end Islamist violence and called for dialogue on Kashmir.

In an hour-long nationally telecast address, the General — even as he met the Indian demand of ban on the two organisations — ruled out handing over of any of the Pakistani citizens included in the list of the 20 terrorists and rogues wanted by India. As for the others, he said the non-Pakistanis named in the list had not been given asylum in his country. "If they are found here, we will think of taking appropriate action against them."

Dressed in a black *achkan* on his much-awaited address, the General initially appeared tense in sharp contrast to his usual flamboyant style. But as he built up the case for the need to make Pakistan a progressive state, he didn't forget the old lines. "Kashmir runs in our blood," he thundered. "Pakistan will not budge an inch from its principled stand on Kashmir."

But nothing more. No organisation will be allowed to indulge in terrorism in the name of Kashmir, he declared. From now on, the support to the Kashmir cause will be strictly moral, diplomatic and political. Nothing tangible, like RDX, one would read.

Addressing A B Vajpayee, he recalled the Prime Minister's recent statement that mindsets have to be altered and historical baggage has to be jettisoned. "I take you on this offer and let us start talking in this spirit."

Lest he sounds too dovish, the wily General peppered the talks offer with some tough talk. "Don't try to cross the border. We will use our full might in

giving a fitting response. Till the last drop of blood, the forces would protect the country."

"I want to address to the international community, especially to the United States: Pakistan rejects terrorism in all its forms and manifestations," Musharraf said in a signal that he was saying goodbye to his laboured distinction between "freedom struggle" and terrorism. Switching from Urdu to English, he said: "Pakistan will not allow its territory to be used for any terrorist activity anywhere in the world. Now, you must play an active role in solving the Kashmir dispute for the sake of lasting peace and harmony in the region."

The thrust of the speech was on the Islamic extremism in Pakistan, which he said the Pakistanis were "fed up" with. "The day of reckoning has come." His goal: a society of mutual respect and tolerance. Pointing out that mosques had been misused by religious fundamentalists, Musharraf said it was a matter of shame that police had to be posted outside places of worship. The extremist ulema had created a state within the state and was challenging the writs of the Government, he told his people bluntly.

Fundamentalism has harmed Pakistan's international image, hurting the country economically. Thus, no new mosques or religious schools would be permitted without Government registration. Foreign students and teachers in Pakistani madrasas, considered the breeding ground of fundamentalism, must show they were in the country legally by March 23, or face deportation. He also declared that loudspeakers at mosques would be permitted only for daily calls to prayer and for sermons on Jumma, not for rabble-rousing.

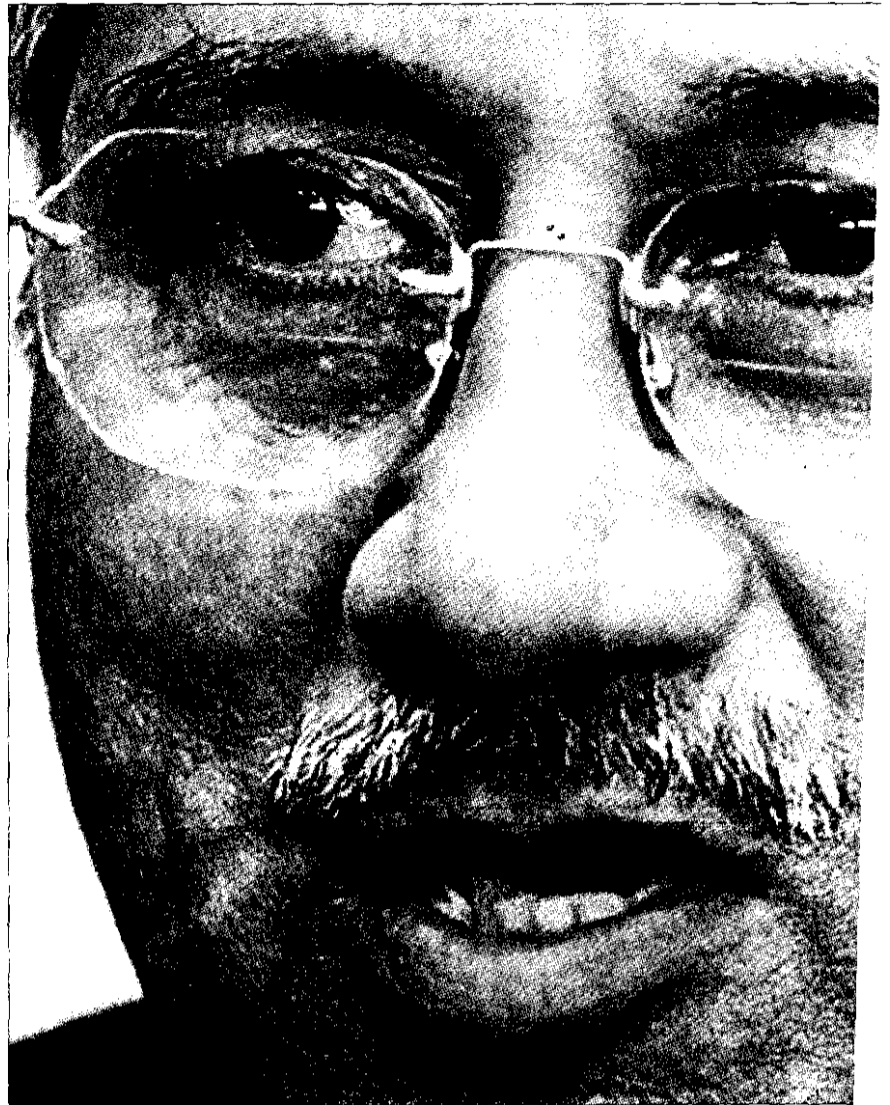
"We are tired of religious intolerance. It is time for Pakistan to take major decisions. Do we want to convert into a theocratic state? Can we run the country only through religious education or make Pakistan a progressive, modern and dynamic state?" the General posed to the nation.

The speech was a disappointment to political and religious parties, which claimed that instead of acknowledging the follies of the military establishment, the General had bowed down to the US-India pressure. The Pakistan Peoples Party was dismayed that Musharraf put national security in great danger while the Pakistan Muslim League the General had betrayed the Kashmir cause.

Related report on Page 9

HIGHLIGHTS

- Ban on Lashkar and Jaish-e-Mohammad.
- Rules out handing over of Pakistanis wanted by India.
- Considers taking action against non-Pakistanis wanted by India.
- Warns India against crossing border.
- Offers fresh dialogue with Vajpayee on Kashmir.
- Pledges to continue moral, political and diplomatic support to Kashmir cause.
- Any group found involved in the Dec 13 attack on Indian Parliament and Oct 1 attack on J&K Assembly to be dealt with severely.
- Not to allow its territory for terrorist activities.
- Bans extremist groups Sipah-e-Sahaba, Tehrik-e-Jaffria, Tehrik-e-nifaz-e-Shariat.
- All madrasas to be registered by March-end.
- No new madrasa to open without Govt permission
- Foreign students for admission to madrasas have to seek permission from the Government.
- Opening of any new mosque needs NOC certificate from the Govt.



NEWS ANALYSIS

No shift in Kashmir policy

Vinod Sharma and
Udayan Nambodiri
New Delhi, January 12

GENERAL PERVEZ Musharraf's much-awaited address to his countrymen tonight fell far short of Indian expectations. While addressing squarely the question of use of Pakistani territory for export of terrorism to Kashmir and elsewhere, he made out a strong case for a third-party role to resolve the dispute.

A few highlights of the Pakistani President's speech amply illustrate this. At the outset, Musharraf reaffirmed continuation of Islamabad's moral, diplomatic and political support for the Kashmir issue. That said, he

proceeded to assure the world community that dialogue was the only way to a settlement: "No organisation will be allowed to perpetuate terrorism in the garb of the Kashmiri cause."

If at all, only this portion of the General's hour-long address qualified as an attempt to change the course of history.

He did announce a ban on the Lashkar-e-Tayyeba and Jaish-e-Mohammad. But these were long overdue and preceded by enough warnings to enable them change spots. The unambiguous and positive response that India awaited on the question of action against the 20 men wanted for promoting terror and crime did not materialise.

As anticipated, the General reached out to the international community, principally the US, with a trade off which India may find difficult to accept. In return for cleansing the Pakistani society of Islamic fundamentalism, he sought Washington's active role in the resolution of the Kashmir dispute. "The legitimate demands of the Kashmiris cannot be suppressed," he declared.

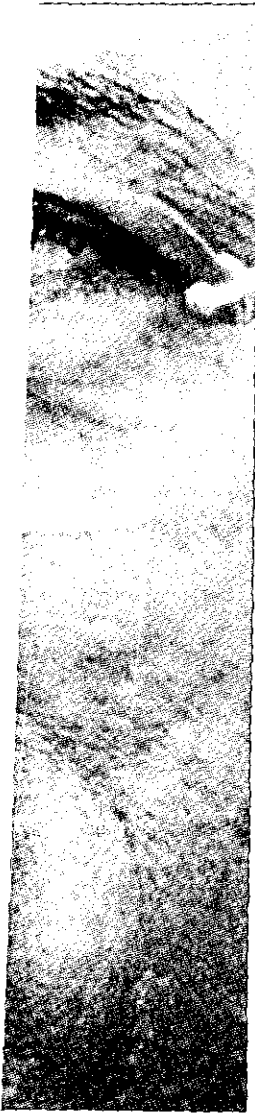
In a clear attempt to kill bilateralism, which for India is an article of faith as enshrined in the 1972 Simla Pact superseding the UN resolutions, Musharraf even envisaged a role for international monitors to check what he termed "human rights violations" by security forces in the Valley.

LASHKAR UNTAMED

THE LASHKAR-E-TAYYEBBA on Saturday vowed to continue its "holy war" in Kashmir despite being banned by Musharraf. "The Government of Pakistan has no right to ban us as we are a Kashmir-based group fighting against Indian forces. Our struggle for Kashmir will continue," Lashkar spokesman Abdullah Sayyaf said by telephone from an unknown location.

AFP, Karachi

front



India weighs response, US lauds speech

New Delhi/Washington, Jan 12

THERE WAS no immediate response from India to Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's address tonight. "President Musharraf's speech is being studied in-depth. We are analysing it and hope to give a detailed response tomorrow," official sources said.

The US welcomed Musharraf's speech, saying it provided a basis for both India and Pakistan to lower tensions. A State Department official thought the speech pledging a crackdown on anti-India terrorists could help "ratchet down" the situation. The official was quoted as saying the speech "marks a clear break with the violence of the past in Kashmir and Pakistani society as a whole".

The BJP said the address had failed to respond to the feelings of Indians after the December 13 attack on Parliament. Referring to Musharraf's refusal to hand over Pakistani citizens included in the list of 20 terrorists wanted by India, BJP spokesman Sunil Shastri said, "He (Musharraf) has not said anything which can satisfy the feelings of Indians."

HTC

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STAR GOLD

SAFTA not expected to come into existence completely before '07

RUCHI AHUJA *gund* *U*
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 10 *of*

WHILE the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) members agreed to finalise the draft for a regional free trade zone by the end of 2002 (already a year behind schedule), it is not expected to come into existence completely before 2007.

Talking to *The Indian Express*, A.S. Kasliwal, vice-president for Saarc Chamber of Commerce said: "The proposed agreement for creating South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) will not happen before 2007. There are lot of modalities to be worked out between the Saarc nations and will certainly take time. However, we expect South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) to be out in the current year itself."

The draft form of SAFTA and the treaty itself were scheduled to be finalised by the end of 2001 and 2002 respectively. But the deadlines have not been met as adequate negotiations between the seven members—India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan and the Maldives—could not be held. He said that SAFTA holds immediate bene-

fit for India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka and not for other members.

While the Saarc nations are home to a fifth of the total population of the world, it account for merely 3.4 per cent of global trade. Despite SAPTA, there is a lack of surge in the intra-regional trade. One of the main reasons for this is that the concessions offered (under SAPTA) by various nations have been more or less symbolic in nature and the commodities targeted do not form a significant part of the trade basket or the potential of trade of the Saarc nations. Also the concessions offered have been to the tune of 10-15 per cent of the prevailing which is not significant enough to promote intra-Saarc trade.

While SAFTA could be effective in bringing about a shift from informal to formal channels of trade, there are other factors, like high transport costs and domestic policy distortions, where SAFTA would be ineffective in bringing about a shift from informal to formal channels. Also the inadequate transport systems between India and the neighbouring countries have been a major constraint in enhancing trade through formal channels.

NDIAN EXPRESS

11 JAN 2002

Kathmandu meet

Terrorism was the dominant issue ^{SIA}

It is not surprising that the SAARC summit has been dominated by the issue of terrorism, given that it is currently one of South Asia's overriding issues, and due to it Indian and Pakistani troops are currently eyeball-to-eyeball on the border. It is worth recalling that this meeting was originally scheduled for November 1999, but couldn't be held at that time because of the Kargil war and Pervez Musharraf's coup in Pakistan. Having disrupted the earlier summit Musharraf delayed the beginning of this one — flying in from China five hours late. He has become a frequent visitor to China over the last month hoping, perhaps, to use it as a counterweight against US pressure, without much success. The Chinese, actually, are in a position not too dissimilar from the US — for reasons of grand strategy, they too had been active in aiding the anti-Soviet *mujahedin* when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, with the result that Islamic militancy has now reached northwestern China. Given that Musharraf must be under pressure, the man has to be given credit for considerable chutzpah — after having held up the summit he went on to create its defining media moment by walking upto Vajpayee with a hail-fellow-well-met air and shaking hands. For once, the Indians did not allow him to walk away with the media credit, as they did at during the Agra summit — Vajpayee came back strongly during his speech to remind the audience and Musharraf how past Indian overtures from Lahore to Agra had been met by unremitting hostility from Pakistan.

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The resolution on terrorism passed by the summit are close to India's views on the matter and should send to Pakistan a clear message of what its neighbours expect of it — it rejected justification of terrorism on "ideological, political, religious or any other ground", and called for suppression of terrorism by SAARC countries including the criminalisation of collection of funds for terrorist organisations and the termination of organised activities on its territory directed towards the commission of terrorist acts. Everything now hinges on whether Musharraf can exhibit as much savvy as he has flair, on whether his handshake was meant to be a curtain-raiser or a substitute for substantive action against anti-Indian terrorism from Pakistani soil. The latter interpretation, unfortunately, still remains a plausible one — if the Indian side were to thaw in response to Musharraf's handshake and enquiries about the state of Vajpayee's health, Musharraf could tell his international interlocutors that he has taken effective action against terrorist groups, the evidence being India's endorsement of his position. It may take a lot more than that to pin him down. Tony Blair's and now George Bush's putting the onus on Pakistan for creating an atmosphere conducive to talks should help. Is it possible that the current isolation that Islamabad faces leads to a rethink of its policy on terrorism?

THE STATESMAN

10 JAN 2002

Smiles and handshakes

Srinivas Aravamudan

SHAMLAL

Pervez Musharraf is as smart at staging public relations coups as at masterminding seizure of power from an elected government in his country. What his martial mindset prevents him from grasping are the limitations of his strategy of using every opportunity to capture headlines. A mere handshake, howsoever warm, cannot create a thaw in the relations between two estranged neighbours, particularly at a time when the turn of events has pushed them into a war-like situation. If the Kathmandu summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation failed to create a propitious climate for a meaningful dialogue between the heads of government of the two countries, it was because the impulse which made the Pakistani general hijack the Agra summit and turn it into a fiasco was still very much at work in the Nepalese capital.

Thus the handshakes, the wan smiles, the all too brief meetings between the two heads of government, the exchange of some papers and the flurry of speculation in the media turned out to be much ado about nothing. The general did not realize that the December 13 attack on Parliament in New Delhi by men belonging to terrorist organizations operating from bases in his country had traumatized India much as the September 11 events had done in the case of the United States of America. Once again it had brought home to everyone the identity of the main enemy of peace. It is no accident after this that almost half the countries of the world have acquired a big stake in the success of the current war on international terrorism.

Nothing is farther from India's intention than getting drawn into another armed conflict with Pakistan. But after the terrorist attacks on the Kashmir state assembly in Srinagar and on Parliament in New Delhi, which could have easily led to a massacre of the country's elected representatives, how can anyone buy Musharraf's proposition of equating terrorists with freedom fighters. That most of the *jihadi* outfits operating from bases in Pakistan, with the full knowledge of the government in Islamabad and active support of the Inter-Services Intelligence, have had close links with the taliban and al Qaida is no secret. How can those leading the war against international terrorism draw a distinction between the two?

Even the US president has at last been forced to shed his inhibition in speaking as bluntly to Musharraf in public as he has been probably doing in private for some time. But the latter has left no room for doubt that he joined the war coalition against international terrorism only under duress. No one knows better about al Qaida activities than the Pakistani establishment. And no one had a greater stake in sustaining the taliban regime in Afghanistan than the government in Islamabad, which used the training camps in that country to replenish the terrorist bases in its own territory and the jihadi militants they

turned out as instruments of its policy. India has put up with cross-border terrorism for too long. It cannot afford to do so any longer. A dialogue, after all that has happened, makes no sense if it is conducted in the midst of a proxy war being waged by Pakistan against its big neighbour.

Treating international relations as a bargain sales counter, the Musharraf regime has been trying to convince the US that even antagonizing the taliban and the al Qaida has been a risky ven-

to terms with the radical change in people's perception everywhere of what the spread of international terrorism means to their security and national integrity. This calls for a radical reassessment in the policies of states which have so far got away with sponsoring cross-border terrorism, however painful it may be to them. It is not the US alone but the international community as a whole, apart from the jihadis, which will not tolerate any longer the use of terrorism as a tool of policy,



ture for it insofar as it has earned it the hostility of powerful jihadi groups, and that giving up "moral support" to those fighting for "self-determination" in the Indian part of Kashmir will put its own survival at stake. Whether anyone genuinely believes this story is quite doubtful, coming as it does from a man who had no compunction in seizing power from an elected government with a two-thirds majority in the Pakistan national assembly.

Before Musharraf talks of a referendum in Kashmir, he should ask himself whether he is prepared for a similar assessment of popular opinion in Baluchistan, where a people's movement for autonomy was put down with extreme brutality; or in Karachi, where the Mohajir majority has got an extremely raw deal even though it was in the forefront of the struggle for Pakistan? And was his own coup an exercise in self-determination?

Musharraf's apologists have said time and again that while he does not mind being seen bending to America's will because of its dependence on that country, he cannot afford to suffer the loss of face involved in succumbing to any pressure from India. The pertinent question, however, is not of surrendering to this or that power, but of coming

‘ A dialogue, after all that has happened, makes no sense if it is conducted in the midst of a proxy war ’

whatever the motive which inspires it or the cause it is supposed to serve. Tony Blair, too, has been frank enough to tell this to Musharraf in so many words.

That Pakistan cannot, for long, go through the motions of fighting al Qaida and the taliban while allowing the ISI to be fully implicated in training and arming terrorist outfits closely linked to these two organizations has already put it in a jam. Considering the ISI's closeness to both Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar, it is indeed hard to believe that the two men, with all their senior aides, could have escaped into the wild tribal belt along long stretches of the Pak-Afghan border without surreptitious aid from sections sympathetic to them in both Pakistan's army and intelligence network. Nor could it have been possible for so many Pakistani troops to have fought

on the taliban side without the collusion, and at the instigation, of their superiors. In any case, Musharraf himself made no secret of his sympathy with the taliban at the start of the war in Afghanistan and, in an act approaching blasphemy, compared his succumbing to US pressure with the prophet's expedient compromise with the Jews in Medina. Indeed, as the endgame in Afghanistan unfolds itself, and the search for the most wanted men intensifies, it will be hard to conceal the duplicity of his armed forces.

The Pakistani papers are fully aware of the harder times ahead for their nation. Has not the *Washington Post* already said that the war has now moved on to that country, the most likely new home for senior leaders of the al Qaida and the taliban, and that the US would watch closely how aggressively the Musharraf regime "moves to kill or arrest" the leading men among its former protégés, and acts against the organizations behind the attacks on the Kashmir assembly and the Indian Parliament? The mere banning of these outfits deceives no one, since more often than not those concerned are warned in advance to withdraw their funds from the banks leaving little to freeze. What is more, they adopt new labels to legitimize themselves and persist in their murderous business. If New Delhi dismisses Pakistan's actions so far as "cosmetic", this is because they do not answer its security concerns.

A prominent Pakistani columnist, Ejaz Haider, has summed up neatly the two messages, coming loud and clear from the US after the events of September and the resulting war in Afghanistan. The first, according to him, "relates to the position of the state *vis-à-vis* non-state actors and subnational groups", putting the state "on a stronger wicket". The second is that non-state actors and subnational groups with "Islamist leanings and ideologies" — the reference is clearly to the Pakistan-sponsored terrorists operating in Kashmir — "are discredited". The discrediting becomes all the more pronounced when these groups have not only strong international linkages but are often manned by foreign mercenaries.

It will, of course, take a long time, perhaps years, for the logic of these changes to work itself out. The ease with which all the big shots in al Qaida as well as the taliban leadership have escaped the US net so far is a stern warning that nothing can be taken for granted. That is why policy-makers in New Delhi have to learn to be more patient and move with great caution. However hurtful their sense of outrage over the attack on Parliament and the tale of repeated betrayals of trust, neither the mobilization of troops along the line of control nor the escalation of tension should be allowed to get out of control and put out of focus the core issue of international terrorism, whatever the national, subnational, regional or ideological flag under which it sails.

