

India, Nepal in jumbo border row

Tapan Das
Kolkata, November 2

A DISPUTE is brewing between India and Nepal over illegal border crossing — and the Maoists have nothing to do with it.

Nepal says gangs of Indian infiltrators regularly cross over from North Bengal, spreading terror and destruction in its border areas. Local Indian authorities accept this, but are furious at Kathmandu's efforts to stop the incursions by erecting barriers and shooting at the intruders.

Such actions are against international conventions, West Bengal Forest Minister Jogesh Barman thundered today. For, the intruders are no terrorists — they are herds of elephants lumbering across from

North Bengal's forests to neighbouring ones in Nepal.

The West Bengal Government will take up the matter with the Centre, Barman told reporters in Kolkata. It will also inform the Elephant Project Director in Delhi, SS Bisht, for appropriate action.

Barman, who toured the Indo-Nepalese border areas in Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling last week, said Nepal has erected at least two dozen 25-foot-high "watch towers" from where its guards burst crackers and often shoot at the herds to scare them off. A few elephants have suffered bullet wounds, he alleged.

A herd of some 70 adult elephants from the Lohagarh forests of Kurseong were stopped from crossing the Mechi and reaching the

forests in Nepal's Jhapa, the Minister said. The herd then turned its fury on North Bengal, damaging crops and property and doing greater damage than usual.

The elephants have always been free to graze in the entire stretch from the Mechi to the Sankosh across the Terai Dooars forests and the Himalayan foothills in Assam, North Bengal, Nepal and Bhutan, Barman maintained. This is the first time that Nepal has acted in such a way, and without informing the Indian authorities.

"I can say on the basis of my personal experience that the African continent, which has the largest population of elephants, allows the herds unhindered movement from one country to another," the Minister said.

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Nuisance value

5-16 Why Delhi must monitor Thimphu 24/10

Ulfa and Bodo militants are an incorrigible lot. Bhutan expected them to honour a mutually agreed deadline to wind up their respective camps by the end of last year and leave, but after a pretence at closing shop, they continue to stay put. What is more, they are said to be setting up new camps which, if true, warrants a strong response. No less disturbing are reports that they are training Kamtapur Liberation Organisation cadres fighting for a separate homeland in North Bengal. Even after the Bhutan National Assembly in 2000 cleared a military option, Thimphu has refrained from acting strongly for fear of reprisals on its nationals living in the border areas. But this policy of gentle persuasion mixed with hope has not yielded the expected results. Though there is no more talk about launching joint operations, Thimphu's assurance to Delhi that it will not allow the militants to use its territory for anti-Indian activities will be watched with interest.

It is difficult to understand how Thimphu plans to solve the problem, but procrastination cannot be part of strategy. Its reluctance to flush out militants lends substance to allegations that it wants to use their presence to check the activities of the People's Forum for Human Rights, which is demanding fundamental rights for Bhutanese citizens. It is also possible that Bhutan wants India to check anti-Bhutanese activities on Indian soil in return for acting against Ulfa and Bodo militants. To be fair, there has been less militant violence, but it should not be assumed that their firing power has been exhausted.

India, Nepal work out formula on deportation

By K. Balchand

7/25/02
7/25/02
HO-12

PATNA, OCT. 6. Though India and Nepal do not have an extradition treaty, they have thrashed out a process for deporting "wanted" people under which two Nepali Maoists have already be repatriated and nine others would be handed over to the Nepal police soon.

The two countries worked out a formula in this regard during the Foreign Minister, Yashwant Sinha's visit to Kathmandu for the SAARC meeting in August, according to official sources. Consequently, New Delhi barred the entry of members belonging to the

Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), a banned organisation in the Himalayan Kingdom, under section 32 of the Foreigners Act (FA), to facilitate their deportation.

Nepal, on its part, has agreed to hand over to India naxalites, particularly members of the banned Maoist Communist Centre (MCC), as and when arrested across the border. Such a course of action was deemed necessary as there is no ban on the movement of people along the border and in the wake of the heightened activity of the CPN(M) and the MCC along the Bihar stretch of the Indo-Nepal border. The deportation is done

under Section 3 of the FA on grounds that the "intruder" lacked relevant papers for staying in India and that his presence could threaten internal security.

According to the IG, Operations, Neelmani, the first such deportation was carried out on September 20 when two Nepali Maoists arrested in Madhubani on August 24 were handed over to the Nepali police by the Bihar police. As per law, both had been booked under the provisions of the FA, presented before the court and, following its order, were delivered to Nepal. A similar process has been initiated in connection with the

nine persons who had been arrested from Raxaul and Sitamarhi last month and lodged in jail at Sitamarhi and Motihari. The SPs of the two districts have sent SOS to the Home Department urging their immediate deportation to Nepal stressing that the arrested were constantly contacting the local MCC leaders in jails. The Sitamarhi SP feared that this nexus could spell further trouble in the jail.

The Centre has taken the stand that since these nine persons had committed crimes in Nepal, the Government there was competent to take any legal action it considered proper and bring them to justice.

6 7 9 2002

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Maldives briefing gets waylaid

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Sept. 20. — It was meant to be a serious briefing on eve of the Prime Minister's visit to Maldives, talking of policy matters to be discussed between heads of the states.

But almost everything but Mr Atal behari Vajpayee's Maldives visit was discussed and newsmen made good use of foreign secretary Mr Kanwal Sibal's presence. They got comments on issues ranging from the Lankan peace talks to deployment of troops along the border, from trilateral talks between Russia, China and India in New York to the old foreign ministry bogeyman, Pakistan President Gen. Pervez Musharraf.

Mr Sibal, at the outset, read a prepared statement on the Prime Minister's three-day itinerary in the Maldives. That was it. There was only one question on the Indian Ocean nation, at the end, on the duration of President Mr Maumoon Abdul Qayoom's

tenure. He has been in power for 26 years.

Anticipating the level of interest the Maldives would generate, the BSM (Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives) division of the MEA had prepared a brief on the just concluded Sri Lankan peace talks.

"The adoption of a conciliatory approach to negotiations, which resulted in agreement for further meetings and the decision to deal jointly with important issues including internally displaced persons, humanitarian and reconstruction activities, demining etc, is welcome," Mr Sibal said.

Mr Sibal called Pakistan the main stumbling block in making the SAARC process a fruitful multilateral forum, saying that Gen. Musharraf's comments on India's "bilateralism" were ridiculous.

"Pakistan is responsible for not having allowed SAARC to move ahead as it should have," he said. Pakistan also bore the responsibility for lack of progress in bilateral relations.

Nepal Maoist's violence hits Hill economy

Sudipta Chanda
in Siliguri

Sept. 12. — The growing political unrest in Nepal is having its effects on the border areas, particularly in the Darjeeling hills.

It is reported that Manebhanjang, Meghma, Rimbik and other adjacent areas on the eastern slopes of the Shingalila range are facing repercussions of the Maoist problem.

For ages, local traders have conducted business with people of Nepal which faces the opposite slopes of the Shingalila mountains. Now the practice is being discouraged by Nepalese authorities, locals alleged.

According to them, they were asked "by people from across the border" last week to stop transaction of goods

on the ground that a substantial portion of the goods, sent from this side of the border, found its way into the Maoist camps in Nepal.

The locals are in a tight spot. There has been little economic development. According to some of them, 10 to 12 truckloads of essential goods were sent to Nepal every day.

Besides, there is apprehension of Maoist activists infiltrating the region, in particular Lodhoma. Locals fear the Maoists could be attempting to cross the mountain range and seek shelter in the heavily wooded region.

Though deployment of the SSB along the Nepal border has minimised chances of infiltration, the SSB's reach is confined up to Manebhanjang, leaving the

rest of the 60-km-border vulnerable. Moreover, about 25 per cent of the SSB jawans have been sent to J&K for the elections.

Dismissing reports about "discouraging instructions coming from people across the border," the Darjeeling SP, Mr Sanjay Chander, told The Statesman: "Such matters need official sanction."

He, however, added that in view of the growing tension in Nepal and the upcoming elections there, all the four police stations bordering Nepal have been asked to remain on alert.

"We are in constant touch with our Nepalese counterparts and the Intelligence network is keeping tab on activities all along the 104-km-border that Darjeeling district shares with Nepal," he added.

India, Nepal polish old ties

PRANAY SHARMA

Kathmandu, Aug. 23: Foreign minister Yashwant Sinha today met the top Nepalese leadership and representatives of all major parties as India underlined its fine-balanced diplomacy that it had no favourites and would deal with the same cordiality with whoever came to power.

The message was re-affirmed during his meeting with King Gyanendra when both agreed "there was no alternative or options for India and Nepal but to have close and strong bilateral relationship".

At a lunch this afternoon, the Indian foreign minister met leaders of all political parties in the Himalayan country, including the leader of the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist) Madhav Nepal, widely tipped to be the next Prime Minister. Tomorrow morning he is scheduled to meet the president of the Nepali Congress, Girija Prasad Koirala.

The stress from both India and Nepal was on close cooperation in fighting terrorism. The two sides agreed to upgrade the existing extradition treaty and also have in place an agreement on mutual legal assistance.

They decided to put in place a system for intelligence sharing, with special emphasis on revenue intelligence — an important area considering the growing menace of global terrorism.

A Nepalese team is scheduled to arrive in Delhi in September to discuss the draft treaty.

At his meeting with the king, Sinha described Gyanendra's recent trip to India "as a landmark visit which provided greater understanding between the two countries". The king had chosen India as his first official destination abroad. The message was not lost on Delhi — that the palace was keen to continue the strong ties the two countries have enjoyed for decades.

Crown prince Paras was called in when Sinha was closeted with the king after the delegations of the two sides had finished interacting and left. Sinha handed over a locket, studded with gemstones, which Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had sent as a gift for the newborn "yuvaraj", Hridayendra.

At his meetings with Gyanendra, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and other senior members of the Nepalese government, Sinha emphasised that the focus must be on aspects common to both sides. Water resources, agriculture and biotechnology were seen as some areas where the two sides could work for mutual benefit.

India reaffirmed its commitment to help Nepal in its fight against the Maoists. Kathmandu also assured it would not allow Nepalese soil to be used by Pakistan's ISI for anti-Delhi activities.

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24 AUG 2002

Central Asia is central

95-6
2/18
THE immediate reason for Foreign Minister Yashwant Sinha's visit to Kabul last week was India's decision to present three Airbus aircraft to the Afghan government. Sinha, in fact, travelled in the first of these aircraft. The more important and long-term purpose of the visit was to maintain continuity in India's high-level contacts with the present Afghan leaders.

India's primary interest in ensuring continuity in relations with Afghanistan arises from its belief that these ties, to be mutually beneficial, can be sustained only if India supports those policies that help to make Afghans prosperous and the country's polity, stable. The establishment of a political dispensation which is moderate, representative of all the ethnic segments composing Afghan civil society and which would not be unfriendly towards India, is the first necessary step to meet the above objective. India has no desire to interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan and would deal with whichever government is in authority.

Going by recent experience, India is quite clear in its stand that an Afghanistan dominated by extremist Islamic forces, or having a government which does not represent the pluralistic nature of Afghan civil society, would not serve the country's interests or indeed India's political or geo-strategic interests in the current security environment.

India's active participation in the Bonn, Tokyo and Geneva conferences on the stabilisation of Afghanistan and its economic reconstruction reflect these policy objectives. While nearly \$1.8 billion have been pledged by the international community to Afghanistan for its development, the Indian segment of the assistance has been the most operational since January. India has trans-



Sinha's Afghan visit went beyond a courtesy call

J. N. DIXIT

lated its pledges valued at about a \$100 million into concrete terms, in the spheres of health, civil aviation, training facilities for Afghan diplomatic, administrative and police personnel, as well as food assistance.

Leaving aside the aim of maintaining continuity in high level interaction, Sinha's visit to Kabul had more substantive objectives. Despite the successful completion of the Loya Jirga meeting and the establishment of a government under Hamid Karzai, the Afghan government continues to suffer from the internecine competition between various leaders. The antagonisms between the Pashtuns,

now under the command of Turkish officers.

By visiting the country, Sinha could arrive at a first-hand assessment about the current political situation and the prospects of political stabilisation in Afghanistan. But more than undertaking such an assessment, the objective of Sinha's trip was to encourage the processes of unity within the local power structure.

In addition, Sinha's visit also aimed at consolidating India's connectivity with the Pashtun leadership. Thus far, India's interaction with this segment was minimal. Pashtuns, who constituted the main opposition to Soviet inter-

India's more specific interest in Afghanistan lies, of course, in expanding its relations with the Central Asian Republics

the Tajiks, and the Uzbeks have surfaced again. The differences of opinion between President Hamid Karzai and the Tajik leader Fahim are out in the open. The regional warlords remain unamenable to the authority of the central government. Uzbek leader, General Dostum, and Shia leader, Ismail Khan, remain alienated. Taliban cadres and other recalcitrant elements merging with various groups of warlords have vitiated the security environment by perpetrating violence to a level where President Karzai has entrusted his personal security to foreign troops of the International Security Force,

vention in Afghanistan, were alienated from India despite the traditional equations Indian political leaders had with Pashtun leaders since the early decades of the 20th century. Over the last two decades, India has had closer connections with Northern Alliance leaders, which became more substantial during the Taliban regime's tenure. The balance in India's relationships with leaders of all ethnic groups had, therefore, to be restored and Sinha's visit was an important initiative in this respect. He not only met Fahim but also met General Dostum and Shia leader, Ismail Khan, during this visit. The meetings were generally aimed at

emphasising to these leaders the importance of transcending old suspicions and entering agreements with Pashtun leaders, in order to ensure that the difficult processes of political stabilisation and economic reconstruction are not disrupted. If they fail, Afghanistan's unity itself maybe in danger.

India's more specific interest in Afghanistan lies, of course, in expanding its relations with the Central Asian Republics. This is important because it will help counter the effect of Pakistani hostility towards India. If, by some miracle, India's ties with Pakistan also get normalised, then it could help further the economic, technological and socio-cultural cooperation between India and the entire Central Asian region.

Iranian President Khatami visited Kabul within days of Sinha's visit. The views expressed by him during the visit indicated a clear convergence of interests between Iran and India on Afghan issues. It is necessary that both countries work together in stabilising Afghanistan, regardless of the misplaced antagonism of the US against Iran — an antagonism that could work against the stabilisation of Afghanistan.

If the friendly and practical suggestions given by Sinha and Khatami to the Afghan leadership are not heeded, then the likelihood of southern and western Afghanistan emerging as a Pashtun territorial entity gets strengthened, with one part of Afghanistan getting linked to Iran and another to Uzbekistan. Such a break up would have dangerous implications, particularly for Pakistan. It would also generate demographic and ethnic pressures in Central Asia which would not serve India's specific interests or, indeed, the interests of security and stability in the entire region.

22 AUG 2002

India, Nepal to tackle trade issues

By Our Special Correspondent

HO-12 2098

NEW DELHI, AUG. 19. India and Nepal have agreed to tackle several irritants in bilateral trade, including a cut in customs duty preferences on Indian goods as well as continuing discrimination against export of cars from this country. Nepal has agreed to examine the question of customs duty preferences and implement a uniform procedure on import of cars from all countries within three months. India agreed to consider Nepal's request for increasing the tariff rate quota on copper.

Another issue taken up was the problems faced by Indian joint-venture companies in Nepal from different agencies of that Government. These issues were discussed at a three-day meeting of the India-Nepal Government Committee on Trade Transit and Cooperation to control Unauthorised Trade which concluded here on Sunday. The Indian side was led by the Commerce Secretary, Dipak Chatterjee, while the Nepal delegation was led by the Industry, Commerce and Supplies Secretary, Bhanu Prasad Acharya.

The two sides agreed that an early meeting of technical experts should be convened to reach an agreement on a bilateral investment protection and promotion agreement; a pact on regulation of Indian vehicular traffic in Nepal; operationalisation of the Birgunj Inland Clearance Depot; setting up a rail link and cooperation between the Bureau of Indian Standards and the Nepal Bureau of Standards and Meteorology.

