

North by north-west

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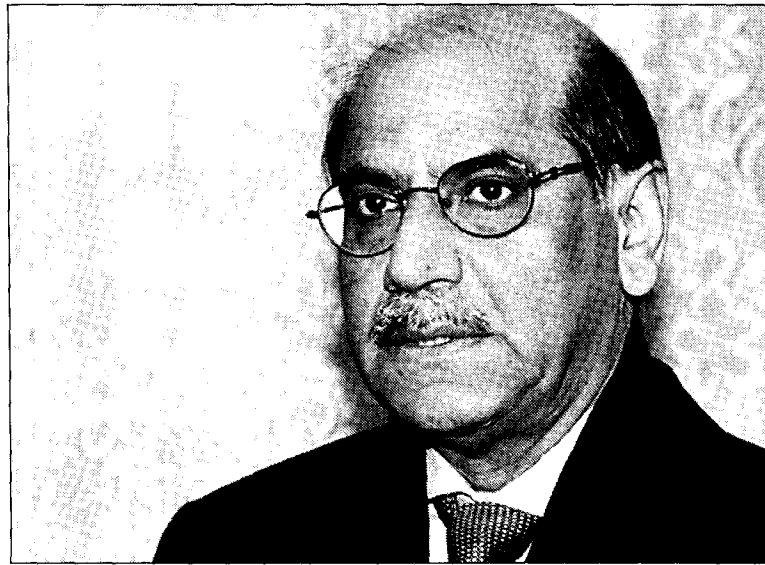
Shyam Saran's 'frank' talk with the Nepal's King Gyanendra may constitute a turning point in Indo-Nepal relations, writes Jyoti Malhotra

India's obsession with the recognition of its nuclear power status at the hands of the lone superpower, United States of America, has fortunately not clouded its head over the troublesome goings-on in the Himalayan kingdom up north. Of course, it helps that the foreign secretary, Shyam Saran, was ambassador in Kathmandu before he moved to New Delhi. At the time, he knew King Gyanendra as well as the insides of the Narayanhity palace reasonably well. So when he arrived to renew his relationship with the direct incarnate of Lord Vishnu a couple of weeks ago — and the meeting lasted some ninety minutes — you deduced it had been a fiery one. Diplomatic, oh yes, but fiery.

India's concerns over the situation in Nepal are well-known. Ever since emergency was imposed there on February 1, New Delhi has been irritable about the growing, if inevitable, confrontation with the monarchy. What nerve Gyanendra must have had by going the whole hog and demolishing whatever semblance of republicanism that remained after Nepal's political parties had argued it away over the last 15 years!

Certainly, an openly feisty nation like India could not have tolerated Gyanendra's open infringement of basic human rights. This is not to say that the government cannot work with either dictators or full-time monarchs. After all, various Indian political parties have tolerated Mamoon Abdul Gayoom's hugely unpopular regime in the Maldives and his sham elections, worked pretty successfully within Pervez Musharraf's reluctance to give up political power and kept its mouth shut when Myanmar's rulers take a leaf out of Alauddin Khalji's book.

The problem is really with Indian public opinion, which fully supports the Nepalese people's right to fix their own destiny. And despite the monarchical stream which allows people like 'Maharani' Vasundhara Raje to keep her prefix, majoritarian India will always be uncomfortable with the Gyanendra school of thought. (To give Vasundhara Raje her due, she wouldn't ever dream of doing a Gyanendra even in a socially



Saran in Nepal: man for all seasons

backward state like Rajasthan or in her in-law country)

According to sources close to Gyanendra, India had been deliberately closing the political space around the Narayanhity palace, thereby giving the Nepalese king little option but to strike back. The king was angry that India had stopped the supply of arms to the Nepalese army, thereby hampering his campaign against the Maoists. He had been left with no alternative but to go to China.

And therefore, the sources added, Gyanendra's diplomatic dismissal of Manmohan Singh's plea to put together a democratic roadmap for Nepal, when the two met in Dhaka on the sidelines of the 13th Saarc summit. So when New Delhi responded by brokering the agreement between the political parties and the Maoists in Nepal, Kathmandu sat up. On the day of the big political rally in the Nepalese capital two weeks ago, Saran flew in to Kathmandu. Two days later, the heart-to-heart with the king followed.

Even Gyanendra's aides now admit that the "very frank" talk with

Saran may possibly constitute a turning point in Indo-Nepal relations. At the very least, it has averted the crisis that nearly destroyed the bilateral relationship in 1989. It has helped take some of the sting out of the tension that has built over the last ten months between the two capitals. And while neither protagonist walked out of the meeting hand-in-hand for the benefit of waiting journalists — television cameras are simply too egalitarian for Narayanhity and therefore, banned — both are said to have promised to give each other some more space in taking the relationship forward.

Indian officials have been completely tight-lipped about the conversation, because, as they argue from the towering confines of South Block, it is far too important for public consumption. Lest that sound too much like what Gyanendra's boys are saying, New Delhi has admitted that both sides will work to put Nepal back on track. But they will not say if Gyanendra has vented any steam at the pressure India was putting on him.

And so it goes in the new year.

Saran is back from the United States of America, having presented the Indian vision document on its nuclear programme, a central element of which is the separation of the civilian facilities from its military ones. Since the Americans have promised to supply nuclear fuel for the production of nuclear energy — so as to part-feed India's growing appetite for energy — both sides have decided that the civilian reactors, which will receive this fuel, will be open to international inspections.

According to K. Subrahmanyan, the strategic guru and now chairman of the prime minister's task-force on long-term policy, military reactors, such as those at the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre in Trombay, Kalpakkam and Mysore, could remain outside this *lakshman rekha*, so as to continue to produce the plutonium that makes up the nuclear arsenal. While the reactors at Narora, Kakrapar, one part of Kalpakkam and Rawatbhata, could come out of the closet.

Just as Shyam Saran was preparing to fly off to the US with his "separation" list, the loose ends of another energy dialogue were being tied up in New Delhi. This time between the Petroleum secretaries of India and Pakistan, on the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline. Both sides have agreed that the pipeline will be constructed and the gas will begin to flow around 2010. That puts paid to the worry that a pro-US agenda will prevent New Delhi from getting into an Iranian deal. The price of piped gas is expected to cost about 75 per cent of the liquid natural gas that India will start buying from Iran from 2009. But a major sticking point is whether Pakistan will allow Indian pipeline engineers into that country to help construct the pipeline (some 800 km through Pakistani territory and 50 km in India).

With 'energy' having occupied considerable time and space in 2005, the new year is likely to be devoted to taking this forward. Such as, a trilateral meeting between India, Pakistan and Iran on the pipeline. As well as a US acknowledgement of the Indian nuclear plan, which would put into place a key milestone for the visit of the US president in February 2006.

27 DEC 2005

THE TELEGRAPH

India urges Gyanendra to mend fences with parties

Statesman News Service

KATHMANDU, Dec. 13. — Indian foreign secretary Mr Shyam Saran met Nepal King Gyanendra at the Narayanhity royal palace today morning, conveying Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh's message that the monarch should seek a reconciliation with the parties in order to effect a national reconciliation. At the end of the meeting with the king, followed by a lengthy one with Nepalese foreign minister Mr Ramesh Nath Pandey, Mr Saran told journalists before departing for Delhi that the Indian government had put arms supply to the Royal Nepalese Army on hold to foster a "national consensus".

"In all my meetings, I have conveyed that the restoration of peace and stability and economic recovery in Nepal is not only in the inter-

est of Nepal but also in India's interest," Mr Saran said. "India stands ready to support all efforts aimed at bringing about a peaceful resolution to the problems confronting Nepal."

The former Indian ambassador to Nepal said during the royal audience, King Gyanendra had expressed his commitment to multiparty democracy and constitutional monarchy. He, in turn, had conveyed the Indian government's view that to confront the challenges facing Nepal, it was very important that all the constitutional forces work together. By constitutional forces, Mr Saran said, the Indian government meant the institution of monarchy and the institution of political parties.

"The arms embargo is to foster a national consensus," he said. "But our other engagements with the Royal Nepalese Army continue, like providing training."

THE STATESMAN

India has vital stake in Bhutan's well-being, says Shyam Saran

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Foreign Secy
- Shyam Saran
- Bhutan

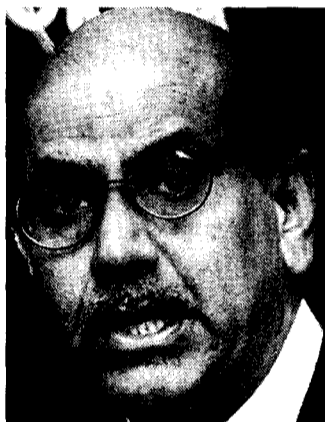
“Threat from Maoist groups is of mutual concern”

Diplomatic Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The “threat” from Maoist groups and their links with Indian left-wing extremists and insurgent groups were a matter of “mutual concern” for India and Bhutan, Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran said on Saturday.

Addressing a seminar on Bhutan-India relations, Mr. Saran said the two countries shared a border of about 700 kilometres. “The open borders, visa free regime and duty free trade across this border could not have been sustainable without complete understanding between our two leaderships of our mutual security concerns.”

“The military operations conducted by the Royal Bhutanese Army in December 2003-January 2004 against Indian insurgent groups in Bhutan were a milestone in our joint response to terrorist activities. We look forward to continuing this cooperation by jointly upgrading our border infrastructure and man-



Shyam Saran

agement, including through better roads and communication links as well as information sharing,” the Foreign Secretary said.

India and Bhutan, he said, had a vital stake in each other's well being and prosperity. “The destiny of [the] two neighbours ... regardless of their size is a shared one. Stability, peace and economic advancement are in-

divisible and the most durable guarantors of peaceful coexistence. It is based on this premise that India has been privileged to assist Bhutan in its task of nation building.”

Hydroelectric project

Referring to cooperation in the tapping of the vast hydro resources of Bhutan, Mr. Saran said after the successes of Chukha and Kurichu, the mega 1020 MW Tala hydroelectric project on the river Wangchu would be commissioned in the first half of next year.

“The project will generate 5 million units of power and lead to major gains for both Bhutan and India in a manner that is environmentally sound and commercially viable in the long term. We are, therefore, deeply optimistic about our future cooperation in this sector where further projects are under active consideration.”

India, he said, was following with keen interest the major Constitutional changes that

have been initiated by King Jigme Singye Wangchuck of Bhutan.

“The draft Constitution was released in March this year for public debate and it is expected that many of the changes flowing from it would be in place in the next two-three years. We wish the Royal Government of Bhutan and the people of Bhutan all success in the course of this political transition and we look forward to working with Bhutan during this period and beyond.”

“In many ways, our approach to Bhutan is subsumed under our overall vision for our region. It is incumbent upon us to bequeath to coming generations a region that is an engine of growth for the world economy. This requires clarity of thought and a mature appreciation of where the true interests of our peoples lie. As India and Bhutan have shown, inter-State boundaries need not be barriers but the gateways to joint and mutually-beneficial undertakings,” he said.

04 DEC 2005

THE HINDU

AFGHAN ROAD PROJECT ■ No succumbing to pressure, terrorism, says Pranab

Govt to beef up security for Indians in Afghanistan

Opp slams govt on internal security

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 1

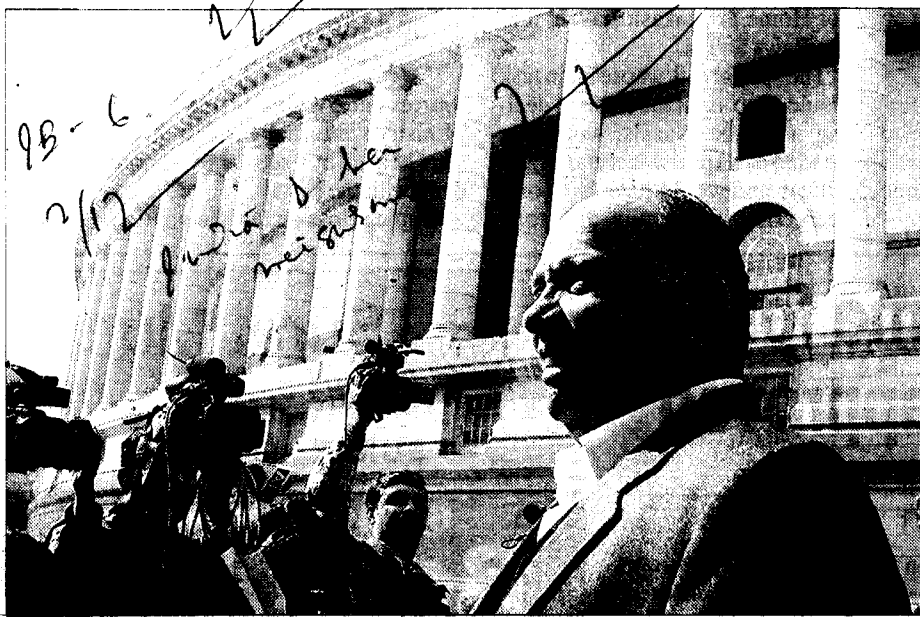
MAKING it clear that India would not succumb to terrorism and continue to help Afghanistan, the government today said that it proposed to beef up security for Indian personnel working in that country following the abduction and killing of Border Roads Organisation (BRO) driver Maniyappan Raman Kutty.

"We are concerned. A large number of people are working not only working Afghanistan but the whole of West Asia. From security point of view, these areas are of concern," Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee told the Rajya Sabha while replying to a clarification on a suo motu statement on the killing of the BRO driver by the Taliban last month.

But at the same time, he said that there could be no foolproof security as the Indian government had to depend on the local government as well.

Regarding the highway construction project connecting southern Afghanistan with Iran, Mukherjee said that it would continue. "We will not succumb to this type of terrorism and we will continue to help Afghanistan."

He said 38 ITBP personnel were providing security for the project and efforts are being made to increase the security strength and its details were



Union Minister Sharad Pawar in Parliament after his election as BCCI chief

being worked out by the director general of BRO with the Afghanistan authorities. It was the desire of Taliban to stall the project, but India was committed to complete it, he said.

Asserting that India's hand of assistance to the Afghan government is intact, Mukherjee said, "In no part of the world, you can buy peace by compromising or succumbing to the pressure of terrorists whatever be the price."

Sometimes the country had to pay a very heavy price, he said. As a nation India is the worst victim of terrorism both inside and outside and "it was necessary to tell them that the project will continue".

To a question from former External Affairs Minister

Yashwant Sinha, the defence minister admitted the Pakistan authorities had been contacted to explore possibilities of release of Maniyappan. He, however, said Pakistan was not approached in a formal manner and Islamabad had responded by saying that it ceased to have any contacts with the Afghan militia.

At that point of time, the main concern was to secure the release of Maniyappan and all possible channels were explored. "Our entire exercise (then) was directed at whatever source we can to save the person. It is not correct to say that we did not make any effort," Mukherjee said.

He also made it clear that National Security Adviser M K Narayanan had not stated that there was a Pakistani hand in the killing of the BRO driver. All he had stated in Kerala was

about the growth of the Taliban and Pakistan's close links with it. Nowhere had he mentioned that Islamabad was involved in this particular incident, the minister said.

Regarding adequate compensation to Maniyappan's family, Mukherjee said that the normal provident fund and other benefits worked out to about Rs 9 lakh. That apart, the Centre has announced Rs 5 lakh aid and the state government had reportedly agreed to give a matching assistance, he added.

Also Maniyappan's wife would get a pension equivalent to the last salary drawn by him as a special case, he said, adding that efforts are being made to provide her employment in a PSU besides providing education to her two children at least up to graduation.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 1

THE opposition attacked the Government in the Lok Sabha on Thursday, accusing it of not taking up internal security issues seriously. BJP leader Vijay Kumar Malhotra held the ruling party responsible for the rise of Naxalites by transacting deals with them during elections.

As the Lok Sabha took up a combined discussion on internal security issues covering terrorist attacks and Naxalite violence following the statements made by the Home Minister, Malhotra said, "Why is Naxalism on the rise? Its because you have deals with them during elections. We impeach this government for destroying the country for vote bank politics."