THE REGION AND THE WORLD

For many decades, regional integration was viewed as a panacea. In the Seventies and Eighties, regionalism was regarded as a recipe for generating economic prosperity and mitigating longstanding political conflicts. The example of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation suggests, however, that not only has regional economic integration failed to produce any significant benefits, but it may also be increasingly imprudent to pin any hopes of economic or political benefits on this virtually ineffective organization.

There is no doubt that regional economic integration has been a roaring success in many parts of the world. The European Union is perhaps the most striking example. On the one hand, through a gradual process of convergence in virtually all economic spheres, and the lifting of barriers on the movement of goods and services, the countries of Europe have been able to, over time, generate greater economic success than would have been

possible had each nation crafted its own economic policy in isolation. On the other hand, by providing elites within each country a stake in stability, the process of integration contributed to the process of marginalization of conflicts that had endured over centuries. In sum, the process of integration helped create peace and prosperity. Less effectively, but as significantly, regional economic organizations in southeast Asia, Latin America and North America have been effective in promoting intra-regional trade and external competitiveness. However, SAARC has been a dismal failure. It has little to show by way of success, especially on the economic front. Intra-SAARC trade is pathetic, at less

than 5 percent, and prospects for the future remain bleak. In 1997, an eminent persons group set up by SAARC heads of government recommended an ambitious plan to put economic integration on a fast track, and put forward a time line to achieve a free trade area in the region. The leaders of SAARC countries have not even considered the report seriously, although there is some prospect of it being discussed at Kathmandu. Clearly, there are two reasons for this lack of progress. The India-Pakistan conflict has acted as the biggest hurdle. India's unwillingness to have any truck with Pakistan's military regime has meant that the current summit is being held two

years behind schedule. SAARC's charter works on the basis of consensus and excludes all bilateral contentious issues. While differences between India and Pakistan cannot be discussed at SAARC, these bilateral problems have prevented the organization from taking off. India's size is another significant factor. It domi-

nates SAARC in every sense. Therefore, smaller countries of the region are unwilling to allow a process of integration that would inevitably further Indian domination.

SAARC may have succeeded in introducing a common framework on certain social and political issues, including terrorism. But even here little progress has been made in translating normative ideals into stable institutions or common practices. The time may, therefore, have come for New Delhi to re-view its relationship with SAARC. In a world increasingly governed by rules of the World Trade Organization, regional economic associations may become anachronisms.

In a world increasingly governed by the WTO, regional economic associations like the SAARC may become anachronisms

THE TELEGRAPH

9 JAN 2002

10-10

A DISTANT DREAM

South Asia

THE KATHMANDU SUMMIT of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) saw yet another pledge to work towards a free trade area. However, it is highly unlikely that the heads of government of South Asia honestly believe that even a draft framework for the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) can actually be drawn up by the end of this year as they have directed their officials to do so. SAFTA is an eminently sensible idea whose formation is long overdue, but it will remain a distant dream until the chasm in India-Pakistan relations is bridged.

SAARC is known for not meeting its schedules, and not just the dates of its summits. The SAFTA agreement, according to a decision taken in 1997, was to have been ready by 2001. The year has come and gone and all that the region has achieved is limited progress under the SAARC Preferential Trade Agreement (SAPTA). The SAARC countries claim to be home to the world's biggest regional market — in population — but that does not show in a great deal of regional trade. Intra-SAARC trade is as little as 4 per cent of SAARC's trade with the rest of the world, which is an indication of just how far the grouping has to travel to translate words into action. Even the tariff concessions that have been offered under SAPTA until now have largely been on minor items and account for no more than 2 per cent of the trade of the region. The biggest stumbling block to making SAFTA a reality is, of course, the obstacles that stand in the way of trade between the two largest members of SAARC. Official India-Pakistan trade is only \$250 million a year, though smuggling and trade through third countries in West Asia is estimated to be closer to \$2 billion. While Pakistan's restrictions, like the denial of Most Favoured Nation status to India, are usually blamed for this pittance of bilateral trade, the strained political relations between the two countries constitute the larger obstacle to greater

bilateral and therefore regional trade. Until India-Pakistan relations improve, SAARC might as well reconcile itself to SAFTA being a non-starter. There are other factors as well which are holding back the growth of intra-SAARC trade. While fears of Indian dominance are usually cited as one reason, it is also a fact that many sectors in India too fear tariff-free trade. The slow implementation of the India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement is a good example of how those sectors that feel threatened by import competition — in this case textiles and tea — can slow a larger process. The truth is that all the larger economies in SAARC have survived on a diet of high import tariffs and therefore fear trade under liberalised conditions. Yet another reason that is offered for the stunted growth of regionalism is that the South Asian economies share too many similarities for them to benefit from trading with each other. But while that is true at present, more open borders may indeed encourage greater diversification and specialisation.

The proliferation of regional trade groupings is not the best advertisement for multilateralism, but as the world organises itself into blocs those countries which do not act likewise will achieve little by crying themselves hoarse against this trend. The marginal economies of South Asia are only faced with the prospect of further marginalisation in the world economy if they do not show greater faith in regional trade. While an improved political climate is essential to usher in SAFTA, the history of regionalism suggests that economic integration also contributes to better political relations. The European Union of today has its roots in an idea born in the ashes of World War II when France formulated a bilateral economic treaty with what was then West Germany, that treaty was part of an explicit strategy to make Germany have a stake in a peaceful and prosperous Europe.

THE HINDU

17 JAN 2001

Why Saarc is not like EU or Asean

By K. Subrahmanyam

NEW DELHI: One of the recurring themes at every Saarc conference is the mournful refrain by some members (mainly Pakistan) that the grouping has not made the rapid advances, others such as the European Union (EU) and Asean have, because it does not have a bilateral dispute resolving mechanism. Either these leaders are ignorant of facts about other regional groupings or believe they can get away with blatant falsifications.

The EU became possible only when all Western European countries accepted democracy and the results of World War II as unalterable. There would be no EU if Germany had continued to demand its old borders. Similarly, Asean became viable only when Indonesia

accepted the final result of the *confrontasi* with Malaysia and Singapore and abandoned all territorial claims. Therefore, if Pakistan wants the example of EU and Asean to be followed, it should accept the results confirmed by four wars (1948, 1965, 1971 and 1999) and abandon all territorial claims to Kashmir.

Very rarely do bilateral issues come up before the EU. There is one between Britain and Ireland, another between Spain and Britain on Gibraltar and a third between Austria and Italy on Tyrol. Therefore, General Pervez Musharraf would do well to study carefully what led to the progress of Europe. Today, the EU is a champion of multiculturalism. It did not tolerate the military coup of the Greek colonels.

Asean is not a regional grouping with a great deal of internal economic cohesion and cooperation. It started with Indonesia joining the other four nations with a Western-oriented common security perspective — Thailand, Philippines, Singapore and Malaysia. Asean's strength was its common security and foreign policy. No member considers another as a security threat. So long as Pakistan does not give up its claims on Kashmir and considers India as its primary threat, it is ridiculous to invoke the parallel of Asean as a model for Saarc.

Both in the EU and Asean, members do not have differing fundamental economic philosophies. No Asean country thinks of practising Islamic banking laws. None of them defy the basic World Trade Organisation (WTO) regulations and exercise a hegemonic attitude towards its neighbour by excluding it from most favoured nation trading status (as Pakistan has done vis-a-vis India).

While a correct understanding of these factors would help to deal with Pakistan's baseless allegations, there is no denying that the Indian leadership has woefully failed to develop more intensive and extensive economic relations with Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Maldives.

Our bureaucrats and politicians have yet to develop an awareness that more trade and intensified economic relations enhances India's security, power and influence.

NEWS ANALYSIS

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Kathmandu signifies progress and we need to build on that

THE Eleventh SAARC Summit proved yet again that it is India and Pakistan, and the tortured relationship between the two nations, that continues to set the South Asian agenda. If the last summit, that was to have been held in November 1999, was postponed indefinitely because India did not wish to do business with a Pakistani regime that had assumed power after a military coup, this one was awash with all the tensions that marked the latest stand-off between India and Pakistan. Predictably, the leaders of both countries used it as an opportunity to justify their respective stands.

Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf, with the touch of theatre that has now become his hallmark, launched a charm offensive marked by great deliberation. He smiled at the Indian prime minister, shook hands with him and even paid him a "courtesy call". It was as if Pakistan's entire diplomatic efforts were focussed on sending out a message to the world that it was serious about de-escalating tension in the region and fighting terrorism. At the same time, Musharraf was extremely careful about how he articulated two issues that are of great concern to India: insurgency in the Valley and the December 13 attack on Parliament. About the first, while he did not mention Kashmir specifically, he reiterated that a "distinction" be maintained between "acts of legitimate resistance and freedom struggle on the one hand and acts of terrorism on the other". As for the Parliament attack, he did not even bother to refer to it. Therefore, if India seemed almost taciturn in its response to the General's overt display of

cordiality it was because of the serious doubts it had about Pakistan's ultimate intent. As Prime Minister Vajpayee put it, what India is looking for is Pakistan putting its money where its mouth is and stopping any activity on its soil that "enables terrorists to perpetrate mindless violence in India". Vajpayee handled that moment in a statesman-like fashion: not churlish in his response to that unexpected handshake but firm about the nation's objectives.

But beyond the stating and restating of known positions, the Kathmandu encounters between the leaders and their aides, casual though they were, signal a significant de-escalation of tensions between the two sides. It is only to be hoped that this process will continue, especially given the significant consensus on terrorism that emerged in Sunday's Kathmandu Declaration, signed by all seven member states. It amounted, in fact, to an endorsement of India's position on cross-border terrorism, as all the nations vowed to fight terrorism in "all its forms and manifestations" and pledged to prevent support and financing of terrorist activities in their countries. It was a sentiment that was firmly endorsed by all the leaders of the region and Sri Lanka's president, Chandrika Kumaratunga, put it most sagaciously when she said that "every one of our countries has experienced the horror and pain of terrorist violence, either emanating from within or from a neighbouring state" — a hint perhaps at India's past record on that score, vis-a-vis Sri Lanka's Tamil insurgency in the early eighties, but also a clear recognition of present subcontinental realities.

INDIAN EXPRESS

- 7 JAN 2002

SAARC pledges to work for free trade area

SAARC
119-11

KATHMANDU, JAN. 6. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) today pledged to work towards early establishment of a South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) and direct the member-governments to finalise the draft treaty framework for this purpose by this year-end.

Agreeing to accelerate economic cooperation of core areas of trade, finance and investment, the SAARC declaration adopted at the conclusion of the 11th summit here asked member-states to expedite action to remove tariff and non-tariff barriers and structural impediments to free trade.

In moving towards the goal of SAFTA, the heads of state or government instructed the seven member-countries to conclude the meeting of the Inter-Governmental Group on Trade Liberalisation for the fourth round of trade negotiations under SAPTA as early as possible.

To realise the goal of an integrated South Asian economy step-by-step, they expressed their determination to make full use of regional synergy to maximise the benefits of globalisation so as to minimise their negative impacts on the region.

"While recognising that trade and economic expansion is closely interlinked, the leaders made a commitment to widen and deepen the scope of regional networks of activities in trade and financial matters."

Satisfied with the outcome of the successive meetings of SAARC Commerce Ministers enlarging the scope of cooperation, the declaration reaffirmed that the free-trade treaty regime must incorporate binding time-frames and ensure equitable distribution of benefits of free trade to all states.

It should also include a mechanism for compensation of revenue loss, especially for small and least developed countries.

The declaration expressed its firm resolve to combat the problem of poverty with a new sense of urgency by actively promoting the synergetic partnership among national governments, international agencies, private sector and the civil societies.

"They reaffirmed their pledge to undertake effective and sustained poverty alleviation programmes through pro-poor growth strategies and social as well as other policy interventions with specific sectoral targets," it said.

The seven heads of state or government renewed their commitment to encourage participation of the private sector and assured their full support for their socially responsible economic initiatives.

"While welcoming the practices of holding trade fairs in cooperation with the private sector at the regional level, they appreciated the efforts of the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry to promote regional economic cooperation in the spirit of public and private partnership," it said.

The SAARC countries also called for early finalisation of regionally agreed investment framework to meet the investment needs of the member-states.

Concern over the region's vulnerability in the face of global economic slowdown, a 'supportive international environment' and an 'enhanced level of assistance' by the international community for poverty alleviation programmes in the SAARC region was mooted. A special session on poverty alleviation at the ministerial level was proposed for comprehensive review.

To coordinate poverty alleviation schemes, they asked the Chairman to seek two nominations from each state by this month-end, to hold its first meeting before the proposed ministerial meeting in Pakistan in April. — PTI

THE HINDU

- 7 JAN 2002

MUSHARRAF HOPES FOR A 'BREAKTHROUGH'

Road map for de-escalation?

By C. Raja Mohan

KATHMANDU, JAN. 6. India and Pakistan appear to have worked out a road map that could help take them beyond the present crisis and begin a substantive political dialogue in the coming days. While Pakistan has suggested that it could be a diplomatic breakthrough, India is reserving judgment.

Informal Indo-Pak. consultations here on the margins of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit over the last few days may have produced the rough sketch of a two-stage process that would focus first on a de-escalation of the military confrontation and later on a comprehensive political dialogue.

The Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, hinted at the broad outlines of the framework at a press conference at the end of the summit. A conciliatory and restrained Gen. Musharraf said he was pleased with the "informal interaction" with the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee. He hoped it was a "breakthrough" and "looked forward to formalising the political contacts" shortly.

Pointing to the "complexity of the environment" facing the two countries, Gen. Musharraf said the two sides must first "remove the dangerous military stand-off" and over the long term "address main disputes" between them.

It may be too early to celebrate the prospect of a renewed engagement. A lot would depend on the immediate steps that Pakistan would take against terrorism. That probably is the reason why the Indian side has chosen not to go public with its assessment of the informal "talks about talks" that have taken place over the last few days.

Diplomatic exploration

Describing the diplomatic process of the last few days, the Pakistan Foreign Minister, Abdul Sattar, said, "contacts and conversations" with the Indian side "have taken place throughout the duration" of the SAARC summit. He insisted, however, "we were not engaged in negotiations".

This diplomatic exploration was about bridging the gap between the two sides on what it would take to begin a formal dialogue. India has been demanding some immediate concrete mea-



The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, looks as if he is telling the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, that it was time they both did something to break the ice in bilateral relations. A scene at the SAARC summit in Kathmandu on Sunday when they had a brief interlude. — Reuters

asures against cross-border violence and a commitment to eliminate terrorism over the long-term.

Pakistan wants New Delhi to

ease the military buildup and a commitment for a serious negotiation on the dispute over Jammu and Kashmir. On the latter question, Gen. Musharraf today

No plan now for talks: PM

KATHMANDU, JAN. 6. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, today made it clear that there was no "immediate plan" for bilateral talks with Pakistan but said they could hold talks in the future. "India and Pakistan are neighbours. They have held talks in the past and they will hold talks in the future also," he said at a meeting with leading Nepalese journalists before leaving for New Delhi after attending the SAARC summit here.

According to one of the journalists, Mr. Vajpayee expressed the view that there was need to further strengthen the SAARC. "The association will deviate from its objectives if we get engaged in political disputes," he said, referring to the proposal of the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, that bilateral issues between member-countries should also be taken up by the forum.

The Prime Minister said, "SAARC should concentrate on the issue of the uplift of the backward people of this region. India would continue to do whatever is possible to make the regional grouping successful." Mr. Vajpayee described as a mere 'courtesy call' his informal meeting with Gen. Musharraf, which the General claimed covered ground on defusing tension between the neighbours. — PTI

reaffirmed the "connectivity" between terrorism and Kashmir. He insisted that "both cause and effect need to be discussed together". While no details are forthcoming on how the two sides plan to play out the "informal understanding", they could come into view from a series of sequential steps by New Delhi and Islamabad in the next few days — if all goes well.

The first steps, from the Indian viewpoint, will have to come from Pakistan in the form of a visible action on the list of terrorists and criminals that New Delhi has handed over to Islamabad and cooperation — tacit or otherwise — in preventing infiltration from across the Line of Control in Kashmir.

The U.S., which has been actively encouraging both sides to defuse tensions, is also likely to press Gen. Musharraf to make additional moves against terrorism and ask India to take steps to de-escalate the military confrontation. The U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, was on the phone last night with the Indian and Pakistani Foreign Ministers.

Relaxed mood

The signs of a more relaxed political mood were visible this morning when Mr. Vajpayee took the initiative to shake the hand of Gen. Musharraf on the dais at the end of the closing ceremony of the SAARC summit. The two leaders also apparently chatted briefly when Gen. Musharraf walked up to him later. A few minutes earlier, the External Affairs Minister, Jaswant Singh, the National Security Adviser, Brajesh Mishra, and Mr. Sattar were seen consulting each other and exchanging pieces of paper.

SAARC to fight 'terrorism in all forms'

The SAARC summit ended today with a strong call for regional cooperation against terrorism. In the Kathmandu Declaration issued at the end of the 11th SAARC summit, the political leaders of the subcontinent "affirmed their determination to redouble efforts, collectively as well as individually, to prevent and suppress terrorism in all its forms and manifestations". The leaders also promised to "accelerate" the "full implementation" of the 1987 SAARC Convention on Terrorism "within a definite time-frame".

Scrub to Azim
H.D. 11

India's stand on terrorism endorsed

7/1

KATHMANDU, JAN. 6. In a solid endorsement of India's position on cross-border terrorism, the SAARC summit today vowed to fight terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and pledged to prevent support and financing of organised terrorist activities in the member countries.

The commitment of the seven-member group, including Pakistan, came unanimously in the 11-page SAARC declaration at the concluding ceremony of the much-delayed summit that was overshadowed by Indo-Pak. tensions and chill.

"The heads of State and Government reiterated their support to the U.N. Security Council resolution 1373 (adopted in the wake of September 11 terror strikes in the U.S.) and affirmed their determination to redouble efforts, collectively as well as individually, to prevent and suppress terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including by increased cooperation and full implementation of the relevant international conventions relating to terrorism to

which they are parties."

"In this context, they called on all States to prevent and suppress the financing of terrorist acts by criminalising the collection of funds for such acts and refraining from organising, instigating, assisting or participating in terrorist acts in States or acquiescing in organised activities within its territory directed towards the commission of such acts."

"The leaders reaffirmed that the fight against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations has to be comprehensive and sustained," the declaration said.

Convinced that terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations, is a challenge to all States and to all of humanity, the leaders rejected any justification of terrorism on "ideological, political, religious or on any other ground". "The leaders agreed that terrorism violates the fundamental values of the U.N. and the SAARC charter and constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security in the 21st century."

— PTI

THE HINDU

7 JAN 2002

'SAARC must take up bilateral issues'

KATHMANDU, JAN. 6. The Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, today called upon the SAARC to take up bilateral contentious issues at its forum.

"Without desirable peace, there could be little progress in the region. Bilateral differences must be resolved in the SAARC on the basis of justice and fairplay," he stated while proposing a vote of thanks at the end of the SAARC summit here.

His comment came despite the SAARC leaders ruling out the possibility of the association taking up bilateral issues so that the grouping was not hijacked by the Indo-Pak. political agenda.

India has always refrained from raising bilateral issues at the SAARC.

Gen. Musharraf said bilateral disputes must

be settled sincerely by the member-countries. Pak. to host next summit

Gen. Musharraf said Pakistan would host the 12th SAARC summit next year and said the group's Ministers would work out the dates.

Later at a press conference, asked when the formal consultations between the two countries would be held, he said "no dates have been fixed but there is an urgency for a formal dialogue and I hope it will occur in the near future".

'A big table between us'

Asked to comment on some 'papers' being exchanged between the External Affairs Minister, Jaswant Singh, and his Pakistani coun-

terpart, Abdul Sattar, during an informal meeting, he said in a lighter vein pointing to Mr. Sattar, who was sitting beside him, "Sattar saheb koi sher shaayeri to nahi exchange kar rahe the (was Mr. Sattar exchanging poetry)?" "They were definitely not talking about the weather," replied Gen. Musharraf when asked on another occasion whether the matters relating to bilateral relations figured during the informal talks between the two Ministers.

Gen. Musharraf rejected India's demand for handing over criminals and terrorists such as the Jaish-e-Mohammad chief, Masood Azhar to it and said linking of the Kashmir issue with the attack on the Indian Parliament causes "problems". "We are not into handing over anybody, anywhere," he said. — UNI, PTI

THE HINDU

7 JAN 2002

Cold war begins to thaw as Musharraf talks peace

By Aunohita Mojudar
Times News Network

KATHMANDU: On the closing day of the Saarc summit, Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee and President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan met in private — and shook hands again in public — but remained circumspect about what had transpired between them.

Though both claimed that their meeting only involved an exchange of courtesies, the forced engagement at the end of three days of palpable tension will certainly ease the climate of hostility between the two countries. The abrupt change in temperature on Sunday morning was evident from Gen Musharraf's tone and tenor. While he reiterated Pakistan's position on each issue, he was no longer aggressive.

At the concluding ceremony, Gen Musharraf made a brief speech stressing the need for "durable peace to realise the dream of Saarc".

As the ceremony ended and the leaders moved towards the exit, Mr Vajpayee made at least half the effort of extending his hand to Gen Musharraf, a gesture which had the entire audience cheering.

He later acknowledged that he had met Gen Musharraf but described it as a courtesy call and said that nothing much had been discussed. "Baatchet hui, zyada nahin (We talked a little, but not much)".