An official release said India agreed to set up additional food-testing labs at the border at Raxaul and Sunauli and three additional agriculture quarantine stations by November 1 at Jogbani, Sunauli and Banbasa. In response to Nepal's request for reducing the fees for food testing labs and agriculture quarantine, India said it would examine its feasibility.

During the meeting, Nepal welcomed India's notification exempting aviation turbine fuel supplies to the Royal Nepal Airline Corporation in this country from excise duty. It also welcomed the West Bengal Government's decision to modify provisions of luxury tax to benefit Nepalese exports to India as well as the streamlining of Nepalese vanaspati imports by the Central Warehousing Corporation (CWC).

20 AUG 2012

Bhutan's dilemma

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Need for joint action to evict Ulfa

Known for inconsistency, it comes as no surprise that the Ulfa has reneged on its commitment to wind up camps and leave Bhutan by the end of 2001. By staying put, the militant organisation is not merely debasing itself but is also abusing the unsolicited hospitality of that country. Bhutan has been most understanding. As early as in November 2000 the Bhutanese National Assembly endorsed the use of force but Thimphu was restrained, preferring instead to pursue a wait-and-see policy and disallowing Indian troops from taking a hand in the matter. Of course, Bhutan has compulsions of its own but there must be a limit to its patience. It was rather disappointing that all foreign minister Yeshwant Sinha's recent visit achieved was Thimphu's reported assurance that it would not allow militants to use Bhutanese territory for anti-Indian activities. Nothing particularly new, since this was expected anyway. What Thimphu might have been waiting for was a decision on joint operations with India to flush out about 1,000 Ulfa and Bodo militants since Bhutan has neither the manpower nor resources to go it alone.

The reported ISI conspiracy to create chaos in Assam by using Ulfa reveals how militants in that state are under the control of foreign agents. Bhutan sees no possibility of the militants leaving voluntarily, nor can it afford to allow them permanent sanctuary. In 1992 Thimphu did allow Indian troops to conduct operations for a limited period with the help of local counterparts. Perhaps similar action deserves consideration before it is too late.

Yashwant in consulate diplomacy with Kabul

PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Aug. 12: India will open consulates in Mazar-e-Sharif, Herat and Kandahar as part of its plan to extend contact to all sections of Afghan society, including the Pashtoons, the largest ethnic group that comprised the bulk of the Taliban student militia.

India opened its embassy in Kabul in December. Foreign minister Yashwant Sinha yesterday inaugurated the consulates in Mazar-e-Sharif and Herat. New Delhi plans to open one in Kandahar soon in its bid to convey to Kabul that India has no favourites in the war-torn country and wants good relations with all.

"My visits to these regions reflected our continuing contacts and cooperation with all sections of Afghan society and our support for a strong, united, independent and sovereign Afghanistan," Sinha said following his return to New Delhi this afternoon.

India is perceived to be close to the Panjsheris, or the Northern Alliance, which is dominated by the Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras in the transitional government in Kabul. Though New Delhi, along with Russia and Iran were the main supporters of the alliance, it now wants to expand its links to other Afghan ethnic groups. Sinha's visit to Afghanistan was meant to convey this message.

The foreign minister, during his visit to Afghanistan, met almost all sections of the Afghan leadership, including former



Sinha

King Zahir Shah, President Hamid Karzai and Vice-President Arsala. He also met his Panjsheri friends in the government including defence minister Fahim, foreign minister Abdullah and education minister Qanooni. Sinha's itinerary was important, especially at a time when serious differences on security issues had started surfacing between President Karzai and defence minister Fahim, who is also the Vice-President.

Sinha said India had earmarked \$4 million for renovation of buildings, upgrading of equipment and supply of medicines to the Indira Gandhi Hospital in Kabul. New Delhi has decided to send Indian doctors to Afghanistan on deputation and train Afghan doctors in premier Indian medical institutions. Seven Afghan doctors are expected to arrive soon for training at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences.

India has also earmarked \$1

million for upgrading of laboratories and the establishment of an information technology centre at the Habibia school. New Delhi will completely renovate the school that was badly damaged during decades of fighting. Sinha, who gifted the first of three Airbus A-300s to the Afghan national carrier, Ariana, carried with him three tonnes of vegetable seeds and educational kits for students at the Habibia school.

India's reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan is meant to ensure that the war-ravaged country does not find itself in a position where it is totally alienated from the rulers in Kabul and other important cities. For nearly six years under the Taliban regime, Afghanistan had turned into a breeding ground for terrorists, many of whom were despatched to fight Indian security forces in Kashmir. India is not going to forget this experience in a hurry and its attempt to establish a strong presence in Afghanistan is an attempt to ensure that forces such as Taliban do not stage a comeback.

Sinha told reporters soon after his arrival that cross-border terrorism from Pakistan had not ended and there was evidence of stepped up violence by Islamabad-backed terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir.

"Quite clearly, cross-border terrorism from Pakistan has not ended. There is no change in this. We had our apprehensions that in the run-up to the elections, terrorist groups will step up violence there. We have seen evidence of that," Sinha said.

Sinha alert to Afghan policemen on Taliban, al Qaida

PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Aug. 7: India today made it clear that it had no favourites in Afghanistan and its only desire was to see the war-ravaged nation emerge as a "strong, united, independent and prosperous" country.

The message was delivered by foreign minister Yashwant Sinha who is scheduled to leave for Afghanistan on Friday night. Sinha also warned against attempts by the Taliban and al Qaida to regroup and reorganise and said it not only posed a major threat to Afghanistan but also to the security and stability of the entire region.

"While the al Qaida and Taliban have been displaced from Afghanistan, they, along with other terrorist organisations, continue to regroup and reorganise," the foreign minister said. "This poses a serious threat not only to return of peace and stability in Afghanistan, but also risks spread of instability in our region."

Sinha was speaking at a reception for a batch of 97 Afghan police officers and diplomats who are undergoing training in India.

His remarks spell special significance as it comes at a time when the fissures have begun to show within the transitional government under Hamid

Karzai. Serious difference on security issues between President Karzai and defence minister Fahim and other "Panjshiri" elements in his government could turn into a major obstacle for a united, peaceful and stable Afghanistan.

In the past, infighting among the various ethnic groups created a situation in Afghanistan that led Pakistan to prop up the Pashtoon-dominated Taliban to take control of the country. The student militia regime not only destroyed the secular traditions of Afghanistan but also turned the country into a breeding ground for religious fundamentalism and terrorism.

Sinha's remarks are an attempt at warning the present Afghan leadership not to repeat the same mistakes that they had made in the past.

The foreign minister said that one of the important areas of Afghan reconstruction had to be the development of its security structure. It is important that the security structures in Afghanistan continue to be established as "Afghan institutions, flowing out of intra-Afghan processes relevant to and targeted at meeting Afghan needs of dealing with internal and external threats," he said.

India's traditional ties with the Panjshiris or the Northern Alliance,

as they were known till recently, are well known. But New Delhi has been making serious efforts to spread its links to other ethnic groups in Afghanistan, particularly the Pashtoons, since the Taliban was ousted from power.

Both Russia and Iran, who had aligned with India to support the Northern Alliance, have asked New Delhi to make its preference for the Panjshiris known in the current power struggle in Kabul. But the Indian leadership has refrained from doing so, keeping in mind its objective of reaching out to other ethnic groups among the Afghans.

Sinha's remarks were a clear indi-

cation that this would be on the agenda during his talks with President Karzai and other senior Afghan leaders this weekend. India has pledged financial assistance worth \$100 million to Afghanistan and already advanced a third of that amount for reconstruction and shoring up the Afghan economy.

Sinha will be taking along one of the three Airbuses that India has promised to donate to Afghanistan. New Delhi has already despatched 50 buses to strengthen the Afghan public transport fleet and also extended medical and educational assistance and helped in training its police, diplomats and administrative staff.

India, Bhutan share concerns over militant camps

By Amit Baruah 6-18

NEW DELHI, AUG. 5. The External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, has discussed the issue of camps belonging to India-based militant groups operating in Bhutan during his meetings in the kingdom today.

Mr. Sinha had a two-hour meeting with the King of Bhutan.

Official sources said four camps belonging to an India-based militant outfit had been shut down by the Nepalese authorities. The Bhutanese National Assembly had resolved that the Royal Government should have one more round of discussions with the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) in a bid to peacefully close down the camps.

"We share the same concerns on the

camps," the sources said when asked whether India had asked Bhutan to "do more" as far as closing down the camps was concerned.

Apart from ULFA, the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) and the West Bengal-based Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO) were reported to have camps in Bhutanese territory. They said that India and Bhutan were "closely consulting each other" on the issue of dealing with militant camps on Bhutanese soil. It was stressed that India had a "very special relationship" with Bhutan which was exemplified by the visit of Mr. Sinha to Thimpu. Each side recognises the sensitivities of the other, the sources maintained.

Mr. Sinha, who referred to the need to address the issue of poverty and depriva-

tion in South Asia, was told by his Bhutanese interlocutors that the progress and development of India would ensure the development of the whole of South Asia.

Referring to the extensive economic cooperation between Bhutan and India, the sources said energy was one of the major focus areas.

The 330 MW Chuka hydel project was in operation while the 60 MW Kurichu project had just been completed. The 1,020 MW Thula hydel project was under construction, the sources said. They further added that India had also gifted a cement plant to Bhutan. While India was importing electricity, cement, timber, wood products, oranges and apples from Bhutan, it was exporting petroleum products, rice and automobiles, among other things, to Thimpu.

Yashwant holds talks in Bhutan

PTI & SNS

THIMPU/NEW DELHI, Aug. 4. — The external affairs minister, Mr Yashwant Sinha, today discussed bilateral relations and other issues of mutual interest with his Bhutanese counterpart, Mr Jigmi Y Thinley, here at the start of his three-day official visit to the kingdom.

Mr Sinha, on his first visit to the country as the external affairs minister, also called on the Bhutanese Prime Minister, Mr Khandu Wangchuck, and the finance minister, Mr Yeshey Zimba, to discuss bilateral issues.

The external affairs minister is scheduled to have an audience with the King of Bhutan Jigme Singye Wangchuk tomorrow. The two countries share concern on the presence of Ufa-Bodo militants in Bhutan.

India has an extensive cooperation and development assistance programme with Bhutan encompassing various sectors with special focus on infrastructure and the social sector.

Mr Sinha is accompanied by Ms Meera Shankar, joint secretary (Nepal and Bhutan), and R Venu, director, ministry of external affairs.

In July 1999, the National Assembly of Bhutan had passed a resolution authorising the government to initiate a dialogue with militants and persuade them to leave Bhutan, snap their links, and take action against them under the National Security Act.

Nepal work permit rule for Indians

Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, July 26

THE NEPALESE Supreme Court has asked the Government to make work permits mandatory for Indians, casting a shadow over Indian investments in the kingdom and the relationship between New Delhi and Kathmandu.

The apex court passed the order yesterday in a case involving an Indian firm. This means the Sher Bahadur Deuba Government must now review domestic labour laws and the 1950 Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship, which calls for equal treatment of Indian and Nepalese nationals in each other's countries.

A similar move by Nepal in the 1980s had created serious differences between the two nations. It was withdrawn after the restoration of multi-party democracy in 1990.

In 1992, Kathmandu's attempts to re-introduce the system failed after some Indians challenged it in court. Most Nepalese, especially the Communists, fear that the unrestricted entry of Indians will upset the kingdom's demographic balance.

An Indian embassy official said, "Work permits are regressive in nature and are in direct contravention of the 1950 treaty."

India has never imposed any restrictions on Nepalese nationals entering the country for jobs. Their number is many times more than that of Indians working in Nepal.

There are about 240 Indo-Nepal joint ventures whose total investments are worth over Rs 4,600 million in Indian currency. The embassy official said, "The number of Indian workers in such companies is negligible."

Indian entrepreneurs in Nepal suggested that the proposed restrictions might lead to a flight of capital from Nepal. One of them said, "We get mostly skilled hands from India. Many industries, especially gar-



Sher Bahadur Deuba
Relook at labour policy

What the new rule implies

- Review of the 1950 Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship, which calls for equal treatment of Indian and Nepalese nationals in each other's countries
- The law may hit many industries in Nepal, especially garments, for which most skilled hands are Indians
- Other business interests may also suffer as a sizeable number of Indians come to work as teachers, plumbers, electricians, carpenters, masons and hawkers.

ments, will collapse in their absence."

There is an unspecified number of individual businesses run by the Indian community in Nepal. Besides, a sizeable number of Indians come to work as teachers, plumbers, electricians, carpenters, masons and hawkers.

27 JUL 2002

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Nepal input plea to fight Pak terrorists

BY A STAFF REPORTER

Calcutta, June 26: The Nepal government today said it was aware of the problems created by Pakistan-backed terrorists for India and expressed willingness to help India combat them.

Commenting on the Nepalese position on India vis-à-vis its problems with Pakistan, a senior member of the 37-strong team that landed here this evening — led by King Gyanendra — said Nepalese intelligence agencies had increased interaction with their Indian counterparts.

Even though the king declined to brief the media about the talks he had with chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, with the latter describing the meeting as a "courtesy visit", senior Nepalese officials in the delegation said the talks could not revolve around anything but the "common security worries" of the two countries.

"Our intelligence chief, Deviram Sharma, visited Delhi less than three months back," one of them said. "The interactions we have at various levels focus mainly on intelligence and information-sharing."

The Indian government, however, had failed to provide any "specific information" about the activities carried out by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence on Nepal soil, the officials claimed. Besides, the information shared by Indian intelligence agencies from time to time were more general in nature while Nepal was keen to have specifics in order to act more effectively, they said.

Nepal also reciprocated with information about Maoist guerrillas who took advantage of the more than 1,000-km-long international border that was, for the larger part, unmanned. "We have given a very comprehensive list to the Indian government," one of the officials said, adding that it contained more than 40 names.

The Nepalese delegation pointed out that Bengal, too, suffered from the Naxalite menace. "We are aware that the Siliguri corridor has emerged as one of



King Gyanendra in Calcutta.

Picture by Pabitra Das

the most worrisome points on the porous border through which ultra-Left extremists often travel from one country to another when the going gets hot on any one side," an official, associated with the armed forces, said.

Things would not get any better till the border was regulated, he added. "District magistrate-level and superintendent of police-level interaction have been increased of late to share information directly at the ground level," he said, explaining that it gave intelligence and security agencies more time to act.

The king, accompanied by wife Komal Rajya Lakshmi and daughter Prerna Rajya Lakshmi, touched down at Dum Dum airport a little after 5 pm, more than a quarter of an hour behind schedule. They were taken to a five-star hotel located at the centre of the city. Traffic was stopped on VIP Road, Eastern Metropolitan Bypass, Theatre Road and Chowringhee to let the entourage pass without a hitch. Traffic was also stalled when the king left for Raj Bhavan around 8.30 pm to attend a dinner hosted by Governor Viren J. Shah.

The king leaves for Guwahati tomorrow to visit the Kamakhya temple. The entourage will return that evening and visit the Kalighat temple the next day.

INDIAN EXPRESS

27 JUN 2007

'Military help to Nepal will continue'

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JUNE 25. India today assured Nepal of continued military assistance to help combat Maoist insurgency in large parts of the kingdom. The promise of uninterrupted assistance was given to King Gyanendra by the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here.

India has already supplied two helicopters, trucks and bomb disposal equipment along with some personnel after the Maoists declared war on the Government. At the hour-long meeting with the King, Mr. Fernandes said India would make special concessions, while supplying additional equipment sought by Nepal. Military hardware, such as helicopters, utility vehicles and mine-proof combat vehicles could even be supplied at cost price or on deferred payment basis.

Mr. Fernandes also promised specialised anti-insurgency training to Royal Nepalese Army officers at the Army's training institutes, including the prestigious Counter Insurgency & Jungle Warfare School at Veingte, Mizoram. The Defence Minister is also understood to have discussed the feasibility of despatching personnel for training the troops in Nepal.

The Defence Minister's promise of military assistance was a follow-up of the discussions held during the Chief of Army Staff, S. Padmanabhan's five-day visit to Nepal last month.

Shock over Minister's suicide in Pak.