Malhotra pointed out that Home Minister Shivraj Patil had claimed there had been no prior information about the blasts. But he said reports of such threats had appeared in newspapers, the police in Chandni Chowk had mentioned such a danger and the US Embassy too had raised an alert. The Home Minister's statement, he said, raised an issue of privilege.

Malhotra said that time and again Pakistan's involvement had been witnessed in terrorist incidents across the country, including the Parliament attack, strike at Ayodhya, incidents in Kashmir and the Delhi blasts, but "we have not taken a lesson from history".

The Taliban turns its attention on India

M.K. Bhadrakumar

POLITICIANS AND diplomats usually move on when an infinitely sad event eventually settles in the private domain. But that should not happen in the case of the tragic death of Maniappan Raman Kutty near Kandahar in Afghanistan last week at the hands of the Taliban.

The incident leaves a lot for the United Progressive Alliance Government to ponder over. New Delhi's reaction has been on predictable lines: a verbal attack on the Taliban, condemning it as representing the forces of darkness; a defence, belatedly though, of what the government did to get Maniappan released; and a proclamation that India's friendship and cooperation with Afghanistan will continue no matter what.

It was possible to have said that it was an almost near-certainty the Taliban did not act on its own. But, in the present climate of India-Pakistan relations, that would have sounded incongruous. At any rate, in twilight zones where shadows of conventional politics and orthodox diplomacy mix with less certain shades, it probably becomes difficult to distinguish things. Beyond a point, it is not that important either. The Taliban's mentors are indeed around, jealously guarding its movements and activities — evaluating tactics and strategy.

In none of the Taliban's notorious acts was it possible to say with absolute certainty whether it acted as a free agent or was carrying out the wishes of its mentors or in what measure its wishes and those of its mentors overlapped. This was so when Ayatollah Mazari (1995) or Dr. Najibullah (1996) was tortured and killed or when eight Iranian diplomats in the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif were executed in 1997 or even when the Bamiyan statues of the Buddha were vandalised.

It was not difficult to ascribe motives to the Taliban's hostility toward India during the five-year period until its retreat in the winter of 2001

It is entirely possible that the Taliban has decided that India is once again taking sides in Afghanistan's internal affairs.

toward Pakistan's border regions. India was being supportive of Afghan militia forces opposed to the Taliban. (Ideology had by then lost relevance in the Afghan war.) The graph of the Taliban's hostility roughly ran parallel to the ebb and flow of "pro-activism" in India's Afghan policy.

But the Taliban had been ignoring India during the recent period. The Taliban hardly ever spoke about *jihad* in Kashmir or 'oppression' of Muslims in India. All evidence pointed to a snapping of ties between the Taliban and Kashmiri militants. No recent reports appeared about militants from India having been spotted in Taliban strongholds in Pakistan.

There were two reasons for this. First, India ceased to be a 'player' in Afghanistan's fratricidal war once the Americans moved in and devised their own game plan. The National Democratic Alliance Government in power in India was aspiring to be a 'natural ally' of the United States on any conceivable front. Specifically in Afghanistan, this demanded confining itself to the role of a junior partner. This meant engaging surplus financial resources in the Afghan reconstruction, playing an occasional role in 'finessing' Northern Alliance groups. But India was never quite allowed on to Afghan political turf where Washington saw Pakistan as its key partner.

Secondly, since 2001, the Taliban has been preoccupied with the foreign military occupation — with the *jihad* against American presence in Afghanistan. In this respect too, while the Taliban turned its ire on countries that formed part of the U.S.-led "coalition forces" in Afghanistan (such as Italy, Japan or the United Kingdom), the list did not include India.

Thus, there is an abruptness in the turn to-

wards vicious hostility the Taliban has taken. New Delhi appears shocked. India-Afghanistan relations seemed placid till a week ago.

Why has the Taliban once again turned its attention towards Indian interests? It is easy to be dismissive of the Taliban as an obscurantist force out of the fastness of the Hindu Kush that continues to haunt the subcontinent's cultured way of life with random acts of barbarism.

But there was all along a method to the Taliban's madness. The Taliban resorted to certain modes of behaviour when it wanted to display annoyance towards the supporters of the Afghan "opposition," the so-called Northern Alliance. It either resorted to vituperative rhetoric condemning "enemies" or, alternatively, retaliated by harbouring its enemies' enemies. The Taliban invariably settled scores within Afghan territory itself, making it clear the demand was to leave it and its country alone.

Thus, even when it caught crew members of a Russian aircraft ferrying weapons to the Northern Alliance, it meticulously recorded their life in captivity near Kandahar on a video camera and sent that across to Moscow in the summer of 1997 through the then U.S. Assistant Secretary of State, Robin Raphel (who was an enthusiastic visitor to Kandahar in that period) as "proof" that the detenus were unharmed.

The point is Maniappan's murder, which has all the signs of being the Taliban's handiwork, stands out as a political killing. Therefore, a need arises to explore the reasons why hostility toward India has erupted in Afghanistan. There was always a thin line to tread in Afghanistan.

It seems, unfortunately, the case that ever since India provided the indelible ink for the

presidential election in Afghanistan last October, New Delhi somehow convinced itself that it had become a stakeholder in the U.S.-sponsored democracy experiment in Afghanistan. New Delhi seems to have concluded that the winner in the presidential elections, Hamid Karzai, needs its backing for consolidating power in Afghanistan. How much of this was predicated on New Delhi's keenness to be of use to American regional policy or whether this was prompted by the complexities of the Karzai Government's ties with Islamabad, becomes difficult to tell. However, the end result somehow has been a tendency of late to equate Afghanistan and the Afghan people with Mr. Karzai.

Powerful signal

The two-day friendly visit by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to Kabul in October represented an extraordinary statement of solidarity with Mr. Karzai's leadership of post-Taliban Afghanistan. New Delhi was, consciously or unknowingly, giving out a powerful signal in the Afghan bazaar. The Prime Minister's visit took place against the backdrop of the parliamentary and local body elections in Afghanistan during which Mr. Karzai had been accused of unprincipled electoral alliances and manipulative politics. Besides, controversies remained over Mr. Karzai's own election. *Washington Post* quoted National Alliance leader Younus Qanooni, who opposed Mr. Karzai, as saying: "I only accepted the results for the sake of national stability."

From that point, New Delhi proceeded to assertively get Afghanistan's SAARC membership sorted out. This move held a resonance that India was factoring in the Karzai regime as a strategic partner in the region. Indeed, Pakistan was hard pressed to show a degree of enthusiasm in the matter. (Pakistani commentators have since criticised their government for at least not stalling on the issue until Afghan policies gained some clarity.)

Thereafter, New Delhi has swiftly followed up with a decision to honour Mr. Karzai with the prestigious Indira Gandhi Peace Prize for 2005. Within days, the Taliban struck demanding that India must "leave" Afghanistan.

There should be no doubt that Mr. Karzai is fond of India. He may remain at the helm of affairs in Kabul, especially with the prospect of long-term Western military presence in Afghanistan. He is a key figure in American regional policy in Central Asia. With the massive American backing he enjoys, he has occasionally stood up to Pakistan's bullying including on the sensitive Durand Line question. He is an immensely popular figure in the U.S. and in influential Western capitals. He is an inveterate enthusiast of globalisation in the region.

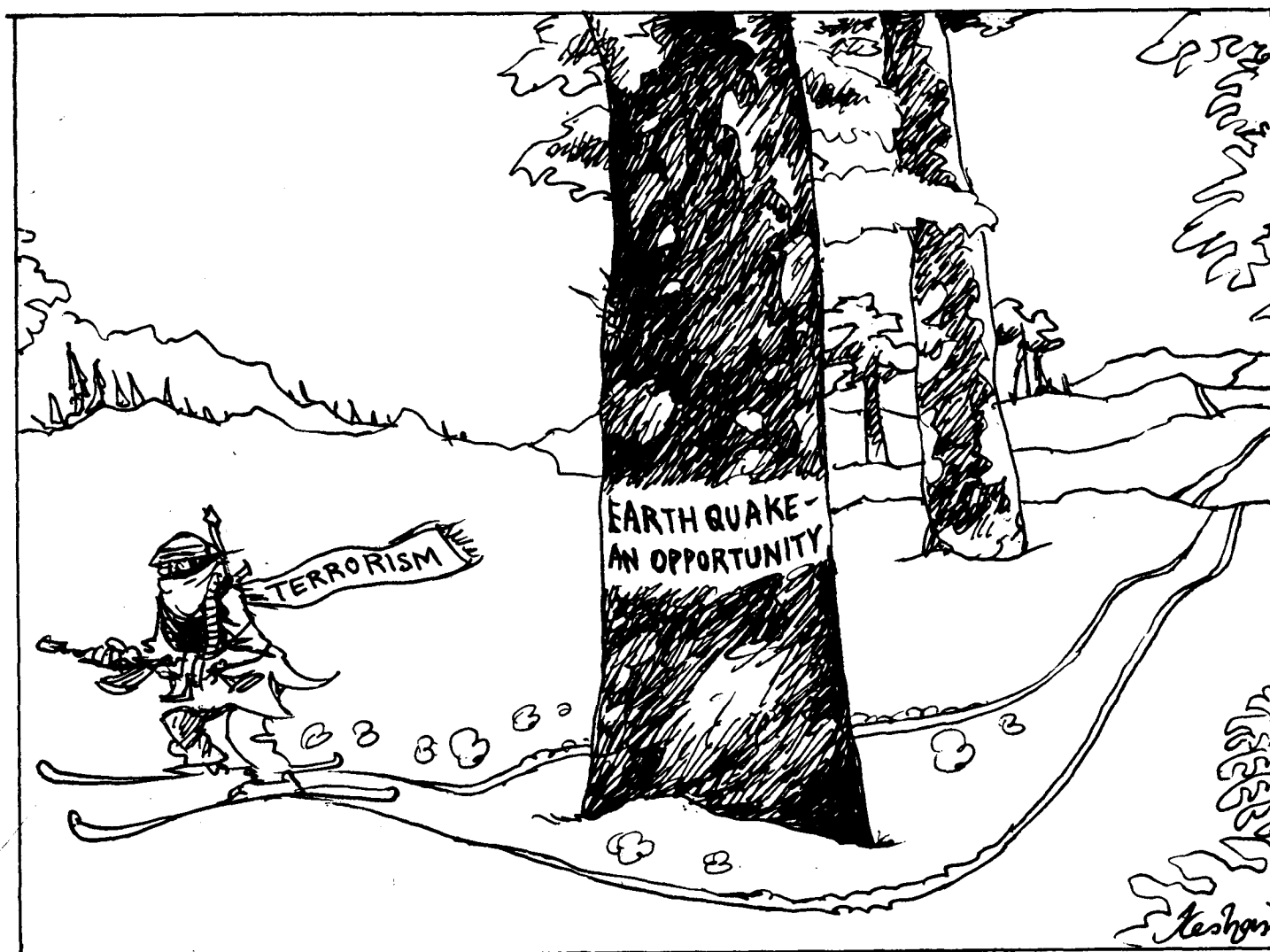
But the paradox is that the Afghan people themselves hold a variety of opinions about Mr. Karzai. This is where the Taliban comes in. According to the Taliban, Mr. Karzai is a faction leader. More importantly, the Taliban sees him as the symbol of the humiliating foreign occupation of the country — an 'American puppet.'

It is entirely possible that the Taliban has decided that India is once again taking sides in Afghanistan's internal affairs. How is this predicament to be handled?

It is well within the grasp of Indian diplomacy to tread softly when it treads on other peoples' dreams. India could do well by emulating other regional powers or, better still, by reverting to the traditional policy toward Afghanistan followed by Delhi till the mid-1990s: emphasise people-to-people relations; proceed vigorously with technical and economic cooperation; maintain correct government-to-government relations but on a low key at least till the anarchic conditions change for the better.

Successive Congress governments used to seek a "neutral, independent and strong Afghanistan free from foreign interference." There is no reason for New Delhi to have any compulsive urge to harmonise with the U.S. regional policy in Afghanistan just because it finds itself unable to be of use to the U.S. in its 'exit strategy' in Iraq. India can have an independent foreign policy toward both Iraq and Afghanistan.

CARTOONSCAPE



নিরাপত্তায় বড় গাফিলতির দাম দিয়েছেন কুড়ি

নয়াদিল্লি, ২৪ নভেম্বর: কুড়ি অপহরণ রহস্যের জট খুলতে পারেনি কেউই। কিন্তু তালিবান জঙ্গিরা তাঁকে হত্যা করার পরে অপহরণের কারণ খুঁজতে শুরু হয়েছে কাটাছেঁড়া। এরই মধ্যে আজ বিআরও-র কর্মী মণিয়াল্লন রামন কুড়ির দেহ কাবুল থেকে এসে পৌঁছেছে দিল্লিতে। কাল তাঁর দেহ নিয়ে যাওয়া হবে কেরলের চিংগোলি গ্রামে। লোকসভায় আজ কুড়ি-হত্যার নিন্দা করা হয়েছে। বিজেপি-ও আজ হত্যার নিন্দা করে। পাশাপাশি বিজেপি মুখপাত্র ভি কে মলহোত্র বলেন, কুড়ি সাধারণ এক কর্মী বলে তালিবানদের হুমকি পেয়েও কেন্দ্র উপযুক্ত ব্যবস্থা নেয়নি। বিদেশ প্রতিমন্ত্রী ই আহমেদের ভূমিকারও সমালোচনা করা হয়।

আফগানিস্তানের মানবাধিকার কমিশনের বক্তব্য, নিরাপত্তার অপ্রতুলতাই কুড়ি ও ৩ আফগান অপহরণের প্রধান কারণ। তারা আফগান সরকারকে উপদেশ দিয়েছে, এ ধরনের ঘটনা ঘটে যাওয়ার পরে শুধু তালিবানের নিন্দা করে লাভ নেই। বরং আফগানিস্তানে পুনর্গঠনে যারা কাজ করছেন, তাঁদের জন্য নিরাপত্তা আরও জোরদার করতে হবে। মানবাধিকার কমিশনের মতে, নিরাপত্তায় সমন্বয়ের অভাবের জন্য আফগান পুলিশ ও সেনার অভ্যন্তরীণ জাতিগত কৌন্দলই দায়ী। তাদের নিয়োগ ব্যবস্থাও বৈষম্যে ভরা। এদের অনেকে তালিবান এবং প্রাক্তন জঙ্গি। নিজেদের দায়িত্ব পালনে তারা খুব একটা সচেতন নয় এবং অনেক ক্ষেত্রেই তালিবান জঙ্গিদের মতবাদের সঙ্গে সহমত। আফগানিস্তানে বিভিন্ন প্রকল্পে কাজ করছেন অন্তত ২ হাজার ভারতীয় কর্মী। — পি টি আই

H.O-10

Wake-up call in Afghanistan

25/11

The wanton murder of Maniappan Ramankutty, a humble driver with the Border Roads Organisation, underlines the Taliban militia's utter contempt for civilised norms — including the fundamental precepts of Islam and the traditional Afghan code of honour. Mr. Maniappan was an unarmed civilian who brought to Afghanistan nothing other than his skills as a driver and a willingness to leave the safety and security of his own land to work for the rehabilitation of a brother nation. Breaking with the pattern of kidnappings in Afghanistan or Iraq, the criminals who seized him appear to have decided from the start that they would liquidate him. The 'demand' that the BRO leave Afghanistan within 48 hours precluded any reasonable negotiation to secure his release. India has cultural and civilisational links with Afghanistan going back tens of centuries. Despite the acrimony of recent years — and the role of Pakistan's intelligence services in cultivating the Taliban as a source of 'strategic depth' against India — the militia has not, until now, taken a direct part in any physical attack on Indian nationals. Why has it chosen to do so at this time? What is the message being sent to New Delhi?