Mr Vajpayee's principal secretary, Brajesh Mishra, was also seen discussing a document with Pakistani foreign minister Abdus Sattar during this time. While speculation about the contents of the document ranged widely from a charter of demands made by India to a blueprint for de-escalation, it was apparent that Indo-Pak diplomacy had entered a new phase and that much of the subsequent engagement will be carried out behind closed doors, largely due to Indian insistence.

Gen Musharraf himself hedged the issue of whether the two countries had engaged in discussions, describing the contact as "sitting together and holding discussions" and said, "We look forward to formalising this." He did not respond to repeated questions on the issue of Mr Vajpayee's harsh remarks at Saturday's inaugural ceremony, saying tensions could only increase from such reactions. Even if irresponsible statements were made, he said, he would try to exercise restraint.

In an important departure, Gen

Musharraf referred to the connectivity between the movement in Kashmir and what the Indian leadership calls terrorism, saying both cause and effect will have to be addressed together or else it will be akin to moving around in circles. "We understand Indian concerns and India must understand ours", he said.

Gen Musharraf also ruled out the possibility of handing over terrorists wanted by India, saying that Pakistan would take



NOT TOO LATE
Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee checks his watch as Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf looks on at the conclusion of the 11th South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation summit in Kathmandu on Sunday.

action under its own laws if evidence was provided. While delinking the action taken in Pakistan against terrorist groups from the Indian demands, he said India should take note of the steps.

Saying he would welcome the appointment of a U.S. envoy to South Asia, Gen Musharraf added: "We believe if two parties cannot solve problems, there is need for third party facilitation or mediation". He said Washington had asked both countries to defuse tensions, talk to each other and normalise relations.

▶ See Edit: Mushy Logic, Page 10

**United we
stand in war
against terror,
declares Saarc**

By Dileep Padgaonkar
Times News Network

KATHMANDU: While India has good reasons to be pleased with the outcome of the Saarc summit which concluded here on Sunday, Pakistan could well be encouraged to demonstrate greater flexibility and determination in addressing the one issue that was at the core of the deliberations of the leaders of South Asia: the campaign against terrorism.

The five paragraphs relating to terrorism in the declaration unanimously adopted at the concluding session of the summit reflect India's concerns in unequivocal terms, concerns that Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee articulated in his address to the summit on Saturday with clarity, candour and, not least, with a vigour that is not usually associated with him.

It is the impact of this address rather than that of the rather dramatic gesture of President Pervez Musharraf of walking up to Mr Vajpayee to shake his hands following his speech that echoes through the text.

Significant in this regard is the statement that terrorism, regardless of its forms and manifestations, cannot be justified on ideological, political, religious or on any other ground.

This effectively negates Pakistan's oft-repeated thesis, advanced in the context of Kashmir, that in the global campaign against terrorism it is necessary to make a distinction between freedom fighters asserting the right to self-determination and terrorists.

The declaration indeed goes on to assert that the South Asian leaders called on all states to prevent and suppress the financing of terrorist acts by criminalizing the collection of funds for such acts and refraining from organising, instigating, assisting or participating in terrorist acts in states or acquiescing in organised activities within its territory directed towards the commission of such acts.

Pak spy drone shot down in Poonch

Times News Network

NEW DELHI: Defence ministry sources said that a Pakistani unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) was shot down by India in the Poonch sector in Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday afternoon.

"The UAV crossed the Line of Control (LoC) around 3 p.m. and flew over Indian airspace for about 20 to 30 minutes", an

official from the ministry of defence said.

"It was detected by radars and hit from the ground while returning".

Officials said the drone - which is used to provide real-time imagery of troop movements or to take photographs of specific locations and posts - was flying very low and was engaged by Indian ground forces.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

7 JAN 2002

SAARC SUMM

South Asia
11-9

Musharraf plays peace

HTC & PTI
Kathmandu / London, January 6

PAKISTAN HAS been far from forthright in its condemnation of terrorism at the Saarc summit, feels Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. "All the member countries of Saarc have denounced terrorism during the conference except one," he said.

"Even in the 11th Saarc declaration, terrorism has been mentioned, but if you look at the speech of President Pervez Musharraf, terrorism has not been denounced," Vajpayee told a group of Nepalese journalists after the summit.

The declaration, issued before the two-day summit ended, called on member countries to introduce legislation to speed up the enactment of a 1987 convention against terrorism.

But despite the Indian Prime Minister's harsh words against him, the Pakistan President sounded dovish. "All differences must be settled amicably through justice and fairplay. Violence in South Asia has to end if long-term and sustained development is to take place in South Asia," he said.

Speaking at the closing ceremony of the Saarc Summit, Musharraf concluded with a prayer: "We may all be endowed with the wisdom and courage to settle our differences amicably on the basis of justice and fairplay, and that violence and the use of force be eradicated from

THE GENERAL HALTS AT BEIJING

PRESIDENT PERVEZ Musharraf on Sunday had an hour-long stopover in Beijing on his way back home from Kathmandu, his second in the past three days and third in the last fortnight. Musharraf, who travelled to the Saarc summit by a special Chinese airliner, returned to Beijing in the same plane. Later, he left for Islamabad by a PIA flight.

PTI, Islamabad

our region." The Pakistan President cautioned: "If there's no durable peace, there will be little progress. If bilateral differences continue to be unresolved, genuine peace will remain an elusive dream. May the people of South Asia progress and prosper and harmony prevail. May the New Year be auspicious for the countries and our people and the association," he said.

"We are all aware of the weaknesses, the impediments coming in the way of our common march ahead. We have to join hands to remove them," he added. Musharraf said South Asia was blessed with every resources and the region has the capability to emerge out of poverty and under-development to move rapidly on the road to



(From left) Khaleda Zia, Khando Wangchuk (Chairman of Bhutan's Council of Ministers), President Musharraf and Chandrika Kumaratunga stand at the conclusion of the Saarc Summit.

socio-economic progress. Describing the Saarc declaration as "constructive and forward looking", he said: "we should move ahead... to translate the declaration into reality."

Musharraf's penchant for humour was in full flow at his press conference. Asked to comment on some "papers" being exchanged between Jaswant

Singh and Abdul Sattar during an informal meeting, Musharraf pointed at Sattar and said: "Sattar Saheb koi sher shaayeri to nahi exchange kar rahe the? (Was Mr Sattar exchanging a poem)? They were definitely not talking about the weather."

Meanwhile, many in the western media are still unconvinced that Musharraf's handshake

Neighbours to work for free trade area

Kathmandu, January 6

SAARC TODAY pledged to work towards early establishment of a South Asian free trade area and direct the member Governments to finalise the draft treaty framework for this purpose by end of this year.

Agreeing to accelerate economic cooperation of core areas of trade, finance and investment, the Saarc declaration adopted at the conclusion of the 11th Summit here asked member states to expedite action to remove tariff and non-tariff barriers and structural impediments to free trade.

In moving towards the goal of Safta, the heads of State or Government instructed the seven member countries to conclude the meeting of the inter-governmental group on trade liberalisation for the fourth round of trade negotiations under Sapta as early as possible.

To realise the goal of an integrated South Asian economy in a step-by-step manner, they expressed their determination to make full use of regional synergy to maximise the benefits of



President Musharraf salutes as Prime Minister Vajpayee looks on after the conclusion of the 11th Saarc Summit in Kathmandu on Monday.

globalisation so as to minimise their negative impacts on the region. "While recognising that trade and economic expansion is closely interlinked, the leaders made a commitment to widen and deepen the scope of regional networks of activities in trade and financial matters."

Satisfied with the outcomes of

the successive meetings of Saarc commerce ministers enlarging the scope of cooperation, the declaration reaffirmed that the free-trade treaty regime must incorporate binding time frames and ensure equitable distribution of benefits of free trade to all states. It should also include mechanism for compensation of rev-

enue loss especially for small and least developed countries.

The declaration expressed its firm resolve to combat the problem of poverty with a new sense of urgency by actively promoting the synergetic partnership among national governments and international agencies.

PTI

IIT | Day 2

enik, Atal unrelenting



(of Ministers), A B Vajpayee, Sher Bahadur Deuba, Maldives President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, Gen Pervez Musharraf at the Saarc Summit in Kathmandu on Sunday.

with Vajpayee means that the threat to India from militant groups in his country has ebbed, adds HTC from London. Musharraf's action was meant to be a symbolic message to the US and UK that Pakistan is willing to be friends with India and can start negotiations for a peaceful settlement of the Kashmir issue. But the gesture has not been received

as positively as the President might have hoped. "Normally, a handshake could be interpreted as a sign of détente between powers. Not here," said Britain's *The Observer* newspaper. It noted that the General drew a distinction between terrorists in Kashmir and acts of terrorism elsewhere. This would be a signal of encouragement to terrorists in

his country for more attacks on India. Many feel the General's show of such amiability might be an indication that the Chinese too had told him to restrain the terrorist groups. He had apparently gone to China in the hope of unequivocal support but the Chinese played down his visit. The government news agency said he was on a transit visit.

KATHMANDU DIARY

Still behind the times

THE SOUTH Asian disregard for punctuality was on full display during the Summit, which not only opened a day late, but also concluded behind schedule. The closing ceremony today began a full hour late, the culprit this time being Chandrika Kumaratunga. Incidentally, Kumaratunga is notorious for her laid-back approach. Once, on an official visit to India, she had kept Home Minister Advani waiting. The experience of a prominent Indian TV anchor and journalists who attended her press meet was no different.

Huddle haze

WHAT SET the rumour mills working overtime this morning over an Indo-Pak interaction was an interesting huddle at the venue of the conference. Found confabulating in a quiet area were the foreign ministers of India and Pakistan, the Indian PM's principal secretary and the Pakistani envoy to Kathmandu.

Scribe vibes

IN SO far as atmospherics went, Musharraf's media interaction, was much more congenial and balanced when compared with his post-Agra media circus in Islamabad. Barring one incident when a Pakistani scribe sought to "balance" an Indian scribe's query by his own question, the show went off smoothly. Major General Rashid Qureshi, who regulated the floor, could not be faulted for his impartiality. He gave equal chance all media persons crowding the small committee room.

No-holds-barred

AS IF taking the cue from Qureshi, Pakistan TV recorded a panel discussion on the Indo-Pak focus, which had reduced the Saarc Summit to a mere sideshow. Besides Hussain Haqqani and Nusrat Javed of Pakistan, two Indian journalists were invited to participate. The debate, anchored by Naseem Zehra, was recorded with the promise that the comments would be carried in full without any post-production changes.

Knee knowhow

WHEN Khaleda Zia met Vajpayee, she inquired about his knee problem. Suffering from the same painful affliction, she apparently is planning the kind of replacement surgery the Indian Premier underwent. Her discomfort notwithstanding, Khaleda reportedly said no when the host Government offered to arrange a wheelchair during the Nagarkot retreat, which was eventually abandoned.

Vinod Sharma

Khaleda talks democracy with Pervez

HT Correspondent
Dhaka, January 6

BANGLADESHI PREMIER Begum Khaleda Zia has urged President Musharraf to restore democracy in Pakistan.

Khaleda met the General on the sidelines of the 11th Saarc Summit in Kathmandu, the Bangladeshi foreign ministry said today. Musharraf in turn said the process of democratisation had started and that elections to the local and provincial bodies were being held. Begum Zia also underscored the need for dialogues between Pakistan and India.

The discussion focused on trade imbalance, increase in exports, return of stranded Pakistanis in Bangladesh and the Afghan situation. On trade imbalance, Zia urged Pakistan to help it meet its trade deficit. Musharraf said the matter would be taken up when the Pakistani Commerce Minister visits Bangladesh later this month. This was the first meeting between Begum Zia and General Pervez Musharraf after the former took power in October.

Vajpayee backs Nepal monarchy

Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, January 6

PRIME MINISTER Atal Bihari Vajpayee on Sunday pledged support to the institution of monarchy in Nepal.

He said, "Let constitutional monarchy be there in Nepal since it is the symbol of stability. The Nepalese themselves know what's best for them."

Vajpayee made the remark at a gathering of members of the Indian community that saw him return to his charming best that was completely missing till an hour before when he appeared at the concluding session of the Saarc summit.

Earlier, Vajpayee drew loud applause when he, in his imitable style, commented, "*Bharat keval akaar se nahi dil se bhi bada hain.*" He said, "Whether in or outside the government, I have always shown concern for Nepal's well-being."

Vajpayee, who was here as Prime Minister for the first time, asked Indian expatriates to help the kingdom in its development.

His support to kingship also

comes as a rebuff to Maoist insurgents who have been fighting an armed struggle for a republican government since 1996. The Prime Minister asked the Nepalese not to give a political colour to the issues of water resources and other economic programmes. He said, "We do not work against Nepal's interests. Both us must try to help each other" (Almost all past bilateral agreements on water resources have run into rough weather because of opposition from Nepalese political parties.)

Vajpayee said discussions were on to formally extend the five-year 1996 India-Nepal Trade Treaty whose term was increased by three months after it expired last month.

He wrapped up his short speech by assuring the gathering that India is capable of meeting both internal and external challenges. He added, "We are both strong and united."

He stressed the need for making the Saarc successful like the EU. He said he was against the raising of bilateral issues at Saarc meetings.

HD-8 SAARC leaders denounce terrorism

KATHAMANDU, JAN. 5. Leaders of the SAARC countries today denounced terrorism in all its forms and demanded immediate steps for elimination of support, encouragement and financing of terrorist groups.

The leaders also made a special mention of the U.N. Security Council resolution in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks, mandating nations to take action against terrorist groups, including denial of safe havens and sought firm action on the measure. In their speeches at the inauguration of the SAARC summit, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Maldives and Bhutan made detailed references on the scourge of terrorism, while Bangladesh just made a passing mention saying that SAARC has moved considerably forward in signing various conventions, treaties and agreements, including those on drugs and terrorism.

Setting the tone, the Sri Lankan President, Chandrika Kumaratunga, fighting the LTTE on her soil, said, "double standards cannot work anymore and will not resolve the long-standing problem of terrorism."

Expressing his country's revulsion against the scourge, the Nepal Prime Minister, Sher Bahadur Deuba, who took over the chairmanship of SAARC, said there was need to collectively and resolutely fight the growing menace along with blocking drug trafficking and organised crimes that finance and support it.

"We need to expedite enabling legislations that will facilitate the implementation of the SAARC regional convention on suppression of terrorism. This should be complemented with the effective implementation of the U.N. Security Council resolution 1373 which all of us have supported," he said. The Maldives President, Abdul Gayoom, said the recent attack on the Indian Parliament, the September 11 strikes in the U.S., Israel's attack on Palestine and the strike on the Colombo airport have drastically changed people's perceptions of the present-day world. "Terrorism must be condemned and eliminated whenever and wherever it appears. It endangers civilisation, destroys peace, subverts democratic ideals and disrupts economic activity."

"We must support and strengthen international efforts to combat terrorism, and effectively use the existing SAARC institutions and mechanisms in fighting this evil in our region," he said. — PTI

THE HINDU

6 JAN 2002

Match gestures with actions, India tells Pakistan

■ Sincere hand of friendship: Musharraf

By C. Raja Mohan

KATHMANDU, JAN. 5. In a political spectacle at the opening session of a summit of the South Asian leaders here today, the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf sought a renewed engagement with India, but the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, insisted that Pakistan first end its support to cross border terrorism.

While welcoming Gen. Musharraf's offer of friendship, Mr. Vajpayee demanded that the General follow his gestures by stopping "any activity" in Kashmir and the occupied part of Kashmir "which enables terrorists to perpetrate mindless violence in India".

In responding bluntly to Gen. Musharraf at the opening session of the summit of the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) India was not shutting the door on a dialogue with Pakistan. It was only laying down unambiguous terms for it.

Official sources here say that Mr. Vajpayee's remark might offer Gen. Musharraf some space for manoeuvre and might show the direction of action needed to control cross-border terrorism.

Mr. Vajpayee's remarks came after Gen. Musharraf declared at

the end of his speech that he was ready to extend "his genuine and sincere hand of friendship" to India. In a dramatic gesture after his speech, Gen. Musharraf walked up to Mr. Vajpayee and shook hands with him.

At the end of his own speech Mr. Vajpayee responded to Gen. Musharraf by recalling his earlier efforts at making peace with Pakistan. Mr. Vajpayee said his journey to Lahore was "rewarded with aggression in Kargil and the hijacking of an Indian Airlines aircraft from Kathmandu."

Mr. Vajpayee went on to say, his invitation to Gen. Musharraf to visit Agra was followed by attacks on the Assembly in Jammu and Kashmir and the Parliament House in New Delhi.

Amid the continuing exploration of the diplomatic space for resuming political contact and high-level dialogue with Pakistan, India today was looking for some positive political signals from Gen. Musharraf — in particular a forthright condemnation of terrorism.

Gen. Musharraf did indeed say that Pakistan "abhors violence" and "we condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations". But the positive aspect of his for-



RIISING TO THE OCCASION: These photographs show the sequence of the offer of handshake by the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, to the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, after the former's speech at the SAARC summit in Kathmandu on Saturday. — PTI, AP

mulation was spiked with the assertion that "it is equally important a distinction is maintained between acts of legitimate resistance and freedom struggles, on the other hand, acts of terrorism, on the other."

The less than conciliatory tone of Gen. Musharraf's speech might have been aimed at his own domestic audiences, but it was not going to be received well by India. Besides trying to delink the Kashmir question from that of Pakistan's support to terrorism,



Gen. Musharraf indirectly blamed India for delaying the SAARC summit, demanded that the forum go beyond its charter to deal with contentious bilateral issues such as Kashmir, and signalled his reluctance to support the proposal for a rapid movement towards a free trade area in the region. Gen. Musharraf appeared to bring in a vision for the subcontinent that appeared to be radically different from that of Mr. Vajpayee who urged "not to let political obsessions cloud" the

Not a snub, Jaswant

India, however, sought to downplay the blunt response of Mr. Vajpayee to Gen. Musharraf's gamesmanship at the SAARC summit in the forenoon. The External Affairs Minister, Jaswant Singh, told reporters that Mr. Vajpayee's remarks were not meant as a snub to Pakistan. Mr. Singh interpreted Mr. Vajpayee's comments as a simple proposition — "Pakistan's gestures of friendship must be followed by acts of friendship". "Indo-Pak. relations are not exercises in public relations", he remarked.

Outlining India's terms for a dialogue with Pakistan, Mr. Singh said Islamabad could not use support to terrorism as a "pre-dialogue mechanism". Pakistan must remove the "gun pointed at the temple" of India, before talks could begin, Mr. Singh declared.

Restating that the moves by Pakistan were "a step in the right direction," Mr. Singh said India wanted to see more steps. On what specific actions from the General would convince India of

Leaders denounce terrorism: Page 8

prevent trafficking of women and children for prostitution and the use of child labour in the region. The two conventions were signed by Mr. Singh and the Foreign Ministers of the other six SAARC members in the presence of the leaders at the inaugural ceremony.

Leaders of the seven SAARC countries tonight approved the 'Kathmandu declaration', to be signed by them tomorrow, which calls upon the member-states to take speedy measures to "suppress the financing of terrorists, eliminate supply of weapons to terrorists, halt cynical abuse of refuge and asylum status, and enact domestic legislations to deal with the extensive international terrorist networks".

Gen. Musharraf offered to host the 12th SAARC summit in Pakistan. At the inaugural session, he said the summit should be held even if a member-country did not participate. According to the SAARC charter, attendance of all the heads of member-countries is necessary to hold the summit.

Mr. Vajpayee tonight attended a banquet for visiting SAARC leaders hosted by his Nepali counterpart, Sher Bahadur Deuba, in which Gen. Musharraf was also present.

KATHMANDU

PM shakes Pervez's hand, slaps his wrist

Vajpayee takes on Musharraf

NILOVA ROY CHAUDHURY
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KATHMANDU, Jan. 5. — In the midst of all the high drama, that included a verbal duel between Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and General Pervez Musharraf, the Saarc agenda has managed to proceed with a degree of unanimity that most observers find amazing.

After reading out his inaugural address, the general walked up to the Prime Minister and extended his "hand of friendship". Mr Vajpayee, slightly taken aback, reciprocated the gesture, but later, while delivering his speech, told off the Pakistani President for "perpetrating mindless acts of violence against India."

Mr Vajpayee said he had gone to Lahore to court Islamabad's friendship, but "was rewarded with aggression in Kargil" and the hijacking of Indian Airlines' IC 814 flight. He had invited the general to Agra and was "rewarded with a terrorist attack on the J&K Assembly and Parliament House." The President, he said, "shouldn't allow the use of Paki-

stan and territory under its control to perpetrate mindless violence against India".

As the stunned President looked on, Mr Vajpayee said: "It's now for General Musharraf to act, as anything else would be betraying the expectations of our peoples."

The impromptu paragraph that Mr Vajpayee added to his prepared speech has silenced the critics of the Prime Minister's "moderate approach". Never before in Saarc's history had there been such a frontal attack on a head of state. And it was a bit of luck that Mr Vajpayee was scheduled to speak second last.

In his speech, Gen Musharraf had talked of the need to resolve bilateral issues that had cast a shadow over Saarc's functioning. "No member," he said, "should be allowed to hold Saarc to ransom."

In a repeat of his performance at the breakfast meet in Agra, the general said: "By no stretch of the imagination can the movement in Kashmir be called terrorism." He also urged India to recall UN resolutions on Kashmir calling for a

plebiscite, because New Delhi has made it a point to harp on Resolution 1373 (on terrorism).

In his rejoinder, which was "from experience", Mr Vajpayee indicated his patience with verbal sophistry had been stretched to its end.