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, JUNE 25. Political observers and authorities in Pakistan are baffled over the suicide committed by Omar Asghar Khan, who was till recently a Minister in the Musharraf Government. Mr. Khan, in his early Forties, had quit the Government and founded a political party, Qaumi Jamhoori Party, to try his luck in the promised general elections to the national and provincial assemblies in October.

Reports from Karachi suggest that Mr. Khan hanged himself with the ceiling fan to death. There was some confusion earlier in the day as a wire agency had said he was shot dead by unidentified gunmen. The Karachi police have recovered a note left behind by Mr. Khan in his own handwriting. It read "to all my dear ones. I could not take it any more. Please excuse me. I'm doing it on my own. No one else is to be blamed."

Country's interest will suffer: Pawar

By Our Special Correspondent

MUMBAI, JUNE 25. The Nationalist Congress Party President, Sharad Pawar, today denounced the Centre's decision to allow Foreign Direct Investment in the print media.

Mr. Pawar said at a press conference that the Vajpayee Government seemed to lack the capacity of taking decisions after careful consideration. The decision was highly objectionable and could cause immense harm to the country's interests.

26 JUN 2002

THE HINDU

India dismisses reports on Gyanendra role

By C. Raja Mohan

NEW DELHI, JUNE 24. India today said it does not share the apprehension that King Gyanendra of Nepal might want to expand his own power at the expense of constitutional rule in the Himalayan Kingdom.

Briefing reporters here on the talks between the visiting monarch and the Indian leaders, the spokeswoman of the Ministry of External Affairs today reaffirmed that "constitutional monarchy and multi-party democracy are two essential pillars for the stability of Nepal."

King Gyanendra arrived here last night on a six-day State visit amidst deepening political divisions at home that are undermining the efforts of the Kingdom to cope with the security threats from the Maoist insurgency. There has been speculation in the Nepal media that the King might want to use the political crisis to go beyond his role as a constitutional monarch and some concern that India might support him in this endeavour. The spokeswoman dismissed such speculation. King Gyanendra him-

self has been on record stating he has enough powers under the constitution and does not need more.

King Gyanendra had extensive talks today with the President, K.R. Narayanan, and the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee. The Vice-President, Krishan Kant, and the External Affairs Minister, Jaswant Singh, called on him.

The consistent message from the Indian leaders today was that New Delhi believes democratic governance offers the best way out of the crisis.

Mr. Narayanan, in his banquet for the King tonight, pointed out that the "Royal family in Nepal has played a wise and significant role in the democratic development of Nepal."

Stressing the importance of political unity, he expressed the confidence that "through the joint efforts of all elements of the Nepalese polity, Nepal will be able to overcome the grave challenge" faced by it.

India also signalled its commitment to do all it can to assist Nepal in dealing with the Maoist threat. The spokeswoman pointed

out that the assistance included material, equipment and intelligence sharing.

It is also believed that India had pointed to the importance of a political resolution of the problems at hand while using military force to deal with the Maoist threat.

While thanking India for its assistance, King Gyanendra emphasised that his own approach, as Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces of Nepal, is to win the "hearts and minds" of the people in dealing with the insurgency.

The Government today rejected speculation in a section of the media here that India is concerned about the attempts by Nepal to play New Delhi and Beijing against each other.

Calling such reports "completely without foundation," the spokeswoman said it attaches "special importance" to the visit of King Gyanendra who has chosen India as his first destination abroad.

In his talks, King Gyanendra referred to his planned trip to China next month and that he had looked forward to the Indian visit and was pleased to be here.

15 JUN 2002

THE HINDU

India to help Nepal fight Maoists

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, June 24

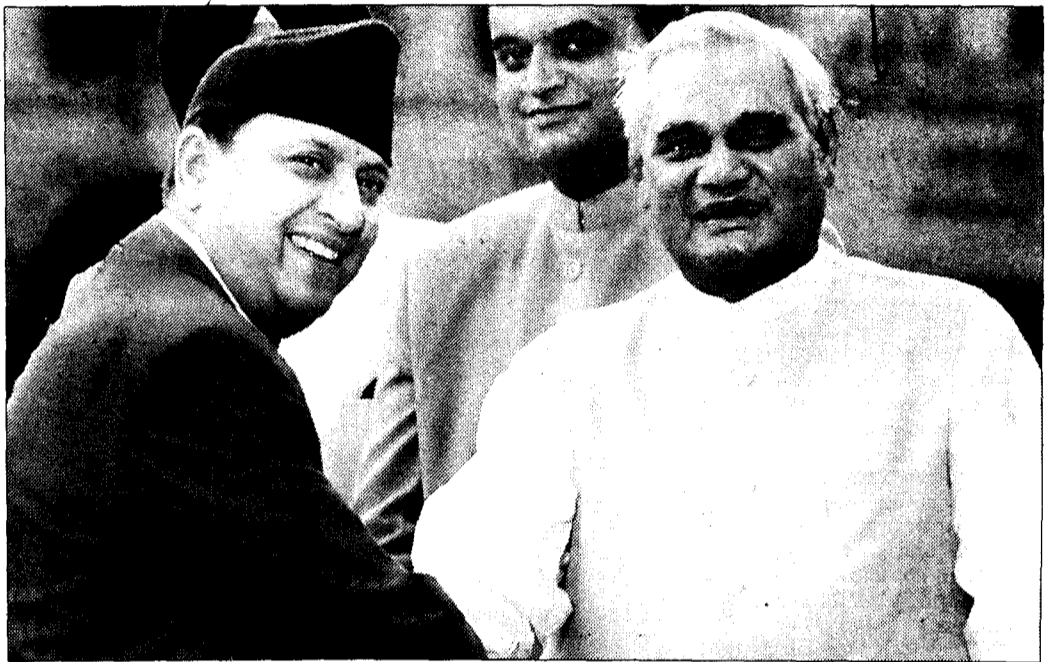
REINFORCING ITS support to multi-party democracy and constitutional monarchy, India today offered all possible help to Nepal in combating the challenge posed by the Maoists as the two countries pledged not to allow their soil to be used by elements inimical to each other.

Visiting Nepalese King Gyanendra was assured during his meetings with the Indian leadership that New Delhi "totally supported" the efforts being made by Nepal at this "testing and trying time" in fighting terrorism and that it would extend whatever help was necessary in meeting the challenge thrown by the Maoists in the Himalayan kingdom.

King Gyanendra, who is on a six-day state visit, stressed the need for the two countries to take their ties to "new levels and break free of the mindset that may have coloured this relationship in the past".

Setting aside protocol, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee hosted an exclusive private dinner for the King at his residence last night, which was attended by former Prime Minister I K Gujral, External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh, Information Minister Sushma Swaraj and top officials.

"This unique and special



Nepal's King Gyanendra with Atal Bihari Vajpayee in New Delhi on Monday.

AP PHOTO

gesture underlines the excellent rapport and understanding between the leaderships of the two countries," an External Affairs Ministry spokesperson said today.

The King began his official engagements with a ceremonial reception at Rashtrapati Bhavan this morning. Gyanendra who is on his first visit abroad after his coronation in June last

year, held wide-ranging discussions with Vajpayee on the entire gamut of bilateral relations besides exchanging views on the situation in the region.

He also held talks with Vice-President Krishan Kant and the External Affairs Minister during which it was conveyed that the Maoist insurgency being faced by Nepal posed a threat to the region.

At a banquet in the monarch's honour tonight, President K R Narayanan said as a neighbour and close friend, India was much distressed by the "mindless violence" unleashed by the Maoists in pursuit of extremist ideologies.

He said New Delhi would continue to support the Nepalese Government for the steps taken by it to maintain peace.

25 JUN 2002

Terror temples on Gyanendra's list

New Delhi, June 23 ^{AP} ^{K.S.} ^{A.S.} Kathmandu has been appreciative of India understanding the sensitivities of the Nepalese people in the wake of the assassination of King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya and some other members of the royal family on June 1 last year.

Ahead of his visit, King Gyanendra had termed Indo-Nepal relations as "very sound" and sought further strengthening of the ties.

The Prime Minister will call on the King and they are expected to exchange views on regional and international issues of mutual concern. This will be the second meeting between the two leaders since January when Vajpayee had called on the king in Kathmandu on the sidelines of the Saarc summit.

President K R Narayanan will host a banquet in honour of the visiting dignitary. Cabinet ministers, including Home Minister L K Advani, External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh, Defence Minister George Fernandes, HRD Minister Murli Manohar Joshi and I and B Minister Sushma Swaraj, will call on the King during his stay here.

King Gyanendra will seek the blessings of the Shankaracharya of Kamakoti who will reach New Delhi especially for the meeting.

The monarch will fly to



Nepal King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev (second from right) and Queen Komal Rajya Laxmi being received by Minister of State for Railways Digvijay Singh on their arrival in New Delhi on Sunday.

Kolkata on June 26 where West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharya will call on him. The King will visit Guwahati the next day where he will offer prayers at the Kamakhya tem-

PTI

PTI

India reaffirms support to democracy in Nepal

By C. Raja Mohan

NEW DELHI, JUNE 21. As it prepares to welcome King Gyanendra of Nepal next week, the Government today reaffirmed its support to constitutional monarchy and multi-party democracy in the Himalayan Kingdom.

The first visit abroad by the new King of Nepal, Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, comes amidst deepening political and security crises within the nation and an increasing international involvement in assisting the kingdom to overcome them.

The Government today expressed its strong political empathy with Nepal as it copes with a very grave terrorist challenge from the Maoist insurgency that is threatening the very foundations of the state in Kathmandu.

As internal political divisions within the kingdom, reflected in the recent split in the ruling Nepali Congress Party, undermine the ability of Nepal to deal with one of the most difficult moments in its history, India is stressing the importance of a political reconciliation within the framework of constitutional democracy.

The spokeswoman of the Foreign Office today underlined that "constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy are the twin pillars that will provide stability" to Nepal.

Pointing to the special importance that the Government attached to the week-long visit of the King Gyanendra, the spokeswoman stressed India's desire to "further diversify" relations with Nepal whose geographic proximity and civilisational links make it a very special neighbour.

Informed sources here say the visit by the King is likely to go beyond ceremony and involve substantive talks with the Indian leadership.

Although King Gyanendra is a constitutional monarch, he is a hands-on ruler who takes deep interest in the affairs of the kingdom. All bilateral issues of interest are likely to be discussed in some depth between the King and his Indian interlocutors.

As the commander-in-chief of the Nepalese armed forces, King Gyanendra has also been closely monitoring the current, intense military campaign against the Maoist insurgency. In dealing with the insurgency, India is apparently suggesting "a judicious mix of political persuasion and military coercion", sources in the Government say.

India also appears to be pleased with the thoughtful remarks of King Gyanendra on the eve of his visit to India. Reflecting on the complexity of Indo-Nepal relations, King Gyanendra said the two sides should not let "past regrets and future fears" become "the twin thieves" who rob the opportunities of the present.

Less than two days before his visit, a British-led international conference on developing a coordinated global strategy to deliver effective economic and security assistance to Nepal concluded in London today.

The two key neighbours of Nepal — India and China — took part in this conference along with the United States, Japan and the European Union.

While working with the Western countries to assist Nepal to deal with its internal threats, India is cautioning against raising political hackles in Beijing which might be concerned about deepening Western involvement in Nepal.

In his remarks, King Gyanendra seemed aware of the dangers when he stated that Nepal is seeking international assistance to "help us help ourselves". King Gyanendra is slated to visit China next month.

King Gyanendra arrives here on Sunday evening and will be formally welcomed on Monday morning. He will hold consultations with the President, K.R. Narayanan, and the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee. The entire Indian establishment including key Cabinet Ministers and former Prime Ministers will call on the King. After his talks in the capital, King Gyanendra heads to Kolkata and Guwahati where he will visit the famed Kamakhya temple.

22 JUN 2002

THE HINDU

Nepal to get more military aid from India

By Suman Pradhan
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kathmandu: Chief of Staff of the Indian Army, Gen. Sunderjan Padmanabhan, said here on Thursday that India would be providing more military aid to Nepal in its fight against Maoist rebels.

After felicitating Indian army personnel who last week successfully climbed Mt. Annapurna, Padmanabhan said that as per the Nepal government's request, India would provide more arms, ammunition and other assistance.

"India will stand true shoulder to shoulder with Nepal in every possible way," he said. "If there is a requirement of military assistance in terms of weapons and ammunition of various types, we will be very glad to share what we have with Nepal. And I know there is quite a lot in the pipeline. It should be coming...I don't know whether helicopters are part of the package."

Asked to be more specific, he said small arms, armaments of various types like mortars, ammunition for smaller arms and mortars, some other vehicles, couple of helicopters, training assistance, or anything that the Royal Nepal Army requires would be provided.

The additional assistance to Nepal is a shot in the arm of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, who has been appealing for military aid to the international community to combat Maoist rebels.

India has already provided two Cheetah helicopters, some heavy lorries and arms and ammunition. But the government of Nepal has requested for more assistance.

Speaking on the Maoist insurgency in Nepal, Gen. Padmanabhan said, "I think the army is doing a great job here. Their tactics appear to be very sensibly formulated. I am very pleased...And as a person involved in counter-insurgency operations in my own country, I did make some suggestions".

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Maoists unite in cross-border truce

FROM TAPAS CHAKRABORTY

Manchanwa (Nepal border), May 13: Displaying signs of increasing solidarity between leftist rebels in Bihar and Nepal, the Communist Party of Nepal declared a unilateral ceasefire last Thursday, to be in force in both countries.

"The ceasefire is in operation both in India and Nepal to merely allow the leaders to take stock of the situation after heavy losses of lives — though poor villagers and not cadre were most often the victims. This is of course no signal to surrender. The organisations in both the countries will regroup and rebuild its cadre," Nepal Maoists said in a statement issued here.

The declaration of unilateral ceasefire has also sparked speculation about the Nepal Maoists' links with Andhra Pradesh's People's War Group, which announced a ceasefire

from Friday. The Maoists indicated that they would analyse the US' response as contradictory reports about America's support to Nepal are pouring in. The rebels added that they would intensify their campaign during the ceasefire period.

"The Naxalites of Bihar and Nepal are linked. They meet on the difficult border terrain and exchange their intelligence. We have evidences of arms smuggling from the persons arrested in the last few years," said A. Ambedkar, superintendent of police in Bagha district, bordering Nepal.

He added that a senior MCC leader from Bihar is a guest member of the Nepal Maoists' politburo.

Bihar police have arrested at least six Nepal Maoists from the border districts in the last two years. The first arrest was that of Baburam Chowraria, a Maoist

based in Rauthat district in Nepal. He was picked up from Motihari on January 16, 2001. On August 3, Bagha police arrested Oso alias Narendra Kumar, an MCC activist in Bihar. Oso is a co-ordinator and one of the key leaders of the Indo-Nepal Border Regional Coordination Committee of Nepal-India Maoists.

In November 2001, police arrested Dhruv Shah from Bettiah, west Champaran. Shah is a member of the Nepal Guerrilla Army. In December 2001, police had arrested Rajkishore Thakur, another member of the Indo-Nepal co-ordination committee.

Between June 1996 and 2000, the Nepal Maoists allegedly got training from the PWG and the MCC cadre. Early this year, the Indo-Nepal border regional committee was set up under the leadership of one Vijay, who has been in touch with both the Nepal Maoists and the Naxalites in Bihar.

Late last month, the committee with the help of some frontal organisations held a seminar in Patna advocating sympathy with the Nepal Maoists' cause. A trusted associate of the Nepal Guerrilla Army chief, Pushpa Kamal Dahal, known as Prachanda, participated in the seminar.

After four days of hiding in Patna, Prachanda's associates left for Nepal through one of the numerous forests dotting the Bihar border, sources said.

The forests which work as corridors into Nepal lead to Bhikuathori, the last outpost on the border. The Maoists slip away after sunset and police say it is impossible to man the entire area. About 45 km from Manchanwa, there is another unguarded border area called Suskar. Suskar tops the police vigilance list as it is a known hunting ground for both smugglers and the Marxist rebels.

"This is where the rebels even discuss whether America would send troops to Nepal to fight the Maoists," a senior Bihar police officer said.