India's role in Afghanistan

As the Indian security establishment thinks carefully about these questions, it is clear the fundamental thrust of the country's Afghan policy must be the economic and strategic integration of Afghanistan with South Asia. Until now, India and Pakistan have tended to look at Afghanistan as a zero-sum game in which one country's gain must necessarily be at the cost of the other. So Islamabad denies India easy overland access to its western neighbour while New Delhi seeks actively to build a special relationship with President Hamid Karzai as leverage against Pakistan. Given the Taliban's traditional links with the Pakistani intelligence establishment, it is possible the militia is being used to deliver a message to New Delhi, which finds itself in a sticky position. India's interests lie in continuing engagement, yet it is not in a position to protect its citizens working in Afghanistan. Its response to the crisis following Mr. Maniappan's abduction was slow, and possibly inept. The solution to this tough problem lies in three areas. First, while maintaining close relations with President Karzai, New Delhi must avoid giving the impression it is getting embroiled in Afghanistan's internal politics. Secondly, the emphasis on non-security-related cooperation and assistance, especially in infrastructure and training, must be maintained. Thirdly, there must be a constructive effort to work together with Pakistan on specific projects inside Afghanistan. The proposed Turkmen-Afghan pipeline suggests itself, as do hydroelectric projects linking Tajikistan and Afghanistan to a common South Asian grid. There are plenty of possibilities for cooperation but what is needed is an intelligent change in policy mindset.

Maniappan's body found

More security for Indian personnel in Afghanistan

24/11
10-1
Jusuf &
Kari Muhammad
Afghanistan

Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI: A body found by Afghan authorities near Delaram in the Nimroz province on Wednesday has been identified as that of Ramankutty Maniappan, Border Roads Organisation (BRO) driver kidnapped by the Taliban on Saturday.

On Tuesday, Taliban spokesman Qari Mohammad Yusuf telephoned the Reuters news agency and claimed Mr. Maniappan was executed as the BRO did not agree to pull out of Afghanistan.

"The body was recovered around 11 a.m. and is being taken to Kandahar," Zia Mojadedi, a senior official in the Afghan Security Council, told this correspondent over telephone from Kabul. "The Afghan Government is making all possible efforts to trace the culprits."

According to Rakesh Sood, India's Ambassador in Afghanistan, the body is likely to be flown to Delhi by an Indian Airlines flight on Thursday. "We are trying to get the body from Kandahar to Kabul in time for the flight," he said from the Afghan capital.

Sombre mood

Asked whether there was fear among the 300-odd Indians in Afghanistan, Mr. Sood said, "The people here are okay, but the mood is sombre." All those who were living and working in Afghanistan were aware of the risks they faced.

"It is not the first time such an incident has taken place. Working in Afghanistan carries its own risks," he said, stressing that Chinese, Turkish, Dutch and

British nationals were targeted in the past. Mr. Maniappan was the first Indian executed by the Taliban.

Mr. Sood said its objective was to scare away Indians working on the \$70 million Zaranj-Delaram road project, which will be Afghanistan's link to the Iranian port of Chabahar. "The stoppage of work by the Indian company [BRO] was the only demand made by the Taliban."

Karzai condoles

Afghan President Hamid Karzai telephoned Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to express his condolences. He promised that security would be beefed up for all Indian personnel in the country.

Dr. Singh told Mr. Karzai that India's resolve to assist Afghanistan remained unshaken.

In a press statement, Dr. Singh said he was "deeply grieved and outraged" by the killing. "I condemn this cowardly and brutal murder of a brave Indian, who was working in the cause of peace and development far from his home and country, which reflects the cruel and inhuman character of the Taliban and the forces they represent."

The External Affairs Ministry said Mr. Maniappan's family would receive Rs. 10 lakh as compensation and benefits. Both his children would receive free education up to the secondary level.

The Ministry hoped that those responsible for the killing would be brought to justice swiftly. It said India was in touch with Kabul to ensure the safety of its nationals in Afghanistan.

Caught between two strategic interests

SUJAN DUTTA

New Delhi, Nov. 23: Maniappan Raman Kutty, the driver-cum-technical hand with the Border Roads Organisation (BRO), was beheaded on Tuesday by the Taliban in an Afghan desert for reasons of Indian strategic interest.

Someone should try explaining that to his family in Kerala.

Maniappan is one of some 400 Indians who work in Afghanistan on projects sponsored by the Indian government. These projects are funded by New Delhi's \$550-million aid to the embattled nation. Among the projects are a school in Kabul, a power transmission line to the Afghan capital from its north, a microwave television network and the Zaranj-Delaram road.

Of all these endeavours, Project Zaranj is easily the riskiest.

Its personnel cannot camp near a city or an urban centre and do not have the security that keeps such population centres safe in a lawless land. For an outfit like the Taliban, Indian workers in the dust bowl of Nimroze — the province where they are building the road — are easy prey.

If Maniappan landed in Afghanistan for Indian strategic interest, he was killed for a Taliban strategic interest.

India wants to ensure a toe-hold in Afghanistan. The Taliban kills an innocent now and then to deliver the message to Washington that Daisy Cutter bombs have not exterminated them.

Once built, the 219-km Zaranj-Delaram road Maniappan was working on would allow Indian equipment to be transported across Afghan-

Indians become easy prey



istan and a communication link to Uzbekistan.

In the absence of transit rights through Pakistan, the Indian government is dependent on the Iranian port of Chabahar. It ships heavy equipment to the port, then transports them by road through Zaranj and Delaram and connects to the Garland Highway that circumscribes central Afghanistan.

Maniappan was engaged in this noble venture. It is another matter that he was also doing it for a livelihood.

Indian projects in Afghanistan are less secure for Indians than the American project of Afghanistan is for Americans. American and European reconstruction teams are always escorted by armoured vehicles.

What about Indian construction teams, as in Zaranj-Delaram? Bands of Taliban and brigands rule the countryside on either side of US and ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) security convoys.

Some of them do so with impunity. For instance, Tal-

iban spokesmen are always able to claim "achievements" by using the satellite telephone to pass messages to news organisations.

Such is the context in which the Indian paramilitary outfit, the BRO, has deployed its personnel in Nimroze. As it is, BRO personnel have a trying time. Weather conditions vary from minus 10 degrees Celsius in winter to plus 55 degrees Celsius in summer. Sandstorms make it impossible to work for more than four to five hours a day. But there is protection from nature. There is none from the Taliban.

In sum, India's Afghan project to checkmate Pakistan has been taken up without Delhi fully appreciating the security implications for its personnel. The security complement for Indian installations in Afghanistan is from the Indo Tibetan Border Police, a paramilitary force. It has no mandate for preventive security. The workers engaged in Indian government projects are completely dependent on the US forces, US-assisted ISAF and the Hamid Karzai administration.

The US and Karzai have their very own Afghan projects. The Indians are therefore easy prey for the Taliban. This is not the first time. In 2003, another Indian was taken hostage. His release could be negotiated with the good offices of Asadullah Khalid, now the governor of Kandahar.

It is now apparent that India did not even try to negotiate the release of Maniappan. This could be part of a new Israel-like policy. But Maniappan who was earning a livelihood in the wilderness and wars of Afghanistan should have been told about it.

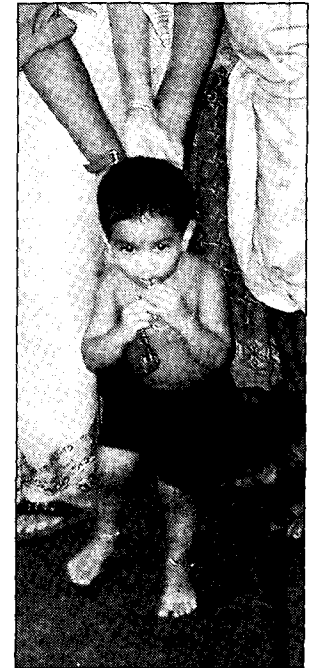
'THEY WOULD HAVE ACTED SWIFTLY IF HE WERE A VIP'



The Maniappan family. (AFP)



Maniappan's wife wails at her Kerala home. (Telegraph picture)



One of Maniappan's sons. (Reuters)

27/4
1-8

Delhi let him die, cries village

JOHN MARY

Alappuzha, Nov. 23: Maniappan Raman Kutty's village today exploded in anger at the Centre's failure to prevent the Indian driver's murder by the Taliban.

"We swapped terrorists for the daughter of Mufti Mohammed Sayeed (former Union home minister). The authorities wasted 48 hours in the case of poor Maniappan," a villager said at Chingoli in Alappuzha, echoing the thoughts of many.

The chief minister's office

rang up Maniappan's home around 2 pm, informing the family of the 34-year-old's death.

Villagers and relations themselves broke down as they made weak efforts to console the driver's wife Bindu and his aged parents. His mother Mani, a cancer patient, kept shouting her son's name.

"Why did you go to this dangerous place? My child is gone," she wailed.

Maniappan's elder son, a seven-year-old Class III student, sat bewildered while relatives took care of his toddler brother, aged two.

"The 48 hours the abductors had given was enough to secure the release of our boy. Unfortunately, the government could not even start negotiations before the deadline. They would have acted swiftly if he were a VIP," said Pushpan, a neighbour. "They could have suspended the road work and tried for his release."

The murdered man's father, Raman Kutty, a heart patient, said rather stoically: "Now what's the use in blaming anyone? He's gone."

Maniappan, the family's breadwinner, had taken up the

job with the sole objective of renovating their small, tiled house, wife Bindu said. "My husband went there in the hope that he'll get more money to meet the expenses for renovating our house. I had cautioned him."

A relative was dismayed that E. Ahmed, minister of state for external affairs and a Keralite himself, had failed to deal with the issue "seriously". He said Ahmed should have cut short his trip to Pakistan and returned home to start negotiations.

The body is expected to

reach Kerala on Friday for the last rites. Some villagers plan to blockade the politicians and officials when they come to the village to condole with the family. "We won't let anyone in," said Prasad, leading a small band of angry youths.

Residents have called for a hartal tomorrow.

"Arrangements have been made to bring the body at the earliest to New Delhi and then to Kochi by Air India," chief minister Oommen Chandy told a hurriedly called press conference.

Indian hostage's body found

India - Afghanistan mh
 29/11
Taliban Slits BRO Driver's Neck, India Condemns Killing As Barbaric

New Delhi: Five days after his abduction by the Taliban, the body of Indian driver Maniappan Raman Kutty was found with his throat slit in southern Afghanistan on Wednesday, evoking strong condemnation by India which described the killing as "outrageous and barbaric".

The slaughtered body of 36-year-old Kutty, a driver with the Border Roads Organisation (BRO), was found dumped by the roadside in Delaram district of Nimroze province, governor of Khashrood Mohammed Hashim Noorzai was quoted as saying. "He has been slaughtered. His throat has been cut," he said. On Tuesday evening, the Taliban had called up a news agency in Kandahar to say that Kutty, who was abducted on Saturday, had been killed as the BRO had not complied with its demand to pull out of Afghanistan.

Condemning the killing, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said the act reflected the "cruel and inhuman character of the Taliban and the forces it represent." Observing that Kutty had "given his life as a soldier for peace", the Prime Minister said he was "deeply grieved and outraged" by the killing of Kutty, who had been working on the Zaranj-Delaram road project. "I condemn this cowardly killing and brutal murder of a brave Indian who was working in the cause of peace and development far from his home and country."

Meanwhile, the government on



Kutty's mother is inconsolable at their Kerala home on Wednesday



A picture of the Kutty family taken before he left on duty

Wednesday announced that Kutty's family would receive Rs 10 lakh as compensation and benefits like free education up to the secondary level for his two children. It also assured the bereaved family that no stone would be left unturned to ensure its livelihood and security.

Terming Kutty's death as "the ultimate sacrifice" for the cause of Indo-Afghan friendship, the external affairs ministry said the "Taliban and its backers must bear the responsibility for the consequences of this outrageous act". In a statement, the ministry said, "We earnestly hope the perpetrators will be brought to justice swiftly."

Family devastated

Chingoli (Kerala): The wife and aged parents of M R Kutty are in a state of shock after hearing of his death.

Kutty's uncle Krishnankutty said chief minister Oommen Chandy had confirmed the news of his killing to his family on Wednesday.

The family was waiting for Kutty to come home on a holiday on November 8. However, the BRO driver was instead sent to Afghanistan. Kutty is the only son of his parents and the sole breadwinner of the family.

Note pinned to body

New Delhi: A note written in English was found pinned to the body of M R Kutty, the Indian driver who was kidnapped and killed by the Taliban in Afghanistan.

"We found a piece of paper written in English pinned to the body. We can't read it now because it's in English," Mohammed Hashim Noorzai, district governor of Nimroze said, adding, "The interior minister has ordered us to transfer the body to the Indian consulate in Kandahar."

Worker's killing exposes India's vulnerability

India has plenty of hands wielding shovels in Afghanistan but no boots on the ground there. While sending troops — or walking away — is not an option, is President Hamid Karzai really in a position to provide security?

Siddharth Varadarajan

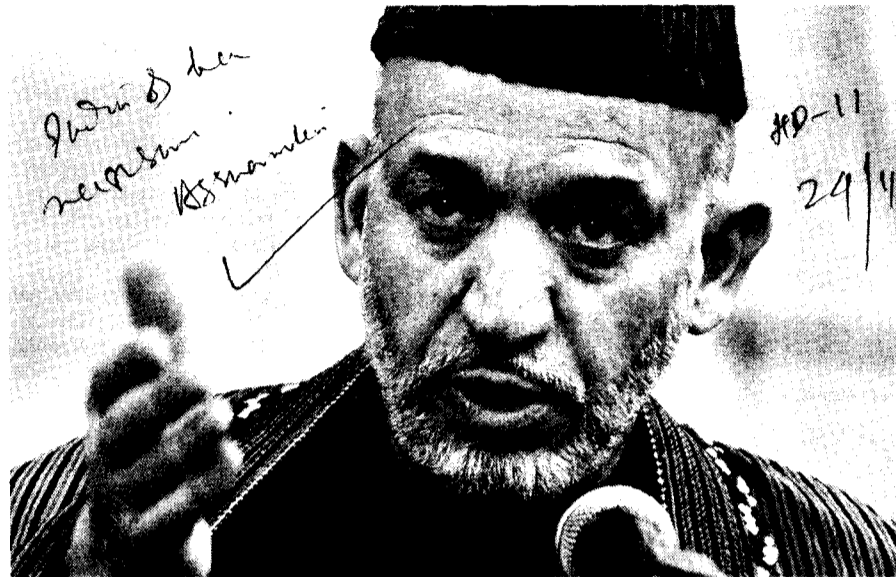
THE KIDNAPPING and brutal murder in Afghanistan of a Border Roads Organisation driver has exposed not just the mindless, criminal nature of the Taliban — which is well known — but also the peculiar vulnerability of India and Indians in a country that is still in the throes of conflict despite reacquiring the trappings of a State.

The Indian government has committed itself to both helping revive Afghanistan's physical infrastructure and also to developing a full-fledged political and strategic relationship with its government. The Indian policy is largely motivated by the desire to deny Pakistan the opportunity to regain the "strategic depth" it once had in Afghanistan. The road from Delaram to Zaranj that India is building will allow Kabul and New Delhi to trade with each other via the Iranian port of Chabahar rather than through Pakistan, which Islamabad in any case is loathe to allow. Certainly, the significance of the road and of the Indian presence in Afghanistan has not been lost on the Pakistani military and intelligence establishment, a section of which is still said to be working with the Taliban.

Today, India is one of the most visible and prominent political backers of President Hamid Karzai in the region. Earlier this year, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh became the first foreign head of government or VVIP to visit Kabul and actually spend a night in the city. On November 19, India announced that it was awarding the prestigious Indira Gandhi Peace Prize for 2005 to Mr. Karzai. These gestures are intended to convey the extent of New Delhi's commitment to the Afghan President.

"The assumption is that Mr. Karzai enjoys unquestioned legitimacy and authority inside Afghanistan and that there is nothing to lose and everything to gain from publicly and demonstrably linking India to him in this manner," says M.K. Bhadrakumar, a former Indian diplomat with extensive experience in the region. "But this is simply not the case."

The Afghan President's writ does not really extend to large parts of his country. The result, says Mr. Bhadrakumar, is that India has allowed itself to become identified too closely with a man whose authority is being contested. "Even for his own personal security, Karzai needs the American firm, Dyn-



Afghan President Hamid Karzai condemns the murder of an Indian Border Roads Organisation employee, at a press conference in Kabul on Tuesday. — PHOTO: AFP

corp," a former chief of the Research and Analysis Wing told *The Hindu*. "So how is he going to ensure the Indians working in some remote corner of Nimroz province are protected from the Taliban?"