Mr Vajpayee skipped the retreat at Soaltee Plaza hotel in the afternoon, and instead deputed the foreign minister, Mr Jaswant Singh, to attend it. No reason was cited. Mr Singh had said earlier that attendance at the retreat was "voluntary".

India tonight denied that there had been an informal meeting between Mr Singh and the Pakistani foreign minister, Mr Abdul Sattar. Mr Sattar's press conference, scheduled for the evening, too was cancelled.

India has rejected the USA's proposal to send a special envoy to Islamabad and New Delhi to help ease tensions in the region. Mr Singh said unless the US missions in the two countries "weren't up to their jobs", there was no need for a special envoy.

■ See SAARC: page 7

THE STATESMAN

Saarc on trial

The Saarc summit has provided India with a unique opportunity to pursue its diplomatic campaign against terrorism

WRITING soon after the Colombo Saarc summit, former foreign secretary Muchkund Dube commented: "The recently-concluded summit provided an excellent opportunity to the two Prime Ministers [of India and Pakistan] to put the long suspended bilateral dialogue back on the rails and set in motion a process of adopting urgently needed confidence-building measures."

Unfortunately these hopes were belied, as the bilateral talks on the sidelines of the Summit proved infructuous. Much the same could be said about the Kathmandu Saarc Summit. Only this time the bilateral talks did not materialise and the strained Indo-Pak relations almost aborted the summit.

Though India had granted Gen Musharraf permission to over-fly India, en route to Nepal, he chose to visit Beijing before reaching Kathmandu - and that too rather late. The delayed arrival of the Pakistani President necessitated the postponement of the inaugural session of the Summit by almost a day, thus curtailing the duration of the Summit. While Gen Musharraf may have been conveying a 'couldn't care less' message by first visiting China and then arriving late for the Summit, the consequent curtailment of the meet has suited India just right.

A brief Saarc Summit makes it that much easier for Vajpayee to avoid Gen Musharraf. For the Indian government had made it very clear that there will be no bilateral meeting between Prime Minister Vajpayee and President Musharraf on the sidelines of the Kathmandu Summit "until Pakistan creates a conducive climate by acting resolutely and meaningfully against terrorism."

The Summit has provided India with a unique opportunity to pursue its diplomatic campaign against terrorism. Though the final picture is not clear at the time of writing this piece, hopefully the Indian delegation to the Summit would have succeeded in keeping the focus of

the Summit firmly on terrorism and arriving at a declaration that will bind the participants to the UN resolution on terrorism. The UN resolution No 1373 requires all member nations to crack down on blacklisted terrorist organizations as well as consider requests for extradition of proclaimed terrorists. This resolution is much more stringent than the Saarc Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism (which, incidentally, was agreed upon during the meeting of the Council of Ministers in Kathmandu in August 1988). And if one were to go by reports, India would have had no difficulty in getting strong references against terrorism in the Kathmandu

Declaration, which will be made public at the end of the Summit.

But fight against terrorism is only a part of the Saarc agenda. The objectives of Saarc, as spelt out in the very first article of the Charter of Association, are to promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and to improve their quality of life; to accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development of the region. Keeping this vision in mind, several ministerial level meetings were held soon after the inaugural Saarc Summit in Dhaka in December 1985. Declarations were adopted covering important economic issues relevant to the Saarc region: study groups were set up to find ways and means to improve the lot of women and children in Saarc countries, to tackle natural disasters; agreements had been reached to curb terrorism and drug abuse and steps were tak-

en to improve agriculture and promote more regional trade.

It would be a pity, then, if disagreements between India and Pakistan vis-à-vis terrorism derail this movement for regional cooperation. As it is, tensions between India and Pakistan had forced the shelving of the 1999 Summit and the movement has been flagging over the last three years. Will Kathmandu mark the revitalization of Saarc or will it prove the critics of Saarc right?

■ Antony Thomas



Pak President Pervez Musharraf salutes Nepalese PM S B Deuba (not in picture) after shaking hands with A B Vajpayee at Saarc summit in Kathmandu

Kathmandu Declaration finalised

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Statesman News Service

KATHMANDU, Jan. 4. — Officials today finalised details of the Kathmandu Declaration that the seven leaders of the region will sign before the 11th Saarc summit ends on Sunday. According to sources, the final result has been an attempt to refocus on the poverty in the region.

There are four paragraphs relating to terrorism, that India wanted to bring to the fore, but the economic agenda gained precedence even though the Union external affairs minister, Mr Jaswant Singh, pointed out that terrorism was hampering much needed development in the region and needed to be tackled "expeditiously and seriously." Firming up the existing Saarc convention on the suppression of terrorism, adopted in the previous Kathmandu summit in 1987, with the committee of legal experts meeting shortly in Colombo to finalise details of tougher legislation in the light of the 11 September events, are among the key parts of

the declaration.

Heated discussions involved India giving up much of its core insistence on terrorism in order to accommodate the majority view, that poverty alleviation and economic integration of the region must take precedence.

An interesting sidelight was that the foreign secretary, Mrs Chokila Iyer, who speaks fluent Nepalese, managed to mediate with the host country during periods of impasse, and slip in some more of India's agenda than was originally acceptable to Nepal and Bangladesh.

Nepal sabotaging summit: Pak

KATHMANDU, Jan. 4. — Unable to adequately account for the delay in General Musharraf's arrival in Kathmandu, Pakistan today accused Nepal of trying to sabotage the Saarc summit at India's behest, and lodged a strong protest against the detention of one of their embassy staffers, Mr Siraj Ahmed Siraj. — SNS

Sri Lanka was one country that was as keen as India on resolute action against terrorism in the region, and terror formed a considerable part of the discussions Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee held during a 50-minute one-on-one meeting with Sri Lankan President Mrs Chandrika Kumaratunga. It was the longest bilateral meet the Prime Minister held today.

Mr Vajpayee also had meetings with Begum Khaleda Zia, and the leaders of Bhutan and the Maldives.

THE STATESMAN

11 JAN 1990

Attack & Retreat

In the end, the weather gods played villain between Atal Behari Vajpayee and Pervez Musharraf. Or did they? Expert opinion in this country would rather have that president Musharraf chickened out of the retreat at Nagarkot near Kathmandu, fearing he would be hauled over the coals by the assembled SAARC heads of government. For the general, the retreat also meant the possibility of a face-to-face with bete noire Vajpayee on a day that India claimed to have produced copious evidence to prove Pakistan's involvement in cross-border terrorism against its neighbour. Whether or not the general's 'no show' was pre-planned, it is a fact that he would like attention deflected from terrorism at the SAARC summit exactly for the reason that India would want focus kept on terrorism. And yet, terrorism is not an irritant that affects only Indo-Pak relations. Unless the SAARC countries collectively repudiate terrorism and pledge cooperation in fighting the menace, there can be little progress in South Asia on vital issues such as development and poverty alleviation. Consider the post-September 11 impact on the region as a whole. American forces on an unprecedented scale have been deployed in the area and a high technology campaign has been fought. Military action is continuing to search and seize Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar. A number of organisations based in Pakistan and Sri Lanka have been notified as international terrorist organisations. There are allegations of collaboration between some Pakistani nuclear scientists and the Al-Qaida organisation.

That Pakistan-based terrorism is a deep-rooted problem is, in fact, affirmed by president Bush's advocacy of a restrained approach in dealing with the matter. Obviously there are fears that hasty action to counter terrorism may destabilise the Pakistani government. And though this only points to the extent to which terrorist outfits are entrenched in Pakistan, so far that country has refused to face up to this truth. It would go to the credit of the Kathmandu summit, if this realisation gains ground. Pakistan's stand on terrorism vis-a-vis India is comparable to its approach to the Al-Qaida and the Taliban. In both cases, General Musharraf demanded proof of their involvement in terrorism, and indeed, made it amply clear that he had joined the US-led anti-terrorist coalition only apprehending a threat to Pakistan's sovereignty, economic viability and strategic assets. The SAARC summit at Kathmandu has sought to further strengthen the earlier convention on terrorism by referring it to legal experts. In the circumstances, General Musharraf will not find it easy to attribute terrorism in Kashmir and elsewhere in India to freedom fighters. Not given the problems faced by Sri Lanka in respect of the LTTE and Nepal in respect of the Maoists. Nor can Pakistan maintain that the Jaish-e-Mohammed and the Lashkar-e-Taiba are terrorist organisations within Pakistan but freedom fighters outside. The Kathmandu summit may not take the traditional SAARC route and focus on development issues. But it will have served its purpose if it concentrates on dealing with terrorism, a scourge that has single-handedly blocked South Asia from reaching its enormous economic potential.

W.L. D.

A SENSE OF DIPLOMATIC STILLNESS IN KATHMANDU

SAARC summit delayed by a day

By C. Raja Mohan

KATHMANDU, JAN. 4. The prospects for an Indo-Pak. dialogue here remain up in the air as the opening session of the summit of South Asian leaders scheduled to begin here this afternoon was postponed by a day due to the delayed arrival of the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf.

Both India and Pakistan are affirming their readiness for a dialogue but are apparently finding it difficult to overcome the obstacles that relate to diplomatic protocol and political substance.

Gen. Musharraf who flew in late from China because of bad weather said he hoped to see all the South Asian leaders but was not sure if a meeting with the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, would materialise.

Talking briefly to reporters at the airport, Gen. Musharraf suggested it was not a question of who invited whom for a conversation. "There should be willingness on both sides for talks."

The President's comments were in response to the remarks of the External Affairs Minister, Jaswant Singh, on Thursday that there was no request for a bilateral meeting from the Pakistan side.

While protocol problems are not insurmountable, the real difficulty appears tied to the question whether Gen. Musharraf is prepared to take concrete actions that could convince the Indian side about his seriousness in tackling cross-border terrorism.

A sense of diplomatic stillness descended on Kathmandu a day after Mr. Singh appeared to show a way out of the crisis. The External Affairs Ministry spokesperson, Nirupama Rao, was unwilling to elaborate on Mr.



The Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, the Sri Lankan President, Chandrika Kumaratunga, King Gyanendra and Queen Komal of Nepal, the Maldives President, Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, his wife, and the Indian Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, pose for a photograph before the royal dinner in Kathmandu on Friday. — AP

Singh's remarks that suggested a readiness to give more time for Gen. Musharraf to eliminate terrorism but called for two immediate steps to prove his sincerity.

Mr. Singh said India expected a "forthright" declaration against terrorism from Pakistan, and "action" on the list of terrorists and criminals handed over to Pakistan recently.

At her press conference, Ms. Rao underscored the importance of Pakistan creating a "conducive atmosphere" for a dialogue and insisted that there had been "no satisfactory response" so far.

Stating that India had "not shut the door" on a dialogue with Pa-

kistan, she suggested that it was "India's sovereign right to determine" if a conducive atmosphere had been created for a bilateral engagement.

Later, Rashid Qureshi, spokesman for the Pakistani President, reiterated that Pakistan had always been for talks and "we are

waiting for a response" from India.

On the question of creating a conducive atmosphere, Gen. Qureshi went at length on what Pakistan had done in the last few months to move in a gradual way against terrorism and sectarian violence, under the laws of the

Pak. relaxes ban on TV channels

ISLAMABAD, JAN. 4. Sports fans and news junkies breathed a sigh of relief today after Pakistan said cable operators could resume transmissions of five Star TV channels banned in the wake of escalating tensions with India. The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) said ESPN, Star Sports, Fox News, Sky News and National Geographic channels would return to screens from tomorrow. — AFP

country. He added that the world had appreciated Pakistan's cooperation in the war against international terrorism. Gen. Qureshi also pointed to his Government's condemnation of the December 13 attack against Indian Parliament and the offer of an impartial inquiry.

Retreat cancelled

The postponement of the summit by a day has resulted in the virtual cancellation of the planned retreat in Nagarkot, just outside Kathmandu, for Saturday morning. But a scaled-down version of the retreat, in the form of informal consultations, is expected to take place on Saturday afternoon in Kathmandu itself.

That still leaves some space for an informal chat between Indian and Pakistani leaders. Whether Mr. Vajpayee will engage Gen. Musharraf or not, there is a distinct possibility yet of Mr. Singh meeting his counterpart, Abdul Sattar. The Indian and Pakistani leaders, along with their South Asian colleagues, were all present tonight at a banquet hosted for the South Asian leaders by King Gyanendra of Nepal. But there were no reports of any substantive Indo-Pak. interaction.

Meanwhile, officials are close to finalising the Kathmandu Declaration that will be issued by the leaders at the end of the summit. India appears to have had little difficulty in getting strong references against terrorism in the declaration. Mr. Vajpayee also met today with the leaders of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. All these bilateral meetings took place in a very positive atmosphere, Indian officials said.

THE HINDU

- 5 JAN 2002

PM NOT TO CURTAIL TRIP, TO JOIN RETREAT

Focus back on Saarc after day's postponement

Nilova Roy Chaudhury
in Kathmandu

Jan. 4. — At the end of a day that saw rise and fall of political temperature, the focus seemed to be back on the Saarc movement.

Despite the late arrival of the Pakistani President (thanks to fog) that forced postponement of the opening session till tomorrow, Nepal is satisfied that its sensitivities had been taken into account.

Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee decided against returning tomorrow, in deference to his hosts who "have pulled out all the stops." The Prime Minister will return to Delhi on Sunday, as scheduled. There were indications this afternoon that he might cut short his stay here.

Mr Vajpayee will also join a retreat along with his principal adviser and the foreign minister. Delegations of all the seven countries will meet informally "to discuss Saarc matters".

Officials, however, said there was no possibility of Mr Vajpayee and General Pervez Musharraf meeting separately. They said the Prime Minister decided to stay on

so that the summit doesn't lose its significance.

Gen Musharraf, on his arrival, met with Nepalese leaders and said he would have made it to the summit even if it took him "three days to reach."



Musharraf: 'Would have made it even if took me three days to reach'. — A file photograph

At a press conference this evening, his spokesman, Maj-Gen Rashid Qureishi, said Pakistan was willing to cooperate with India if it provided "even a shred of evidence" against any individual. Pakistan, he said, wanted an independent inquiry into the 13 December attack, and would

welcome even a FBI probe.

He fielded questions for around 25 minutes after the Indian spokesperson, Mrs Nirupama Rao, took questions from mostly Pakistani journalists for around the same time.

Pakistan, Maj-Gen Qureishi said, had deployed "the bare minimum" of forces along the border and LoC, and would cooperate with India by taking action against individuals against whom "a shred of evidence" was provided, but not against groups. It has frozen the accounts of certain groups not because of India, but a UN resolution that calls for blocking funds to terrorist organisations.

China, from where Gen Musharraf arrived here, has always "stood by Pakistan", he said.

The Saarc declaration was finalised today for signing by the heads of governments.

The Saarc has rejected Gen Musharraf's proposal to include bilateral issues on the agenda, UNI adds. A spokesperson of the association urged the members to "preserve the regional mechanism in which bilateral contentious issues have no place".

More reports on page 2

THE STATESMAN

JAN 2002

India, Pak media managers rough it out on Nepal turf

■ There is a major propaganda campaign afoot from both the Pakistani media managers and the Indian officials. Rumours on whether "they'll" meet or not have reached such a fever pitch that everyone seems to have forgotten that this was not the Indo-Pak summit but the Saarc summit in Kathmandu. After Mr Jaswant Singh's press conference

yesterday, the matter seemed to have been put at rest, at least as far as the Indians were concerned. But the Pakistani principal information officer

took the cake when he seriously told a group of foreign journalists that Mr Jaswant Singh and Mr Abdul Sattar had held a meeting "for twenty minutes" in which they had agreed that there would be no war and a dialogue between the two countries would be resumed shortly. This apparently happened soon after Mr Singh left the press conference. The only hitch to this version was that Mr Singh was not present at the venue at the time given! He had accompanied Mr Vajpayee on a delegation level visit to the Nepal Prime Minister.

■ A very pleasant change from Agra has been the effort to keep the media constantly informed. The spokesman of the PMO, the redoubtable Mr Ashok Tandon,

was moved to Kathmandu a few days before the Prime Minister, to "be available to journalists. And the foreign office spokesperson, Mrs Nirupama Rao, is completely self-assured and able to communicate just what is required. It's difficult to recall when the Indian media managers managed to so consistently put down Pakistani propaganda.



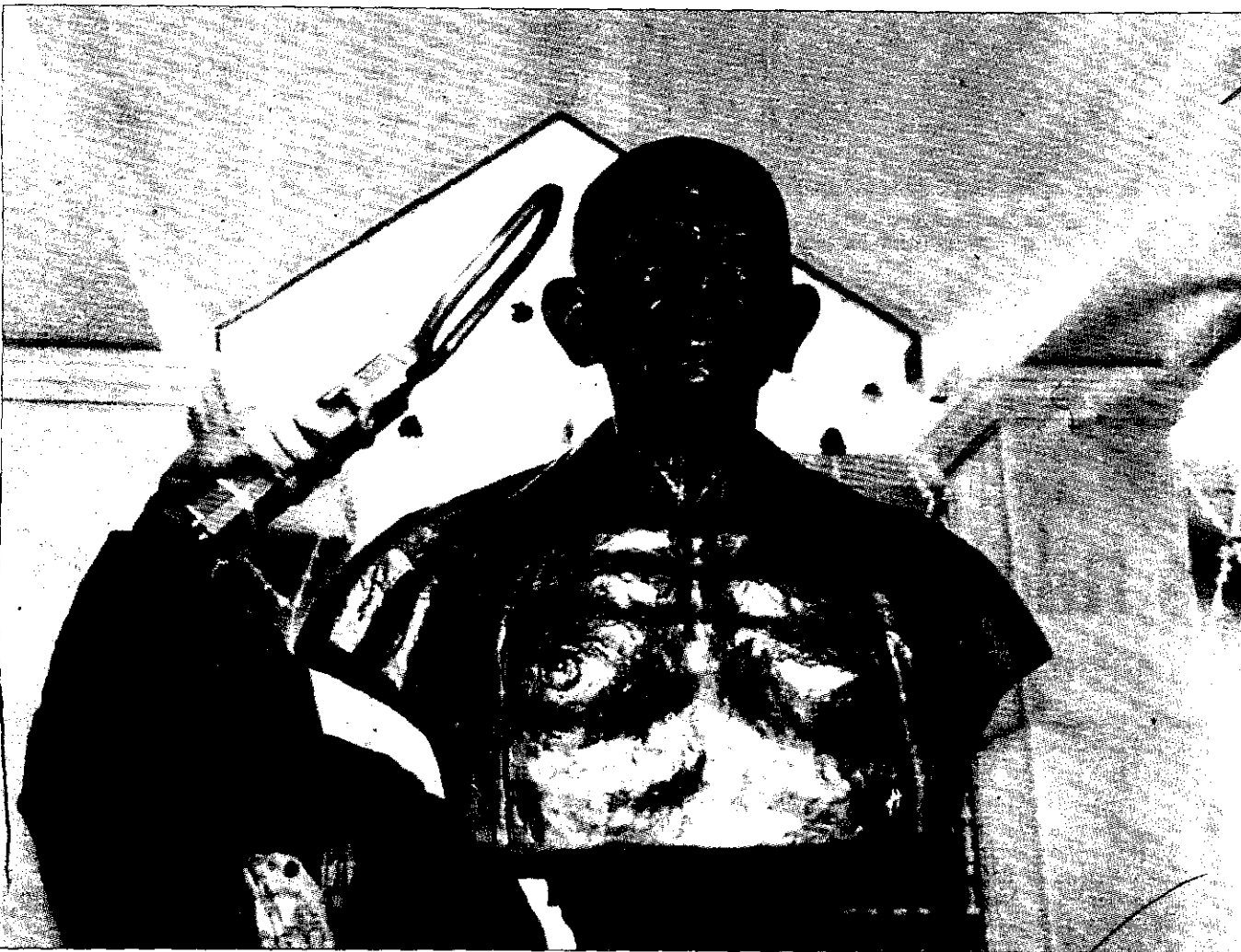
■ The Nepalis take their role as hosts very seriously. In their effort to make all arrangements for Saarc look their best, they have tried to impose a dress code on journalists

wanting to attend the opening and closing ceremonies. The foreign ministry spokesman, Mr PR Bhandari, announced that all journalists had to be dressed in formal lounge suits or their national dress.

■ Many people were out this morning on the city streets, but mostly all walking and taking in the bright sunshine. It's believed, King Gyanendra has personally supervised most arrangements. But the work ethic of the bureaucracy would put even the *babus* in Writers' Buildings to a shame. No information ministry official is available after six when journalists who've applied for accreditation are left to fend for themselves. Thankfully, the Indian media centre functions. — SNS

THE STATESMAN

- 5 JAN 2002



Apostle of peace as terrorist threat: The state police takes no chances with the Gandhi statue at Chakdah Bapuji Bidyamandir, Nadia. — Bishwanath Saha

**War unlikely, says
Rumsfeld**

WASHINGTON, Jan. 3. — US Defence Secretary Mr Donald Rumsfeld today said "he does not think that India and Pakistan are going to go to war. They are going to sort these things out. I know the President Bush is anxious to see that happen." He noted that both the Pakistani President and the Indian Prime Minister have been on the phone with the US and other countries repeatedly. — PTI

Lashkar threat

LUCKNOW, Jan. 3. — Lashkar-e-Tayyaba has threatened to assassinate the UP chief minister, Mr Rajnath Singh, Samajwadi Party chief Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav and BSP leader Miss Mayawati. It has also threatened to blow up the Taj Mahal and attack the makeshift Ram temple at Ayodhya. — PTI

Proxy war

NAGPUR, Jan. 3. — Mr George Fernandes today said that even as efforts to scale down tensions were on, there was no change for the better in Jammu and Kashmir or a let up in the proxy war waged by Pakistan. — UNI

Pak staffer detained

KATHMANDU, Jan. 3. — Police today detained a Pakistani embassy staffer here for allegedly possessing counterfeit Indian rupees and US dollars — part of a racket New Delhi says is run by the ISI. — AP

Strike in 11 ports

KOLKATA, Jan. 3. — Employees of the 11 major ports in the country would observe a token strike on 22 January against the Centre's move to corporatise them. — SNS

Govt doubts ISI 'downsizing'

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Jan. 3. — Officials are sceptical about Pakistan's reported move to shut down the ISI wing which deals exclusively with armed insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir.