He, however, added: "Our meetings with Nepal police never make any headway towards a joint operation. We have tea and snacks, exchange pleasantries and depart."

Birgunge and Raxaul, the two business centres, are the main ingress points. Police say sometimes, lesser known rebels enter India posing as traders. "There are 75 acre of vacant land along the border villages near Raxaul where new camps and hutments are being set up. These provide shelters to the rebels too," an officer said.

Recently, the Special Services Bureau and armed police outposts have been deployed and vigilance has been stepped up along a long canal near the Birgunge-Raxaul border.

India gifts three Airbus to Afghanistan

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MAY 7. The Civil Aviation Ministry has gifted three Air-India Airbus-300-B4 aircraft to Ariana Afghan Airlines as part of a reconstruction package to Afghanistan.

The aircraft, which were operating on the Gulf route, were going to be sold to Indian Airlines. They will now be replaced with Airbus-310s that the Maharaja will hire on lease later this month.

The \$7-million gift was pledged by the Minister for Civil Aviation, Shahnawaz Hussain, to the visiting Afghan Minister for Civil Aviation, Zalmai Rasool, here today.

The Ministry of External Affairs will reimburse the cost of the aircraft to AI through the Civil Aviation Ministry.

The Afghan team will visit Mumbai tomorrow to inspect the planes.

Mr Rasool said the 265-seater airplanes would be operated to European destinations including London, Frankfurt and Paris. There are also plans to open new destinations such as Tashkent, Teheran and possibly, Islamabad.

None of the Indian carriers is yet flying to Afghanistan. Mr. Hussain said that talks were on with China for use of its airspace and, if successful, west-bound Indian carriers would avoid the Pakistan airspace permanently and fly over Leh and China.

At present, Ariana operates between Kabul and Delhi, Kabul and Dubai, Sharjah through its two 120-seater Boeing 727 aircraft.

Under the bilateral air services agreement between India and Afghanistan, Ariana can operate four times a week to Delhi and twice to Amritsar.

It operates twice or once with about 66 per cent load factor.

Mr. Rasool said Afghanistan was looking to India for help in rebuilding civil aviation infrastructure, its airports, technical support, training of pilots, air traffic controllers, in computers, management and finances.

Besides, the three Airbus aircraft, AI will 'lease' a team of 12 pilots, instructors and trainers to Ariana for training their pilots, who at present fly Boeing 727 on the Kabul-Delhi sector and to Dubai and Sharjah.

Ariana pilots would be trained on the Airbus-300 aircraft. After the initial three-months training, the Afghan airline will sign in some retired pilots from Indian Airlines or Air India to be present in the cockpit for "the cockpit to be safe".

Later, speaking to mediapersons, Mr. Hussain said the first Airbus would be delivered to Ariana by the end of this month.

Answering questions, he said the Comprehensive Civil Aviation Policy was being given final touches in consultation with the Planning Commission and the Finance Ministry. Road shows were over for the leasing of international airports in four metros.

He said there was no plan as of now to cancel the operating licence of Jet Airways which had sought security clearance for some of its directors.

The Civil Minister will follow the decision of the Home Ministry, he said.

Vigil along Nepal border stepped up

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SILIGURI, May 4. — The SSB has stepped up vigil along Sikkim's border with Nepal. This follows fresh clashes between security forces and Maoist insurgents in Nepal.

Former Sikkim chief minister Mr Nar Bahadur Bhandari has alleged that Maoists rebels sneak in to the state through the porous border and take shelter. Intelligence reports have corroborated this claim. Officials said senior Maoist leaders have occasionally held secret meetings in areas close to Siliguri.

Police and Intelligence agencies suspect that the Maoists rebels are being actively supported by some local groups. "Such groups are providing safe accommodation to insurgents on the run from Nepal," a police officer said. "The deployment of the SSB at the border is likely to discourage surreptitious movement of ultras, particularly through remote areas."

Deployed at the border since last year, the SSB has already set up several posts up to Simana near Darjeeling. However, force deployment at the upper ridges, which includes Sikkim's border with Nepal, was not possible earlier because of the terrain and hazardous climate. Availability of troops was also a major hurdle, it was learnt.

"Our officers are currently conducting a survey of high altitude areas, looking for suitable spots to set up posts," Mr A Negi, SSB IG, North Bengal, Bihar and Sikkim division, said. "After the survey is completed, we shall start constructing the posts and begin troop deployment." The Darjeeling district police has also been put on high alert.

THE STATESMAN

5 MAY 2002

COMING CLOSER

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Deuba's Visit Helps Remove Misunderstandings

By PARMANAND

By tradition and convention, every Nepalese Prime Minister pays an official visit to India soon after assuming office. By that yardstick, the six-day goodwill visit of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba in March was relatively delayed. However, no Nepalese Prime Minister had visited India under such difficult domestic circumstances. The Maoist insurgency and the resultant state of emergency since 26 November contributed both to the delay and the importance of the Deuba-Vajpayee summit.

The speeches made by the two Prime Ministers at the Hyderabad House dinner hosted by Atal Behari Vajpayee made these things quite clear. It was clear from the outset that the two Prime Ministers meant business and that their officials had done good homework. Vajpayee and Deuba reiterated the determination of the two countries to work closely in fighting the scourge of terrorism, which was "adversely affecting peace and stability in the region" and was impeding socio-economic development. They reiterated their opposition to the "use of violence in the pursuit of political and ideological objectives".

Commitment

The Indian side condemned the "widespread attacks by the Maoists in Nepal", and reiterated its support "for the steps taken by the government of Nepal to maintain peace and security in the country". On its part, the Nepali side "deplored the brutal attack on the Indian Parliament" on 13 September and "expressed its support for India in its efforts to confront the challenge of terrorism". The Prime Ministers renewed the commitment of their countries not to allow their respective territories to be used for activities inimical to the interest of the other. They noted the outcome of the discussions held by the two governments' home secretaries in New Delhi between 6 and 7 February and emphasised the need for expeditious implementation of the decisions taken at that meeting, including an early conclusion of the Agreement for Mutual Legal Assistance and updating the Extradition Treaty. The 12-Article India-Nepal Treaty of Extradition was signed by the then Indian Ambassador to Nepal, Bhalchandra Krishna Gokhale, and the then Nepalese Prime Minister, Matrika Prasad Koirala, in Kathmandu, on 2 October 1953.

Significantly, Deuba and Vajpayee agreed on the need to prevent the misuse of the open border by terrorists, criminals and other undesirable elements and directed that "cooperation in this

regard be enhanced". It was agreed that the discussions on the management of the border would continue in the Joint Working Group on Border Management between the two Home Secretaries.

Deuba's delegation was relatively big, comprising his wife Dr Arzoo Deuba, water resources minister Bijay Kumar Gachhedar, industry, commerce and supply minister Purna Bahadur Khadka, science and technology state minister Bhakta Bahadur Balyar, foreign affairs state minister Arjun Jung Bahadur Singh,

agricultural and primary products because of the quarantine regulations in India. They also agreed to expedite the setting up of testing facilities at Gorakhpur and Raxaul — as agreed earlier — so as to facilitate Nepalese food exports to India. The Nepalese side also requested that similar facilities be established at other major border trading routes between the two countries.

Inevitably, water resources constituted a significant component of the bilateral discussions. Deuba had signed the



a group of parliamentarians, with the notable exception of one from the main opposition the UML, senior officials of His Majesty's government of Nepal and business and trade leaders from the kingdom.

Trade Treaty

The two sides noted with satisfaction that the India-Nepal Trade Treaty had been renewed for five years till 5 March 2007 with mutually agreed amendments. They expressed the hope that the new Treaty would pave the way for increased bilateral trade and encourage the pace and process of industrialisation in the Himalayan kingdom.

The Nepalese side requested that various taxes and levies imposed prior to the renewal of the trade treaty may be reviewed. The two South Asian states, agreed to expeditiously conclude the Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement which would provide a framework for the promotion of Indian investment in Nepal.

Nepal and India agreed to resolve, as early as possible, the difficulties faced in exports from the former to the latter of

Mahakali Treaty with PV Narasimha Rao in New Delhi in 1996. The Prime Ministers reiterated that the implementation of the Mahakali Treaty would be given high priority.

In this context, they directed the two sides to complete the Joint Detailed Project Report of Pancheshwar Project. They also stressed the importance of the role of the Joint Task Force in flood control and forecasting and agreed that there should be close consultations on flood control structures and preparation of a Master Plan on flood forecasting.

The 1950 Treaty has, for more than a decade, remained a means of playing to the gallery for political parties. Thanks to the Maoist insurgency, it has, for some time, been occupying a back seat. On its part, India has reportedly gone to the extent of offering to agree to the abrogation of this Treaty, if Nepal so desired. Article 10 of the 31 July 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship says: "This Treaty shall remain in force until it is terminated by either party by giving one year's notice". Significantly, the 1950 Treaty does not have any provision for revision or updating.

The 1950 Treaty gets a mention in the 23 March joint press statement in New Delhi. It says the Prime Ministers noted that in accordance with the earlier decision that the foreign secretaries undertake a review of all issues pertaining to the 1950 Treaty, they "had held their first round of discussions in January 2001 and had agreed to continue their discussions".

Boundary panel

Not less significantly, the two Prime Ministers noted the importance of a scientifically demarcated "alignment of the international boundary between India and Nepal". They reviewed the progress in the work of the Joint Technical Level Boundary Committee and directed the committee to complete its task by 2003.

It is worth mentioning that the two Prime Ministers reiterated that in case the committee was unable to reach "mutually acceptable agreement on certain specific segments of the boundary despite its best efforts, detailed reports on these pockets, including a compilation of the available evidence, would be submitted to the two governments for their consideration".

The two premiers also discussed the disputed territory of Kalapani and directed the joint working group of the joint technical-level boundary committee to "expeditiously complete its examination of the facts relating to the alignment of the boundary in the western sector, including the Kalapani area, and in other pockets, where there were differences in perceptions of the two sides".

It was against the backdrop of these exhaustive discussions that Deuba invited Vajpayee to pay an official visit to Nepal. The invitation was accepted. Hence on his arrival at Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International Airport on 25 March, Deuba described his visit as "a success on all fronts" and "fruitful". He told a press conference that the two sides discussed "substantive matters in a spirit of friendship and goodwill". He was right. Not everyone in Nepal, though, seems to be in agreement. Former foreign minister and Rashtriya Prajatantra Party MP, Dr Prakash Chandra Lohani, commented: "It was just a travel trip at the taxpayer's expense".

Nepal Sabhavana Party MP Rajendra Mahto, however, said in an interview that the visit would go a long way in increasing meaningful and fruitful cooperation between the two geographically and socially close neighbours.

True, only time will show the impact of the summit, but it is beyond debate that both Nepal and India tried their best to come close to each other as fruitfully as possible by removing as many misunderstandings as possible.

India returns Nepal rebels

FROM SEEMA GUHA

New Delhi, April 18: Nepal has welcomed India's move to turn in wounded Maoist insurgents who cross over to Bihar and other eastern states back to Kathmandu.

"This is a positive step and will be a major psychological blow to Maoist cadre who were confident they just had to cross over to Bihar or Bengal to get treatment or escape the Nepali army," Nepal's former foreign minister Chakra Bastola told **The Telegraph**.

If India continues to hand over Maoist guerrillas taking refuge in the country, it would be a serious setback for the militants. Bastola hopes this trend will continue as it can be of great help to the Nepalese army and police fighting the Maoists.

But most Nepalis believe this is too little too late. Bastola said the general perception in Nepal was that New Delhi could do much more to help but was not paying enough attention because the Maoist movement was not hurting India.

However, India is worried because the Nepali Maoists are in close touch with its own ultra Left radicals. Intelligence agencies are worried about the cooperation between the Maoists in Nepal and the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) in Bihar, the People's War Group in Andhra Pradesh and various Naxalite factions all over the country.

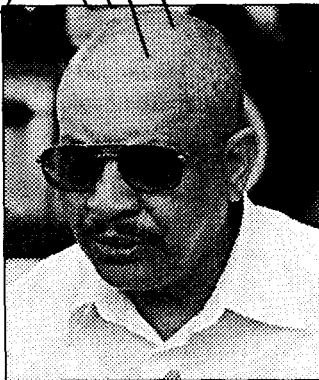
Despite the misgivings of many quarters in Kathmandu, New Delhi is aware of the serious crisis unfolding in Nepal. India is doing its bit to help, knowing well that an unstable Nepal is not in India's best interests.

Indian diplomats say the government could do much more to help Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, but for the widespread suspicion among the Nepali Opposition and intelligentsia of New Delhi's motives. The last thing on India's mind is to stir a controversy and embarrass the Deuba government that is already under attack from several quarters.

"We will help quietly without making a noise or show about it," said an official.

In fact, India will begin sending small arms and other military hardware for the Nepali army beginning May 1. India is also helping Nepal to negotiate the purchase of more than 20 helicopters from Ukraine. The helicopters will help the army to fly sorties and spot Maoist guerrillas holed up in their mountain strongholds. The choppers have been offered by the US as Washington's contribution to Nepal's fight against terrorists.

Bastola hopes India will follow this with other equally important steps. Many front organisations of the Maoists are operating openly in India. Nepal wants New Delhi to look into the



Bastola

finances of these groups and monitor their members closely.

Kathmandu suspects funds for the Maoist cause are sent by non-resident Nepalese through the Nepali Ekta Samaj. The Ekta Samaj, a parent organisation of the Maoists, operates openly in several Indian cities, including Delhi. According to Bastola, the Ekta Samaj has been working in India for the last 30 years and was initially set up to help Nepalese workers living in this country.

Today the organisation is packed with Maoist sympathisers. Nepal wants the Indian government to freeze the bank accounts of the Ekta Samaj, as the funds raised here are used to buy weapons for the Maoists.

In one of their strategy papers, the Maoists talked about how to strengthen their organisations in India. In fact, the Maoists say their movement has two arms, one in Nepal and the other in India.

THE HINDU

Delhi cool to Koirala

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, April 17: Former Nepali Prime Minister G.P. Koirala has made it clear that he will do nothing at the moment to destabilise the Sher Bahadur Deuba government in Kathmandu. But he added that any proposed constitutional amendments should not expand the king's role.

The president of the ruling Nepali Congress, who is here ostensibly to attend the 75th birthday celebration of former Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar and also on an invitation from BJP chief Jana Krishnamurthi, met other Indian leaders during his stay in the capital over the past few days.

His mission, though not explicitly stated, is to assess if Delhi would be supportive of a proposed campaign in Kathmandu to replace Deuba. Going by the indication that he received from the leaders here, South Block is in no mood to rally behind any move that will destabilise the present regime in Nepal.

Party insiders said a move is on in the Nepali Congress to get Deuba replaced. But it requires the final nod from Koirala, who is not only the party president, but also one of its most influential leaders. "I don't believe in changing governments through no confidence motions," said Koirala, a victim of a similar move last year.

Asked about the possibility of a change in guard in Nepal, the former Prime Minister today said: "Changing the Deuba government will depend on the situation."

Though he did not elaborate, it was clear that Koirala would review his stand to support the extension of Emergency by the Nepal government to deal with the Maoist rebels at the end of the three-month period.



Deuba: Seat safe?

Koirala is aware that Deuba, who recently visited Delhi, enjoys the confidence of the Indian leaders and any move to destabilise him at this juncture would not find favour with the Vajpayee government and other key members in the Indian establishment. The move for him now is to wait and watch.

The Nepali Congress president tried to play down the differences within the party. "It is natural for any democratic party to have differences and to encourage debates. Unless that happens, a party cannot move forward."

He also clarified his support to the imposition of Emergency in Nepal. "Emergency cannot find a place in a democracy, but then you have to do it at times to deal with extraordinary situations."

However, his apparent support to Deuba did not stop Koirala from throwing a few barbs at his party rival. "When you are in a minority, you have to make adjustments with undesirable elements. The Deuba government which is in the minority is making such adjustments which in the long run may prove to be costly." Though he did not specify the "undesirable elements", he could have hinted at the relationship of convenience between Deuba and the palace.