Four years after the United States-led coalition invaded Afghanistan and overthrew the Taliban, the former ruling militia has managed to pull itself together again. One indication of their renewed ability to wage war is the casualty rate among U.S. soldiers. Of the 315 foreign military personnel who have died in Afghanistan since the time 'Operation Enduring Freedom' was launched, 120 of them — approximately 40 per cent of the total — were killed in this year alone. That's up from 58 in 2004, 57 in 2003, 68 in 2002 and 12 in 2001. As for civilian deaths from bombings and shootings, this year's death toll is already close to 1,500 — the highest annual total since the ending of major offensive operations by the U.S. military which also claimed a large number of civilian lives.

The irony is that the Taliban's increasing strength — as measured by their ability to inflict casualties on foreign troops — has proceeded more or less in tandem with President Hamid Karzai's ascent up the ladder of formal political legitimacy. From being

someone whom the Bush administration had hand-picked and installed in Kabul as *de facto* leader, Mr. Karzai last year oversaw the adoption of a new Constitution and went on to win a keenly contested presidential election. Elections to the Majlis have also now been held. The U.S., which is keen to draw down its active military presence, is focussing its efforts on training and equipping the Afghan army. However, none of this has helped to improve the security environment within the country.

Lately, there have been reports in the Pakistani press suggesting that once again Washington is looking at the possibility of cutting a deal with the Taliban, or at least getting a section of the former ruling militia to join forces with Mr. Karzai. These moves might also explain Washington's reluctance to make a bigger issue out of the fact that Taliban insurgents continue to cross the Pakistani border with ease.

For India, which has very real stakes in ensuring Afghanistan re-emerges as a peaceful state, the challenge is to remain committed to the rebuilding of the country without being sucked into the vortex of its often destructive politics. "Our aim from the start should have been to provide aid, training and scholarships, increase people-to-people

contact and take on projects, but without politically over-committing ourselves," says Mr. Bhadrakumar. India wants to be recognised publicly as a key player but it lacks the strategic or military muscle to back that up. In other words, being seen as close allies of Mr. Karzai makes Indians in Afghanistan a target; and in the absence of any security presence of its own, New Delhi is helpless in the face of this targeting.

In the run-up to Manmohan Singh's visit to Kabul in August, the Indian side had expressed some interest in increasing the level of cooperation on security matters. The Afghans were cool to the proposal, as were the Americans and Pakistanis. In any case, the fact that Washington insists all foreign forces in Afghanistan must function under the overall command of the U.S. Army effectively rules out the possibility of even a limited Indian security contingent being deployed to protect, say, Indian infrastructure projects. The small ITBP force stationed in Afghanistan protects only Indian diplomatic property and never leaves the compound. Indeed, so restricted is their mobility that the PM's special plane for the August visit brought gym and exercise equipment for them.

While there are disagreements within and outside government about how to structure New Delhi's relations with President Karzai, all agree that there can be no question of India walking away from its commitments. It is possible that the Taliban picked on a worker from the Delaram project precisely because it is so important strategically, because the road to Iran will eventually reduce Pakistan's leverage over Afghanistan. Or the choice of target may have been a coincidence, the aim simply being to tell India to stop "interfering" in Afghan affairs. Either way, it is in India's interest to stay the course. It is also in India's interest to work on allaying Pakistani fears about its Afghan policy. In pushing for Afghanistan's inclusion in SAARC and agreeing to open discussions on extending the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan pipeline to India, the Manmohan Singh government gas sought to create a framework in which New Delhi and Islamabad could cooperate with each other in the region rather than seeking to score "strategic" points over each other. The logic of these proposals must now be taken forward. It is only a genuinely South Asian approach that can lay the basis for Afghanistan's revival.

24 NOV 2005

THE HINDU

অপহৃতকে খুন করেছি, দাবি করল তালিবান



কন্দহর ও
নয়াদিল্লি, ২২
নভেম্বর: সত্ত্বত
প্রাণে বেঁচে মুক্তি
পাওয়া হল না
মণিয়াপল্লন রামন
কুট্রির।
দাবি না-মানায়

বিআরও-র অপহৃত কর্মী কুট্রিকে তারা মেরে ফেলেছে বলে জানিয়েছে তালিবান জঙ্গিরা। আজ সন্ধ্যার মধ্যে বিআরও সড়ক নির্মাণের কাজ বন্ধ না-করলে তাদের কর্মী কুট্রিকে মেরে ফেলা হবে বলে জঙ্গিরা হুমকি দিয়েছিল। তালিবানের কাউন্সিলের নির্দেশে আজ সন্ধ্যা ৬টায় কুট্রিকে গুলি করে মারা হয়েছে বলে সংবাদসংস্থা রয়টার্সকে তারা জানিয়েছে। জানানো হয়েছে সংবাদসংস্থা এএফপি-কেও।

তবে আফগান স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রক বা অন্য কোনও সূত্রে রাত পর্যন্ত এই খবরের সত্যতা সম্পর্কে মন্তব্য করা হয়নি। ভারত সরকারেরও বক্তব্য, খোঁজখবর নেওয়ার চেষ্টা চলছে। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর মিডিয়া উপদেষ্টা সঞ্জয় বাঘু রাতে বলেছেন, “কুট্রিকে খুন করা হয়েছে বলে সরকারি ভাবে জানতে পারিনি। আফগানিস্তানে আমাদের রাষ্ট্রদূত রাকেশ সুদ আফগান কর্তৃপক্ষের সঙ্গে কথা বলেছেন। তারাও নির্দিষ্ট করে বলতে পারেননি।”

আবার অন্য একটি সূত্রের খবর, মুক্তি পেয়ে কুট্রি রয়েছেন আফগান প্রশাসনের হেফাজতে। স্বভাবতই কুট্রির পরিণতি ঘিরে রাত পর্যন্ত সংশয় রয়েছে। সংবাদমাধ্যমে কুট্রিকে হত্যার খবর ছড়ানোর সঙ্গেই শোকের ছায়া নেমে আসে করলে চিন্তালি গ্যামে কুট্রির বাড়িতে। মুখ্যমন্ত্রী উশ্মান চাভি অবশ্য তাদের ফোন করে বলেন, খবরটা ঠিক নয়। তিনি দিল্লিতে খোঁজ নিচ্ছেন। কুট্রির পারিবারিক সূত্রেই এ কথা জানানো হয়েছে।

কিন্তু রয়টার্স জানাচ্ছে, কুট্রিকে মেরে ফেলা হয়েছে বলেই দাবি করেছে তালিবানের মুখপাত্র কারি মহম্মদ ইউসুফ। অজ্ঞাত স্থান থেকে স্যাটেলাইট ফোনে ইউসুফ বলেছে, “ভারতীয় সংস্থাটি কথা শোনেনি। জবাবও দেয়নি। তাই ভারতীয় কর্মীকে মেরে ফেলেছি।” কালাশনিকভের গুলিতে কুট্রির প্রাণ নেওয়া হয়েছে। কোথায় কুট্রির মৃতদেহ মিলবে, সেই ব্যাপারে সবিস্তার তথ্য পরে দেওয়া হবে বলেও জানিয়েছে মুখপাত্রটি।

দক্ষিণ আফগানিস্তানের নিমরোজ প্রদেশে গত শনিবার গাড়ি থেকে অপহরণ করা হয়েছিল কুট্রি-সহ চার জনকে। অন্য তিন জন আফগান। এক জন মুক্তি পেয়ে গিয়েছে। তালিবানি মুখপাত্রের বক্তব্য, কাউন্সিল বাকি দু'জনের সম্পর্কে সিদ্ধান্ত নেয়নি।

অপহরণের পরে ৪৮ ঘণ্টা সময় দিয়ে তালিবান জঙ্গিরা দাবি করেছিল, এর মধ্যে বিআরও-কে আফগানিস্তানের কাজ গুটিয়ে ফিরে যেতে হবে। না-হলে অপহৃত কুট্রিকে মেরে ফেলা হবে। পরে আজ সন্ধ্যা পর্যন্ত সময়সীমা বাড়ানো হয়েছিল। রয়টার্স সূত্রের খবর, দুপুরে দাবি পূরণের জন্য ফের হুমকি দেয় জঙ্গিরা। তার পরে সন্ধ্যায় কাজ শেষ করে ফেলার কথা জানায়।

এর পর নয়ের পাতায়

তালিবান প্রথম পাতার পর

দাবির সমর্থনে কোনও প্রমাণ অবশ্য দেয়নি তালিবান মুখপাত্র। আফগান স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রকের মুখপাত্র ইউসুফ স্তানিজাই বলেছেন, “এই মুহূর্তে আমাদের কাছে কোনও খবর নেই। জানার চেষ্টা করছি।” ভারতের সরকারি কর্তারা বলেছেন, “সত্যতা যাচাই করা যায়নি। আমরা খতিয়ে দেখছি।” কাবুলে ভারতীয় দূতাবাসের তরফেও জানানো হয়েছে, তালিবানি দাবি সম্পর্কে তাদের কাছে এখনও কোনও তথ্য নেই। আফগানিস্তানে রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জ বা আমেরিকার সেনার কাছেও কোনও খবর নেই।

এর আগে ২০০৩-এ মার্কিন অর্ধে চলা একটি প্রকল্পের দুই ভারতীয় কর্মী অপহৃত হয়েছিলেন আফগানিস্তানে। তিন সপ্তাহ পরে তাঁদের অক্ষতই মুক্তি দেয় তালিবান জঙ্গিরা। তবে এই বছরের সেপ্টেম্বরে সড়ক নির্মাণ প্রকল্পেরই এক ব্রিটিশ কর্মীকে অপহরণ করে খুন করে তারা।

সন্ধ্যায় তালিবানের দাবির আগে তাদের কবল থেকে মুক্তি পাওয়া আফগান কর্মীকে জেরা করে জানার চেষ্টা হচ্ছিল, কুট্রিকে কোথায় নিয়ে যাওয়া হয়ে থাকতে পারে। ভারতের তরফ থেকেও বিশেষ দল কাবুলে যোগাযোগ রাখছিল, প্রয়োজনে জঙ্গিদের সঙ্গে আলোচনা করতে আফগানিস্তানে প্রতিনিধিদল পাঠানোর কথাও ভাবা হচ্ছিল।

সত্ত্বত এ সবের আর কোনও প্রয়োজন থাকল না। কেরলের আলাপুঝা জেলায় এক সাধারণ ঘরে এক বৃদ্ধ, ক্যানসার-আক্রান্ত এক বৃদ্ধা, এক গৃহবধু এবং দু'টি শিশুর সেই জিজ্ঞাসাই শুধু রয়ে গেল— “ও (কুট্রি) তো কিছু করেনি!”

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GROUP TO MONITOR EFFORTS

PM push for Kutty's release

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Nov. 21. — The Prime Minister has directed that all efforts be made to seek the safe return of the Indian hostage in Afghanistan — which the government noted “with deep concern” — and strengthening of security for the remaining Indians in Afghanistan.

A high-level inter-ministerial group has also been set up to monitor the developments. The Cabinet secretary will head the group that consists of officials from the home and external affairs ministries and security agencies.

This is the third day since Mr Maniappan Raman Kutty, a driver with Border Roads Organisation, was kidnapped on the afternoon of 19 November, along with an Afghan driver and two other Afghan security guards. They were taken hostage while travelling from Gurguri to Minar in Nimruz province.

About 290 Indians are working in the \$84 million BRO project to construct a 219-km road from Delaram to Zaranj near the Iranian border. Later that evening, an unidentified caller told an international news agency that Taliban had carried out the kidnapping.

An external affairs ministry spokesperson said today that the Prime Minister was briefed about the

Parents, wife keep praying

CHINGOLI (Kerala), Nov. 21.

— The aged parents and the wife of the BRO driver from Kerala, Mr MR Kutty, kidnapped by Taliban in Afghanistan, are praying for his early release. Mr Maniappan R Kutty was kidnapped, along with three Afghans, yesterday when they were working on a highway project. Maniappan was planning to visit his parents and wife in this coastal village in Alapuzha district on 8 November when he was transferred by the BRO to Afghanistan. He was earlier posted at Meghalaya.

“Maniappan is our only son. He is the sole bread-winner of the family,” said his 70-year-old father, Ramankutty, a heart patient and his mother, Mani (60), who is recovering from cancer. Maniappan's wife Bindu is devastated after hearing about his abduction. The couple have two sons aged 8 and 3 years. The family came to know about the abduction first from TV reports. They were later intimidated by BRO officials from Delhi, Maniappan's uncle Mr Krishnankutty said. — PTI

kidnapping, after which he gave directions to ensure that “all efforts be made, in cooperation with the Afghan authorities, not only to seek the safe return of Mr Kutty, but also ensure the safety of all Indians engaged in projects in Afghanistan”.

THE STATESMAN

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ভারতীয় অপহৃত, সন্দেহ তালিবানকে

নয়াদিল্লি ও কাবুল, ২০ নভেম্বর: জীবিকার সন্ধানে বিদেশে গিয়ে ফের অপহৃত হলেন এক ভারতীয়। আফগানিস্তানে এই অপহরণের ঘটনায় উঠে আসছে তালিবান জঙ্গিদেরই নাম।

কন্দহরে কর্মরত ভারতের বর্ডার রোড অর্গানাইজেশন (বিআরও)-এর এক ভারতীয় ও তিন জন আফগান কর্মীকে রাতের অন্ধকারে গাড়ি থামিয়ে অপহরণ করেছে জঙ্গিরা। সন্দেহ, তারা তালিবান গোষ্ঠীভুক্ত।

দিল্লিতে বিদেশ মন্ত্রকের মুখপাত্র নভতেজ সারনা জানান, বিআরও-র ওই 'নিখোঁজ' কর্মীর নাম বি আর কুটি। তিনি ট্রাক চালক। ভারত সরকারের টাকায় কন্দহরে একটি সড়ক নির্মাণ প্রকল্পে যুক্ত ছিলেন তিনি। আজ সারনা বলেন, "আমাদের কাছে নির্দিষ্ট রিপোর্ট রয়েছে, ওই কর্মীকে তালিবান জঙ্গিরাই অপহরণ করেছে। জঙ্গিদের আবেদন জানাচ্ছি, অপহৃত ৪ জনকে বিনা শর্তে অবিলম্বে মুক্তি দিতে।" কাবুলের সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ রাখছে নয়াদিল্লি। সারনার কথায়, "আফগান সরকার জানিয়েছে, তারা যথাসাধ্য চেষ্টা করবে ওঁদের উদ্ধার করতে।"

আফগানিস্তান থেকে সংবাদসংস্থা অবশ্য জানাচ্ছে, নিখোঁজ ওই ভারতীয়ের নাম এম এস কুটি। তিনি বিআরও-র রোড ইঞ্জিনিয়ার। খুঁজে পাওয়া যাচ্ছে না আরও তিন আফগান কর্মীকে। আফগানিস্তানের দক্ষিণে কন্দহর থেকে পশ্চিমের হেরাট পর্যন্ত একটি জাতীয় সড়ক নির্মাণের প্রকল্পে কাজ করতেন তাঁরা।

কাল গভীর রাতে কুটি দক্ষিণ আফগানিস্তানের নিমরোজ প্রদেশের

খাশ রোড জেলার পশতা-ই-হাসান এলাকা দিয়ে গাড়িতে যাচ্ছিলেন। তিনি ছাড়াও সে সময় গাড়িতে ছিলেন তাঁর দুই আফগান দেহরক্ষী ও আফগান চালক। রাস্তাটি অত্যন্ত বিপজ্জনক। বিশেষত বিদেশিদের জন্য। কন্দহর থেকে হেরাটের ওই গোটা এলাকাই জঙ্গি উপক্রম ও তালিবানদের স্বর্গরাজ্য হিসাবে বিশেষ ভাবে চিহ্নিত। সেখানেই অন্ধকারে গাড়ি থামিয়ে

দুষ্কৃতীদের কাজও হতে পারে। অপরাধীদের সন্ধানে তদন্ত চালাচ্ছে পুলিশ ও সেনাবাহিনী। কাবুল থেকে ভারতীয় রাষ্ট্রদূত রাকেশ সুদ বলেছেন, "অপহরণকারীরা কোথায় লুকিয়ে আছে, এখনও জানা যায়নি।"