New Delhi doesn't feel encouraged by the distinction made by Pakistan between foreign elements and Kashmiri "freedom fighters." Officials feel that by openly supporting militant outfits in Kashmir, Islamabad has blocked the way for bringing militants in the Valley into the political process. Had Gen. Musharraf told the ISI to stop helping all groups, militants would have automatically fallen in line. But now they might become more aggressive in their attacks, experts say.

Senior officials said more than examining the veracity of the

reports appearing in a New York-based newspaper, the Pakistan government's actions regarding crackdown on terrorist groups operating in India must be investigated. Pakistan has demanded more evidence against those accused in the 13 December attack and against 20 people wanted in India.

Observers said the Pakistani spokesman's declining to confirm the newspaper report should be seen as Islamabad's compulsion not to be seen as deserting the "Kashmir cause". "Otherwise it is impossible to even think that the President issues an important order and his spokesman is not aware of it," officials said.

The officials said steps taken by Pakistan so far were not "satisfactory". India would like to have full details relating to the action taken against terrorist outfits and would also like to ascertain if they included those

responsible for the attack on Parliament. Sources cited yesterday's grenade attack outside Jammu and Kashmir Assembly in this regard. They said the incident showed Gen Musharraf's directive wasn't effective enough.

General Musharraf openly abandoned the Taliban and vowed to stop any kind of support to the regime but the ISI continued to maintain its relation with it on various fronts. It's a fact recognised by the USA. The Pakistani President had to replace the ISI chief but that also did not yield desired results.

Sources said in the changed scenario it was increasingly becoming difficult for Pakistan to openly fund and provide logistical support to foreign terrorists for armed insurgency in Kashmir.

The officials said cosmetic actions like freezing of accounts of the Lashkar and Jaish would not convince Indian authorities.

Bush to bend rules for Advani

Sanjay Singh in New Delhi

Jan. 3. — The US President, Mr George Bush, is likely to change the usual protocols accorded to a visiting minister in order to meet Mr LK Advani when the latter goes to New York and Washington on a five-day tour next week.

The Union home minister may be welcomed by the US authorities with the protocols normally reserved for a head of government. The US envoy to New Delhi, Mr Robert Blackwill, would probably accompany Mr Advani to ensure that follow-up action of decisions taken could be smoothed.

According to convention, the US President does not hold one-on-one meetings with a visiting dignitary if he is less than a head of state or government. There is, however, a possibility that Mr Bush may interact with Mr Advani in another way.

Senior home ministry officials said "there are indications that Mr Bush would intervene while the home minister is meeting the US attorney-

general, Mr John Ashcroft, or the secretary of state, Mr Colin Powell, which is a repeat of what he did when Mr Jaswant Singh had visited there after the 11 September attack."

Mr Advani's visit is considered most crucial in the wake of the 13 December attack on Parliament.

So far, no Indian home minister has ever visited the USA in his official capacity. It is, in fact, for the first time in several decades that the US has invited a home minister of any country. The US authorities are quite reluctant to deal with an interior minister, because they once had a problem with Latin American countries.

The US invitation to Mr Advani now suggest that they wish to use "his (Mr Advani's) expertise on fighting terrorism" and discuss other issue including a mutual legal assistance treaty, source said. Mr Advani is likely to do some plain speak on his part and tell the US authorities that it was time they realised that fighting terrorism was not limited to its war in Afghanistan and the pursuit of Osama bin Laden.

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India provides the evidence on ultras

Nilova Roy Chaudhury
in Kathmandu

Jan. 3. — Mr Jaswant Singh today provided evidence on the 20 criminals and terrorists India has asked Pakistan to hand over. By doing so, and by refusing to meet the Pak foreign minister bilaterally ("there has been no formal communication from the Pakistani side for such a meeting," he said), he scotched the possibility of a meeting between Indian and Pakistani leaders at the Saarc summit, saying, "Saarc isn't a bilateral affair". "There is a convention," he said, "not to address contentious bilateral issues at Saarc."

The focus till now has been entirely on the possibility of talks between leaders of the two countries, to the detriment of the 'Saarc process.' By trying to divert the focus to Saarc matters, Mr Jaswant Singh was trying to dispel the 'big brother' image that India has within the regional grouping, saying "Saarc has not managed to achieve its goals. As the largest member, we are committed to making it work," he said, talking of how India had free trade agreements with several member nations, including Sri Lanka, and MFN status for Pakistan. He rubbed in the fact that Pakistan had not reciprocated.

He also strongly made the point

'This is what they've done'

■ In connection with the Bombay Blasts case: On 23 March 1993 — the secretary (west) in the external affairs ministry handed over a list of six persons, including their passport details, who were suspected of involvement in the bomb blasts, and had subsequently flown from Karachi to Dubai on 17 March 1993. ■ On 28 March 1993 — The Indian High Commission, Islamabad, gave a list of 10 persons whose passports had been revoked by India. ■ 30 March 1993 — Note Verbale (NV) no. J/103/20/93 — an 18-sheet long communication, containing information on physical marks of six wanted Indian persons and their involvement in the bomb blasts case. ■ 15 September 1993 — NV no J 103/20/93 given again with flight manifests from Dubai to Karachi of Memon family movements and photographs of Arges grenades and empty explosives cartons; followed by an aide memoire in June and August 1994 ■ Hijacking of IC 814 — 5 January 2000 — NV to Pak High Commission forwarding a brief report on the hijack, requesting them to apprehend the hijackers and their accomplices in Pakistan. ■ Pak responded on 24 January 2000 denying the presence of the hijackers in Pakistan and calling the demarche "baseless and provocative."

that after the UN Security Council resolution 1373, that makes it mandatory for all member nations to categorically reject all support, passive or active, to terrorism, how could Pakistan claim to provide "even moral and diplomatic support" to terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir. "Let Pakistan act on the commitment it has made to the international community, to not support terrorism." That India is on a diplomatic offensive against Pakistan is clear, but, as a senior official said, "Isn't it high time we

got the message across that we've had enough?" Providing the evidence was the next round in the pressure tactics. It highlighted the fact that the evidence has been given for nine years now. "Asking for evidence," Mr Singh said, "was untenable, unacceptable, and like the criminal asking the victim what evidence he has."

At a press conference that was originally meant to be a briefing exclusively for Indian journalists and foreign correspondents stationed and accredited in India — after Pakistan refused to allow

Indian journalists in for their briefing earlier in the evening — the press conference was then thrown open to all when it was converted from a briefing to a press conference. Mr Singh gave a detailed list of the evidence India has provided Pakistan ever since the Mumbai blasts occurred in March 1993. He went on to detail dates, times and types of evidence against the 20 people India has sought from Pakistan, for the Mumbai blasts, for the hijacking of IC 814 and for terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir.

He said: "I fail to understand why Pakistan should provide shelter to these criminals, accused of every kind of heinous crime against humanity." He said India hadn't laid down a time limit, "but at least let them respond to us directly." "I can understand that edifices created over 20 years would take time to dismantle," he said of the terrorist organisations Pakistan has been nurturing for decades.

A US newspaper said Pakistan, as part of its move against terrorist groups and leaders, had disbanded the branch of the ISI that groomed Pakistanis and other foreigners for terrorist acts, confining its activities now to nurturing local J&K-based groups instead.

Meanwhile, Mr Singh is expected to visit Colombo by April to revive a joint commission that hasn't met since 1998, a Sri Lankan diplomat said, adds AFP.

Delhi won't have a Pak-centric Saarc

Statesman News Service

KATHMANDU, Jan. 3. — India is pulling out the stops to ensure that its relation with Pakistan do not become the single-point agenda of the Saarc summit.

Indian officials ruled out any possibility of a bilateral meeting here. "Why do we need to meet here?" an official said. "Any fireworks between the two sides would derail the meet and no one wants that." In reply to questions regarding Mr Abdul Sattar's statement to an Indian website that Pakistan is willing to address India's concerns, the official said: "Pakistan has to create a conducive climate for such a dialogue. Much more needs to be done by that country."

Another point India sought to bring home is that terrorism "is the enemy of development and democracy" and strong measures are needed to counter terrorist activities in the interest of poverty-alleviation programme.

The regional grouping, however, didn't do much in this regard, except for delivering conciliatory and politically correct speeches. In fact, India didn't speak on terrorism except in bilateral meetings with the foreign ministers of Sri Lanka, Bhutan and The Maldives.

At today's discussions on terrorism, Sri Lanka took the floor and spoke of how the two conventions, adopted by Saarc in 1987 on suppression of terrorism and drugs, need to be updated, specially after 11 September and 13 December terrorist attacks and the adoption of Resolution 1373 by the UN Security Council. A meeting of legal experts from all seven nations will be held in Sri Lanka soon to finalise stronger anti-terrorist measures.

India is trying to press forward the Saarc agenda for development and poverty alleviation. Mr Jaswant Singh today participated in ministerial discussions that dealt with the Saarc "social charter". Bilateral meetings with leaders of other participating nations at the Saarc summit are not mandatory, officials said.

Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee will meet with Mr Sher Bahadur Deuba and the leaders of the Maldives, Bhutan and Sri Lanka (Mrs Chandrika Kumaratunga is coming as Sri Lanka's President) before the summit begins at 2 p.m. tomorrow. He is going to have a post-session meeting with Mrs Khaleda Zia tomorrow. However, a meeting with General Pervez Musharraf is not on his agenda.

The foreign ministers of India and Pakistan are also not meeting, officials said. "As they have their domestic compulsions and need

time, for which they have asked us not to push them, so do we, and there is no time. We also have our compulsions," an official said.

Mr Vajpayee will call on King Gyanendra this evening and will be his guest at an informal dinner, meant "for the PM only", an official said. "It's a dinner for only the principals, no families or delegations," the official said. Indian officials said that Mr Vajpayee and General Musharraf won't have a one-on-one meeting. But "pleasantries will obviously be exchanged." Both men appeared to have toughened their rhetoric before arriving here.

Gen Pervez Musharraf has advocated inclusion of bilateral issues in the charter of the seven-member grouping and observed that terrorism would raise its head in various forms unless there were sincere efforts by individual member-states to eradicate the menace, adds UNL.

"In our opinion, talking to each other about contentious issues is much better than refusing to discuss them. Pakistan would still advocate that bilateral issues should be taken up in Saarc," he said, knowing well that other member-countries are opposed to inclusion of contentious issues on the agenda.

Editorial: For their own sake, page 4

DVC to curb supply to CESC

Statesman News Service

KOLKATA, Jan. 3. — The DVC has decided to stop supply of power to CESC twice a day from 10 a.m. to 12 noon and 3.30 p.m. to 5.30 p.m. for one week, starting from 5 January. The CESC hasn't paid its dues, which on 31 December 2001 stood at Rs 66.07 crore. The DVC said in a press release

Dalai Lama the medium for NCERT's message

Sanjay K Singh
in New Delhi

Jan. 3. — Is the Dalai Lama a reluctant recruit in the human resource development ministry's plans to "reform education"?

Ministry officials said that senior government functionaries had given 'His Holiness' broad guidelines for a lecture he is scheduled to deliver at the National Council for Educational Research and Training on Friday.

The Dalai Lama is scheduled to deliver the 'Extension Lecture on Education for Peace' at 2.30 p.m. in the NCERT campus.

The 40-minute lecture is the first of a series, scheduled to "precede" the implementation of the National Curriculum Framework for Education.

The curriculum, which is to be introduced in the next academic session, has been mired in controversy with several eminent scholars accusing the council of saffronising certain subjects. History has particularly been the focus of the controversy.

Almost 75 per cent of the

history syllabus has been deleted in the new syllabus, specially portions which show brahmins in a "poor light".

Historians who wrote the original texts protested saying the government was trying to propagate facts selectively by



Dalai Lama: On a mission to convince people?

distorting history.

"The lectures are being organised to ease the pressure created by the controversy," admitted NCERT officials.

According to ministry officials, the Dalai Lama had been "advised" about the matter by the Union HRD minister, Dr Murli Manohar Joshi, "on the government's stance".

"The Dalai Lama has after all been accorded the status of Head of State of a Government

in Exile and he has a moral obligation to support the Indian government where he can," said a senior official.

While the HRD minister was out of station, repeated attempts to contact the Dalai Lama and the Union education secretary, Mr MK Kaw, failed.

The Dalai Lama was reportedly told that the government is "trying to introduce value-based education in India but it has become the subject of controversy for political reasons", and that "for the greater good, it will be better if someone of your stature can convince people that the government is not wrong".

There will be no official representative of the government at the lecture "to avoid any further controversy," officials said.

And it is not only the Dalai Lama who will be asked to advocate the government's cause in promoting the new curriculum.

Senior ministry officials said the government was trying to persuade retired judges, academics and several eminent persons to take up its cause by delivering the other lectures.

Atal vows to draft Saarc into terror war

FROM ANAND SOONDAS

Lucknow, Jan. 3: Before heading for Kathmandu, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee promised to push terrorism as the main issue at the Saarc summit. "Atankvaad ko zordaar dhang se uthaenge," he said, in a written statement to journalists in Lucknow.

The Prime Minister is hoping to get the support of some, if not all, Saarc members in the fight against terrorism. Vajpayee ruled out meeting Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf on the sidelines of the summit, saying Islamabad was "just not doing enough on the terrorism front to merit a dialogue".

Turning to another neighbour, Vajpayee said, in Kathmandu, he would take the opportunity to meet the king and the Prime Minister of Nepal and offer his full support to the Himalayan kingdom.

"Nepal is going through troubled times and India is with it," he said, adding that he would welcome the opportunity to meet the heads of Maldives, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Bangladesh. Pakistan's name was missing from Vajpayee's "welcome list".

In an indication of what India would push for at the summit, Vajpayee said all Saarc nations, barring Pakistan, shared a "South Asian determination" to fight in concert against terrorism.

The Prime Minister added that if all the nations "put aside (our) political confrontation and mutual rivalry" and get together, the "political, social and economic" face of the region would change for the better.

Continuing his diatribe



Vajpayee at Pashupatinath temple in Kathmandu. (PTI)

against Pakistan. Vajpayee said talks with Musharraf are not possible as long as Islamabad supports terrorism.

Demanding evidence from Pakistan on what it had done to

curb terrorism, Vajpayee said: "First I would like to know what action Pakistan has taken against terrorists and their organisations, how many people have been arrested and what Pakistan thinks is the nature of their crime. Where did they come from? Who exactly were involved in the attack on Parliament and other terrorist acts in Kashmir and other parts of India?"

Vajpayee clarified that he had not said India would use the atom bomb, if needed, to defend itself against a Pakistan attack.

Vajpayee had yesterday said in Lucknow that India would fight one last decisive battle against terrorism and had enough weapons in its arsenal to thwart any attack.

Some local newspapers reported this statement with the headline that Vajpayee was not ruling out an atomic attack on Pakistan.

"We want peace, not war," Vajpayee said.

"Our position and philosophy on the use of the atom bomb is clear. We will not initiate war and we will stand by our commitment to no first use. We will also not use the atom bomb on those who do not have it. We feel there is no need for it now and there shouldn't be even in future. These things are for self defence."

Dismissing reports that the BJP will make the Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue an election agenda, Vajpayee said the country was faced with a much graver issue now and all political parties had to get together to focus on it. "All issues barring terrorism are secondary and peripheral," the Prime Minister said.

Jaswant Singh pins down Pakistan with instances of 1 Here's hard evidence

Udayan Namboodiri and
Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, January 3

IN WHAT is clearly India's first official response to Pakistan's ceaseless propaganda seeking "evidence" of its role in abetting terrorism in India, External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh today made public all the information that New Delhi shared with Islamabad over the past decade on the matter which went unheeded by Islamabad.

At a packed Press conference here, Jaswant Singh went back in time, all the way to the 1993 Mumbai blasts, to prove India's contention that Pakistan had been consistently blind to the evidence contained in documents India laid before it.

Singh maintained that India has not come to the Saarc Summit to initiate dialogue with Pakistan. Nor was any official request made by Islamabad for a bilateral on the sidelines of this essentially multi-lateral show.

Sources in the Indian camp explained that neither the time nor the setting was appropriate for an Indo-Pak bilateral. In the absence of any possibility of immediate forward movement, a meeting now would only be an exercise in futility that could result in a slanging match, vitiating the Saarc atmosphere and causing much embarrassment to the host country.

Jaswant Singh today gave vent to India's frustration at Islamabad's refusal to take action against those accused in the Mumbai blasts, the hijack-



WILL THIS DO?

MUMBAI BLAST: Information on six accused, including the Memon family, and the flight manifest of the PIA aircraft that flew them from Dubai to Karachi given to Pakistan in March 1993. Matter raised several times by India.

IC-814 HIJACKING: Pakistan given note in January 2000 expressing need for nabbing the hijackers. "Irrefutable evidence" included affidavit of pilots. Pakistan's response: denied hijackers' presence and called the Indian missile "provocative and baseless".

TERROR LIST: A list of 32 wanted by India given in November 1998. This was followed by another list of 20 terrorists given last week.

ers of IC-814, besides providing shelter to terrorists from Punjab and Kashmir. "I have cited these examples only to illus-

trate that the subterfuge of seeking evidence is not acceptable," the Minister said. He also lashed out at Pakistan's "moral backing" to Kashmir terrorism saying, "I fail to understand how moral support can be given to an immoral activity like terrorism."

The Pakistani camp received the Jaswant charge-sheet with a degree of nonchalance. A senior official brazenly asked as to what action India had taken against Masood Azhar while he was in prison in Jammu. He also claimed that Islamabad's crackdown on some militant leaders was prompted only because they committed crimes on Pakistani soil.

However, on his part, Jaswant Singh demanded firm action by Pakistan against criminals figuring in the list furnished by New Delhi on December 31.

Earlier, in his talks with Foreign Ministers of Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka, Jaswant Singh had sought and received support for the Indian stand in the fight against terrorism. Official spokesperson Nirupama Rao interpreted the evolving consensus as recognition by member countries of the debilitating impact of terrorism on Saarc's objectives of development and economic union.

"Terrorism acquires a special meaning because it impacts every aspect of development and democracy," Rao said. The fight against the scourge, she averred, has come to occupy a certain "core position" in the South Asian outlook.

Related reports on Page 9



Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee at the Pa after his arrival in Kathmandu on Thursday fo

Member nations back India's stand

HT Correspondent
Kathmandu, January 3

ATAL BIHARI Vajpayee's nonsense approach to talks with Pakistan is being appreciated by Saarc's other members. They are not only backing the Indian refusal for a dialogue with Pakistan on the sidelines of the Summit, but will also resist all attempts to dilute the Convention on Terrorism in the Saarc declaration.

Pakistan Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar, who arrived here on December 31, is seen as overreaching himself to wean support for his country's position against India among the other Saarc member nations. A diplomat from Bangladesh told *Hin-*

dustan Times that his country could not be convinced that Pakistan was doing enough to rein in terrorists operating against India.

Sattar is also learnt to have used diplomatic back-channels to send messages to India. One such message, conveyed to External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh even before he landed here yesterday, pleaded for India's empathy with General Musharraf's domestic compulsions. He also asked for more time, to which the Indian reply was a polite "sorry - but we have run out of time".

There was anticipation that the Pakistan Embassy here was trying to organise a demonstration against "Indian excesses

in Occupied Kashmir" in central Kathmandu. However, that may have to wait till the Press corps from Islamabad arrives in full strength.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee arrived in Kathmandu this afternoon from Lucknow for the Saarc Summit beginning tomorrow. Vajpayee's arrival, a full day ahead of the summit, has sent warm signals about New Delhi's support to the Saarc process.

Vajpayee arrived a little after 3 pm in a special aircraft with his family members and officials at Tribhuvan International Airport, where he was received by Deuba, Indian Ambassador to Nepal I P Singh and other dignitaries.

INDIA SLAMS SELECTIVE ISI SHUTDOWN

INDIA ON Thursday reacted sharply to the reported Pakistani decision to turn off ISI support to only non-Kashmiri terrorist groups active in Kashmir. Support to terrorism of "any variety is completely unacceptable", External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Nirupama Rao said.

Reacting to a *New York Times* article, Rao said this only confirmed what India had all along said about Pakistan and its agencies' involvement in terrorism directed against India. PTI

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NORTH

Islamabad abetting terrorism in India

Prime Minister says, General



AP PHOTO
 Vajpayee at Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri Temple soon after the Saarc Summit.

Pak not ready to end support to terror: PM

HT Correspondent
 Lucknow, January 3

PRIME MINISTER Atal Bihari Vajpayee struck a pessimistic note at a press conference here saying there were indications that Pakistan was not ready to give up its sponsorship of terrorism. Just before leaving for the Saarc Summit in Kathmandu, the PM also ruled out the possibility of a dialogue with Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf on the sidelines of the meeting.

Vajpayee, however, ruled out the possibility of a war at the moment. "We will make and are making every effort to ward off war. It may not be required at all if a solution can be found through diplomatic efforts."