Asked if King Gyanendra had a greater role to play in the country, Koirala made it clear that the king, under the present Constitution, only had a nominal role to play. "He is a constitutional monarch and should not get involved in the day-to-day running of the government and administrative affairs," he said.

The former Prime Minister felt that the Maoist insurgents were not only isolated by world opinion but also by Nepalis because of their mindless acts of violence against innocent people and destruction of government property.

India's Nepal policy remains shortsighted and Indocentric

India's foreign policy

Borderline friendship

J.N. DIXIT

The Nepalese prime minister, Sher Bahadur Deuba, was in Delhi in the third week of March. He returned via Calcutta to Kathmandu over the weekend of March 24 to 26. His programme and discussions conformed to the protocol requirements in cosmetic terms but the substance of his discussions with our leaders do not seem to have been responsive to the political, economic and strategic imperatives which should be governing Indo-Nepal relations at this critical juncture. Deuba's trip to New Delhi took place in the background of serious political turmoil and economic uncertainties in Nepal. This was the first visit from Nepal by Deuba after the tragic assassination of the previous Nepalese king and his family. King Gyanendra is still to fully stabilize his constitutional authority in the Nepalese power structure. The Maoist insurgency in eastern and central Nepal continues unabated despite the deployment of the Nepalese army and its dedicated efforts to counter the anarchy sought to be spread deliberately by Maoist insurgents.

Despite the fact that the domestic crisis in the Nepalese polity at the most fundamental levels is related to institutional strength and political cohesion, the major political parties in Nepal remain faction-ridden. The domestic security situation seems to be compounded further by some of the Maoists operating from the Indian states of eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar bordering Nepal. Nepal's problems with Bhutan about refugees of Nepalese origin from Bhutan resident in Nepal is not fully resolved. Nepal's economy stands disrupted due not only to the Maoist insurgency but also due to the endemic problems of unemployment, inflation and the imbalances in the levels of development within different parts of Nepal.

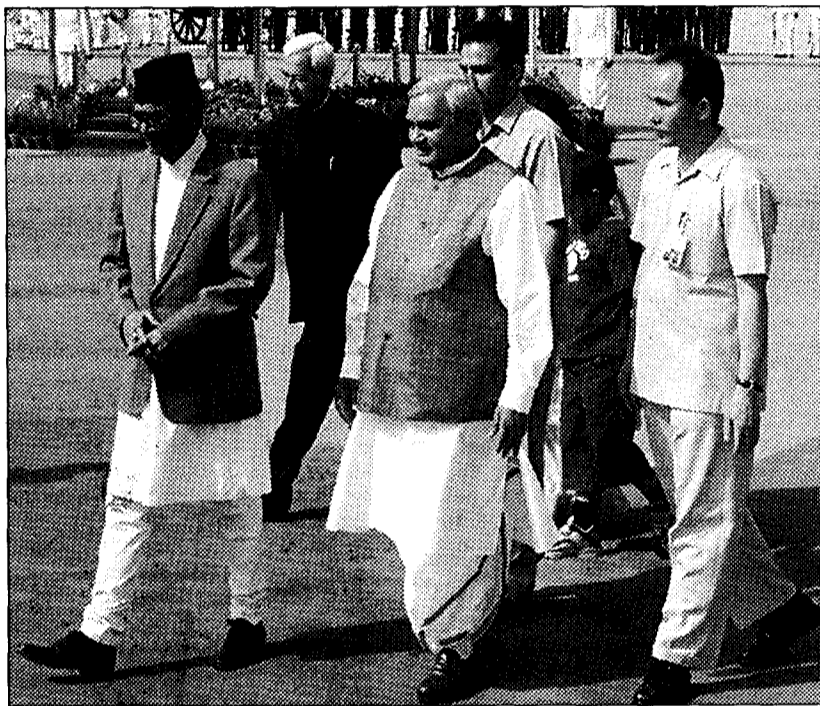
Indo-Nepal relations still remain in the doldrums because of the differences of opinion between Nepal and India on important issues like generation of hydro-electric power, trade and transit arrangements and the organization of joint security arrangements against violent and disruptive activities undertaken by various disaffected groups on both sides of the border. Controversies related to trade and transit arrangements have re-surfaced with Indian concerns about unfair advantage being taken by traders, to flood the Indian markets with non-Nepalese goods, utilizing the tariff and non-tariff concessions available to Nepal under the existing Indo-Nepalese trade agreements. Differences on territorial issues like those of Kalapani and macro-level political issues like revision of the Indo-Nepalese treaty of 1950, still remain unresolved.

The prime ministers, Deuba and Atal Bihari Vajpayee, had a long and substantive agenda to deal with, had they the time and the inclination to re-

The author is former foreign secretary of India

fashion Indo-Nepalese relations within the framework of a longer strategic perspective. This did not happen because Deuba was concerned with immediate priorities which were to seek Indian cooperation in countering the unstable security situation created by Nepalese Maoists, to finalize a new trade and transit treaty, as the previous treaty's term is coming to an end, and to move forward on important projects of economic cooperation, particularly in the power sector (related to the Ma-

in positive terms in official pronouncements on the results of the visit. Discussions on the important subject of trade and transit arrangements were inconclusive with India taking a strict view about third country goods entering the Indian market, in violation of transit and tariff concessions extended to Nepal. The point of fact is that this violation or taking of unfair advantage is primarily indulged in by Indian traders or traders of Indian origin resident in Nepal. Even at the lev-



hakali project) which have been hanging fire since 1996.

At the same time, Vajpayee was enmeshed in the crises resulting from the communal riots in Gujarat, the temple-mosque controversy in Ayodhya and the problems related to pushing through the prevention of terrorism ordinance in Parliament. He was also engaged in preparing for his visit to Singapore and Cambodia in the first half of April. Both sides, therefore focussed on an agenda limited to immediate concerns. One must add in parenthesis that Indian security concerns regarding the activities of Pakistan-sponsored terrorist groups from Nepalese sanctuaries also formed part of the agenda.

The outcome of the discussions on all counts has been less than satisfactory, particularly about long-term Indo-Nepalese relations. The only exception was the decision taken by the two governments to structure and implement substantive and intense cooperation arrangements to counter terrorist violence on both sides of the border. India has also agreed to provide training facilities and defence supplies to Nepal, in terms of its present urgent and expanded needs.

The discussions on other remaining subjects remained ambiguous and palliative, though they were couched

This was the first visit by Deuba since the assassination of the former king of Nepal

els of organizational and administrative efficiency of the Nepalese trade and customs services. To put the entire blame on Nepal and to expect Nepal to take preventive action is an unfair approach as this is what seems to have been the negotiating brief articulated by the Indian side.

There are even reports that senior officials of our commerce ministry were abrupt and unilateral in making demands in this respect. This is a politically inept and decidedly negative approach towards a smaller neighbour which could have been avoided. While stressing the factor of unfair advantage being taken of Indo-Nepalese confessional trade and transit arrangements, our approach should have been to offer to take firm action against Indian traders participating in this pernicious activity which is detrimental to the long-term economic interests of both Nepal and India.

A more basic question which India should have asked itself was whether

the extent and value of the unfair entry of third-country goods into India would really do any substantive harm to the Indian economy. Answers to these questions should not have been based on the agitation and concerns of sections of our trading community but it should have been formulated and transmuted into Indian policies in the framework of the long-term political interest of evolving a stable relationship with Nepal which merits India's patience and accommodation.

The equally important proposed Mahakali hydel power project which would have the capacity of generating nearly 6,000 megawatts of power has not moved forward since 1996 when the Mahakali power project agreement was signed between the then Congress government in India and the government of Nepal. The project was to go on steam within a year or two of the agreement having been signed. But it did not take off due to the interminable debates about what would be more advantageous primarily for India, thermal power versus hydel power, which could come from Nepal under this project.

There are also differences of opinion about the cost of distributing this power in India, a part of which would benefit Nepalese economy. The long-standing issues about settling the Kalapani territorial disputes and the revision of the basic Indo-Nepalese treaty of 1950 were not touched upon in detail during Deuba's visit, given their complexity and controversies related to them. One does not quite understand why India does not implement its decision to re-negotiate the 1950 treaty with Nepal in a manner which would be mutually satisfactory and which would be responsive to Nepal's sensitivities and would preserve India's imperatively important relations with Nepal.

Deuba's visit to Calcutta and discussions with the chief minister of West Bengal, Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, is reflective of his desire to apprise the West Bengal government about his concerns and to seek West Bengal's cooperation, both in trade and transit as well as security matters. Reports are that the West Bengal government responded with understanding to Deuba's advocacy.

India seems to be imprisoned in a jacket of assertiveness and excessively narrow Indocentric considerations. The argument that India should be generous with its smaller neighbours put forward by some analysts is not a relevant point. Generosity smacks of a certain incipient big brotherly hegemonistic attitude. A cooperative and accommodating approach towards Nepal is of utmost and vital interest to India in political, geostrategic and economic terms. Good Indo-Nepalese relations have ramifications for our relations with other neighbours in the south Asian association for regional cooperation as well as with China. This is the empirical reality to which our Nepal policy should respond.

Wangchuck attempts to persuade Ulfa rebels to leave Bhutan

By Shankhadeep Choudhury
Times News Network

GUWAHATI: Bhutan King Jigme Singye Wangchuck has recently visited a militant camp to persuade top functionaries of the banned United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) to leave his country, according to reports.

Sources said that the Bhutanese ruler had visited the Phakupang camp of Ulfa, in south Bhutan, and had discussions with the outfit's chairman, Aurobindo Rajkhowa, and political advisor, B. Borgohain, for about an hour.

When contacted, a spokesperson at the Royal Bhutanese Embassy in New Delhi, who requested anonymity, admitted that the king had toured south Bhutan last month.

Significantly, the Bhutanese authorities refused to confirm or deny the king's visit to the Ulfa camp. The spokesperson pointed out that he had "no information" on this issue.

In response to this correspondent's queries, both over telephone and through e-mail, the spokesperson forwarded an official reply from Bhutan's director of bilateral affairs, Daw Penjo, which said, "In February, His Majesty visited the militancy-affected areas in Samdrup Jongkhar and Sarpang districts. His Majesty also went there with government officials to verify on the spot that the four Ulfa camps had been closed down as per the agreement reached in June last year and it was confirmed that these camps had been removed."

Interestingly, even though the

Bhutanese official was silent on the king's visit, he vehemently denied that King Wangchuck had participated in any feast in the Ulfa camp, saying that the "feast was a figment of imagination and baseless".

Intelligence sources here, however, not only confirmed the king's visit but also said that during the hour-long discussions, King Wangchuck appreciated "Ulfa for closing down four of its camps inside Bhutan".

"The king also urged upon the rebel outfit to close its central headquarters very soon. Ulfa leaders promised the king that they

would discuss the issue amongst themselves," the sources said. After an agreement in June last year, Ulfa had promised to close down four of its nine camps in the Himalayan kingdom, besides reducing the number of cadres. Besides Ulfa, the banned National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) and the Kamthapur Liberation Organisation (KLO) also have

bases in Bhutan, where around 2,000-odd cadres are housed.

Interestingly, this is not the first time that the king had an interaction with the militants. Mr Penjo, in his official statement, also admitted how, in November 2001, Arabinda Rajkhowa met the king in the Bhutanese capital of Thimpu to discuss this issue.

This apart, revelations by arrested Ulfa cadres show that King Wangchuck had earlier visited the Enigma A camp of the outfit, close to the Nanglam electricity sub-station in Bhutan.



King Wangchuck

'His Majesty visited the militancy-affected areas with government officials to verify on the spot that the four Ulfa camps had been closed down as per the agreement reached in June last year'

Nepal and India still haven't stopped scoring points of each other, says JYOTI MALHOTRA

Coming home to Big Brother

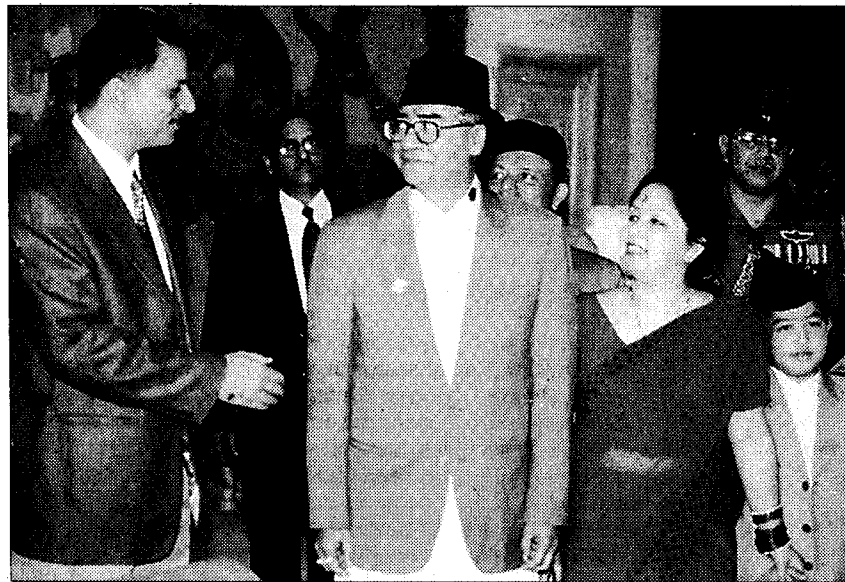
THE message from the visit of Nepalese Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba to India last week is loud and clear: When New Delhi sneezes, Kathmandu catches a bad, bad case of the 'flu.

That should have been an occasion to take a big picture view of what both sides generously call a "very special relationship", was often reduced to the diplomatic mockery of a shopping list, with New Delhi and Kathmandu scoring off and tallying points about what they had received in return for what they had to give away. So if India had agreed to train Nepalese forces in counter-insurgency to deal with the Maoist uprising as well as give them arms, Nepal had agreed to seriously move on implementing the Mahakali river water treaty. Meanwhile, if Kathmandu was upset with the newly renewed Trade treaty and felt New Delhi was forcing it down its throat, well, too bad.

One long-term observer of Indo-Nepal affairs put it succinctly, "There's a world of difference in the bilateral relationship between the '60s and now. In the '60s Indians would say, 'Nepali haraam hain, magar yeh apne hi haraam hain (the Nepalese are unreliable, but they are our own).' Today, they simply say, 'Nepaali poorey haraam hain (the Nepalese are completely unreliable).'"

New Delhi's ties with Kathmandu, in fact, are degenerating so quickly, some say they could touch the nadir of the late 1980s, when Rajiv Gandhi as PM toughened trade and transit restrictions to the extent of blockading this land-locked country from the rest of the world and setting into motion a huge chain of bitter events. As the cost of salt — and everything else — then touched the sky in Kathmandu, "India" became a byword for everything big, bad and ugly.

Certainly, 2002 is not 1989, but in the mind of the average Nepali, it's not too far. The story goes that Commerce min-



Sher Bahadur Deuba, his wife and son being received in New Delhi. Anil Sharma

New Delhi's ties with Kathmandu are degenerating fast. PM Deuba's visit was often reduced to the mockery of a shopping list

ister Deepak Chatterjee, while renegotiating the trade treaty a few weeks ago, couldn't help insulting his Nepali counterpart. "I have half-an-hour," Chatterjee is said to have told him, looking at his watch, "Either you take the treaty or leave it." This, when the Nepali side voiced apprehensions about the newly instituted quota restrictions, the 25 per cent value addition on some items (vegetable oil, acrylic yarn, zinc oxide and copper products) as well as the all-encompassing "safeguard measures" that could be invoked when New Delhi felt its industry was being threatened by an overwhelming influx of Nepali goods.

India's argument is that the zero tariff 1996 Trade Treaty — signed when Deuba was PM last time and IK Gujral was foreign minister — was misused by fly-by-night operators, admittedly Indi-

ans themselves, to "legally smuggle" goods from Nepal into India. Meant to encourage the Nepali economy by allowing third country imports — such as from south-East Asia — to be re-exported into India after minimal value addition, many businessmen, often of Indian origin, made a huge killing by violating the spirit of the treaty.