তবে, রয়টার্স ও এএফপি জানিয়েছে, অপহরণের পরে স্যাটেলাইট ফোনে জনৈক কোয়ারি মহম্মদ ইউসুফ নিজেকে তালিবান

করেও গল্প সাজায়। প্রমাণ করতে চায় তাদের শক্তি ফুরিয়ে যায়নি। তাই সত্যতা বিচার না করে এ ব্যাপারে নিশ্চিত হওয়া উচিত নয়।

সেই সুরে গলা মিলিয়ে আফগানিস্তানের স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী ইউসুফ স্তানেজাই বলেছেন, "আমাদের কাছে সত্যিই নির্দিষ্ট কোনও সূত্র নেই। তবে অপহরণের ধরন দেখে মনে হচ্ছে, তালিবান গোষ্ঠীই এর সঙ্গে যুক্ত। তদন্ত চলছে। আমরা অকাট্য প্রমাণের অপেক্ষায় রয়েছি। অপহৃতদের মুক্ত করতে আমাদের তরফ থেকে চেষ্টার কোনও ক্রটি থাকবে না।"

বিদেশে ভারতীয়দের অপহরণের সবচেয়ে বড় ঘটনাটি ঘটে গত বছর ইরাকে। সে বার তিন ট্রাকচালককে অপহরণ করে জঙ্গিরা। ভারত মধ্যস্থতায় নামে। শেষ পর্যন্ত মুক্তি পান টিলকরাজ-সুখদেব-অন্তর্মীরা। আর, অগস্টের পরে এ বার কন্দহরেই তালিবানদের বড়সড় হানা। অগস্টে তারা এক ব্রিটিশ ইঞ্জিনিয়ার ও এক আফগান দোভাষীকে অপহরণ করেছিল। কদিন পর তাঁদের দেহ পাওয়া যায়। সড়ক নির্মাণে বাধা দিতে তালিবানেরা এর আগে ২০০৩-এ ভারতের ইঞ্জিনিয়ার ও ট্রাক চালকদের অপহরণ করেছিল। ১৯ দিন পরে তাঁদের মুক্তি দেওয়া হয়।

তবে এ বার বেসরকারি সূত্রের তথ্যের উপরে ভর করে আগেভাগে তালিবান জঙ্গিদের দিকে অভিযোগের আঙুল তুলতে নারাজ আফগান প্রশাসন। তাই সন্দেহ প্রমাণে পরিণত না হওয়ায় এই অপহরণ নিয়ে ভারত-আফগানিস্তান এখনও ধোঁয়াশায়।



অপহরণের পরে কাবুলে ভারতীয় দূতাবাসে দিনভর তৎপরতা ১-এএফপি

অজ্ঞাতপরিচয় বন্দুকধারী জঙ্গিরা চার জনকে অপহরণ করে। স্থানীয় এক অফিসার বলেছেন, "ওঁদের সাবধান হওয়া উচিত ছিল। রাতে ওই অঞ্চলে কারও যাওয়াই নিরাপদ নয়।"

নিমরোজ প্রদেশের গভর্নর জানিয়েছেন, সন্দেহের তালিকায় প্রথমেই তালিবানদের নাম এলেও, তাঁরা এখনও নিশ্চিত নন। এটা স্থানীয়

জঙ্গিদের মুখপাত্র বলে পরিচয় দিয়ে বলে, "আমরাই ভারতীয় ইঞ্জিনিয়ার ও ও আফগান কর্মীকে অপহরণ করেছি। ওরা আমাদের হেফাজতেই রয়েছে।" তবে সে দাবিদাওয়ার উল্লেখ করেনি।

একই সঙ্গে অবশ্য আফগান সংবাদমাধ্যমের বক্তব্য, তালিবান জঙ্গিরা মাঝেমধ্যে এ ধরনের ভুয়ো দাবি করে থাকে। কাউকে অপহরণ না

গণতন্ত্র ফেরান, নেপালকে ফের বলল ভারত

অনিন্দ্য জানা • ঢাকা

১৩ নভেম্বর: আপনাকে কি কোনও প্রশ্ন করা যাবে?

“না। কারণ আমার কাছে সব প্রশ্নের জবাব নেই,” বললেন নভতেজ সারনা, ভারতীয় বিদেশ মন্ত্রকের মুখপাত্র।

স্থান: সোনারগাঁও হোটেলের মিডিয়া সেন্টার। সময়: আজ সকাল।

সারনা এসেছিলেন নেপালরাজ জ্ঞানেন্দ্রের সঙ্গে প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের দ্বিপাক্ষিক বৈঠকের ‘ব্রিফিং’ করতে। অত্যন্ত সংক্ষিপ্ত ‘ব্রিফিং’-এ সারনা যা বললেন, “প্রধানমন্ত্রী নেপালরাজকে ফের স্পষ্ট জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন, যত দ্রুত সম্ভব নেপালে বহুদলীয় গণতন্ত্র ফেরাতে হবে। নেপালরাজকে গণতন্ত্র ফেরানোর ব্যাপারে সুনির্দিষ্ট ব্যবস্থা নিতে হবে। এবং সেটা রাজনৈতিক দলগুলোকে বাদ দিয়ে সম্ভব নয়।”

প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ নিজেও ঢাকা ছাড়ার আগে আজ বিকালের সাংবাদিক সম্মেলনে বলে গেলেন, নেপালরাজ তাঁকে প্রতিশ্রুতি দিয়েছেন যে, নেপালে গণতন্ত্র ফিরিয়ে আনার জন্য তিনি যথেষ্ট যত্ন নিয়ে একটি ‘রোডম্যাপ’ তৈরি করছেন। সে ক্ষেত্রেও সমস্ত রাজনৈতিক দলকে সঙ্গে নিয়ে যা করণীয়, তা করা হবে।

কয়েক ঘণ্টা আগে বিদেশ মন্ত্রকের মুখপাত্রও বলেছিলেন, নেপালরাজ ভারতের প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে জানিয়েছেন, তিনি নেপালের বহুদলীয় গণতন্ত্রের প্রতি এখনও আগের মতোই দায়বদ্ধ। এবং সেটা যে নেপালের রাজনৈতিক দলগুলিকে বাদ দিয়ে সম্ভব নয়, তা-ও তিনি জানেন। সারনার কথায়, “নেপালরাজ ভারতের প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে বলেছেন, নেপালের রাজনৈতিক দলগুলিকে সঙ্গে নিয়েই যত দ্রুত সম্ভব তিনি দেশে গণতন্ত্র পুনরুদ্ধার করার জন্য তৈরি।”

ভারতীয় বিদেশ মন্ত্রকের মুখপাত্র আরও বলছেন, “দুই নেতাই ভারত ও নেপালের ঐতিহ্যগত সুসম্পর্ক রক্ষা করার গুরুত্ব নিয়ে একমত হয়েছেন।”

প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সাংবাদিক সম্মেলনে প্রশ্ন উঠেছিল অধুনা তাঁর বলা বহুচর্চিত ‘ফেইল্ড স্টেট’ নিয়েও। দু’দিন আগে নয়াদিল্লিতে বলা মনমোহনের সেই কথারই জবাব নেপালনরেশ দিয়েছিলেন গত কাল সার্ক সম্মেলনের উদ্বোধনী মঞ্চ থেকে।

আজ প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে সরাসরি সে বিষয়ে প্রশ্ন করা হলে তিনি বললেন, “আমি কোনও বিশেষ দেশের কথা বলিনি। আমি শুধু আমাদের পড়শি দেশের কাছ থেকে নিরাপত্তাহীনতার প্রশঙ্কটির প্রতি দৃষ্টি আকর্ষণ করতে চেয়েছিলাম।”

কিন্তু এ সব একান্তই ‘কুটনীতির ভাষা’। নেপালরাজের কালকের বক্তৃতা নিয়ে কোনও কথা উঠেছিল কি না, সে প্রশ্নের জবাব দিতে চাননি সারনা। তিনি শুধু জানিয়ে দেন, মনমোহন-জ্ঞানেন্দ্র সব মিলিয়ে প্রায় ৪০ মিনিট বৈঠক হয়েছে।

মনমোহনের তীব্র অনিচ্ছা সত্ত্বেও যে নেপালরাজের সঙ্গে তাঁর দ্বিপাক্ষিক বৈঠক হল আজ সকালে, তার মূল কারণ অবশ্যই সার্ক শীর্ষ সম্মেলনের মঞ্চ থেকে দক্ষিণ-পূর্ব এশিয়ায় কোনও ভুল বার্তা না-পৌঁছে দেওয়া। জাকার্তা সফরেই গত বছর মনমোহন নেপালরাজকে যত দ্রুত সম্ভব তাঁর দেশে গণতন্ত্র ফিরিয়ে আনার কথা বলেছিলেন। নেপালরাজ তখন যা বলেছিলেন, আজও সেই একই কথা বলেছেন। বস্তুত, জাকার্তার বৈঠকের পরেও জ্ঞানেন্দ্র গণতন্ত্র ফিরিয়ে আনায় বিশেষ উদ্যোগী নয় দেখেই প্রাথমিক ভাবে মনমোহন ঢাকা সফরে তাঁর সঙ্গে দ্বিপাক্ষিক বৈঠকে বসতেই অনিচ্ছা প্রকাশ করেন। সেই মতো তাঁর কর্মসূচি থেকে তড়িঘড়ি নেপালরাজের সঙ্গে দ্বিপাক্ষিক বৈঠকটি বাদ দেওয়া হয়।

উদ্বোধনী অনুষ্ঠানে গত কাল জ্ঞানেন্দ্রর পাশে-বসা মনমোহনের বিরক্তি, মনমোহন বা ভারতের নাম না-করেও নিজের বক্তৃতায় নেপালরাজের তীব্র কটাক্ষ পরিস্থিতি আরও যোরালো করে। অন্য দিকে, নেপাল-শিবির থেকেও ভারতীয় শিবিরকে বার বার আবেদন জানানো হয় দ্বিপাক্ষিক বৈঠকের জন্য। কুটনীতি এবং সার্কের সব চেয়ে বড় দেশ হওয়ার স্বার্থে ভারতও কাল সন্ধ্যায় প্রস্তাবটি মেনে নেয়। শেষ পর্যন্ত আজ সকালে ঢাকা শেরাটন হোটেলে দ্বিপাক্ষিক বৈঠক হয়। কিন্তু তার নির্যাস যে কী, বিদেশ মন্ত্রকের মুখপাত্রের কথাতেই স্পষ্ট।

ঢাকায় এই দ্বিপাক্ষিক বৈঠকোত্তর সময়ে রাজা জ্ঞানেন্দ্র দ্রুত নেপালে বহুদলীয় গণতন্ত্র না-ফেরালে ভারত-নেপাল সম্পর্ক কোন দিকে যাবে?

উত্তর না-দিয়েও উত্তর দিয়ে দিয়েছেন ভারতীয় বিদেশ মন্ত্রকের যুগ্মসচিব তথা মুখপাত্র নভতেজ সারনা, “আমার কাছে সব প্রশ্নের জবাব নেই!”

14 NOV 2005

Stay the course on Nepal

These are testing times for Indian policy towards Nepal. King Gyanendra is trying to usher in a managed democracy through sham elections. The Americans are beginning to express doubts about the ability of the political parties to bring about change. China is stepping in with military assistance to support the monarchy. And India has inexplicably failed to respond to Chinese aggressiveness.

When the external affairs minister, K. Natwar Singh, stopped at Kathmandu airport *en route* to Bhutan, the Nepalese foreign minister, Ramesh Nath Pandey, had an unscheduled meeting with him. Pandey wanted India to support the king as all the promises made about democracy in Jakarta, he claimed, had been fulfilled — political prisoners had been released, municipal elections announced and the general election advanced from 2008 to 2007. What more did India want? Natwar Singh is believed to have told him that the restoration of multi-party democracy was the minimum New Delhi expected before contemplating any change in ties.

The king's claims about democratic changes fell through soon enough when he clamped down on the media through a draconian ordinance. His army even stormed into the offices of a radio station and confiscated broadcasting equipment without any judicial authorization.

Yet, the world may be persuaded to think that the Nepalese monarch is still useful. The US ambassador to Kathmandu, James F. Moriarty, speaking to journalists in Butwal on October 26, spelled out US policy towards Nepal quite clearly: prevent a Maoist takeover and restore democracy. However, he then went on to argue for the "unity of the legitimate political forces — the political parties and the monarchy". His describing the monarchy as a "legitimate" political force suggests which way the wind might blow.

The US under-secretary of state, Nicholas Burns, is believed to have given a similar spiel to India during his recent visit — Maoists are the primary enemy; the political parties lack credibility and are unable to get people on the streets; and even though the king is not sincere about democracy, under the circumstances the US may be compelled to support him.

TWENTY-TWENTY BHARAT BHUSHAN



Not a happy alliance

With these signals from the US, Chinese military overtures to Kathmandu have further muddied waters for Indian policy-makers. The Royal Nepal Army chief, General Pyar Jung Thapa, visited China last fortnight and Beijing has promised military assistance to the tune of Rs 50 crore as well as better military cooperation.

What is going on in the Indian policy making establishment at a time like this? There has been no strategic reaction from India to Chinese aggressiveness in Nepal. While Beijing's military assistance to Nepal is not substantial, it is nonetheless indicative of the emergent Chinese policy. In 1989, Rajiv Gandhi had reacted swiftly to Nepal sourcing arms from China. He forced Beijing to go back to the formulation that Nepal was part of India's area of influence. However, this time around, New Delhi has not shown any public displeasure, leave alone threatening any action.

That China is supporting the monarch and the US is getting halfway there, should be sufficient reason for India to reinforce its support for the political parties. If it supports the king now, he will always think that the support came under Chinese and US pressure and will never be a reliable friend. Therefore, India must

forcefully express its displeasure at what the Chinese are doing. It must counter the emerging US line and insist that the king is not a legitimate political force in Nepal.

It is important that the Indian policy of supporting the restoration of democracy in Nepal does not come unstuck now. The political parties in Nepal look to India for inspiration. They are not pro-China, including a majority of the communists. The king, on the other hand, only wants to blackmail India into supporting him. Most importantly, India has to come to grips with the reality that the crisis in Nepal will not be solved by the US or by China. Ultimately, New Delhi will have to help resolve it.

A cogent and consistent policy that safeguards India's interests must be based on the recognition of the basic fact that its only friends in the Himalayan kingdom are the people. The ordinary Nepalese both promote and stand to gain from India's economic prosperity. It is these people that we ought to be supporting.

The second home truth that Indian policy-makers ought to realize is that today the people of Nepal want a revolutionary change in their political, social and cultural lives. The pursuit of change in Nepal can be delay-

ed by both internal and external circumstances. But it cannot be stopped. There is no way the people of Nepal would agree to stay under an absolutist monarchy in the 21st century.

India's only option is to support the democratic revolution in Nepal. Only then can it be on the winning side. Once this is recognized, all arguments about supporting a "brother army" or getting into bed with a dictator to safeguard India's interests become irrelevant. India should, therefore, constantly reiterate to the king that unless political power, both executive and legislative, is handed over to the political parties, there would be no question of any arms supplies or normalcy in the relationship.

Manmohan Singh is going to Dhaka for the Saarc summit in November. If King Gyanendra turns up there, the prime minister should not grant him an audience. If, however, it is difficult to refuse such a meeting, the encounter should not result in letting the Nepalese people down. Manmohan Singh cannot afford to do a Jakarta twice.

India's advice to the king should be that New Delhi is not at all convinced of his sincerity about restoring democracy in Nepal. Nor should the prime minister be fooled by the king's cunning in calling for municipal elections and advancing the general elections. He wants nothing more than to extend his illegitimate rule.

It is wrong to say that the Nepalese political parties have not been able to mobilize people against the king. In Kathmandu, Nepalganj, Birganj, Biratnagar and Okhaldunga, large public meetings in support of democracy have been held. The size of these meetings worries the king. The fact is that not only the civil society but also the Nepalese media — a result of 12 years of democracy, does not support the regression of the king. The fact is that the internal political mobilization has been substantial and is expected to move into a high gear once the Hindu festival season of Diwali and Chhat is over. It is the external pressure that would have to match it.

It is India's turn to repay its debt to the Nepalese people who are friends of India, who work in millions for low wages in India, who fight India's wars and who today, aspire to live with democratic rights. For their sake, New Delhi must stay the course.