Vajpayee also said that Pakistan's role in abetting cross-border terrorism would not be raised at the Saarc Summit. Any discussion on terrorism, he said, would be framed in a broader context, since all the countries at the Summit faced the challenge of terrorism.

Replying to a question on the pressure exerted by the US and UK for resuming dialogue with Pakistan, Vajpayee said that India was not against talks. He added: "But cross-border terrorism must end to create a conducive atmosphere for talks."

He said no terrorist group

should be allowed to function out of Pakistan no matter what cause they professed to espouse and whether or not their target was India.

The Prime Minister added that Pakistan had not done enough. "We have no official information. Through newspapers and our High Commission we know (about) the steps taken by the Pakistan Government so far, but there is still the need to know how many ultras have been arrested, who they are, their involvement in various crimes, how many of those involved in the attack on Parliament or the terrorist strikes in India prior to that have been arrested. We have been demanding information but there has been no response. We have not received any details," Vajpayee said.

Pak mission staffer held

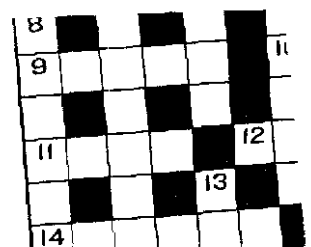
A day before Musharraf's arrival in Kathmandu, Nepal police today detained a Pakistani embassy staffer for allegedly possessing counterfeit Indian rupees and US dollars, adds AP from Kathmandu. India says the ISI prints fake notes in Nepal to buy arms and explosives for Kashmir militants. It wasn't clear whether the staffer, Siraj Ahmad Siddiqui, has been arrested.

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APHIC



Pak demand for proof a cruel joke, says PM

India is ready for war if ^{the} Pakistan, India unlikely
diplomacy fails: George to talk at Kathmandu

Times News Network

By Dileep Padgaonkar
Times News Network

LUCKNOW: Reiterating that India would not be the first to carry out a nuclear strike against any of its enemies, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee nevertheless gave no hint of the possibility of holding talks with Gen Pervez Musharraf during the 11th Saarc summit beginning in Kathmandu on Friday.

Addressing the media at Raj Bhavan before leaving for Kathmandu on Thursday, Mr Vajpayee said India was against war. However, he expressed his dissatisfaction with the measures taken by Pakistan against terrorist organisations operating from its soil.

Mr Vajpayee said the recent steps taken by Islamabad against non-Kashmiri terrorist outfits were just not enough and showed that the Musharraf regime was not willing to act in a decisive manner. "Although we are out to avert any eventuality of a war, we cannot be taken for granted," he warned, adding that India would use the nuclear option only in self-defence.

Appealing to political parties and religious outfits like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad to desist from raising any contentious issue like Ayodhya, Mr Vajpayee maintained that despite the fact that efforts were on to resolve the temple issue, ending terrorism was India's top priority.

Dubbing Islamabad's demand that India provide proof of the involvement of Pakistan-based terrorists in the attack on parliament and other subversive activities in India as a "cruel joke", Mr Vajpayee said, "I am at a loss to understand what evidence Pakistan wants when it is a well-established fact that our neighbour is responsible for terrorist activities in India."

KATHMANDU: Contradictory statements emanating from the Pakistani establishment regarding New Delhi's demand that Islamabad extradite 20 individuals wanted in connection with terrorist and criminal activities in India have dampened the prospects of bilateral talks between Indian and Pakistani leaders on the margins of the Saarc summit beginning here on Friday.

In an exclusive interview with this newspaper on Wednesday, Pakistan's foreign minister Abdus Sattar had said that although India and his country did not have an extradition treaty, Islamabad was of the view that the 1987 Saarc document on extradition provided a framework for Pakistan to heed India's request. Mr Sattar had also made several conciliatory statements which, taken together, suggested that Pakistan was willing to address India's concerns about cross-border terrorism.

However, reports from Islamabad on Thursday said Gen Pervez Musharraf had ruled out extraditing the 20 terrorists, but declared that they could be prosecuted under Pakistan's laws after examining the evidence that India provided against them. A Pakistan foreign ministry spokesman maintained that "even under the Saarc convention, evidence will have to be provided before extradition or any action can take place".

Indian officials, who are part of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's delegation, arrived here on Thursday afternoon. However, they were tight-lipped when asked for their reactions to Mr Sattar's comments and the possibility of even a chance encounter between the leaders of the two countries.



ON THE FENCE
Soldiers keep a tight vigil on the international border between India and Pakistan in Punjab on Thursday.

Maoists trigger blasts on eve of summit

KATHMANDU: Just a day before the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) summit, suspected Maoist rebels struck on Thursday, exploding powerful bombs. The explosions killed two persons and partially damaged the residence of a minister, officials said.

Health minister Sharad Singh Bhandari, however, was not in his house at Jaleshwar, 250 km southwest of Kathmandu, when the 'pressure cooker' bomb went off, officials said. No one was injured in the blast.

In another explosion, two boys were killed on the spot and five others sustained serious injuries when a bomb planted by unidentified persons went off in Manma-Khandachakra in Kalikot district, they said.

The bomb, alleged to have been left by Maoist

rebels, exploded near a public utility where the boys had gone for a bath. The five injured children were taken to the Nepalgunj hospital in an army helicopter for treatment.

The bomb was left near the public utility by the rebels while attempting to blow up the district headquarters a few days ago, the officials said.

Meanwhile, South Asian leaders meeting here on Friday will take up the issue of Afghanistan joining the regional grouping. Afghanistan had sought Saarc membership during the Soviet occupation of the country and its bid was renewed by former President Najibullah in 1990.

Sri Lanka's foreign minister Tyrone Fernando said that the application could now be considered by Saarc following the installation of a new government in Kabul last month. (Agencies)

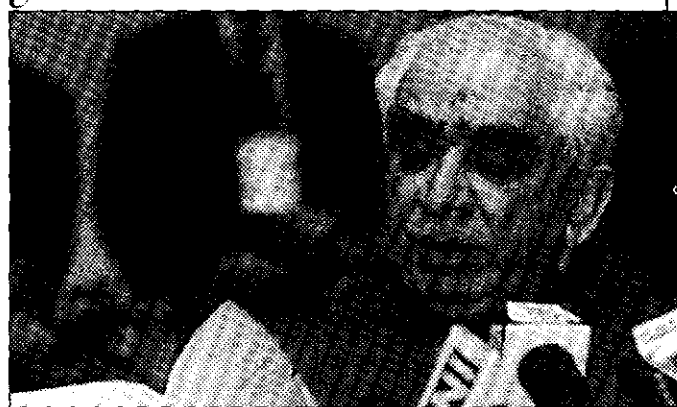
Twins hijack Saarc agenda

FROM ASHIS CHAKRABARTI

Kathmandu, Jan. 3: With the Big Brothers bickering, the smaller Saarc countries are left out in the cold to crib. With the focus firmly on the tensions and hostilities between India and Pakistan, the crucial issues of economic development of the world's second poorest region - next only to sub-Saharan Africa - seem to have been put on the backburner.

India's foreign minister Jaswant Singh sought to put a straight face on the issue when he was asked if the India-Pakistan tensions have hijacked Saarc's economic agenda. "Saarc is an economic forum," he said but pleaded helplessness when his press briefing turned out to yet another round of point-counter-point between the two.

In fact, Nepal, the host country, has long been complaining that the India-Pakistan bilateral problems had stunted Saarc's growth and the economic regeneration of the poor South Asian



Jaswant Singh at the Saarc meeting in Kathmandu. (AFP)

region. The two major political parties of Nepal - the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) - have openly made their complaint on this.

Couching his complaint in diplomatic language, Arjun Bahadur Singh, Nepal's minister of state for foreign affairs, has said peace between India and Pakistan was a prerequisite for

making Saarc a meaningful body.

Nepal also blamed the two big partners for the long delay in the present Saarc summit, which was originally scheduled for November 1999. That time India declined to take part in it, citing the Kargil war and the then Pakistan army chief Pervez Musharraf's coup which toppled the Nawaz Sharif government a mo-

nth before the scheduled summit. Not only Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, too, complained that their economic interests had suffered because of India-Pakistan hold-ups.

Officially, though, the economic business was conducted this time according to schedule. A resolution was taken to finalise the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) by the end of this year. Earlier, SAFTA was to be finalised by December 2001.

This morning, the meeting of the foreign ministers decided to reconstitute the South Asian Independent Commission for Poverty Alleviation, which was set up in 1992 with former Nepal Prime Minister K.P. Bhattarai as chairman. But it remained a dead instrument. No wonder when Jaswant Singh met the foreign ministers of Maldives, Sri Lanka and Bhutan this morning, terrorism dominated his presentations. Economic issues too were discussed, but in passing, as it were.

THE TELEGRAPH

7 4 JAN 2002

SAARC: a slow boat to nowhere?

By C. Raja Mohan

HP-10 3/1
AS THE leaders of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) gather in Kathmandu this weekend, the expectations of a substantive outcome from their deliberations are very low. Neither the region nor the world is biting its fingernails about the declaration that will emerge out of the 11th SAARC summit. Nepal, the host nation, which has had the misfortune of managing this much-postponed summit, will heave a sigh of relief that it is over and done with. The media will be more interested in the "body language" of Indian and Pakistani leaders than in the abracadabra of SAARC officialese.

The story of the 11th SAARC Summit is unlikely to be very different from that of the 10th summit in Colombo in July 1998. Then, as now, the South Asian political leaders met under the shadow of Indo-Pakistan tensions. In 1998 too, everyone was pleased that the SAARC summit took place despite the Indian and Pakistani nuclear tests that May. If worries about a nuclear flashpoint dominated the region then, those have become a reality now. This SAARC summit takes place amidst a looming prospect of a military confrontation between India and Pakistan that could escalate to the nuclear level.

Must SAARC remain satisfied with the fact that the leaders get to see each other once in a while and sign on some trivia that their officials manage to cook up? Compared to similar organisations elsewhere in the world, the record of SAARC in promoting regional integration has been dismal. The SAARC summits have become expensive talk shops with little effect on the lives of one and a quarter billion people in the region.

Take for example the discussion at SAARC this time on "poverty alleviation". How credible can the political elite of the subcontinent be when they mouth collective statements on eradicating poverty — a promise made a long while ago to their own national constituencies but not kept? Poverty of ideas and timidity of action are the real problems before the SAARC. To be sure there have been many ambitious slogans — a regional free trade area by 2001, a customs union by 2010 and, catch your

Without India's leadership, SAARC will continue to drift aimlessly. And for India to lead, it must come up with unilateral measures that will accelerate the process of regional economic integration.

breath, an economic union by 2020! In the typical subcontinental fashion of ritualising everything, these dates are doled out without any seriousness of purpose. Having missed the deadline of 2001 for a free trade area (agreed in 1997) the 11th SAARC summit now wants it by the end of this year. A free trade area involving India and Pakistan which have just downgraded diplomatic relations and snapped transportation links? Just forget about it. The SAARC is going nowhere. It will begin to go somewhere only if India

takes charge. Can the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, make the 11th SAARC summit somewhat different from the previous ones? Mr. Vajpayee is right in the middle of one of the most serious national security crises ever faced by India. The crisis involves a fundamental redefinition of relations with one of its largest neighbours in the SAARC. No one will blame Mr. Vajpayee if he does not come up with big ideas on regional cooperation. His domestic constituencies will be quite happy to see Mr. Vajpayee talk tough on terrorism and just look through Gen. Pervez Musharraf. But Mr. Vajpayee can do better. Even as he keeps the political focus on terrorism in Kathmandu, Mr. Vajpayee can push forward regionalism in the subcontinent by putting out four messages.

First, Mr. Vajpayee must do some blunt talking on what the crisis means for the subcontinent as a whole — that cross-border terrorism and regional cooperation do not go hand in hand. Mr. Vajpayee must speak plainly on the threat that religious extremism and violence pose to all nations of the subcontinent. Cooperation in combating terrorism is not a political favour one nation is doing another, but in the national interest of every country in the region. He needs to emphasise that unless this scourge is rooted out forth-

with, the region will find its dreams for peace and prosperity shattered. At the same time, Mr. Vajpayee must unambiguously point to the failures of the SAARC over the last two decades. In speaking to the SAARC, Mr. Vajpayee is addressing the entire region. He has the status to proclaim that India will no longer stand for the current stagnation in the SAARC process.

Second, Mr. Vajpayee must signal that India is ready to take the leadership role in the SAARC. In the early years of the SAARC, it was argued by many that New Delhi

WORLD VIEW

must maintain a low profile in the organisation. It was suggested that if India as the largest nation took the initiative, the others would get uncomfortable. India's strategy of lying low has not worked. It has led to a mindless drift. If the SAARC is to become productive, India has to take the lead. No one else will. Pakistan's approach to regionalism has made it abundantly clear it has no interest in the collective advancement of the region. The smaller countries are in no position to set the agenda for the SAARC.

On the core economic issues before the SAARC, Pakistan has been the slowest camel that has set the pace. It has been more interested in bringing its bilateral dispute with India over Kashmir into the SAARC ambit than in trade liberalisation. Pakistan's basic line in the SAARC is that there can be no economic progress unless political issues are resolved. This approach, is the exact opposite of what the other regional organisations have successfully adopted — expand economic cooperation despite political differences. Pakistan's refusal to benefit from regional cooperation has beggared itself. It should no longer be allowed to hold the rest of the region back.

Third, Mr. Vajpayee should proclaim In-

dia is ready for a "two-speed" SAARC. Mr. Vajpayee goes to Kathmandu days after downgrading the relationship with Pakistan. He needs to demonstrate at Kathmandu that India is prepared to advance economic integration in the region with Pakistan if possible and without Pakistan if necessary. The smaller countries of the region have increasingly seen the benefits of a regional market and are frustrated that integration is not taking place. To prevent regionalism from being held hostage by Pakistan, India must get going with those who are ready. The SAARC charter permits sub-regional cooperation that involves two or more countries. There are serious possibilities for rapid movement among India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan on the one hand and among India, Sri Lanka and Maldives on the other. Pakistan can join this process whenever it is ready to put commerce above politics.

Finally, Mr. Vajpayee can develop a credible strategy for transforming the region only on the basis of a strategy of unilateralism, which can be both negative and positive. Just as he displayed India's negative unilateralism by downgrading ties with Pakistan, Mr. Vajpayee must show he is capable of positive unilateralism in relation to the other neighbours. The best way of demonstrating this will be for Mr. Vajpayee to offer duty free access to goods from the least developed countries of the SAARC. This would mainly benefit Bangladesh at this stage, since Nepal and Bhutan already have that access to the Indian market. There is a separate trade treaty with Sri Lanka. Since the summit is taking place in Kathmandu, Mr. Vajpayee must publicly proclaim India's desire to renew the trade treaty with Nepal on reasonable terms for mutual benefit, and a vision to modernise and transform the bilateral economic relationship. Without India's leadership, the SAARC will continue to drift aimlessly. And for India to lead, it must come up with unilateral measures that will accelerate the process of regional economic integration. If Mr. Vajpayee cannot muster that political will, the 11th SAARC summit will end up as just another forgettable ritual among the South Asian leaders.

THE HINDU

JAN 2002

THEY SHAKE HANDS BUT WILL THEY TALK?

India yet to decide on bilateral meeting with Pak.

By C. Raja Mohan

KATHMANDU, JAN. 2. The External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, had a couple of close encounters with his Pakistani counterpart, Mr. Abdul Sattar, here today but the much-anticipated substantive consultations between the two leaders, if at all, might have to wait for another day.

There will be opportunities for the two Ministers to interact in the next few days as the summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) unfolds. All of them will be in a multilateral setting. The Indian side is yet to make up its mind on whether Mr. Singh should have a separate bilateral meeting with Mr. Sattar.

As every encounter here between Mr. Singh and Mr. Sattar gets highlighted by the media, India might find it increasingly hard to sustain the diplomatic difference between the civility that is extended to each other in multilateral settings and a serious bilateral conversation.

The world would like to see the Ministers talk to each other seriously and take the first steps towards a de-escalation of the current military deployment by India and Pakistan. And Mr. Sattar is making no secret of his desire for a substantive engagement with Mr. Singh on the margins of the SAARC summit.

Pakistani officials are raising expectations tonight about the "ice melting" between the Ministers. Mr. Ashfaq Ahmad Gondal, Principal Information Officer of Pakistan, told a few presspersons this evening that the two Minis-



The External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh (left), and the Pakistan Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdul Sattar, at the SAARC conference in Kathmandu on Wednesday. — AP

ters would be at the same dinner table tonight and that "it is not possible they will not talk".

India, however, is not showing its hand yet. If it comes up with an assessment that Pakistan is creating a "conducive atmosphere" for the talks by taking effective measures against terrorism, there might yet be a serious conversation between the Ministers over the next few days.

Mr. Singh and Mr. Sattar shook hands when they came face to face at the informal consultations of the SAARC Council of Ministers that convened here today. The

brief informal chat among the Ministers is a tradition at the SAARC ministerial meetings and lasted about 20 minutes.

Later, they were both present at a dinner hosted by the Nepalese Finance Minister, Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat. The Ministers are believed to have exchanged pleasantries, but there were no reports of any substantive talks between the two sides.

With the media spotlight riveted on the likelihood of an Indo-Pak dialogue here, the Indian officials were at pains to point out that Mr. Singh was here "princi-

pally and primarily" to attend the meeting of the SAARC Council of Ministers.

Asked to comment on the Pakistani demand for evidence before handing over the terrorists wanted by India, the External Affairs Ministry spokesperson, Ms. Nirupama Rao, said, "Such a refrain does not create a climate conducive to a dialogue."

Mr. Singh arrived from Lucknow on a special aircraft this afternoon in time for the scheduled meeting of the SAARC Council of Ministers. He also called on the Nepal Prime Minister, Mr. Sher Bahadur Deuba.

Meanwhile, the Council of Ministers continued with housekeeping chores for the SAARC summit. The Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, Mr. Tyrone Fernando, handed over charge to Dr. Mahat, who is leading the Nepalese delegation to the conference.

Dr. Mahat reminded the Foreign Ministers of the importance of rising to the new challenges from globalisation and pressing ahead with advances in the social sector. The Ministers reviewed the work done so far by the Foreign Secretaries.

A drafting committee, involving officials, is working late tonight under the guidance of the Ministers to give final touches to the 'Kathmandu Declaration' that will be issued by the heads of government at the end of this week.

Officials here said the discussions on the future agenda of the SAARC had been productive. After two decades of drift, there is a growing opinion within the organisation for a rapid movement towards regional economic integration.

Blair's 'peace' mission to subcontinent

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, JAN. 2. The British Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair, is to visit India and Pakistan this week in what is being projected here as a high-profile personal intervention to defuse the tension in the region.

It is believed that he may not carry any concrete proposals, but will urge both sides to resume talks while pressing Pakistan to act more firmly against terrorist groups operating out of its territory. According to *The Times*, Mr. Blair is expected to deliver "an uncompromising message (to Pakistan) over terrorists in Kashmir", but Downing Street declined to discuss the visit for security reasons.

Diplomatic sources said a bilateral visit to India had been planned long before the latest turn in India-Pakistan relations, and dismissed the media hype that it was specifically designed to address the current crisis in the region. However, they acknowledged that it had assumed significance in the present context. A substantive statement on bilateral relations, including a reference to mutual cooperation in fighting international terrorism, is likely to be issued after Mr. Blair's talks with Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee.

Commentators insisted on linking the visit to the new tension between India and Pakistan and described it as part of the U.S.-U.K. joint diplomatic "initiative" to bring the two nuclear neighbours back on to the negotiating table. They said though Mr. Blair was not travelling with a "blueprint" he would urge them to pick up where they left at Agra last July.

One report said the U.S. believed that Britain, with its historic colonial links with India and Pakistan, could play a "significant role in jumpstarting an intensive round of diplomacy" leading to a compromise in Kashmir which is widely seen here as one of the potential "flashpoints" in coming months.

In the past week, the British Foreign Secretary, Mr. Jack Straw, has often used tough language while urging Pakistan to crack down harder on terrorist groups whom India accuses of being behind the December 13 attack on its Parliament. But after Islamabad arrested Hafiz Mohammed Saeed, leader of Laskhar-e-Taiba, and rounded up a number of other suspects alleged to be linked to the attack on Indian Parliament, there is a growing view here that

Gen. Pervez Musharraf should not be painted into a corner as it might provoke a domestic backlash.

Extradition issue

Analysts found it hard to back New Delhi's demand for the extradition of 20 suspects. "Politically it would be suicidal for any Pakistani leader to extradite 20 nationals to India. If Delhi presses the issue, it could lead to the sort of stalemate the international community wants to avoid," a leading newspaper commented.

Mr. Vajpayee will be away in Kathmandu for the SAARC summit when Mr. Blair arrives in India from Bangladesh on January 4, and the two leaders are expected to meet on January 7. This would be their third meeting since the September 11 terrorist attack on the U.S.

Mr. Blair first met Mr. Vajpayee when he visited the region in October to bolster support for the international coalition against terrorism, and later the two had a fleeting meeting at Downing Street when Mr. Vajpayee stopped over at London on his way back home from the U.S. in November. Mr. Blair will also visit Hyderabad and Bangalore where the long-standing issue relating to India's plan to buy 66 Advanced Jet Trainers — a deal worth \$ 1 billion — is likely to come up. Britain is competing with Russia to get the deal.

AIFB resents 'tilt' towards Cong.

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JAN. 2. The All-India Forward Bloc (AIFB), a constituent of the People's Front, today expressed resentment over attempts by a section of the new formation seeking the Congress' support in the coming Assembly elections, especially Uttar Pradesh.