Palm oil or vanaspati, for example, was imported from Malaysia, marginally value-added in Nepal and exported to India under zero duty on a matching price in the Indian domestic market. As Indian traders, legitimately, cried foul, neither country had the will to deal with the nub of the problem. One Nepali businessman said bitterly, "Instead of cracking down on those who are guilty, India has thrown the baby out with the bathwater."

Indian analysts, especially those given to the long-term view that India must create linkages with her smaller neighbours on generous terms — rather than the bloodless version of foreign policy often adopted by the external affairs ministry — were disturbed by the trade treaty turnaround. "Even if India was losing money on zero tariff goods coming in from Nepal, we were building far more complex ties with Kathmandu that gave it the incentive to keep India, rather than China, as the primary power in Nepal."

Of course, Kathmandu swallowed Chatterjee's bitter medicine. The bigger need of the hour, after all, was to get New Delhi's help not only in training but also arming its forces in counter-insurgency operations. The Maoist menace has now grown to become such a threat that it challenges the very survival of Deuba's government, and the country has been under a state of emergency for several weeks.

Deuba is said to be fairly satisfied with New Delhi's promises on counter-terrorism. He told *The Indian Express* that both countries had agreed to tighten the border and patrol it on their respective sides. "We are in trouble in Nepal. When we imposed an emergency, India was very prompt in offering help in our campaign against terrorism," he said. India is also said to have conceded a key Nepali demand that it would deal with a heavy hand against Maoist insurgents in north Bengal, neighbouring Bihar and as far away as Andhra Pradesh. In fact, tightening the open border kills another bird with the same stone: New Delhi's fears that ISI infiltration into India, via Nepal, may now also be controlled.

As he walked a fine line between domestic concerns and accepting a New Delhi-dictated agenda, for example on the Trade treaty, Deuba also agreed that Nepal would get its act together and move on the 1996 Mahakali water treaty. The detailed project report to build a dam on the Mahakali river (to give 6,000

MW at peaking power) was supposed to have been completed within a year, but it lingers on. Both sides have argued interminably about replacement costs (the cost of thermal power vs hydro-electric power) and peaking power tariffs, with the result that they have successfully missed the wood for the trees. Now, it seems, that both are finally reconciled at getting the job going.

Analysts hope the economics of the relationship will henceforth drive the politics. If both sides could make money on the Mahakali dam — a dam that has the capacity to wipe out the eternally power-hungry Bihar-UP belt as well substantially replenish Delhi's needs — they could well look into building a second dam on the Saptakosi river, that could in turn ease the Nepali heartburn over inundation that would cover vast tracts of land. For a start, some of the bad blood that remains from the time of the hijacking of IC-814 from Kathmandu in December 1999 would get erased.

The aftermath of the hijacking surely left a bitter taste in India's mouth. Asked to tighten security for Indian air passengers, Kathmandu took a high-handed view, first refusing outright, then agreeing to a via media that borders on the ridiculous. India's insistence that the final check at Kathmandu airport must be at the ladder point before emplaning has meant that the security check takes place on a raised platform on the tarmac: since it is raised, it is not on Nepali soil and therefore does not infringe Nepali "sovereignty," Kathmandu argues.

Still, the ladder security is really a metaphor for the cussed, microscopic view that New Delhi is once again taking on Nepal. Analysts argue in favour of the generous view, such as building Nepal's economy, if only to take care of India's own security concerns. "When India sneezes," one analyst said, adding, "it should not push the victim with the bout of 'flu, in this case Nepal, to run to China for treatment. It should hope that the victim is persuaded to come home."

INDIAN EXPRESS

26 MAR 2002

Kathmandu Calling

Successive Nepalese prime ministers have always found it to their advantage to visit New Delhi more with an eye to domestic politics rather than bilateral relations. Despite the current anti-Indian strain in Nepalese politics — and the ever-present opposition criticism of the ruling party for cosyng up to New Delhi — the importance of this political pilgrimage has not diminished, regardless of which party is in office. Equally predictable in recent years has been every party's representation for the "revision" of the 1950 India-Nepal treaty. Kathmandu knows that the treaty cannot be revised; it can be scrapped or a new one signed in its place. Equally, Kathmandu is aware that any departure from this treaty will hurt Nepal and the Nepalese more than India, and inevitably the issue is voiced only for form's sake. Given this history, prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's trip to India marks a break from the predictable agenda of earlier visits. The most significant aspect of Mr Deuba's visit is that he has come seeking unreserved Indian support to fight the Maoist insurgency. Irritants that dog bilateral relations have been raised cautiously, so as not to shift the focus for Kathmandu's paramount need for immediate help in the emergency conditions prevailing in Nepal. Issues pertaining to the trade treaty, Nepal's concerns about anti-dumping duties, early completion of the Birgunj-Raxaul railway line, and greater access to the Indian market also figured in the wide-ranging talks. But they were not central to Mr Deuba's mission.

At the moment, Mr Deuba is besieged by the violent Maoist campaign which has plunged the Himalayan kingdom into an unprecedented political and economic crisis. Democracy and the freedoms that came with the 1990 constitution have been suspended, and with the king in command the army is waging a grim battle against insurgency. It must be gratifying to Mr Deuba that New Delhi has responded readily, and generously, to Nepal's plea for military and other assistance. To meet the Maoist challenge, the two sides have agreed on the need for cooperation in intelligence-sharing and border surveillance. It has been decided to strengthen the content of the 1953 extradition treaty, and use it effectively. While New Delhi was receptive to Nepalese concerns over the cross-border connections of the Maoists with extremist groups in India, the most significant advance in this round of talks was Kathmandu's acknowledgement of Pakistan's ISI working in Nepal and its resolve to crack down on activities directed against India. Hitherto, Kathmandu had been reluctant even to name the ISI, despite New Delhi's charges that the Pakistani agency was using Nepal for its anti-Indian operations. Confronted with terrorism at home, Mr Deuba had little choice but to admit the ISI's role in promoting terrorism abroad and make common cause with India, if only to secure the best deal for his government's fight against the Maoists. This is a major gain for New Delhi, but the biggest achievement is that the two countries have come closer for a common purpose.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

26 MAR 2002

Nepal Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's just-completed visit to India took place against a background of Emergency in his country. Even so, there was not much public discussion of the Emergency while he was in New Delhi and his visit did not seem driven by any special considerations. It was presented as a normal sort of bilateral occasion, a call by the Prime Minister of India's close neighbour early in his new term of office.

That appearance could be deceptive. The situation in Nepal remains very difficult. Virtually every day there are reports of clashes and incidents from different parts of the country. The army has been engaged for several months now and has had a free hand, but the Maoists seem to be holding on. There is no sign of their being on the run.

They seem able to strike simultaneously in many areas far removed from each other, and appear willing and able to take on the army when the occasion presents itself. The required political measures to face the danger they represent have been taken in Nepal. Emergency was declared by the King at the bidding of his government, and was confirmed by parliament, as required under the law. But the parliamentary debate on the occasion did not give the impression of across-the-board unity and determination.

Some political elements appear reluctant to give full, long-term support for Emergency regulations to confront the danger. Maybe such measures summon up uncomfortable memories of the autocratic rule that Nepal's democratic forces fought hard to overcome. Whatever the reason, one does not get the sense of a wholehearted mobilisation against the rebellion.

One is reminded of the intermittent crackdowns followed by political conciliation of rebellious groups that we have seen so often in India's North East. It is a reminder of the great complexity of combating the sort of situation to

Nepal PM's visit strengthens ties

be seen in Nepal, where the rebels have succeeded in developing pockets of local support. The links between Nepal's Maoists and counterpart bodies in India have often

been mentioned, groups like the Maoist Communist Centre in Bihar and the People's War Group in Andhra Pradesh. The nature and extent of the relationship between these various bodies is difficult to determine but their interconnection must cause real concern to Nepal.

The open border between the two countries facilitates networking between these different insurgencies. There is also the question of funding for the rebels. The Nepalese authorities would be extremely hard

pressed to try to control the flow of funds from outside the country, should this in fact be taking place. India has its own concerns about security and these have been mentioned prominently during Mr Deuba's visit. Pakistan's ISI is

wide angle

SALMAN HAIDAR



Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee welcoming his Nepalese counterpart Sher Bahadur Deuba before the start of delegation-level talks in New Delhi on Thursday. — AP/PTI

active in Nepal, doing what it can to use it as a haven for mounting operations against India.

It can do serious harm, as was seen in the Indian Airlines hijacking some years ago. But no matter how damaging a blow it

might land, it cannot ultimately do much more than irritate and unbalance; it cannot destabilise.

The Maoists may pose a more serious threat, for there is no knowing at this stage how far they may go and how much of their activity the Nepalese state will be able to withstand.

In these circumstances, there is need for the fullest mutual support and cooperation between the two countries. At present, the focus may be on a joint effort against terrorism, but there is a great deal more that must command attention. The joint statement issued at the end of the visit refers to many issues that were discussed, including trade, transit and investment.

These tend to crop up in all such statements but that does not reduce their importance, especially to Nepal, whose access to the world is almost exclusively through India, which is also by far the largest trading partner.

Just a few days before Mr Deuba's visit, the Indo-Nepal Trade Treaty was renewed. The previous treaty was signed in 1996, at the height of the Gujral Doctrine, when special efforts were made to meet Nepal's concerns and strengthen bilateral cooperation.

This time, reports suggest that Nepal is not too happy with what has been agreed. This could be because emphasis is given to protecting the interests of Indian manufacturers, which means controlling the entry of many types of goods that can gain favoured entry into India through Nepal. This is a long-standing problem that has never been satisfactorily sorted out. However, an excess of rules and regulations at the frontier can make for friction and encourage malpractice.

One must hope that advancing economic integration will be reflected in simplified trading arrangements, the aim being to bring the two countries closer rather than to erect additional barriers between them.

An important subject that received a boost from the Deuba visit is the implementation of the treaty for joint development of the Mahakali river. This is a huge multi-purpose project that can provide enormous economic benefit to both parties but has been languishing under fitful discussion since it was signed in 1996. Mr Deuba is reported to have agreed that the detailed project report should be completed by June. This is a bold decision, for all manner of political riders have been attached to the project in Nepal and it may be a tricky matter to try to advance its implementation.

Mr Deuba's visit was a somewhat low-key affair, yet it seems to have occasioned a number of important decisions across a wide spectrum of Indo-Nepal issues. The test now will be in translating these decisions into effective action.

(The author is a former Foreign Secretary.)

THE STATESMAN

26 MAR 2002

Give-and-take advice to Deuba

22/3 T.G. इन्दी शे रिशर
FROM PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, March 21: Nepal Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba today sought India's cooperation in dealing with groups aiding the Maoists in his country and wanted assurances that trade and economic impediments would be removed soon.

This is Deuba's first foreign visit after his election in October last year.

The six-day official tour will give him an opportunity to get India's support in his government's fight against the Maoist rebels as well as assurances from Delhi to pave the way for quick implementation of trade agreements between the two countries.

Deuba's visit, which began yesterday, also includes a trip to Calcutta on Saturday.

The Premier also sought India's cooperation in preventing the flooding of large areas in Nepal because of two barrages coming up at Siddhartnagar in Uttar Pradesh. Work was suspended last year and experts from the two countries met a couple of times to stop the flooding.

The visiting Prime Minister has come with a 100-member delegation that includes Nepali Congress leaders, MPs, businessmen and mediapersons.

Deuba will attend a business meeting tomorrow where he is likely to seek the cooperation of captains of Indian industry to bolster Nepal's economy.

Deuba, who was accorded a ceremonial welcome, met all important leaders, including President K.R. Narayanan.

At Hyderabad House today, the two countries signed an agreement for cooperation on science and technology.

In his meeting with home minister L.K. Advani, Deuba discussed the problems posed by terrorists who take advantage of the porous India-Nepal border. The Nepal Prime Minister wanted Delhi to take firm action against groups which provided refuge and arms to the Maoist rebels.

Advani sought the neighbouring country's cooperation to deal with the ISI that was operating from Nepal and smuggling arms and sending men to India.

The home minister suggested that the 1953 extradition treaty between the two countries be reviewed and amended to deal with the situation in the aftermath of the September 11 strikes on the US.

He also suggested that the two countries should have a mutual legal assistance treaty and work closely on intelligence sharing to help both countries to man their borders effectively.

Deuba also met defence minister George Fernandes though details of the meeting were not available.

India has provided the Himalayan kingdom with military hardware like helicopters in its fight against the Maoists.

TELEGRAPH

77 MAR 2002

India to help Nepal fight Maoist insurgency

22/3
By Atul Aneja HD-12

NEW DELHI, MARCH 21. India and Nepal today discussed ways to counter the Maoist insurgency prevailing in the Himalayan kingdom, and decided to expand intelligence sharing and enhance vigil along their borders. They also looked at ways to impart training to the Nepalese armed forces in counter-insurgency operations.

While recognising the primacy of its relations with India, Nepal is also discussing the Maoist threat with the United States, highly-placed sources in the security establishment here said. A team of the Hawaii-based U.S. Pacific Command visited Nepal early this month. Without committing any military advisers, the U.S. side is looking at the Nepalese requirement for transport equipment, including helicopters.

The U.S. is consulting India

on the internal strife in Nepal. India is optimistic that these consultations will lead to active coordination between the two sides in the future.

The visiting Nepalese Prime Minister, Sher Bahadur Deuba, today discussed with the Prime Minister, A.B. Vajpayee, ways to revive economic activity between the countries, development of water resources in Nepal and the developments in South Asia.

Earlier, Mr. Deuba held talks with the Home Minister, L.K. Advani, and the External Affairs Minister, Jaswant Singh. Mr. Deuba told Mr. Advani that Nepal was left with no choice but to proclaim an emergency after three rounds of dialogue with the Maoist insurgents failed to make any headway.

Concerned about the use of Nepalese soil by Pakistan against India, Mr. Advani pointed out that both sides had to en-

sure that a third country did not take advantage of the political situation in Nepal. He drew attention to Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) which, he emphasised, should not be allowed to enhance its profile on account of the porous border between India and Nepal. India is concerned about ISI's growth in Nepal as it could destabilise the strategic Siliguri corridor that connects the Northeast with the rest of the country, analysts say.

Both sides also talked about renewing their extradition treaty to facilitate the transfer of criminals and terrorists arrested in Nepal to India. A section of the Mumbai underworld had fled to Nepal after investigations into the serial bomb blasts of 1992 began, the sources said.

In course of their discussions, Mr. Deuba and Mr. Singh agreed to quickly wrap up negotiations on a transport agreement.

THE HINDU

27 MAR 2002

Security focus in Indo-Nepal talks

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FROM SEEMA GUHA

New Delhi, March 20: When home minister L.K. Advani calls on visiting Nepalese Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba tomorrow, their talks would focus on security and ways to deal with Maoist rebels, terrorists and gunrunners who take advantage of India's long and porous border with Nepal.

Deuba's six-day trip includes a stopover in Calcutta on his way back for talks with West Bengal chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee.

Faced with a violent uprising, Deuba wants tough measures against the Maoist insur-

gents who have close links with Naxalites in Bengal. Nepal wants coordinated action between the Centre and the governments of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Bengal to crack down on the separatists taking shelter in India and stop the steady flow of arms from Indian gunrunners to the rebels.

At one time, Kathmandu even suspected Delhi of turning a blind eye to the insurgents who crossed into India to escape Nepalese security forces. Nepal saw it as India's way of needling the government of the day. But much of those doubts have now been cleared.

Of particular concern to

India is the number of madarsas that have sprouted over the last two years just inside Nepalese territory along the border. Intelligence agencies believe that Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence is using these madarsas to fuel anti-India sentiments as a result of which they have become breeding grounds for jihadis and terrorists. Intelligence sources here say the ISI often recruits highly motivated cadre from these religious schools to carry out terrorist strikes in India.

Senior Nepalese diplomats are anxious to allay Delhi's fears that the ISI is being given a free run to carry out anti-India oper-

ations from Nepalese soil. "India is more important to us than Pakistan. Our trade and commerce are closely linked with India. Realising how vital these links are, it would be foolish to act against New Delhi," a senior diplomat said.

Nepalese officials say the madarsa issue has been blown out of proportion. "Yes, there are many new madarsas that have sprung up recently, but Nepal has nothing to do with these schools. They are run and operated by Indians," the diplomat said.