PM pledge on Nepal

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Oct. 26: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has told a team of Left leaders from Nepal that resumption of military aid to the Royal Nepal Army will be considered only after evidence that steps were being taken to restore democracy in the Himalayan kingdom, a member of the delegation said.

This comes a day after the Nepal army chief returned to Kathmandu from a week-long visit to China yesterday and said Beijing had pledged military assistance in its war against the Maoists, a development that the Indian military establishment has noted with some concern.

The team from the Communist Party of Nepal (United

Marxist Leninist), led by its general secretary and former deputy Prime Minister, Madhav Kumar Nepal, was here chiefly to convince the Indian establishment that it must abandon its conventional policy of supporting both the monarchy and the political parties in Nepal.

"We have told the Indian Prime Minister, the defence minister, the home minister and the foreign minister that democracy must take precedence over everything, given the situation in Nepal. This monarchy must be subject to democracy. We are very satisfied with the hearing we were given," Rajan Bhattarai, a member of the CPN (UML)'s international affairs department, said.

Sources in the Indian military establishment were still

analysing the visit of the Nepal army chief, General Pyar Jung Thapa, who also enjoys honorary status as Indian army chief, to Beijing at the invitation of the Chinese People's Liberation Army.

Indian military sources said Kathmandu was scouring world markets to reinforce its army whose stockpile of ammunition is running out of bullets for India-supplied INSAS rifles among other firepower.

They noted that the Nepal army chief had described China as a friend after the visit and that Beijing had committed — according to the claim of the Nepalese military — funds of Nepali Rs 75 million (about Indian Rs 45 million).

Thapa said this amount would be used to strengthen the army.

THE TELEGRAPH

27 OCT 2005

Natwar in Nepal surprise meet

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BHARAT BHUSHAN

New Delhi, Oct. 17: External affairs minister K. Natwar Singh had an unscheduled informal meeting with Nepal's foreign minister Rameshnath Pande in the VIP lounge of Tribhuvan International Airport today.

The curious meeting took place while Natwar Singh was on his way to Thimpu.

Natwar Singh's meeting with his Nepalese counterpart comes at a time when the seven-party alliance of Nepal has decided to boycott the election call given by King Gyanendra.

The king, who usurped all executive powers in the Himalayan kingdom this February, now wants to impose a "managed democracy" in Nepal on the lines of Pakistan.

It is at this time that Natwar Singh has chosen to meet the king's representative.

Natwar Singh's flight, which left Delhi at 11.30 am, had a half-an-hour scheduled transit stop at Kathmandu. Indian ambassador to Nepal Shivshankar Mukherjee had

been informed that the minister would be passing through.

It is not known whether it was Mukherjee who set up the meeting with the Nepalese foreign minister or whether Kathmandu sought it. South Block sources claimed that the meeting was not planned.

What is clear, however, is that Kathmandu did not want the meeting to remain secret, even if India might have wanted that.

Pande came to meet Singh with the official Nepal TV in tow. The hopes of a secret con-fabulation, if any, evaporated while the internationally marginalised regime in Kathmandu got the publicity it desired.

It is not known what Natwar Singh wanted from such a meeting.

Earlier, he had earned national opprobrium when, through a one-to-one meeting with King Gyanendra in Jakarta, he tried to sew up a deal on re-suming non-lethal supplies to the Nepal army. It was the intervention of the Left parties that had saved the day for the UPA then.

Nepal Opp leaders invited

Statesman News Service

KATHMANDU, Sept. 30. — During the Quit India movement, Nepal's pro-democracy leaders had fought alongside Indian freedom fighters against the British colonial rulers. Now it's India's turn to discharge the debt of gratitude by supporting Nepal's movement for the restoration of democracy.

A team of seven Indian politicians, led by CPI-M MP and politburo member Mr Sitaram Yechuri, wind-

ed up its three-day fact-finding trip to Kathmandu today by inviting Nepal's Opposition leaders to India to carry the movement forward. "Multi-party democracy and constitutional monarchy are the twin pillars of Nepal," Mr Yechuri said. "The erosion of any of them will erode the process of modernisation of society."

The Indian team, which returned to New Delhi in the afternoon after a three-day trip, would present its report to the Nepal

Democracy Solidarity Committee, a forum of 14 major Indian parties formed in February after King Gyanendra seized power. It would also apprise Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh of the situation. According to Mr D Raja of the CPI, who was part of the seven-member team, they found King Gyanendra getting more and more isolated. "The Opposition parties are going to the grassroots to give their movement a momentum and the issue

has also been taken up by human rights activists," Mr Raja said. The Indian leaders are also going to apprise the Indian authorities of the massive migration of Nepalis across the border into India.

The Nepal Democracy Solidarity Committee will hold a national convention in support of the pro-democracy movement. It will also keep up the pressure on the Indian government not to allow any further assistance to the Royal Nepalese Army.

*Quin d
the newspaper
HD-2
11/10
to be reported*

Indian delegation tells Nepal to bring 'decisive' pressure on King

YUBARAJ GHIMIRE

KATHMANDU, SEPT 30

JEERED and booed on their arrival two days ago, a 7-member Indian delegation on Friday said its commitment and moral support to the movement for the restoration of democracy in Nepal was 'total', but wanted agitating parties here to go for a decisive action.

"We have come here to extend our moral support and solidarity to the cause of democracy; this can not be called interference in Nepal's internal affairs," the delegation led by CPI(M) politburo member Sitaram Yechury told newsmen before they left for Delhi.

"It was the Vishwa Hindu Parishad supremo Ashok Singhal who met the King immediately after the February 1 takeover, and pledged to secure the support of Hindus in India for the King's move. We are here for a much larger

cause—democracy—which the people of this country have to get back," said Yechury, a message that every one including veteran socialist leader Surendra Mohan, D Raja (CPI), Chandra Shekhar Sahu (Congress), DP Tripathi (NCP) and Dr Sunilam (Samajvadi party) endorsed.

Yechury and the group faced a black flag demonstration on arrival just outside the airport on Wednesday, which has very likely contributed to their assessment that the "King can not be trusted at all". The delegation said it would submit a report to the Man Mohan Singh government to review its support to the King, a member of the delegation said. However, the delegation felt that while India should not resume arms supply to the Royal Nepal Army unless the king restored the country to democracy, it stopped short of suggesting that India should also break diplomatic ties with Nepal.

King's men show black flags to Yechury team

Statesman News Service

KATHMANDU, Sept. 28. — A seven-member team of Indian politicians led by CPI-M Politburo member Mr Sitaram Yechuri was pelted with stones by supporters of King Gyanendra and shown black flags at the Tribhuvan International Airport this afternoon when they arrived on a three-day visit to express solidarity with the pro-democracy movement started by a coalition of seven Nepali parties since the King took power by force in February. No one was hurt, though.

"It was an orchestrated attack," Mr Yechuri said. "We were prepared for protests because being from a democratic country, we believe in the right to hold protests but this was different." "What do you do in a country where the government itself orchestrates stone-pelting attacks," asked Mr Sagar Shumshere Jung Bahadur Rana, in charge of foreign affairs at the Nepali Congress (Democratic) party of the deposed prime minister, Mr Sher Bahadur Deuba.

The Indian delegation also includes Mr D Raja of the CPI, Mr DP Tripathy of the Nationalist Congress Party, Mr Chandra Shekhar Sahu of CPI, Mr Surendra Mohan and Ms Manju Mohan of the Janta Dal S and Dr Sunilam of the



A Nepalese policewoman attempts to restrain a female activist taking part in a pro-King Rally outside Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu on Wednesday. — AFP

Samajwadi Party. They were accompanied by Mr Sunil Barua of the South Asia Foundation.

The Indian leaders will be meeting Opposition leader Mr Girija Prasad Koirala for a short time in the evening, followed by a prolonged one at his residence on Thursday morning. On Friday, they will meet Mr Deuba's wife Dr Arju Deuba and the wife of former minister Mr Prakash Man Singh. Both Mr Singh and Mr Deuba have been jailed by the current government on a charges of corruption. The delegation is likely to try visit Dr Deuba in prison on Friday. "The objective of our visit is to strengthen democracy

everywhere in the world, including Nepal," Mr Yechuri said. "It is up to the Nepalese to decide what kind of political structure they want."

The visit has generated intense heat with the government media carrying out a propaganda against the visitors, calling it an interference with

Nepal's internal matters. The government is also calling it an attempt by India to oust monarchy in Nepal. The government is especially wary of the Left parties since reports surfaced about meetings between CPI-M leader Mr Prakash Karat and Nepali Maoist leader DR Baburam Bhattarai.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2005

Restoring a historical bond

It was unfortunate that no Indian Prime Minister could visit Afghanistan for the past 29 years although the two countries share a close relationship extending over centuries. From the early 1980s to the mid-1990s the situation in and around Kabul was too dangerous for such a visit. New Delhi was shut out of Afghan affairs after the Taliban assumed power in 1996. The situation has turned around completely since the theocratic regime was ousted in 2001. Diplomatic relations have been fully restored and India is playing a major role in the reconstruction of the war-torn country. Given this wider context, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit earlier this week was significant. The potential for constructive interaction is enormous; trade and investment can increase exponentially and Afghanistan can provide a transit route for oil and gas pipelines from Central Asia and the Caspian Sea region. That this landlocked country can be the much-needed link between South Asia and the petroleum-rich countries beyond the Oxus has been recognised in the proposal for its inclusion in South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Pakistan has accepted this idea in principle but has made its implementation contingent on the Kashmir issue being resolved. But the point is that the interlinking of the three countries through lucrative commerce can only enhance the prospects for the resolution of contentious issues. However, Islamabad has refused to buy into this thesis until now.

Against this background, New Delhi's attempt to play a role in the rebuilding of Afghanistan's security forces appears somewhat problematical. It has been clarified that India is interested only in giving a helping hand to the police and not the military. But any cooperation between the two countries in matters of security would have further aroused the suspicion of their mutual neighbour. Pakistan believes, with no reasonable basis, that any improvement in India's relations with Afghanistan is against its interests. Entanglement in Kabul's security concerns could cause complications, given its belief that Islamabad still extends some support to the remnants of the Taliban. The composite dialogue between India and Pakistan is so delicately poised that measures likely to disrupt the process should be avoided. That the proposal has been set aside because New Delhi did not want its advisors to work under the "lead country" framework appears a blessing in disguise. In other respects, the policy towards Afghanistan has been fashioned quite wisely. Instead of imposing projects of its own choosing, the Manmohan Singh Government has let President Hamid Karzai and his men identify the areas in which they require assistance. Over the past four years a total of \$ 515 million in aid has been provided for projects in healthcare, education, road construction, and telecommunications. India had historically been the destination of choice for Afghans seeking medical treatment and higher education. Those traditional ties have now been fully restored.

India & this neighbour

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Islamabad

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জঙ্গি কার্যকলাপে মদত বন্ধ করার দাবিতে দুই প্রতিবেশীর কাছেই সরব ভারত

মেয়ের বিয়ের অনুষ্ঠান দেখিয়েই ফের দাউদকে ফেরত চাইল দিল্লি

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২৯ আগস্ট: একটা বিয়ের দিকে প্রথমে নজর ছিল গোয়েন্দাদের। শেষ পর্যন্ত মেয়ের বিয়ের প্রসঙ্গ টেনেই দাউদ ইব্রাহিমকে তাদের হাতে তুলে দেওয়ার জন্য ফের পাকিস্তানের কাছে দাবি জানাল ভারত।

দিল্লির বস্তাবা, পাক ক্রিকেট তারকা জাভেদ মিয়াঁদাদের ছেলের সঙ্গে দাউদ-কন্যার বিয়ের পরে করাচিতে তার অনুষ্ঠান ও জাঁকজমকের মধ্যে দিয়ে এটা স্পষ্ট, পাকিস্তানে এই মাফিয়া ডলের উপস্থিতি এখনও রয়েছে। দাউদকে তাদের হাতে তুলে দেওয়ার দাবি জানাতে গিয়ে এই যুক্তিকেই ভারত তুলে ধরেছে বলে সরকারি সূত্রের খবর।

ভারত-পাকিস্তানের সরাষ্ট্রসচিব পর্যায়ের তৃতীয় দফার বৈঠকের প্রথম দিনেই আজ দাউদ সম্পর্কে যাবতীয় তথ্য পাক কর্তৃপক্ষের হাতে তুলে দিয়েছে ভারত। করাচি-সহ পাকিস্তানের একাধিক শহরে দাউদের গোপন ডেরা, গতিবিধি, ব্যবসা এবং সে দেশে তার অপরাধ চক্রের “নেটওয়ার্ক” সবই রয়েছে সেই তালিকায়। ছোট্টা শাকিল, মৌলানা মাসুদ আজহার-সহ পাকিস্তানের আশ্রয়ে থাকা আরও ৩০ জন অপরাধী সম্পর্কে নথিপত্র পেশ করে তাদেরও ভারতের হাতে তুলে দেওয়ার আর্জি জানানো হয়েছে। পাকিস্তানও তাদের তরফ থেকে ৩৭ জনের তালিকা দিয়েছে ভারতকে।

সরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রক সূত্রের খবর, অন্যান্য বিষয়ের সঙ্গেই দু’দিনের এই বৈঠকে অন্যতম গুরুত্ব পাচ্ছে বন্দি প্রত্যাগণ এবং মৎসজীবীদের সমস্যা। কারণ, দু’দেশের জেলে বন্দিদের প্রত্যাগণের মাধ্যমে মৈত্রী আরও প্রসারিত করা সম্ভব বলে দু’পক্ষই একমত। সর্বজিৎ সিংহের প্রক্ষেপে বিষয়টি আরও প্রাসঙ্গিক হয়ে উঠেছে। ইসলামাবাদ আজই যোগা করেচ্ছে, আগামী কাল সর্বাঙ্গিতের সঙ্গে ভারতের কূটনীতিকেরা দেখা করতেন্দে পারবেন।

দু’দেশের সরাষ্ট্র সচিব পর্যায়ের এগে আগের বৈঠক হয়েছিল গত বছর অগস্টে। ইসলামাবাদে। দিল্লির অভিজাত মৌর্য শেরটিন হোটেলের আজ তৃতীয় দফার বৈঠক শুরু আগের কেশরী সরাষ্ট্রসচিব ডি কে দুগ্গল বলেন, গত বছর জানুয়ারিতে প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ এবং পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফের যৌথ বিবৃতির পরিশ্রমিক্তেই দ্বিপাক্ষিক আলোচনা চলবে। গুই বিবৃতিতে স্পষ্টই বলা হয়েছিল, ভারত সরাষ্ট্রসচিব কার্যকলাপের জন্য পাকিস্তানের মাটি ব্যবহার করতে দেওয়া হবে না। আত্মবর্ধক ব্যবস্থার মাধ্যমে মৈত্রী আরও মজবুত করার পথেও সন্ত্রাসবাদ কাঁটা হয়ে দাঁড়াবে না।

দুগ্গলের কথায়, “আমরা যখন বলি ওখানে (পাকিস্তানের মাটিতে) জঙ্গি শিবির থাকবে না, বা জ্বাল ভারতীয় মুদ্রা নিয়ন্ত্রণের মাধ্যমে পেরিয়ে চুকবে না, তখন নিশ্চয়ই তা হওয়া উচিত নয়। আবার যখন বলি যে সব আন্তর্জাতিক অপরাধী ভারত বিরোধী সন্ত্রাসবাদী কার্যকলাপ চালাচ্ছে, তাদের শাস্তি হওয়া উচিত, তখন অবশ্যই তা হওয়া উচিত।”

পাক সরাষ্ট্রসচিব সৈয়দ কামাল শাহ অবশ্য দাউদ প্রসঙ্গে কোনও কথা বলেননি। তিনি শুধু বলেন, সন্ত্রাসবাদ ও মাদক পাচারের মতো গুরুত্বপূর্ণ বিষয়ে আলোচনা হবে। সেই সঙ্গে দু’দেশের বন্দিদের যত শীঘ্র সম্ভব প্রত্যাগণের চেষ্টা হবে।