The AIFB, at its recent party congress, decided to contest at least in 13 seats in Uttar Pradesh, six in Punjab and one in Uttaranchal. Conveying its opposition to efforts in arriving at some understanding with the Congress, the AIFB general secretary, Mr. Debabrata Biswas, reiterated at a press conference that while his party favoured to be part of the Front, the formation should neither be with the Congress nor the BJP.

THE HINDU

3 JAN 2002

'Give more teeth to SAARC terrorism convention'

By Atul Aneja

NEW DELHI, JAN. 2. The former Prime Minister, Mr. I.K. Gujral, has urged leaders of SAARC countries to deepen their collective resolve against terrorism and revive the dormant economic agenda of the grouping.

In a letter, addressed individually to the seven South Asian heads, Mr. Gujral advocated more teeth for the existing SAARC convention on terrorism.

Making specific recommendations, he said that an updated SAARC convention should make it mandatory for all members to "totally prohibit" asylum and financial resources to terrorist organisations. The new legal arrangement should have enforcement provisions such as extradition of extremists.

Mr. Gujral, who advocated urgent and "concrete action", said that the U.N. Security Council resolution 1373 passed after the September 11 terrorist strikes in the U.S. was a useful guide for fortifying the SAARC convention.

Apprehending possible bureaucratic delays, he felt that the existing convention need not be forwarded to an "experts committee" for a revamp. Instead, the SAARC leaders could take advantage of the "evolution of regional consensus" for change that had already emerged among the SAARC officials to update this regime. "We can no longer leave our collective fight against terrorism, hampered by our existing or stipulated individual national legislations as is the case at present".

Lack of sustained "political will" had allowed the forces of terrorism to grip all the SAARC countries, Mr. Gujral observed.

THE HINDU

- 3 JAN 2002

Musharraf's stopover in Beijing is surprising

By Harvey Stockwin
Times News Network

HONG KONG: As Pakistan President Gen Pervez Musharraf flies to Kathmandu through Chinese airspace, China appears to be raising its profile regarding current Indo-Pakistan tensions, but available signs still indicate that Beijing is adopting a low-key and even-handed approach to the South Asian stand-off.

The clearest indication of this came in phone calls made earlier this week by Chinese foreign minister Tang Jiaxuan to both Indian external affairs minister Jaswant Singh and Pakistan foreign minister Abdul Sattar.

According to what has been reported by the Xinhua News Agency, in both calls Tang linked the current Afghan situation to the need for a reduction of Indo-Pak tension.

"The current Afghan peace process has just had a good beginning, and to continue the process and carry out post-war renovation requires peace and stability in South Asia," Mr Tang told Mr Sattar.

Xinhua reported Mr Tang as also telling Mr Singh that "India, as a big country in South Asia, can play a more positive role" in improving Indo-Pakistan relations. The Chinese foreign minister also said that the Saarc summit was very important and he hoped that it would succeed. However, it was not clear whether he said this specifically in relation to ties between India and Pakistan.

Given this fairly bland approach, little different from what other foreign governments are saying to New Delhi and Islamabad, it comes as a surprise that Gen Musharraf is going to Kathmandu via Beijing, where it is reported that he will be meeting Chinese leaders both before and after the summit.

Obviously, if the avoidance of Indian airspace was

Musharraf's sole aim, he could fly directly over Afghanistan, Tajikistan and China, approaching Nepal from Tibet, without incurring the many extra hours of flying required to go to Beijing and back.

The possibility exists that these extra hours are a subtle Chinese hint that Gen Musharraf should take advantage of India's offer and fly directly to Kathmandu. Normally it would be possible to speculate that there are some special security issues in Sino-Pakistan relations in urgent need of discussion — but the Pak President has only just completed a five-day state visit to China during which he also met top Chinese military leaders.

While it is always possible that the speed and extent of India's current mobilisation, since the terrorist attack on parliament, may have aroused some new

Pakistan security concerns which would hardly require two Musharraf visits going to and coming from the Saarc summit. It remains scarcely conceivable that China's private posture would be radically different from its public one of even-handedness.

First, China continues to express its opposition to terrorism, a point made by Chinese President Jiang Zemin in his New Year message to the Chinese people. Beijing would not want to have the image of opposing terrorism in Afghanistan and its own province of Xinjiang, while ignoring it in Kashmir.

Second, China knows that sustaining its close friendship with Pakistan while also attempting to improve relations with India is a tricky exercise but Beijing clearly wants to sustain it.

Lastly, the Chinese leadership is anxious to improve ties with the U.S., and so is unlikely to depart too much from an even-handed policy at a time when the Americans are no doubt watching China's every move.

NEWS ANALYSIS

THE TIMES OF INDIA

3 JAN 2002

Delhi rebuffs Islamabad's jehad

HT Correspondent & Agencies
Kathmandu, January 2

IN A harsh rejoinder to Pakistan's statement that it would consider extraditing the wanted criminals and terrorists if New Delhi provided the evidence against them, India said Islamabad should stop uttering ad nauseam its demand for "evidence" as condition for extraditing the 20 rogues whose names were submitted to Islamabad last week.

"It's their old refrain. For them to repeat this does not contribute to progress or reduction of tension," said Ministry of External Affairs spokeswoman Nirupama Rao. "Pakistan knows fully well what we mean and what the central point is."

Much to the chagrin of the terrorist groups on its soil, Pakistan had earlier in the day said it would consider extraditing the 20, provided New Delhi gives evidence against them and takes recourse under the Saarc Anti-Terrorism Convention.

"We can consider the extradition of these persons, but only after India meets all the legal conditions," said Pakistan Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar in Kathmandu last night.

To meet the legal requirements for the extradition, India will have to make a case against each listed persons in its own courts, provide evidence that would help indict these persons and ask for extradition under Saarc anti-terrorism convention.

The United Jihad Council, an umbrella organisation of some Pakistan-based militant outfits,

said the council would re-evolve its strategy in the next few days in the wake of Pakistan's crack-down on militants. UJC chairman and Hizbul leader Saeed Salahuddin said he was hopeful that Islamabad would not go to the extent of extradition. "If it happens, everything would be finished."

Sattar, who is attending the Saarc Foreign Ministers' conference beginning today, said India could invoke the right of extradition after completing the proper procedures and providing the evidence. Reacting to India's demand for 20 wanted terrorists, he said the issue of their extradition should be seen as a legal and not a political one.

"India should first fulfil all the requirements and conditions for extradition of the wanted people. Then it should clarify as under which law it calls for extradition of the people from Pakistan," he said, adding that New Delhi had not so far justified its request for extradition. "We cannot hand over any person to India until it justifies the extradition."

Sattar said: "It is a legal matter and needs justification for implementation. Why did the Indians not put Masood Azhar on trial when he had been in Indian jails for five years?" But he added that Pakistan would consider the request and extradite the persons on the list if they were "genuinely" required for prosecution.

His remarks followed reports that the Saarc Standing Committee, which met in Kathmandu in the last two days in the run-up to the summit beginning from January 4, recommended improve-



Indian missiles near the Pakistan border in Kutch on Wednesday.

ments in the Saarc Anti-Terrorism Convention signed in 1987.

As speculation continued over the possibility of his meeting with Atal Bihari Vajpayee, President Pervez Musharraf stepped up his diplomatic efforts to defuse the Indo-Pak tension.

Today, he was in constant touch with various world leaders, including Tony Blair, Colin Powell, Chandrika Kumaratunga, Kofi Annan, King Abdullah-II of Jordan and Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

Blair discussed with Mushar-

raf the current situation on the Indo-Pakistan borders and the need for peace and restraint, a Pakistani news agency reported.

He referred to his coming visit to the region next week, when he is scheduled to hold meetings with the Pakistani leadership.



Nepalese policemen guard the Saarc Summit venue, where leaders of the seven South Asian countries will meet on January 4.

Scribes want PM, Gen to talk

Vinod Sharma
Kathmandu, January 2

IT WAS media pressure of a different kind. Journalists from all seven Saarc nations today took part in a rally demanding the resumption of a dialogue between Vajpayee and Musharraf and toning down of tension in the region.

About 50 mediapersons from member-countries of the seven-nation regional grouping have assembled here under the aegis of the South Asian Free Media Association (Safma). They marched through the streets of Kathmandu to the Saarc Secretariat near Narayanhiti Palace. They carried banners with slogans like "no to war", "no to terrorism", "No to repression" and "Vajpayee-Musharraf should meet".

The agenda of the journalists' convention is to promote peace amidst the rising threat of war. The discussions remained focused on the increased animosity between India and Pakistan. Terrorism was one issue on which delegates wrangled like anything.

Siege within

The talk on global terrorism is intensely debated in Nepal even at the popular level. The Maoist

From the

SIDELINES

threat from within, the Kandahar hijack and the recent attack on the Indian Parliament seem to be changing the Nepalese way of life. And nothing drives home the message more palpably than the tight security at the Birendra International Conference Centre, the venue of the January 4-6 Saarc summit. Armed security men in battle gear are keeping strict vigil all over the place, sanitising the premises days ahead of the big event.

Tourism trauma

Tourist dollars make up Nepal's staple source of revenue. But, this year alone, the country stands to lose roughly \$ 50 million because the tourists stayed away from the Himalayan Kingdom.

The slide began in the aftermath of the June 2 Palace massacre and touched a new low after the September 11 attack. To turn the tide, the Nepal Tourism Board has come out with a new policy. The rebates offered to woo tourists include a huge slash—from \$

40,000 to \$ 5,000—in the fee charged from filming units headed for scenic locales like Upper Mustang and Upper Dolpa.

At an informal media interaction with the Tourism board's chief executive Pradeep Raj Pandey, Indian journalists were at their wittiest best. While one found him to be an Anupam Kher look-alike, another journalist suggested that the Board's job would be much easier if it were to approach Indian tourists with the slogan *Chalo chalen Kathmandu, jahan milenge Shambhu* referring to Nepal's famous Pashupatinath temple.

Cry freedom

"We cannot let terrorism win the war, nor should we let the Governments use it as a pretext to abridge freedoms," remarked Madhav Nepal, while opening the conference yesterday.

The CPU(UML) leader's observations may be applied to the conflicts in other parts of the subcontinent in the context of press freedom.

But K P Sharma Oli, a party comrade of Madhav Nepal, felt that newsmen in his country could do more for restoration of their freedoms.

"Until now, they have tended to accept what has come their way," he said.

li handover terms

in Asia

Vajpayee dig at Pak prop to terror

Kathmandu, January 2

IN A veiled attack on Pakistan ahead of the Saarc summit, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee today asserted that countries should desist from aiding or abetting terrorism in any form in South Asia, where religious fundamentalism combined with terrorism has been "blatantly used as a state policy".

Along with economic issues, he said, countering terrorism should define the agenda not only for the upcoming summit here, but for the regional group for the next decade as well. "No Government should be allowed to justify terrorism under any pretext," he said in an interview to the Nepalese official news agency Rashtriya Samachar Samiti.

Maintaining that terrorism has become a global phenomenon, Vajpayee said the people in South Asia have been suffering the consequences of the scourge for decades. Vajpayee will reach Kathmandu tomorrow to participate in the three-day summit.

"Religious fundamentalism combined with terrorism has been blatantly used as an instrument of state policy. My country has for two decades now been a victim of state-sponsored cross-border terrorism resulting in loss of life and property of thousands, uprooting families and

communities from their homes and depriving them of development and economic advancement," he said in a clear reference to Pak-aided extremist violence.

Asked if there was any special agenda from India for the summit, the Prime Minister said: "In my view, economic cooperation, poverty alleviation and countering terrorism define the agenda, not only for the Kathmandu Saarc summit, but for the association in the next decade."

Stating that India is looking forward to participate in the summit, he expressed the hope that the process of cooperation would move faster, especially in economic cooperation, the main agenda of Saarc.

Poverty, he said, was the most serious problem facing South Asia and the grouping must strive individually and collectively to address it. "It is only when we have greater economic development and more liberal trade and commerce that the full potential of the people can be realised."

Vajpayee said it was an uncomfortable truth that while other organisations like the Asean and the EU have marched ahead, Saarc has not been able to achieve the same momentum because it has allowed extraneous issues to retard its progress.

PTI

High (hopes) tea

NEPALESE PREMIER Sher Bahadur Deuba is trying to organise a tea meeting between Atal Bihari Vajpayee and President Pervez Musharraf, a source close to the Nepalese leader said on Wednesday. Indian officials refused to divulge if such a meeting was indeed on. The initiative was taken by former Prime Minister KP Bhattarai, who suggested that Deuba should take the lead in bringing the two leaders together in keeping with upholding the Saarc spirit of friendship and cooperation. Vajpayee and Musharraf will stay at the same hotel during the three-day summit.

PTI, Kathmandu

Media bar war

IN A tit-for-tat action, Indian and Pakistani officials barred journalists from each other's media briefings on Wednesday. At the Indian briefing, MEA spokesperson Nirupama Rao refused to take a question from a Pakistani TV journalist on the evidence Islamabad sought from New Delhi on the 20 terrorists operating from Pakistan and demanded by India. As the journalist stood up to put forth his question, she asked him to identify himself. "This is an Indian briefing meant for Indian journalists," she told him. Shortly later, some Indian journalists who went to the Pakistani briefing were similarly shown the door.

PTI, Kathmandu

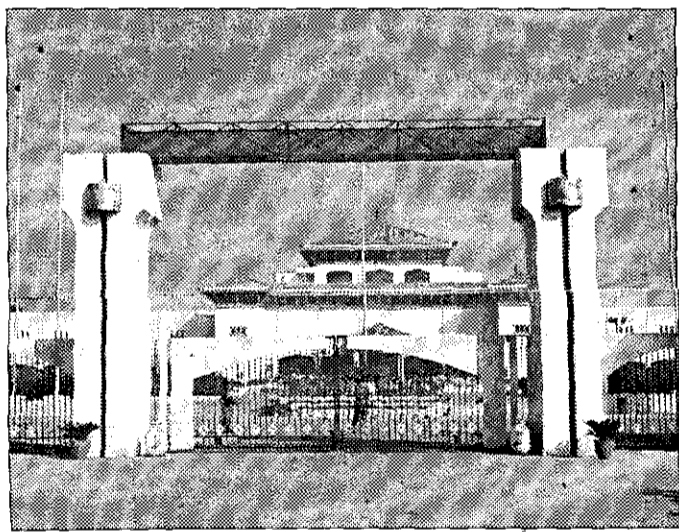
Pak scuttles India's move on UN Council

Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, January 2

WITH INDIA and Pakistan at daggers drawn, the emergence of the Saarc as a major regional group like the Asean still remains a distant dream.

Fearing possible gains by India, Pakistani has reportedly opposed a Saarc move to seek reforms in the constitution of the UN Security Council. For, India is the only South Asian country that is trying for a slot in the world's most powerful body.

It is learnt that smaller Saarc nations like Nepal had suggested such reforms at the three-day meeting of the standing committee of Saarc foreign secretaries that ended on Tuesday. Concerned at the far-reaching consequences of the India-Pakistan animosity on the Saarc, Kathmandu and Colombo informally requested the two nuclear neighbours to revive the peace process. The request came amid a possibility of Indian and Pakistani leaders meeting on the sidelines of the summit during which Nepal will replace Sri Lanka as chairman of the Saarc.



The main entrance to the Birendra International Convention Centre, venue of the 11th Saarc Summit in Kathmandu.

India's attempts to expand the Saarc by including Afghanistan, along with Myanmar, may make Pakistan jittery. For, the present interim Government in Kabul is not as close to Islamabad as the Taliban regime was. Close on the heels of the fall of the Taliban, Jaswant Singh had reopened the issue of the inclusion of the two countries. Aware that opposition by even a single member can block such expansions, Nepal, Sri Lanka and the Maldives have so far been non-committal on the issue.

Nepalese Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat, who will lead Nepal at the meeting of the Saarc council of ministers

beginning today, said, "We can think over it only when we receive applications from these countries."

On the other hand, Maldives President M A Gayoom said it was up to the people of Afghanistan to decide. Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Tyrone Fernando described the issue of Afghanistan as 'premature' as Kabul is still in transition.

A section of the Nepalese, including former Prime Minister Kirtinidhi Bishta, have sought inclusion of China. Many believe this as an attempt to expand Nepal's economic relationship with China or to maintain a balance within Saarc.

U rap Umai



tral Command spokesman, U Navy Commander Dan Keesee.

"The people who are actually knocking on the doors of these structures are anti-Taliban (Afghan) forces," Keesee said "and they are backed up by the US Marines."

End to bombing

The Central Command has directed a massive US air onslaught on the Taliban since October 7, but many Afghans want the bombing to stop. "There is no fighting now and the local people also don't want destruction and death," the Kandahar official said.

Local Afghan leaders and the country's interim defence minister, Mohammad Fahim, have called for an end to the US bombing campaign. US officials as

Jaswant, Sattar break ice in Kathmandu

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Udayan Namboodiri &
Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, January 2

JASWANT SINGH and his Pakistani counterpart Abdul Sattar exchanged brief hellos and even smilingly shook hands minutes before the start of the two-day ministerial council meeting here today. But that was it as Pakistan's offer to resume dialogue — made public here last evening — evidently failed to cut ice.

On the eve of Singh's arrival here, Sattar made the offer at an exclusive meeting with Pakistani and Nepalese journalists at the residence of Pakistan Ambassador to Nepal Fauzia Nasreen. "I am ready for dialogue, so is President Pervez Musharraf. We are ready for talks anywhere, anytime," Sattar told the gathering.

Despite the offer as well as the international pressure for dialogue, India showed no signs of officially meeting Pakistan on the Saarc sidelines. Indian spokeswoman Nirupama Rao made it clear that India had not changed its position on its demand for action against Pakistan-based terrorist outfits. On Islamabad's demand for evidence, she said: "We have heard this refrain from Pakistan on earlier occasions also."

For a world waiting on tenterhooks to know if a one-on-one was possible, the answer today was clearly no. What about tomorrow, or, even better, a Vajpayee-Musharraf meeting on the margins of the summit? The field is open to speculation.

India today sought to underplay the hype. Rao shot back at her daily briefing: "Our minister has come for a multilateral meeting." But that is not enough to water down the expectation for dialogue.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee is learnt to have put off his trip to Kathmandu by a day. Now he is expected on the morning of January 4 itself, when the summit begins.

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Security strengthened across Nepal

Leaders redraft speech to focus on poverty

Kathmandu, January 1

NEPAL HAS stationed armed guards around the clock, imposed major restrictions on traffic and will deploy helicopters later in the week to guarantee security for South Asian leaders holding a summit in the insurgency-ridden kingdom.

Aware of the current attention on the summit, King Gyanendra and Crown Prince Paras have both personally inspected key sites for security and other arrangements, officials said.

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf are expected to be present.

Camouflage-clad army and police personnel carrying semi-automatic guns were already in the streets of Kathmandu late yesterday, four days before the heads of State and Government are due to begin talks.

While rising tension between India and Pakistan seems sure to overshadow all else at the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) summit, the chief security concern for Nepal's Government is the Maoist rebels who broke a cease-



Soldiers stand guard in front of the Birendra International Convention Centre in Kathmandu on Tuesday.

fire in November. "The Government has handed over security arrangements to the army and the armed police force to check any acts of terrorism by the Maoist terrorists during the three-day summit," Home Ministry spokesman Gopendra

Bahadur Pandey said. Even though most Maoist-related violence has taken place outside Kathmandu, security forces have been watching all entry points to the capital "attentively" since the beginning of the week. Stringent restrictions have

been imposed around Tribhuvan International Airport, which only passengers and Government officials are being allowed to enter, and at the Saarc summit venue — the Birendra International conference hall.

AFP

MK Tikku
New Delhi, January 1

SAARC LEADERS have been making last-minute changes in their formal addresses to be delivered at the forthcoming Kathmandu Summit to highlight the need to address the problem of mass poverty in South Asia.

This follows a communication a few weeks ago from former Nepalese Prime Minister KP Bhattarai in which he urged the seven leaders to address the problem of regional poverty in view of the tardy progress made since the Independent Commission on Poverty Alleviation had been set up at the Colombo Summit a decade ago. Bhattarai also suggested that in keeping with UN precedents, the Commission be reconvened to ensure that its unfinished work was brought to fruition.

The former Nepal Prime Minister, who was chairman of the Independent Commission, has referred to the increasingly direct connection between mass poverty and rising violence in south Asian countries.

Sources said the Declaration to be issued after the Kathmandu Summit too would seek to address the issues raised in Bhattarai's communication.

The PMO in New Delhi is reported to have sought the assistance of a leading Sri Lankan development economist, who played a key role in making of the Poverty Commission report, to ensure that adequate emphasis is placed on this issue in the PM's address. The Prime Minister had suggested a joint effort to address the poverty problem in his communication to Musharraf preceding the Agra summit.

Nations agree to define terrorism

Udayan Namboodiri
Kathmandu, January 1

THE SAARC countries have resolved to work closer to combat terrorism. Despite the disagreement between India and Pakistan over defining the term, the Standing Committee meeting here today resolved to sort out the complexities by holding a meeting of legal experts as early as possible in Colombo.

The Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism was signed at the Kathmandu Summit in 1987. But it has remained a dead letter thanks to bilateral disputes and internal problems faced by member countries. Terrorism was not part of the

Standing Committee meeting's agenda. But the committee decided to address the sticky issue and ignore the spectre of bilateralism. Sources said there was unanimity over the view that regional co-operation, which includes police networking, could go a long way in rooting out terrorism, a malaise afflicting almost all member nations.