As there are no restrictions on free movement between India and Nepal across the international boundary, most of these

madarsas shifted to the other side after states like Uttar Pradesh passed laws regulating their growth. Diplomats say Kathmandu did not react as it was legal for people to cross the open border and settle where they wanted.

Indian officials who have raised this issue several times with successive governments in Nepal are confident that Deuba would take note of their concern and enact laws to check the trend. According to Delhi, the Deuba government, forced on the defensive by the Maoist upsurge, is now much more attuned to India's security anxieties.

In spite of earlier Indian doubts, Karzai's visit had a positive outcome

A matter of relationship

Hamid Karzai, chairman of the interim government of Afghanistan, visited India on February 26 and 27, putting to some extent at rest speculation that he is not too enthusiastic about India. No major political or security agreements were signed with Afghanistan during his visit, nor were there any declarations of profound policies about bilateral relations or regional developments. He had all the scheduled meetings with the leaders of the Indian government as well as with the leader of the opposition, Sonia Gandhi. His more substantive discussions were with the prime minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the external affairs minister, Jaswant Singh, and the defence minister, George Fernandes.

Given this general factual background, the question arises whether his visit was of political significance or whether it laid the foundation for an entirely new and positive edifice of Indo-Afghan relations. His discussions in New Delhi have to be assessed in the context of his foreign policy initiatives and discussions since he took over charge of the interim Afghan administration nearly nine weeks ago.

First, we must take note of the management of domestic politics which he undertook. Given the absence of any cohesive Pashtun military force in Afghanistan, he had to accept the troops of the Northern Alliance as the main national instrumentality for defence and security of Afghanistan. He also had to give a number of important portfolios to leaders from the Northern Alliance (Uzbeks and Tajiks) in the interim cabinet to ensure a manageable coalition in this initial stage of stabilization of Afghanistan.

The writ of his government does not run effectively in different parts of Afghanistan with local warlords supported by armed cadres following their own agenda. He has not only had to cope with the Pashtun, non-Pashtun politico-ethnic divide in Afghanistan society, but he has also had to face internecine factionalism and violence within Pashtun factions and within the Northern Alliance. The conflict between the Tajik and Uzbek cadres of the Northern Alliance in northern and north-eastern Afghanistan, the assassination of the minister for civil aviation of Afghanistan, and the refusal of local tribesmen and governmental leaders south of Kandahar, in Paktia and in Pakhtika, reflect the complex factiousness which permeates Afghan politics.

Karzai has had to undertake high-level foreign policy consultations with leaders of important powers of the world while trying to keep his government together and initiate domestic consultations for the summoning of the Loya Jirga or the grand national tribal assembly. There was criticism and concern in some circles in India that despite the

The author is former foreign secretary of India

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neighbourhood

unqualified support which India gave to the campaign against the Taliban and the promptitude with which India extended developmental assistance to Afghanistan, Karzai has not given sufficient attention to India. As usual, the irrelevant Indian lament was he went to Pakistan but he had not given any final dates for a visit to India.

An objective assessment of his trips abroad and discussions with other heads of government indicate that he structured these visits and discussions with a careful sense of priorities. The priorities were to establish his government's credibility and effec-

leg of his journeys he visited Iran and India between February 23 and 27. The chronological order of these visits affirm that they took place within the framework of his priorities mentioned above. His visit to Iran is of particular significance given the fact that he went to talk to Ayatollah Khomeini (the supreme Iranian leader) and the president, Mohammad Khatami, after the declaration of the US president, George W. Bush, that Iran was a part of "the axis of evil" in his "state of the union" speech in January. It showed that despite Afghanistan's dependence on the US, Karzai has a capability of



Karzai's delaying the India visit need not be seen as India being a low priority in his scheme of things

tiveness in the eyes of the major powers of the world led by the United States of America; second, to obtain the maximum amount of economic and developmental assistance for Afghanistan as speedily as possible to stabilize his government and to restore civil administration in Afghanistan, responsive to Afghanistan's immediate and multi-faceted requirements.

The third priority was to establish contacts with immediate geographical neighbours to seek their cooperation in the above processes. The fourth priority was to restore Afghanistan's identity as a moderate Islamic country within the community of Islamic states. And the fifth priority was to interact with governments which have a direct interest in Afghanistan's stability and development and to inform them also of his plans and his difficulties and his anticipations about political prospects in Afghanistan.

When one takes note of these logical priorities which underpin his foreign policy approach, Indian angst about his not coming to India before going to Pakistan and so on is not logical or practical. He visited Japan, the US, and the United Kingdom. He has visited China, Tajikistan, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. And then in the last

independent foreign policy options which are of importance to his country despite the obvious macro-level political constraints affecting the Afghan predicament at present.

His delaying coming to India need not be interpreted as India having a low priority in his scheme of things. It should be that Indo-Afghan relations are pegged to a different and long-term framework of importance. Karzai has had connections with India in his youth. He did his graduation from a college in Shimla. He apparently has positive memories of his time in India. He was, of course, critical of India for India's support to the Soviet-backed Babrak Karmal government in Afghanistan as he was part of the Afghan struggle against that government. That resentment, however, does not seem to linger in his psyche or policies towards India. His visit was the

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culmination of the process of high level consultations between his interim government and the government of India which have taken place since December last. The Afghan defence minister, Fahim Khan, the deputy defence minister, Rashid Dostum, and interior minister, Yunus Qanooni, visited New Delhi for discussions on Indo-Afghan cooperation which led to an agreement about economic and development assistance and extension of training facilities to the Afghanistan government. India has pledged a hundred million dollars of assistance to Afghanistan at the Tokyo conference in January.

During Karzai's visit, Vajpayee announced another *ad hoc* immediate assistance package of the value of ten million dollars. There are also indications that his discussions with Jaswant Singh and George Fernandes have resulted in decisions about cooperation: with Afghanistan in countering terrorism, in ensuring a proper security environment, for certain categories of defence supplies and some training facilities for Afghan administrative and security personnel in India. A practical and measured revival of long-term stabilization of Indo-Afghan relations stands initiated with Karzai's visit. He also gave his assessment about political prospects in Afghanistan which are of equal importance. He has acknowledged that the convening of Loya Jirga will be a complex exercise given the politico-military tensions in Afghanistan compounded by the escape of large number of Taliban cadres who have dispersed in the Afghan countryside (leaving aside those who escaped into Pakistan).

He indicated that an international peace-keeping or peace maintenance force (separate from the anti-terrorist coalition force), operating in Afghanistan will have to be augmented and may have to remain in Afghanistan till Afghanistan creates a cohesive national army and police force. He and the foreign minister, Abdullah Abdullah, were, however, clear in their mind that once the above process takes off, the foreign forces must leave Afghanistan. They were also averse to having military personnel from neighbouring countries who might generate internal antagonisms in the emerging Afghan power structure. He emphasized that India has an important role to play in Afghanistan's reconstruction and re-stabilization and in resisting the revival of religious extremism and terror. It was also the assessment of the Afghan delegation that close relations with India and the US would strengthen India's role in Afghan developments.

A positive revival of Indo-Afghan relations has been initiated by this visit. There is no need to evaluate these relations through the prism of our relations with Pakistan, Afghan-Pak relations or the US's relations with Pakistan, as far as these relations do not manifest trends which may negatively affect Indian interests.

Indo-Nepal trade treaty renewed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, March 2. — India and Nepal today extended for five years until 5 March 2007 the validity of the 1996 bilateral trade treaty that seeks to address the concerns over inflow of third country goods and surge in imports of certain commodities affecting the Indian industry.

The treaty initialled by the commerce secretary, Mr Dipak Chatterjee, and his Nepalese counterpart, Mr Bhanu Prasad Acharya, after six rounds of talks does not alter the basic framework of the treaty, foreign ministry sources said.

However, the protocol has been modified to take care of the concerns regarding value-addition norms and surge in certain commodities, sources said, adding that details of the rules of origin have also been adopted.

The existing treaty had been granted a unilateral three-month extension by India until 5 March 2002 after the treaty expired on 5 December, last year.

Under the 1996 agreement, no definition of manufacturing and value addition was prescribed. However, under

the renewed treaty a safeguard clause has been inserted to permit appropriate remedial measures in tune with international norms in case of a surge in imports of certain commodities.

This is specially in reference to the imports of sensitive commodities like vanaspati, acrylic yarn, copper products and zinc oxide, sources said.

Duty-free imports will be allowed up to a certain ceiling and any import above the ceiling would be applicable for duty as prescribed under MFN (most-favoured nation) status.

The new provisions are expected to provide a fair balance between India and Nepalese concerns.

New Delhi's concerns regarding value addition and safeguard have now been made much more clear and specific and in tune with international practices, sources said.

"At the same time there is a strong basis for genuine industrial development in Nepal rather than switch trade," they said, adding that can contribute to the growth of manufacturing capabilities in the Himalayan kingdom.

THE STATESMAN

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New Delhi makes Kabul richer by \$10 million

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, February 27

INDIA AND Afghanistan today reiterated their resolve to eliminate forces of terrorism and religious extremism to ensure peace and stability in the region.

New Delhi announced \$10 million assistance to Afghanistan for meeting its immediate requirements.

Following delegation level talks between Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and the visiting Afghan Interim Government leader Hamid Karzai, the two leaders declared that the two countries would continue their close cooperation against terrorism.

Karzai said, "India and all other neighbours can contribute towards stability and peace in Afghanistan so that the Afghan people can get a stable government." He said issues relating to intelligence sharing did not figure in their discussions.

But in response to a specific query, Vajpayee did not rule out the possibility of Indian troops being sent to Afghanistan for security duties: "There is no proposal to send troops to Afghanistan...but if it is needed,



Afghanistan's interim leader Hamid Karzai is greeted by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee at the Rashtrapati Bhawan on Wednesday.

we will consider it favourably."

Karzai said so far Afghanistan has not had a say in the selection of international forces sent to his country under a Security Council directive.

"If India has a role in this, Afghanistan has no problem with that," he said.

He stressed that Afghanistan would ask foreign troops to leave as soon as the fight against terrorism is over and stability returns to the country. The Afghan side expressed its gratitude, seeking India's help for technological and industrial assistance.

THE HINDU
28 FEB 2002

India to help Afghanistan in farm sector

By Our Special
Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 27. Afghanistan has sought India's expertise in sericulture, seed processing, poultry, fishing and veterinary services, besides agricultural equipment.

The visiting Afghan Agriculture Minister, Seyyed Hussein Anwari, has also requested the Union Agriculture Minister, Ajit Singh, for immediate help as the sowing season is about to start.

Assuring Afghanistan of all help, Mr. Singh said the Agriculture Ministry would work out an emergency plan within a week jointly with its Afghan counterparts.

He suggested that Afghanistan send its delegation to visit India's agricultural laboratories and universities to identify its needs for joint cooperation.

India looked forward to a stable and prosperous Afghanistan and would go all out to help it in its endeavour. India had 30,000 farm scientists and researchers and become a food surplus State from a deficit State within a short time. This expertise would be useful for Afghanistan.

The Afghan Minister said the economy of his country, including agriculture, on which 80 per cent people depended, had been seriously damaged following 23 years of war. Rebuilding the agricultural institutions needed over \$ 5 billion.

THE HINDU

28 FEB 2002

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Karzai seeks Indian investments

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 27. The Chairman of the Interim Administration of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, has sought the hand of Indian businessmen in the gigantic task of reconstructing his country.

Interacting with the captains of the Indian industry and trade under the aegis of the CII and the FICCI, Mr. Karzai spelt out Afghanistan's priorities for overall development and said there were many opportunities for Indian businessmen. He promised to consider their request for preferential treatment in the highly competitive business climate.

The Afghan Missions and the Foreign Ministry would serve as nodal agencies to facilitate the flow of investment and further development of trade between Afghanistan and other countries.

Mr. Karzai said the areas that required immediate attention were education, health and infrastructure, including roads, bridges, highways, information technology, banking and finance. The Indian businessmen were welcome to make investments in these sectors. India had all along been helping Afghanistan in the field of education and health and should continue to do so in future, he said.

Though the foremost priority of the interim administration was to govern effectively and efficiently and collect revenues and taxes to pay salaries to the Afghans, Mr. Karzai said an equally important task was to resurrect their banking and financial system with linkages with international banks to help bring about economic

growth and development with foreign investments.

He urged the Indian financial and legal experts to help improve the country's financial system to bring it on a par with the international banking system.

"Various Afghan agencies are working with the IMF and the World Bank to stabilise the Afghan currency, fix an Afghan exchange rate and to bring about means and ways of improving the economy and the financial system." For effective reconstruction and attraction of foreign investment, transparency and public accountability were essential and a high-powered body had been set up to coordinate the flow of money, he said.

Pointing out that the Central Bank of Afghanistan was virtually bankrupt when the Taliban regime left and the interim administration did not have a penny to start with, Mr. Karzai said the first instalment of money from the world community for reconstruction and rehabilitation was diverted to health, education and upliftment of women.

While the Disinvestment Minister, Arun Shourie, assured all help, the CII president, Sanjiv Goenka, said the CII was taking initiative for setting up an Indo-Afghanistan Business Association that would open its overseas office at Kabul in March.

The CII would also organise a 'Made in India' show in Kabul to showcase Indian technological products and services. The FICCI has set up a special cell for Afghanistan.

THE HINDU

28 FEB 2002

Head in Kabul, heart in Shimla

28/2
FROM PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Feb. 27: Hamid Karzai can well call his first political assignment to India a success, but it failed to satisfy his heart.

The Afghan interim leader could not visit Shimla where he had spent six of his student years. "How can I describe to you what a beautiful place it is," Karzai said this afternoon at the joint news conference he addressed with Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee at Hyderabad House.

"I spent some very important years of my life there," he said. "I was only 18. I can still remember the beautiful people I met there...."

To prove his roots with India, he even switched from Americanised English to answer a

question in chaste Hindustani to loud applause.

It was the language he must have used when he was in Shimla during the seventies. Initially, a visit to the hill station had been on his itinerary.

But it had to be dropped at the last minute because Karzai's three-day visit had to be reduced to two to accommodate his trip to Paris for a meeting with the French government.

Dressed in western clothes with his customary green designer robe on top, Karzai talked of how the new regime in Kabul was committed to eliminating "terrorism and radicalism".

He wanted to have "good and friendly relations" with India and all its neighbours and sought their help to put in place

a "responsible" government in Kabul and make the country a peaceful place.

Karzai has been circling the globe after taking over in Kabul, but kept Delhi for later. But he made it clear that he had a lot to thank the Indian leadership for its help to the new regime.

The Indian government too got the message across that Karzai was an important guest. He was treated as the visiting head of government and given a formal reception at the Rashtrapati Bhavan forecourt this morning.

During the day, Karzai also held meetings with President K.R. Narayanan, Vajpayee and other senior members of his Cabinet, including home minister L.K. Advani and foreign minister Jaswant Singh.

Karzai lauds Delhi role in Afghan rebuilding

New Delhi, February 26

ON HIS first visit to India, Afghan interim head Hamid Karzai today appreciated the all-round support extended by New Delhi to the rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts of the war-ravaged country. He also sought major expansion of bilateral trade and economic cooperation.

During an hour-long meeting with External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh soon after his arrival on a two-day State visit, Karzai appreciated India's support to the Afghan national resistance. Karzai, who had his college education in Shimla, said he was happy to come back to the country where he had received his education.

The Afghan leader also spoke of India's contribution to educate many Afghans and its cooperation in the medical sphere including making available artificial limbs, an External Affairs Ministry spokesperson told reporters.

Karzai will also have a meeting with visiting British foreign secretary



Afghan Interim Prime Minister Hamid Karzai with External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh at Rashtrapati Bhawan on Tuesday.

Jack Straw here tomorrow.

Karzai, who is accompanied by a 36-member strong delegation including Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah, was accorded a red carpet welcome and received by Minister of State for External Affairs Omar Abdullah, Foreign Secretary Chokila Iyer, senior Foreign Ministry officials

and diplomats from the Afghan mission here.