দু’দেশের এই বিষয়টিকে ঘিরে দু’দেশেই আশা-আকাঙ্ক্ষা দানা বাঁধছে। আর ইসলামাবাদে পাক বিশেষ মন্ত্রক মুখপাত্র নঈম খান বলেছেন, “দাউদ পাকিস্তানে নেই।”

কেশরী সরাষ্ট্র প্রতিমন্ত্রী শ্রীপ্রকাশ জয়সওয়াল বলেন, দাউদকে ভারতের হাতে তুলে দেওয়ার জন্য আমরা জোরালো দাবি জানাচ্ছি। কিন্তু সেটাই একমাত্র বিষয় নয়। আরও আনুসঙ্গিক প্রসঙ্গ রয়েছে। চলতি বৈঠকে যে হেতু সরাষ্ট্রসচিব পর্যায়ের, তাই অভ্যন্তরীণ নিরাপত্তা সংক্রান্ত বিষয়গুলিই গ্রাধান্য পাচ্ছে।

জীবন সিংহ-পারেশ বরয়ার প্রক্ষে দ্রুত সিদ্ধান্ত নিতে চাপ ঢাকাকে

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২৯ আগস্ট: ইসলামাবাদের কাছে যেমন দাউদ ইব্রাহিম ও তার শাগরুদেরা, ঢাকার কাছে তেমন পরেশ বরযা ও জীবন সিংহ। মাফিয়া ডন থেকে জঙ্গি নেতাদের দুই প্রতিবেশী দেশ থেকে তাদের হাতে তুলে দেওয়ার দাবিতে দিল্লি একই রকম সরব।

পারেশ বরযা ও জীবন সিংহকে ফেরত চাওয়ার প্রসঙ্গটি দীর্ঘ দিন ধরেই খুলে রয়েছে। ভারত চাইছে, ঢাকায় সার্ক সম্মেলনের আগে এই ব্যাপারে ইতিবাচক সিদ্ধান্ত নিক বাংলাদেশ। এই পরিস্থিতিতে আজ সংসদ ভবনে কেশরী সরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ পাটিলের সঙ্গে বাংলাদেশের হাই কমিশনার লিয়াকত আলি চৌধুরির বৈঠক তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ বলেই মনে করা হচ্ছে।

পাটিল যখন আজ বাংলাদেশ হাই কমিশনারের সঙ্গে কথা বলেছেন, তখন নর্ধ রকে র, কেশরী গয়েলা বিভাগ, বি এস এফ, মনিপুরের এক পুলিশ-কর্তা এবং পাকিস্তানের এক উচ্চপদস্থ গোয়েন্দা-কর্তার সঙ্গে বাংলাদেশ ও দুটানের আশ্রয়ে থাকা উত্তর-পূর্বের জঙ্গিদের প্রসঙ্গে বৈঠক সারেন সরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রকের যুগ্ম সচিব এইচ এস ব্রহ্ম।

জীবন সিংহ-পারেশ বরযারা যে ভাবে বাংলাদেশ থেকে পশ্চিমবঙ্গ এবং

কর্নাটকের বেড়া দেওয়া যে জরুরি, সেই বিষয়েও সওয়াল করে আসেন নটবর। সেই সফরের সময় সীমান্ত দিয়ে জাল নোট চুকে পড়ার প্রসঙ্গও উঠেছিল। এবং এই প্রক্ষেও ঢাকা কোনও নির্দিষ্ট আশ্রয় দেয়নি সে বার।

সরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রক সূত্রের খবর, নর্ধ রকে আজকের বৈঠকের আলোচনার বিষয়বস্তু ছিল বাংলাদেশ ও দুটানে লুকিয়ে থাকা উত্তর-পূর্বের জঙ্গিদের কার্যকলাপ। মন্ত্রকের এক অফিসার বলেন, দুটান-বাংলাদেশ-কলকাতা-শিলিগুড়ি নিয়ে জঙ্গিদের একটা ‘নেটওয়ার্ক’ গড়ে উঠেছে। সম্ভবত দুটানে তাড়া খাওয়ার পরে আলফা এবং কে এল ও জঙ্গিরা বাংলাদেশে পালিয়ে গিয়ে আশ্রয় নিয়েছে বলে খবর। ফলে তাদের মধ্যে বেশ কিছু জঙ্গি সম্ভবত কলকাতা-শিলিগুড়ি হয়ে ফের দুটানে গিয়ে আশ্রয় নিয়েছে বলে খবর।

এখন পরিস্থিতি এমনই যে, বাংলাদেশ ও দুটান, দু’টি দেশের সঙ্গেই ভারতীয় সীমান্তে নজরদারি আরও বাড়াতে হবে। কারণ, কোনও একটি জায়গায় ক্রটি হলে এই ‘নেটওয়ার্ক’ ভাঙা সম্ভব নয়। সরাষ্ট্র সূত্রেই জানা গিয়েছে, সেক্টরের মাসে হায়দরাবাদে সংশ্লিষ্ট রাজগুলির সরাষ্ট্রসচিবদের সঙ্গে এ বিষয়ে সবিজ্ঞার আলোচনা হবে।

30 AUG 2007 ANANDGAZAR DAY

'Ties with Afghanistan will improve if Pakistan grants transit rights'

India not in the business of thrusting cooperation on any unwilling country, says Manmohan

10-12-80
G. S. Singh
Manmohan

Siddharth Varadarajan

KABUL: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has acknowledged that the "effectiveness" of India's relationship with Afghanistan areas can "improve significantly" if Islamabad agrees to grant transit rights for Indian goods. He was speaking to reporters here on Monday at the end of his two-day visit to Afghanistan.

"President Karzai has always been supportive of India's request that Pakistan give us normal transit rights for the

movement of our goods to and from Pakistan into Afghanistan and Central Asia," he said.

"The main issue is to persuade Pakistan."

Asked whether India's relationship with Afghanistan was being held hostage to its relationship with Pakistan, Dr. Singh said that while he would not like to use such strong words, "it is certainly true that the effectiveness of our cooperation [with Afghanistan] in many areas will improve if Pakistan is also on board."

He said he would be meeting

Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf in New York on September 14.

"The dialogue is on, but it is difficult to predict what the outcome would be."

Asked about the problem of "cross-border terrorism" from the Pakistani side being faced by India and Afghanistan, the Prime Minister did not make any observations on Islamabad.

"We have discussed all issues [with the Afghan side]," he said, "and I am quite satisfied with the outcome of the visit."

With respect to bilateral rela-

tions with Afghanistan, he said India's emphasis would now be on small development projects "which have a direct impact on the common man, especially in rural communities."

On the possibility of expanding security cooperation with Afghanistan and whether India had a problem with the "lead nation structure" [in which military assistance has to be channelled through the U.S.], Dr. Singh said India "is not in the business of thrusting cooperation, whether security cooperation or economic cooperation,

on any unwilling country."

The Government of Afghanistan was the sole determinant of what sort of cooperation was required of India.

"This is an ongoing process. We share views, we share perspectives, and we act accordingly. There is no more to it than this [rather than] that we don't like a particular set-up."

Senior officials told *The Hindu* that for the moment, India was looking only at an expansion in its training programme for the Afghan police force.

THE HINDU

Democracy not the preserve of the West, says Hamid Karzai

Former King Zahir Shah lays the foundation stone

Siddharth Varadarajan

India's involvement

KABUL: In a brief but moving ceremony which underscored India's intimate involvement in the rebuilding of Afghanistan, the former King, Zahir Shah, on Monday laid the foundation stone for a new parliament building to be constructed with Indian assistance.

Speaking to an invited audience at the construction site, Afghan President Hamid Karzai expressed his "most sincere thanks" to India for its help. India, he said, is a country that has shown that democracy is not the preserve of the Western world alone. In his own remarks on the occasion, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said that the roots of a plant were being laid which will, "through your nurturing and care, grow into a sturdy 'panja chinar' of democracy." Earlier, Zahir Shah — now called Baba-e-Millat, or 'father of the nation' — had told the Prime Minister that the new parlia-

• **Project is part of New Delhi's quiet emphasis on infrastructure creation in Afghanistan**

• **Two chambers — for the Wolesi Jirga and the Meshrano Jirga — to be constructed**

ment building would symbolise the partnership between the "world's largest and newest democracies."

The parliament project is part of New Delhi's quiet emphasis on infrastructure creation in Afghanistan, say senior Indian officials. Though the \$550 million pledged so far makes India only the sixth-largest donor country, virtually all the Indian money was going towards the creation of tangible public assets such as buildings, roads, buses and hospital equipment. The Habibia High School — renovated by In-

dia and inaugurated on Sunday — is one example. The Tata buses, which form the backbone of Kabul's public transport system, are another. On Monday, the Prime Minister's wife, Gursharan Kaur, visited the Indira Gandhi hospital in Kabul and announced the provision of \$2 million for a new neo-natal centre.

The new National Assembly will come up on the western fringes of Kabul, virtually in the shadow of the bombed-out shell that is the Darulaman Palace, built by King Amanullah in the 1920s. This sector saw the heaviest fighting between rival mujahideen groups in the aftermath of the fall of the leftist Najibullah government in the 1990s.

At the foundation laying ceremony, an Indian engineer, Anshuman Chakravarti, made a power-point presentation of the architectural plans for the complex, which include the construction of two chambers as well as a library and prayer hall.

30 AUG 2005

Zahira could have been induced to turn hostile, says committee

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410-13 3199

Supreme Court grants both parties three weeks for filing objections

J. Venkatesan

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court-appointed committee that probed the veracity of the statements made by Zahira Sheikh, key witness in the Best Bakery case, said it was likely that Ms. Zahira was induced to turn hostile in the case.

The Committee headed by Registrar-General B.M. Gupta, who had co-opted Joint Commissioner of Police Kanwaljeet Deol, submitted its report to the court on August 24.

On Monday, a Bench comprising Justice Arijit Pasayat and Justice H.K. Sema, perused the 154-page report and made it

clear that it was not accepting the report. It said the parties could be given copies of the report to enable them to file their objections.

The Bench granted three weeks for filing objections and another three weeks for filing written submissions on whether the report should be accepted or not, and posted the case for further hearing on October 24.

On November 3, 2004 Ms. Zahira alleged that Ms. Setalvad of Citizens for Justice and Peace kept her in confinement for seven months and that she compelled her to give false statements in the Bakery case contradicting those she made

before the trial court in Vadodara.

She accused Ms. Setalvad of pressuring her into making statements and naming innocent persons during the ongoing trial of the case at a special court in Mumbai. Ms. Setalvad described Ms. Zahira's allegations against her as baseless.

The Committee, which went into the whole episode in its report, held that Ms. Zahira returned to Vadodara in October 2004 and approached her lawyer. There was no compulsion or threat upon the family to return to Vadodara. The report pointed out that the timing of this movement (of Ms. Zahira) was significant as the retrial court in Mumbai court had already started and an important eyewitness Taufel Ahmad had given his testimony from October 26 to 29, 2004.

The report noted that when Ms. Zahira addressed a press conference, the BJP MLA, Madhu Srivastava was present at the venue and he fired with his licensed firearm in front of reporters and the media. It said the accused party had an interest in Ms. Zahira and her family changing their stand before the re-trial court and they might have contacted them at this crucial time. "This strongly suggests inducement as a motive

for again changing the stand," the report said.

The Committee held that "Ms. Zahira who once earned public sympathy out of her desertion through the condemned tragedy has made concerted efforts and has engaged herself in having cash/comforts from every possible corners."

The Committee, however, said that despite best efforts it could not identify the person/persons responsible for the inducement, in the absence of concrete evidence.

It said: "Ms. Zahira has developed an image of self-confessed liar whose statements alone cannot be safely accepted.

30 AUG 2004 THE HINDU

কাবুলে মনমোহন

প্রায় তিন দশক পরে যখন একজন ভারতীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রী একটি প্রতিবেশী রাষ্ট্রে সরকারি সফরে যান, তখন সেই সফরের রাজনৈতিক গুরুত্ব অকিঞ্চিৎকর হইতে পারে না। আর সেই দেশটির নাম যদি হয় আফগানিস্তান— যাহার সহিত ভারতের ঐতিহাসিক সম্পর্ক প্রায় সভ্যতার উষালগ্ন হইতেই— তবে সেই গুরুত্ব অনুধাবন করাও সহজ হইয়া ওঠে। মৌলবাদী তালিবান জমানায় কাবুলের সহিত কার্যত নয়াদিল্লির সম্পর্কচ্ছেদ হইয়া গিয়াছিল। সে সময় এমনকী তালিবানি স্বৈরাচার হইতে পলাতক আফগান শরণার্থীদেরও অন্যতম ঠিকানা হইয়া উঠিয়াছিল— ভারত। মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের নেতৃত্বে পশ্চিমী বহুজাতিক বাহিনী ওসামা বিন লাদেনের আশ্রয়দাতা তালিবানকে আফগানিস্তান হইতে অপসারিত করিলে পট পরিবর্তিত হয়। কয়েক দশক ধরিয়া উপর্যুপরি গৃহযুদ্ধ, জনজাতীয় হানাহানি ও সর্বশেষ মার্কিন বোমা-কামানে বিধ্বস্ত আফগানিস্তানে পুনর্গঠন ও নবনির্মাণের কাজে ভারত বেশ কিছু কাল যাবৎই যোগদান করিতেছিল। আফগানিস্তানে জায়মান নবীন গণতন্ত্রের পরীক্ষা-নিরীক্ষাতেও অপ্রত্যক্ষ শরিক ছিল নয়াদিল্লি। দ্বিপাক্ষিক সহযোগিতা ও সম্পর্ক আরও নিবিড় করিয়া তুলিতেই সর্বোচ্চ রাজনৈতিক পর্যায়ে কাবুল সফরের এই ভারতীয় কর্মসূচি। দুই দেশের মধ্যে যে সব চুক্তি বা বোঝাপড়ার খসড়া সম্পাদিত হইয়াছে, তাহাতে স্পষ্ট, গণতন্ত্র, শিক্ষা, স্বাস্থ্য, কৃষি-গবেষণা ও প্রযুক্তি ক্ষেত্রে আফগানিস্তানের নবনির্মাণে ভারত উল্লেখযোগ্য ভূমিকা রাখিতে বদ্ধপরিকর।

সম্পর্ক যখন দ্বিপাক্ষিক, তখন দেওয়া-নেওয়ার হিসাবও থাকিতে বাধ্য। আফগানিস্তান ভারতের সাহায্যে দক্ষিণ এশীয় আঞ্চলিক সহযোগিতা গোষ্ঠী সার্ক-এর সদস্য হইতে চায়। আর ভারত চায় ইরান ও তুর্কমেনিস্তান হইতে স্থলপথে তেল আমদানি করিতে। উভয় প্রকল্পেই আফগানিস্তান ও পাকিস্তানের উপর দিয়া পাইপ যোগে তেল আসিবে। মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র যদি ইরানকে একঘরে করার প্রক্রিয়ায় সেখানকার তেল আমদানিতে বাধা সৃষ্টি করে, তাহা হইলে তুর্কমেনিস্তানের উন্নত মানের জ্বালানি সরবরাহ হইতে অসুবিধা নাই। আফগানিস্তান তাই গুরুত্বপূর্ণ, ঠিক যেমন গুরুত্বপূর্ণ পাকিস্তানও। সম্ভ্রাস দমন প্রসঙ্গে আফগান প্রেসিডেন্ট তাঁহার মার্কিন অভিভাবকের মতোই পাকিস্তানের প্রশংসা করিয়াছেন। মনমোহন সিংহ অবশ্য তাঁহাকে স্মরণ করাইয়া দেন নাই যে, আফগানিস্তানে আল কায়দার সম্ভ্রাসবাদীদের প্রশ্রয়দাতা তালিবান গোষ্ঠী পাকিস্তানের মাদ্রাসাগুলিতেই প্রশিক্ষিত হইয়াছিল। বরং তিনি পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফের সঙ্গেও সুসম্পর্ক গড়ার অঙ্গীকার এই সুযোগে ঝালাই করিয়া লইয়াছেন। প্রশ্নটিহুটি তবু থাকিয়াই যাইতেছে। জেহাদি সম্ভ্রাসবাদীরা পাক কর্তৃপক্ষের কতখানি নিয়ন্ত্রণে, সেই প্রশ্ন। বিন লাদেন-সহ আল কায়দার কর্মীরা এখনও আফগান-পাকিস্তান সীমান্তের দুর্গম জনজাতীয় অঞ্চলেই ঘাঁটি গাড়িয়া আছে কি না, সেই প্রশ্নও। সবচেয়ে বড় যে প্রশ্নটি কাঁটার মতো বিধিয়া আছে, তাহা হইল আফগানিস্তানে গণতান্ত্রিক পরীক্ষার সাফল্যের প্রশ্ন।