India points out that barring Pakistan and Bangladesh, all nations have implemented domestic legislations against terrorism. But the reality, as Nepal's acting Foreign Secretary Madhu Raman Acharya put it, is that "All countries are in different stages of implementation".

The "events since September

11" had injected considerable urgency to the need to expedite the progress of the convention, India's foreign office spokesperson Nirupama Rao said. Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Inam ul Haque did not comment on the load in the remark, but agreed to the next step of convening a legal experts-level meeting in keeping with Islamabad's support to the coalition against terrorism.

Legal experts will have to grapple with the many definitions of terrorism. Pakistan, for instance, objects to India's term "cross-border terrorism". Nepal calls the Maoist rebels terrorists. Sri Lanka has the LTTE and Bangladesh brands any organised crime by that opprobrium.

Moreover, the Saarc region has no bilateral treaty between members on extradition.

The Standing Committee did not take any decision on addressing this lacuna. The overriding feeling, according to sources, was to get the ball rolling again.

However, on the less contentious issue of economic cooperation, there was a huge step forward. Years of inaction had rendered dead the 2001 deadline for a South Asia Free Trade Agreement (Safta), which was part of the 1998 Colombo SAARC declaration. So the members made it their New Year's resolve to finalise Safta by the end of 2002 towards an eventual South Asia Economic Union by 2020.

Border-smug Washington looks to Kathmandu

FROM K.P. NAYAR

Washington, Jan. 1: Three days after the Americans urged India and Pakistan to restrict military movements along their common border, the state department yesterday expressed satisfaction that there have been no new reports of actions which increased tension.

Philip Reeker, deputy spokesman, said: "Missile deployments and military movements can only heighten tension and uncertainty. I haven't seen particular new reports."

Reeker's comments implying progress towards reducing the temperature in South Asia came as secretary of state Colin Powell made calls on New Year's eve to discuss the India-Pakistan crisis with German foreign minister Joschka Fischer, UN secretary-general Kofi Annan, and British foreign secretary Jack Straw.

Reeker, meanwhile, expressed hopes that meetings on the margins of the South Asian summit in Kathmandu would defuse tension.

"The fact is that they (India and Pakistan) are both going to

be represented in Kathmandu. That gives them an opportunity for dialogue as well as their continued diplomatic ties. So that continues to be the message that we and others in the international community have given," Reeker said.

The state department revealed that Powell had spoken to external affairs minister Jaswant Singh again on Sunday.

He spoke to Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf twice and once with Singh on Saturday.

Powell, said Reeker, "has had a regular dialogue now, almost daily and sometimes more than once a day, with President Musharraf".

He shared with reporters the Bush administration's belief that Musharraf is taking steps against terrorists in Pakistan with "public support because that is what is in the best interests of Pakistan, to not allow extremists to drive their agenda".

At the same time, George W. Bush revealed that in his last conversation with Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the US President asked for an opportunity

to work with President Musharraf to bring the terrorists to justice".

Bush said he had urged Musharraf "to do everything he could to crack down on the terrorist network that had bombed the Indian Parliament or raided the Indian Parliament".

The President continued: "In my conversation with the Prime Minister (Vajpayee), I said I can understand how he feels — if someone attacked the US Capitol, I'd feel angry, too. I urged, I explained to the Indian Prime Minister that while I understand his anger, I was hoping that they were not headed for war."

"He (Musharraf) is cracking down hard on terrorists and I appreciate his efforts. Terrorists are the fact that the Pakistani President is after terrorists is a good sign."

Blair South Asia tour

British Prime Minister Tony Blair will pay a four-day official visit to India from Friday and talk with Vajpayee in an effort to reduce tension in the region, says a PTT report

from London.

Blair, who has established a close rapport with the Prime Minister after his flying visit to Delhi in November and Vajpayee's two-day "official working visit" to London from November 12, has been playing a key role in the US-led alliance's fight against terrorism.

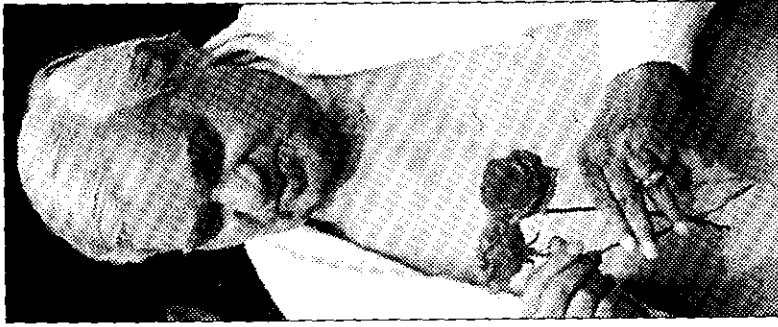
Blair will begin his South Asian tour with an official trip to Dhaka followed by his visit to Islamabad. Official sources in London said he will also visit Bangalore and Hyderabad.

Blair will arrive in Bangalore on Friday on his three-day visit.

According to an official release, on arrival in the evening, the British Prime Minister will participate at the dinner hosted in his honour by Governor V.S. Ramadevi at the Raj Bhavan.

On January 5, Blair will participate at the inaugural function of the Partnership Summit, at the Infosys campus in Keonics Electronics City.

He will leave for Hyderabad on the morning of January six.



AB Vajpayee with roses given by wellwishers at his residence on New Year's Day. (PTI)

FROM SHISH CHAKRABARTI

Kathmandu, Jan. 1: Although it was not on the agenda of the standing committee meeting of Saarc foreign secretaries here today, terrorism predictably took centre stage on the eve of the Saarc summit. The standing committee resolved to address the issue more closely at a meeting of legal experts in Colombo "at the earliest".

The meeting went back to the Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism that was signed way back in 1987 at the last Saarc summit at Kathmandu. But the document remained defunct, as the member-countries did not enact their own legislation that the convention required them to do. India, however, claims that all member-countries other than Pakistan and Bangladesh did come up with some laws to curb domestic terrorism.

The acting Nepalese foreign minister, Madhu Raman Acharya claimed that "all countries are in different stages of implementing the (1987) convention". Obviously, the immediate point of reference was the events relating to the terrorist strikes in the USA and the UN Security Council resolution on terrorism last September. India's external affairs ministry spokesperson Nirupama Rao said as much.

The recent terrorism-related events, she said, have made it more urgent to "expedite the progress of the convention".

A Saarc statement issued this evening also underscored the need for closer interaction among the police agencies to combat terrorism, drug trafficking and other forms of organised crime.

That terrorism, which was not on the agenda of the standing committee meeting, was given this importance could well be an attempt to build an atmosphere of unanimity for the summit, despite the tension between India and Pakistan. The Pak-

istan foreign secretary, Inamul Haque, declined to comment on the issue after the meeting. But Pakistan, too, did want to be seen opposed to the move and agreed to the meeting of legal experts to try and sort out the issue.

Sources later indicated that none of the countries expected the Colombo meeting to be a big leap forward because differences were certainly going to surface over the definition of terrorism.

The possibility of a meeting between Pakistan foreign minister Abdul Sattar and his Indian counterpart, Jaswant Singh, was being talked about this evening.

Rao, however, said "no concrete decision has been taken." Indian sources here were talking about a "slight change" in the climate of mutual distrust and hostility over the past two days. While Sattar arrived here yesterday, Singh comes tomorrow when the Saarc ministerial conference begins.

Saarc limelight on terror

TRADITION TO THINK OF SEPARATE WINGS

Open to talks by any other name

FROM PRANAY SHARMA
AND SEEMAGUHA

New Delhi, Jan. 1: Away from the ambiguous public posture, India and Pakistan are exploring the possibility of facilitating a meeting between Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and President Pervez Musharraf in Kathmandu.

Both the leaders will be in the Nepal capital to attend the Saarc summit beginning January 4.

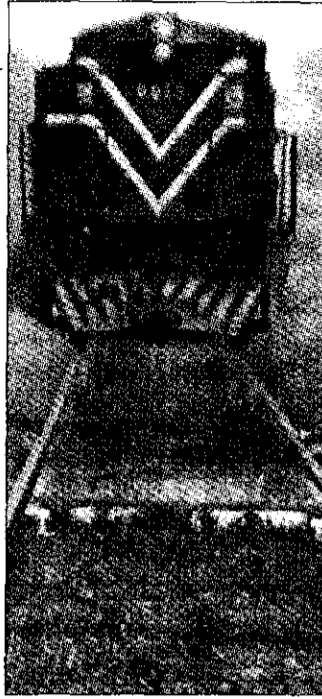
India is officially maintaining that Pakistan is yet to take "credible" and "visible" action against terrorists. But South Block officials and close aides of the Prime Minister are not ruling out a meeting between Vajpayee and Musharraf later this week.

The biggest problem confronting the Prime Minister's advisers seems to be that of semantics: they are not sure how to describe a dialogue between Vajpayee and Musharraf. If the talks do come through, Delhi is not in favour of calling it a "meeting on the sidelines of the Saarc summit" — the diplomatese for a "mini-summit".

It would be difficult for Vajpayee to sell a "mini-summit" to hardliners in his party as well as outside since the government has been vocal and persistent in its refusal to talk with Pakistan.

Both India and Pakistan are under mounting pressure from other countries, particularly the US, to give positive signals that would assure the world that the two are trying to break the impasse through a dialogue.

India and Pakistan today sent a message of reassurance by re-



The last train to Pakistan from India. (AFP)

newing a 10-year-old agreement under which both are committed not to attack each other's nuclear installations and facilities.

Officials said Vajpayee and Musharraf would exchange pleasantries at Kathmandu. But the test for the Prime Minister's diplomacy team lies in making the meeting, if it takes place, look a little more than a "mere exchange of pleasantries" but a lot less than a "bilateral meeting".

The Indian leadership since yesterday has started dropping hints that it was willing to bring down the temperature in the volatile region. A brief meeting

between Vajpayee and Musharraf will help bolster that effort.

Two reasons are being cited for Vajpayee's willingness to be a little more accommodative of Pakistan. The steps taken by the Musharraf regime against the Jaish-e-Mohammad and the Lashkar-e-Toiba over the last three days have raised some hope in Delhi that Islamabad is finally cracking down on terrorists.

The second reason is the assessment made by the Prime Minister at Sunday's meeting with political parties. Vajpayee realised that though most of the Opposition parties had rallied behind him, the stress was on a diplomatic, rather than military, offensive.

Vajpayee chaired a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security this evening to review the fast-paced developments in the region. After the meeting, foreign minister Jaswant Singh remained non-committal on whether he would meet his Pakistani counterpart Abdus Salam in Kathmandu — a possibility if the Vajpayee-Musharraf dialogue does not work out.

In Kathmandu, Pakistan officials said the Saarc "retreat" could provide an opportunity for a meeting between Vajpayee and Musharraf. On the eve of unveiling the Saarc declaration, the leaders usually meet at the retreat to iron out differences.

Indian foreign secretary Chokila Iyer neither denied nor confirmed such a meeting. "No meeting has been planned," she said in Kathmandu. Officials said it is possible that both Vajpayee and Musharraf would stay at the Soaltee Crown Plaza Hotel.

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US pitches for Pervez-Atal talks at meet

S Rajagopalan
Washington, January 1

THE US is understood to be making quiet efforts to set up a Vajpayee-Musharraf meeting, even if a symbolic one, on the sidelines of the SAARC summit in Kathmandu later this week.

There is no official confirmation of the moves as yet, but Washington apparently wants to seize the initiative in the wake of the perceptible de-escalation in the last 24 hours with Pakistan arresting the top terrorist leaders and India publicly welcoming the move.

Secretary of State Colin Powell, who has been in frequent contact lately with leaders of both countries, held a fresh round of telephonic consultation with General Musharraf on Monday.

A State Department spokesman, while declining to go into details of the US moves, said that Washington views the SAARC meet as "a good oppor-



COLIN POWELL

tunity for them (India and Pakistan) to make progress toward resolving their current differences".

That continues to be "the message that we and others in the international community have given" to the two countries.

"We are in touch with both countries and are encouraging them to have a dialogue on all of these subjects and use dialogue to resolve their differences," deputy spokesman Philip Reeker said.

In its immediate reaction to India welcoming the Pakistani action of arresting the Lashkar-e-Tayyeba and Jaish-e-Mohammad leaders, the State Department applauded both the countries for "acting responsibly" to avoid an armed conflict. The absence of any backlash to the arrests showed that "the vast majority of Pakistanis support these moves because they are in the interests of the country".



PERVEZ MUSHARRAF

Nepal is happy that Saarc summit is finally taking place

KATHMANDU: Whatever be the results of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit here from January 4 to 6, the fact that it is finally taking place is being seen by hosts Nepal as a major breakthrough for this region.

"Being able to hold the summit at a time of heightened tensions between India and Pakistan is the biggest success of SAARC", minister of state for foreign affairs Arjun Jung Bahadur Singh told IANS.

"Nepal believes that South Asian leaders will be able to use the summit to bring peace to the region", he said.

Nepal's ambassador to India Bhekh Bahadur Thapa said a lot would depend on whether the leaders of the seven-nation grouping decided to cooperate on regional issues.

"The success of the summit depends on whether the leaders of SAARC can reach some unanimous decision (at a time when India and Pakistan are locking horns)", Mr Thapa told a gathering in Kathmandu on Monday.

Tensions between India and Pakistan have held up the 11th SAARC summit for almost four years. The regional grouping, the other members of which are

Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, the Maldives and Sri Lanka, last met in Colombo in July 1998.

The summit is being held at a time when the India-Pakistan border is witnessing the largest military build-up in almost 30 years, sparking fears of hostilities between the two sides.

Suppression of Terrorism adopted at the regional grouping's 1987 summit in Kathmandu.

The foreign secretaries accepted India's suggestion that the convention be referred to legal experts for updating it to make it more relevant in the current circumstances.

Pakistan and Bangladesh are the only SAARC members that do not have domestic legislation to enforce the convention. India's proposal for changes in the convention was not opposed by Pakistan. India has said the convention needs to be reviewed following the terrorist attacks in the U.S. and the Indian Parliament.

The foreign secretaries also discussed regional economic cooperation, including the implementation of the South Asian Preferential Trade Arrangement (SAPTA) and South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA).

Political commentators here feel SAARC members will have to do more to implement the grouping's charter that enjoins on them to work for "peace, stability, amity and progress in the region".

"All previous SAARC summit meetings were a success but the spirit of SAARC has never been a success", said Rajendra Dahal, editor of the influential *Himal* magazine. (IANS)

Tight security for summit

KATHMANDU: Nepal has stationed armed guards round-the-clock, imposed major restrictions on traffic and will deploy helicopters later in the week to guarantee security for South Asian leaders during the summit in the insurgency-rocked kingdom.

Aware of the current attention on the summit, King Gyanendra and Crown Prince Paras have both personally inspected key sites for security and other arrangements, officials said. (AFP)

New Delhi ruled out a one-to-one meeting between Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf on the sidelines of the SAARC summit even as it kept open the door for meetings at other levels.

New Delhi has made it clear it will use the SAARC summit to forge greater regional cooperation for its fight against terrorism.

Meeting ahead of the summit, SAARC foreign secretaries on Monday agreed to make changes in the Regional Convention on

Saarc stresses for free-trade area by year-end

ST- Business Section 2/1

Saarc Area

Press Trust of India
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DRAFT DECLARATION AT KATHMANDU SUMMIT PROPOSES

Giving special focus to regional economic cooperation, the draft declaration of the Saarc summit has underscored the need for finalisation of the South Asian Free Trade Area (Sapta) framework treaty by the end of 2002.

The Saarc leaders propose to direct the council of ministers to expedite the next rounds of trade negotiations under South Asia Preferential Trade Arrangement (Sapta) and also broaden its scope, according to the draft document being discussed by the Saarc countries. The Saarc countries also propose to accelerate cooperation in the core areas of trade, finance and investment to realise the goal of an integrated south Asian economy in a step-by-step manner.

The document spoke of Saarc members voicing the determination to make the full use of regional synergy to maximise the benefits of globalisation and liberalisation and to minimise their adverse impacts on the region.

The countries are likely to make a commitment to widen and deepen the scope of regional networks of activities in trade and financial matters. The Saarc leaders propose to accord special and favourable treatment to the smaller and the least developed economies in the process of establishing a South Asian

Expedite the next rounds of trade negotiations under SAPTA and also broaden its scope

Accelerate cooperation in the core areas of trade, finance and investment to realise the goal of an integrated south Asian economy in a step-by-step manner.

Make full use of regional synergy to maximise the benefits of globalisation and liberalisation and to minimise their adverse impacts on the region.

Widen and deepen the scope of regional networks of activities in trade and financial matters.



free trade area and in the gradual transition to deeper regional economic integration.

The draft also spoke of Saarc heads renewing their commitment to encourage the participation of the private sector and give an assurance to fully support their socially responsible economic initiatives.

Close interlinking of trade and economic cooperation, particularly in the interest of the

least developed and smaller economies, in realising the objective of equitable distribution to all member states is likely to be stressed during this summit.

The draft also spoke of instructing the Saarc secretary general to put in place regionally agreed investment framework to attract capital from the international markets to meet investment needs of the regional group. A special mention was made on the immense tourism potential of South Asia and the need to take measures to promote South Asia as a common tourist destination through joint efforts in areas such as upgrading of infrastructures, air linkage, simplification and harmonisation of administrative procedures besides training and marketing.

A review of intra-regional economic cooperation will be undertaken at the meeting of the Saarc foreign ministers commencing tomorrow. An agenda document to be considered by the ministerial meet has recommended that the Saarc leaders issue a declaration on principles on WTO issues which emphasises that for the economic globalisation to be credible and universally acceptable, it needs to place the human face at the heart of the global trading regime.

Emphasising the need for advocating the concept of government-industry partnership, the ministerial meet may recommend a programme of action detailing a series of areas such participation is envisaged.

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Kathmandu options

SAARC meet is an opportunity to reiterate the terror theme

GIVEN the events since December 13, the mere fact of the SAARC summit taking place is in itself a great achievement. It signifies the intentions of both Pakistan and India to ensure that regional co-operation for mutual benefit must not be allowed to become a casualty to even the most serious confrontation since 1971. The leadership also backs this on both sides, declaring that diplomacy and not war will be the central instrument in dealing with the challenges faced in bilateral relations. Prime Minister Vajpayee has sent out positive vibes in his New Year message and his strident party colleagues have more or less fallen in line. On his part, Jaswant Singh has acknowledged that Pakistan — while it has to do a great deal more in cracking down on the spawners of terrorism operating on its soil — is moving in the right direction.

The summit, therefore, coincides with the pulling back from a serious military confrontation. It is, as yet, too early to think in terms of dialogue at the summit level between India and Pakistan. Summit level talks for the sake of talking hold little promise of productive results less than three weeks after the jihadi terror strike on the Lok Sabha. Even a promise of talks would only raise expectations as indeed they did at Agra, and foster frustration over the subsequent lack of movement, leading to a vicious cycle of heightened cynicism and lowered trust. It would, however, be a good thing to keep the lines of communications open if for no other reason than expanding the scope of future negotiations. It follows then that talks between political leaders below the summit level would be a

wise strategy, provided that they do not raise unnecessary expectations or unwarranted rhetoric. The politico-diplomatic offensive by India against terrorism itself requires that now that Pakistan has started to take steps against terrorist organisations most injurious to peace in India, we give them time to move further forward along this line. Military deployments would need to remain in place for some time even while further diplomatic-economic steps against Pakistan be kept on hold. We should, in the meanwhile, ask Pakistan to exchange the list of nuclear installations required in January by our bilateral agreement.

What we need most is a political approach to dealing with the challenges, both in relation to Pakistan as well as in the domestic domain. There is a sense in the public mind that the SAARC Summit is hardly likely to achieve anything significant beyond the declaration on terrorism. But the declaration itself would be a notable step forward since SAARC last addressed the issue in 1979 in any serious way and should be read in the context of UN resolution 1373. But the summit should provide at least the basic framework if not agreement for further regional co-operation in economic and trade issues. The secret of continued progress on regional co-operation is not to wait for an opportune moment after trust has been created, but to move forward in spite of specific differences between any pair of countries. We may not get to the stage of measures like a free trade agreement soon. But there is also no reason why both countries cannot keep walking on the road toward that goal.

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SAARC to make major changes in terrorism convention

KATHMANDU, DEC. 31. Reflecting India's concerns on terrorism, the SAARC today agreed to make major changes in their convention on suppression of terrorism to make it more relevant to the present situation.

Meeting ahead of the seven-nation summit beginning on January 4, the SAARC Foreign Secretaries pored over the draft declaration that favoured immediate enactment of enabling legislations by member-countries for the implementation of the 1987 convention within a time-frame.

The grouping accepted India's suggestion that the convention be referred to legal experts for updating and to make it more effective in implementation at the regional level, Mr. R.O. Wallang, the Joint Secretary (SAARC) in the External Affairs Ministry, told reporters.

Pakistan, which, along with Bangladesh, had still not implemented the mandatory provisions of the convention, did not oppose the Indian proposal, he said.

India said the review of the "outdated" convention was necessary in the wake of the terrorist attacks in the U.S. and on the Indian Parliament.

Contrary to media speculation, the atmosphere at the meeting was very cordial and there was no acrimony.

Asked whether there was any contact at all at the meeting between the Foreign Secretary, Ms. Chokila Iyer and her Pakistani counterpart, Mr. Inamul Haq, he said they exchanged pleasantries.

The SAARC spokesman, Mr. Pushkar Rajbhandari, confirmed this. — PTI

THE HINDU