He will meet Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee tomorrow and brief him on the efforts underway for rehabilitation and reconstruction. Karzai will also discuss the nature of assistance his country seeks from India.

PTI

Identity checks on India-Nepal border

Sudipta Chanda in Mechi (Indo-Nepal border)

Feb. 20. — Following a spurt in Maoist activities in Nepal, the special services bureau and the police have initiated identity checks for people using this transit point in Indo-Nepal border to prevent ultras sneaking into the country. A thorough check of vehicles coming or going through the point is also on the cards.

This is the first time such a move has been initiated since the 1950 Indo-Nepal treaty.

However, the checking is being done on an experimental basis, for an hour or two, for the time being. It's expected to become a permanent feature soon, and those wanting to cross the border either ways would have to produce some document to establish their bona-fides.

Jawans of SSB are thoroughly frisking visitors to and from Nepal. A drop gate is also being contemplated on the approach road to the Mechi bridge, which connects the two countries.

The countless rickshaws that ply over the Mechi bridge to transport passengers to and from Nepal, will probably be withdrawn. All the rickshaws and rickshaw pullers are from India.

"The situation demands further tightening of the border," Mr A Negi, IG, SSB, North Bengal, Bihar and Sikkim divisions, told The Statesman.

The SSB authorities have approached the state government to allocate land near the transit point so that vehicles coming from across the border "can be examined thoroughly."

"Under the present conditions, all we can manage is a cursory check of the vehicles," Mr Negi said.

The Centre has proposed to construct an integrated office complex and truck stand, and has acquired a 16-acre land on either side of the approach road for the purpose. But work on the project is yet to begin. The approach road to the Mechi bridge from Panitanki, which is about a quarter km long, is to be converted into a four-lane passageway.

"We have approached the state government on these matters and the district authorities are being most helpful," Mr Negi said. The SSB has posted a strong vigil along the border, though they are 24 company (2,500 jawans) short of the desired force now.

THE STATESMAN

THE STATESMAN

21 FEB 2002

BIG AND SMALL

India And Bhutan Set An Example In Cooperation

By PARMANAND

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Relations between India and Bhutan can be described as the paradigm of continuous cooperation between the big and the small. This is the outcome of growing economic ties and interactions between the two. Quite significantly, both realise each other's importance and take care of each other's sensitivity in every sphere.

Delivering the fifth Dinesh Singh Memorial Lecture under the auspices of the Indian Council for South Asian Cooperation at the India International Centre on 18 January, Bhutanese finance minister and planning commission chairman Lyonpo Yeshey Zimba rightly stressed that Bhutan and India "are not competitors" and there "is no way Bhutan will ever be a competitor to India in either the domestic or the international market".

Electricity exports

True, the production base in Bhutan is so small that the kingdom's exports will hardly have any impact on the Indian economy. On the other hand, there will be no adverse impact on price levels, employment or the domestic market in general. Besides, given its small market, Bhutan can never enjoy economy of scale in the production of most goods for the domestic market. Lyonpo Zimba is of the opinion that it "will always be cheaper and better to import especially from India".

Obviously, the most well known product which India buys today from Bhutan is electricity. Bhutan's power potential today is estimated at 30,000 MW, thanks to the pristine natural environment and the snowfed perennial rivers of the Himalayas. However, currently only about 500 MW of electricity is produced under the various Chukha Hydel Projects — probably the example par excellence of Indo-Bhutan cooperation. And of the total power produced about 70 per cent is exported to India.

Lyonpo Yeshey Zimba, who has been the kingdom's finance minister since 1 July 1998 and who was the Thrizin of the Lhengye Zhungtshog (chairman of the council of ministers, at times also referred to as the Prime Minister) between 31 July 2000 and 7 August 2001, enumerates several advantages in

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

Bhutan's production of power. First, all power projects are of the river scheme type and there is no submersion of land etc which would have resulted in the displacement of people.

Secondly, the projects are very environment-friendly as most of the construction is underground. Thirdly, power construction in Bhutan has been completed in time and at lower cost.

most important area for Bhutan-India cooperation is agriculture. Bhutan has a very high potential for the export of fruits and vegetables to India, inter alia, because the Bhutanese agriculture season is different from that of India. On the other hand, Bhutan has been exporting to India wood-based products. Bhutan today exports oranges, apples, vegetables (including potato) and spices (like



Indeed, this has allowed Bhutan to provide cheap electricity — it exports to India currently at Rs 1.50 per unit.

Indeed, Bhutan is well endowed with rich deposits of minerals such as limestone, dolomite, gypsum, coal etc, notwithstanding the fact that the Himalayas are relatively young mountains. The availability of cheap electric power and improved infrastructure has enabled the Druk-yul to establish a few industries catering mainly to the Indian market. Currently, the main products are cement, calcium carbide, ferro-silicon, gypsum, coal and dolomite.

Other goods & services

Lyonpo Yeshey Zimba, who received the third highest number of votes in July 1998, when the ministers were elected for a five-year term by the unicameral legislature, the Tshogdu (National Assembly), is of the opinion that the other

cardamom and ginger).

Tourism is a significant component of the Bhutanese economy and Indian tourists do not face any restrictions in the kingdom. As a result, Indian tourists come in thousands especially during the summer months to take a respite from the sweltering heat. Indian tourists are not circumscribed by visa restrictions and can pay in rupees. Besides, Indians can just cross the border easily and comfortably.

If the two countries are moving closer to the advantage of both on the economic plane, there is no irritant on the diplomatic and political front either. His Majesty Druk Gyalpo (King) Jigme Singye Wangchuck, who ascended the throne in 1972 at the age of 16, has so far made 13 trips to India. Thanks to the warmth in official and civil society circles in India, the dividing lines between his official and private visits are always blurred.

Though since July 1998, King Jigme Singye has abdicated his role as the head of government and concentrates only on his role as head of state, he still remains the most significant personality in Bhutan. He might have abandoned his role as the head of government, but he still retains his position in the kingdom's political structure. In May 1998, the Bhutanese monarch was the first head of state and government to support India's nuclear tests.

Friendly ties

His Majesty lost no time in expressing shock and concern over the terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament on 13 December. "This outrageous act of terrorism on Parliament is not only an attack on India but also on the very symbol of democracy", His Majesty said. He added: "It is our hope that the perpetrators of this heinous crime will be brought to justice". In his message to President KR Narayanan and Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, the Druk Gyalpo said that Bhutan condemned the senseless acts of terrorism in all its forms. At Thimphu, the King met the Charge d'Affaires of India, Vinod Kumar, and personally conveyed Bhutan's support for the government and people of India in dealing with the increasing threat of terrorism.

True, a visit by King Jigme Singye Wangchuck to India is overdue but Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck became the first Crown Prince of the Kingdom to pay any official visit to India. The Bhutanese Crown Prince utilised the opportunity to meet President KR Narayanan and Union external affairs minister Jaswant Singh and also visited Dehradun, Hyderabad, Bangalore and Wellington. Bhutanese foreign minister Lyonpo Jigmi Y Thinley visited India in October and met foreign minister Jaswant Singh, home minister Lal Krishan Advani. He also delivered a number of lectures.

The Indian government and officials are very cautious to ensure that no damage is done to the mutually beneficial ties nurtured over the years. Regular low-profile visits by the officials of the ministry of external affairs, including those of the joint secretary (North), Ms Meera Shankar, have helped strengthen bilateral ties further. The new millennium is sure to see the two countries being more useful to each other.

India offers to help raise Afghan army

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India's
her neighbours

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JAN. 31. India today offered assistance to Afghanistan for raising its army. This offer was made by the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, during his meeting with Afghanistan's visiting Deputy Defence Minister, Rashid Dostum.

According to the External Affairs Ministry spokesperson, India is looking at providing military training to Afghans. India has already offered to train a part of the police force. In fact, Afghanistan's Interior Minister, Younus Qanouni, had visited the National Police Academy in Hyderabad in December and the Foreign Minister, Abdullah Abdullah, had also come over.

Analysts here point out that Gen. Dostum's visit is likely to deepen India's ties with the Uzbek element of the multi-ethnic Northern Alliance. The Tajiks and Hazaras are the other two ethnic communities that find prominence within the Northern Alliance, now called the United Front. Gen. Dostum, a leader of ethnic Uzbeks, exercises considerable influence in Northern Afghanistan.

Keen to ensure that the Uzbek



The Afghanistan Deputy Minister, Abdul Rashid Dostum, with the Foreign Secretary, Chokila Iyer, in New Delhi on Thursday. — AFP

flank of the Alliance is not neglected, India has sent its doctors to a government hospital in the northern Afghan city of Mazar-e-Sharif. India, for the first time, also plans to open a consulate in this city.

During talks with Mr. Fernandes, Gen. Dostum said that Afghanistan was seeking cooperation with India especially in the fields of information technology,

communications, health and education. He also held talks with the Foreign Secretary, Chokila Iyer, and thanked her for India's support to Afghanistan.

India has pledged \$100 millions for rebuilding Afghanistan's infrastructure apart from offering 100 million tonnes of wheat. Indian doctors are also in Kabul to revive the Indira Gandhi Hospital for Women and Children.

THE HINDU

1 FEB 2002

Karzai keen on Indian expertise

By Amit Baruah

TOKYO, JAN. 21. The Disinvestment Minister, Arun Shourie, today called on the Afghan interim administration chairman, Hamid Karzai, to discuss matters of bilateral interest.

India and the new administration in Kabul have kept up their contact on the sidelines of the Afghanistan aid conference with India's Special Envoy, S.K. Lambah, holding talks with the interim Afghan Foreign Minister, Abdullah Abdullah, last night.

Mr. Shourie also called on the U.N. Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, today and discussed matters relating to Afghanistan. Mr. Annan is scheduled to go to Afghanistan from Tokyo.

Mr. Shourie told reporters that Mr. Karzai was pleased to know that 20 Afghan diplomats would begin a training course in New Delhi on February 13. The course, he said, was designed specially for them.

Mr. Karzai expressed a desire to visit India at an early date, pointing out that he would be travelling to the U.S. later this month. The dates for his visit to India are to be fixed

through diplomatic channels.

Mr. Karzai, who had received much attention at the aid conference, was keen on visiting Shimla, where he did his college education, Mr. Shourie said. Referring to India's strengths in management and technical training institutes, Mr. Karzai hoped that such expertise could be made available to Afghanistan. Mr. Shourie informed Mr. Karzai that an Indian Ambassador would shortly be in place in Kabul.

Mr. Karzai was also keen on the resumption of civil aviation links between India and Afghanistan. Mr. Lambah, who was present at the press briefing, said the aviation links could resume in the next few weeks.

Earlier in his statement on the Afghan reconstruction conference, Mr. Shourie said the process of broad-basing Afghan Government must be consolidated, the country must be free of outside interference, the Taliban and Taliban-type elements must have no part in governance, the country must be rid of terror-

ism and women and minorities must receive special attention.

"As part of its international responsibilities, especially in view of its historical ties of friendship and cooperation with Afghanistan and the Afghan people, India is committed to making a substantial contribution to assist the new Afghan Government. We are also committed to unity, sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Afghanistan," the statement said.

"India, Afghanistan and the people of the two countries have had a long-standing record of technical and economic cooperation in various fields." Before 1979, Afghanistan was the largest partner in India's technical and economic cooperation programme.

"The areas of cooperation covered construction of dams, agriculture, hospitals, archaeology and other fields. We continued extending humanitarian relief even during the phase when the Taliban militia had taken over various parts of the country," Mr. Shourie said.

THE HINDU

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The Terror Error

US secretary of state Colin Powell's visit to Kathmandu — and offer of military hardware to the beleaguered Nepalese government to crush the Maoists — should open New Delhi's eyes to look at issues beyond Kashmir. In its obsession with the K-word, and consequently Pakistan and the US campaign against terrorism, Indian foreign policy appears to have become a one-track affair. The government of India has all but conceded Washington's role as the arbiter of South Block's direction, and, by implication, the future of India's relations with its neighbours. If Pakistan-based cross-border terrorism violates Indian sovereignty, the same sovereignty is no less transgressed when, despite the 1950 treaty with Nepal, Indian sensibilities are ignored by Mr Powell's explicit offer of military aid to the Himalayan kingdom. In the past, any move by Kathmandu to import weapons, particularly from China, has raised New Delhi's hackles. In fact, the crisis in the late 1980s, when Rajiv Gandhi's administration closed most of the trade and transit points, was intended to impress on Nepal that New Delhi would come down heavily should Kathmandu aspire to acquiring Chinese weapons. The 1950 treaty between India and Nepal has been the bone of contention in recent years with Kathmandu demanding a review of "some clauses", meaning the defence relationship. New Delhi has pointed out that there is no provision for a review of the treaty. However, because it had become an issue of domestic politics in Nepal, India agreed to the two foreign secretaries looking into the matter. Although this was a ploy to bury the controversy, for that very reason it was welcomed.

This is not to suggest that Nepal should remain under India's defence umbrella, but to underscore that the principles of India-Nepal relationship should not be treated as an instrument of expedience against one power or in favour of another. Once that happens, New Delhi will not be able to cite this principle should Kathmandu opt to import military equipment from elsewhere, as for example, from China which is also committed to the campaign against terrorism. Equally important is that New Delhi should distinguish between terrorism and insurgency. Unlike the Taliban and the many outfits inspired by Osama bin Laden, the Maoists of Nepal, for all their violence, represent a progressive protest movement which is neither anti-modern nor exclusivist in ethnic and religious terms. The Maoists are not anti-women, anti-education or anti-development, and were, till recently, negotiating with elected authorities who have a dismal record of both governance and adherence to democratic norms. New Delhi has been prudent enough to stay out of the conflict between the government and the Maoists in Nepal, for any intervention could exacerbate the conflict and increase hostility to the government. Such restraint, despite Nepal falling within New Delhi's area of 'security interest', is now being brazenly mocked by Washington's overflying of Indian prerogatives. That is, if New Delhi has not been consulted. If it has tacitly agreed to the US supplying weapons to Nepal, then South Block may well have given up the very clauses in the 1950 treaty on which it has been unrelenting with Kathmandu. Either way, it is a situation that does little credit to India as it undermines its primacy as Nepal's best friend and biggest neighbour.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

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Afghans want Indian hands to train Army

GAURAV C. SAWANT
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 4

INDIA'S budding relationship with the new-look Afghanistan appears to be right on track. After medical and movie aid comes the real thing: the armed forces are drawing a blue print for training the United Front (formerly the Northern Alliance) troops and air force after "receiving feelers" from Kabul's interim administration.

Defence minister George Fernandes, in an earlier interview with *The Indian Express*, had disclosed that India was providing war materiel to the Northern Alliance. Though he

did not go into details, he had said that "whatever they were asking", for including artillery pieces and ammunition, was being provided to them.

Afghanistan did not have an organised armed force, in the normal sense of the term, during the six years of the Taliban regime. Apart from the Taliban militia, the forces, under Ahmed Shah Massoud and General Abdul Rashid Dostum had their own armies; tanks, infantry combat vehicles, artillery and troops.

"Most of the equipment used by them is of Russian origin, like ours. While we have modern equipment and upgrades, they are still using the war materiel

T-90 tanks arrive

■ NEW DELHI: The first batch of ten tanks of frontline Russian T-90 main battle tanks (MBTs) have landed on the Indian soil, with the defence ministry asking Moscow to speed up the remaining shipment in view of the prevailing tension on the border with Pakistan. SEE PG 3

we had earlier," sources in army headquarters said.

The Soviet pullout of Afghanistan in 1989 left a large quantity of equipment behind. The Northern Alliance army is using the same Russian infantry combat vehicle (BMPs) as India is, apart from radars, tanks (T-

54, T-55s and T-62) and artillery (130 mm) pieces, an official said.

Defence analyst Maj-Gen (retd) Himmat Singh Gill, who served as military attache at Kabul, said the Indian army and air force played a crucial role in the training of the Afghan forces before the collapse of the Najibullah regime.

The capsule envisaged for the new army in Afghanistan includes training at different levels; at the Indian Military Academy (IMA) Dehradun for cadets, squadron commander's course (middle-rung) at the Mechanised Infantry Regimental Centre and Armoured Corps

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