তালিবান পরাস্ত হইলেও আফগানিস্তানের সমাজ-সংস্কৃতির জন্ম হইতে উৎখাত হয় নাই, তাহা নিশ্চিত। মার্কিন ও বহুজাতিক বাহিনীর হেলিকপ্টার এখনও গেরিলা হানায় ভূপাতিত হইতেছে। চোরাগোপ্তা হামলায় টহলদার মার্কিন সেনাদের নিধনও হইতেছে। প্রেসিডেন্ট হামিদ কারজাই তাঁহার ফ্যাশনদুরন্ত পোশাকের জন্য যতই পশ্চিমে বন্দিত হোন, রাজধানী কাবুলের বাহিরে এখনও তাঁহার সরকারের কর্তৃত্ব প্রতিষ্ঠিত নয়। ইরাকের মতো এখনও আফগানিস্তানের শাসক গোষ্ঠী ও তাহার গণতন্ত্র মার্কিন, বহুজাতিক বাহিনীর সশস্ত্র সমর্থননির্ভর, আফগান জনসাধারণের অভ্যন্তরীণ তাগিদ ও বাহ্যিক মদতনির্ভর নয়। এই বাহিনী অপসারিত হইলেই আফগানিস্তান নিশ্চিতভাবেই অরাজকতায় অধঃপতিত হইবে। আবার এই বাহিনীর পাহারায় যে গণতন্ত্র বিকশিত হইতেছে, তাহা অনেকাংশে খণ্ডিত। একটি সাবালক ও প্রকৃত সার্বভৌম গণতন্ত্রে পরিণত হইতে কাবুলের কত কাল লাগিবে, বলা কঠিন। অথচ নয়াদিল্লির সহিত সুসম্পর্কের মধুচন্দ্রিমা সেই পরিণতির উপরেও অংশত নির্ভরশীল। তবে মৌলবাদ ও জেহাদি সম্ভ্রাসের বিরুদ্ধে সমগ্র দক্ষিণ এশিয়ায় যে দীর্ঘস্থায়ী সংগ্রাম চলিতেছে, স্বেচ্ছায় বা অনিচ্ছায় আফগানিস্তান হইতে বাংলাদেশ পর্যন্ত বিস্তৃত গোটা ভূখণ্ডই তাহার শরিক। নিজেদের রাষ্ট্রিক অস্তিত্বের স্বার্থেই এই সংগ্রামে সাফল্য পাইতে পরস্পরের সহিত সহযোগিতা ছাড়া উপায় নাই। আর আর্থিক ক্ষেত্রে তো যে-কোনও আঞ্চলিক সহযোগিতাই পরস্পরের পক্ষে লাভজনক হইয়া থাকে। সেই প্রেক্ষিতেই মনমোহন সিংহের আফগান সফর একটি তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ প্রক্রিয়ার সূত্রপাত।

Manmohan, Karzai moot gas pipeline

25/8 H0-1
India & her neighbours
NCPA
Afghanistan keen on seeking closer links with SAARC; India affirms its support

Siddharth Varadarajan

KABUL: India's South Asian diplomacy took a big step forward with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Afghan President Hamid Karzai mooting — for the first time ever in an official document — Afghanistan participating in SAARC, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.

The issue was raised by Mr. Karzai during his one-on-one meeting with Dr. Singh here on Sunday.

“Land bridge”

The joint statement issued at the end of the meeting noted that in the context of Afghanistan's historic role of being a “land bridge” between Central and South Asia, the country was interested in seeking closer links with SAARC. On his part, Dr. Singh “welcomed this initiative and affirmed India's support for Afghanistan's engagement with SAARC.”

Dr. Singh's visit is the first by an Indian Prime Minister to Afghanistan in 29 years. He is also the first foreign head of state or government to visit here for more than a day. Afghan officials are particularly grateful for this, noting that no visiting VVIP has ever spent the night in Kabul or driven through its streets since the Taliban regime was ousted at the end of 2001.

Support from Pakistan

Fielding questions at a joint press conference, Mr. Karzai said he was glad to have received a positive response from India on the issue of SAARC. “We are also glad to have had the same positive response from President Musharraf of Pakistan. So Afghanistan is very keen on SAARC and hopes to be a contributor and receiver [from] that organisation.”

The Indian Government has also, for the first time, flagged its



EXCHANGING NOTES: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Afghan President Hamid Karzai look on as External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh and his Afghan counterpart Abdullah Abdullah sign an agreement on Small Development Projects in Kabul on Sunday. — PHOTO: PTI

official interest in the proposal to build a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan. The idea was first floated by the U.S. energy company, Unocal, during the Taliban days.

Sunday's joint statement noted that “the two leaders endorsed the need for greater con-

sultation and cooperation in a future project of a Turkmenistan gas pipeline that would pass through Afghanistan and Pakistan.”

Energy needs

Asked if he preferred the Turkmen gas option to the Ira-

nian one, Dr. Singh said India needed both. “It is not a question of preferring one over the other. Our needs for commercial energy are increasing at an explosive rate. ... There is an enormous unmet demand for commercial energy which is set to increase, so we need both the pipelines, the

pipeline from Iran-Pakistan-India and the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India one.”

On Pakistan's refusal to grant transit rights for land trade between Afghanistan and India, Mr. Karzai acknowledged this was holding back regional integration.

But he said the steady progress of the India-Pakistan peace process would take care of this issue too. “We are very happy to see a dialogue for better relations between India and Pakistan,” he said. “Afghanistan is directly affected by friendship between these two countries.”

2005

KARZAI ENDORSES MANMOHAN'S VISION OF ECONOMICALLY-INTEGRATED S ASIA

Terror tops Indo-Afghan talks



MEETING POINT: Dr Manmohan Singh with Afghan President Mr Hamid Karzai in Kabul on Sunday. — AFP

Manish Chand in Kabul

Aug. 28. — India and Afghanistan today imparted a new dimension to their burgeoning ties by agreeing to work closely in combating Taliban-driven terrorism and speeding up the reconstruction and democratic process in the war-ravaged country.

Dr Manmohan Singh, who arrived here in the morning on a two-day visit, also announced fresh assistance of \$50 million to the ongoing reconstruction of Afghanistan, which takes India's contribution in rebuilding the country to over \$600 million.

Kabul pulled out all stops in rolling out the red carpet for this "special visit" by the Indian Prime

Minister. He was received at the Kabul international airport by the Afghan interior minister, Mr Ali Ahmad Jalali, and later given a grand ceremonial welcome at the presidential palace by Mr Hamid Karzai. This is the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to this country in nearly three decades, the last being by Indira Gandhi in 1976.

"We have discussed the threat posed by terrorism in both India and Afghanistan. There is a convergence of interests between the two countries on fighting this scourge," Dr Singh said after his talks with Mr Karzai. "Terrorism anywhere and everywhere is a threat to civilized existence."

Referring to the recent reports of

regrouping of the Taliban, the Afghan President said: "We see the continuation of terrorist activities directed against the Afghan people. No nation likes to see its sons and daughters murdered. India and Afghanistan will jointly fight to eliminate this menace from the region and the world."

A joint statement issued at the end of the talks said: "The two leaders reiterated their commitment to work together to ensure that Afghanistan never again becomes a safe haven for terrorism and extremism."

Dr Singh said: "We hope to realise a shared destiny of people in the entire region. Poverty, disease and ignorance do not have to be the inevitable lot of people in South

Asia... If we work together, we can overcome these problems."

Mr Karzai wholeheartedly endorsed Dr Singh's vision of an economically and culturally integrated South Asia. "The three countries (India, Pakistan and Afghanistan) can have a maximum impact not only in the region but in the world if they join hands together to fight terrorism and forge closer economic linkages."

India and Afghanistan signed three agreements in the field of small developmental projects, health care, and agricultural research and education. Both countries agreed to expand their capacity in building democratic institutions. — IANS

Kabul collage, page 4

PM gifts rebuilt school

KABUL, Aug. 28. — Dr Manmohan Singh today handed over to the local authorities a school rebuilt by India and announced 1,000 scholarships annually for Afghan students. Addressing a function to hand over the Habibia school, the Prime Minister said: "We firmly believe that strong educational institutions are the basis of a productive society and progressive nation." He said India remains the preferred destination for pursuing education as well as professional training for Afghan students and it is a matter of pride to note the fact that the Afghan President is an alumni of Himachal Pradesh University. Dr Singh pointed out that India currently provided less than 100 slots under International Technical Education Cooperation programme and Colombo Plan for short-term professional training courses and 14 scholarships for pursuing university education. "We realise that this number is inadequate. We have decided to increase it to 1,000 scholarships annually," he added. — PTI

29 AUG 2001 THE STATESMAN

২৯ বছর পরে কাবুলে ভারতের প্রধানমন্ত্রী

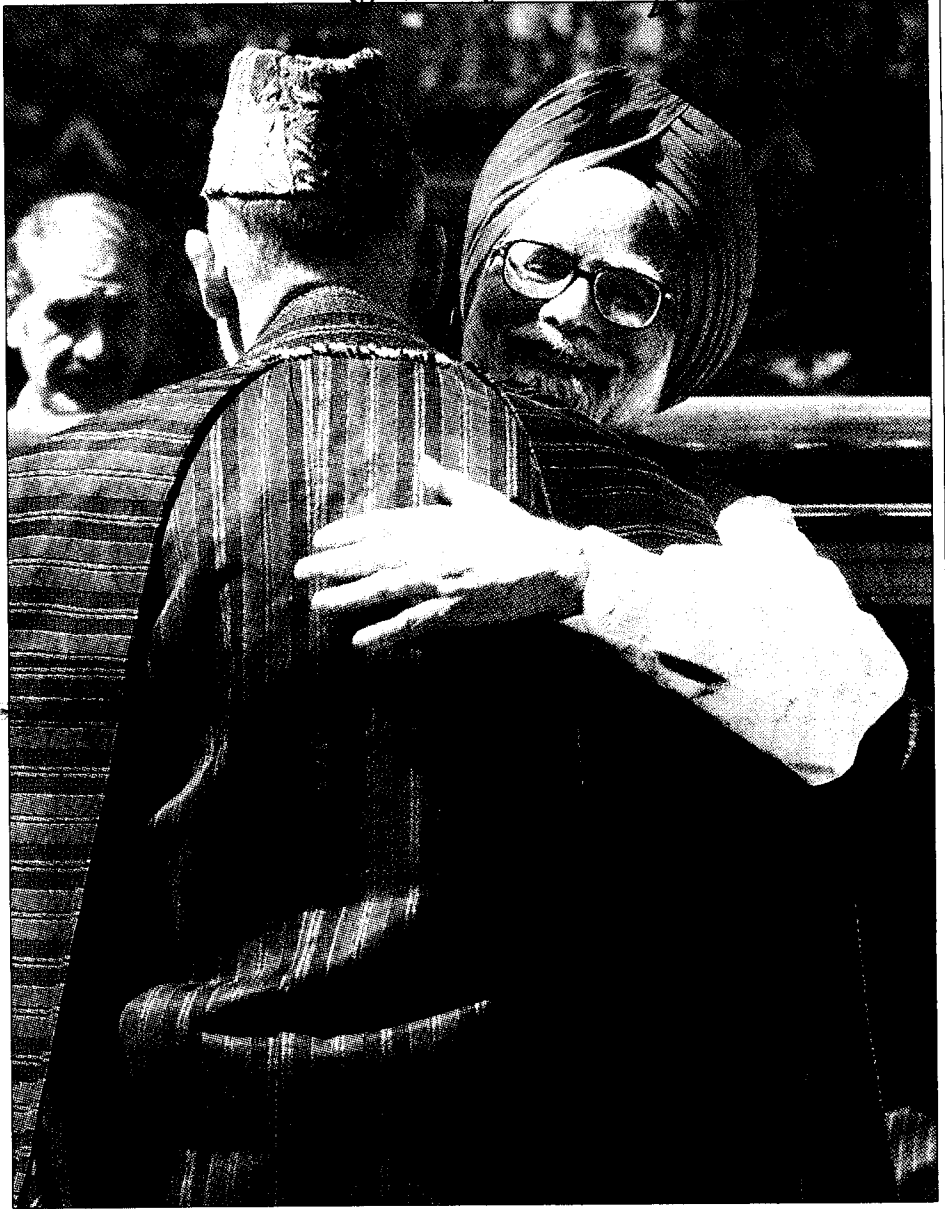
পাকিস্তানই চ্যালেঞ্জ মনমোহন ও কারজাইয়ের

কাবুল, ২৮ অগস্ট: বিবিধ উন্নয়ন প্রকল্পে পাঁচ কোটি ডলার, মহিলাদের জন্য এক হাজার সেলাই মেশিন, ছাত্রদের জন্য হাজার খানেক বৃত্তি—এ রকম একগুচ্ছ প্রতিশ্রুতি নিয়ে ২৯ বছর পরে এখানে পা রাখলেন কোনও ভারতীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রী। সপরিবার। সেই সঙ্গে আছেন বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহ ও তরুণ সাংসদ রাহুল গাঁধী।

যুদ্ধবিধ্বস্ত আফগানিস্তানকে 'আধুনিক, গণতান্ত্রিক ও সমৃদ্ধ' করে তুলতে না পারলে আঞ্চলিক ভারসাম্য নষ্ট হবে বলেই মনে করেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ। তাই 'অতীতের সম্পর্ক ঝালিয়ে নেওয়ায়' ভারতের উৎসাহ। ২৯ বছর আগে তৎকালীন প্রধানমন্ত্রী ইন্দিরা গাঁধী শেষ কাবুল সফরে এসেছিলেন। এ বার মনমোহনের সঙ্গী ইন্দিরার নাতি রাহুল। তাই রাহুলকে তাক করেছে সংবাদমাধ্যম।

পুরনো সম্পর্ক ঝালিয়ে নেওয়া ছাড়া গুরুত্ব পাচ্ছে সন্ত্রাসের প্রসঙ্গও। সন্ত্রাসবাদের সমস্যা যে ভাবে বিশ্বজনীন হয়ে উঠছে, তাতে পৃথিবীর যে কোনও দু'টি গণতান্ত্রিক রাষ্ট্রের কাছে এখন তা মোকাবিলার যৌথ কৌশল তৈরি করা প্রয়োজন হয়ে পড়েছে। স্বাভাবিক ভাবেই আফগানিস্তান ও ভারতের কাছেও প্রাধান্য পেয়েছে সন্ত্রাসের বিষয়টি। আজ বৈঠকের পরে যৌথ বিবৃতিও দিয়েছেন দুই শীর্ষ নেতা মনমোহন সিংহ ও আফগান প্রেসিডেন্ট হামিদ কারজাই। বিবৃতিতে আফগানিস্তানকে সাহায্যের প্রতিশ্রুতি ছাড়া এসেছে আঞ্চলিক ভারসাম্যের প্রসঙ্গও।

'জিওস্ট্র্যাটেজিক পজিশন'-এর জন্য ভারত-আফগান সম্পর্কে খুবই গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা রয়েছে পাকিস্তানের। মুশারফ প্রশাসনের সঙ্গে বর্তমান ভারত ও আফগান সরকারের আলাপ-আলোচনা চলছে মোটামুটি সৌহার্দ্যপূর্ণ পরিবেশেই। কারণ, তার পিছনে কাজ করছে পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফের অভ্যন্তরীণ রাজনৈতিক বাধ্যবাধকতা। কিন্তু প্রায় সমান্তরাল ভাবেই পাকিস্তানে থেকেই কাজ চালিয়ে যাচ্ছে বিভিন্ন জঙ্গিগোষ্ঠী। আফগানিস্তান থেকে বিতাড়িত হয়ে তালিবান গোষ্ঠী পাকিস্তানে আশ্রয় নিয়েছে বলে খবর রয়েছে। কাজেই পাক প্রশাসন মুখে সহযোগিতার কথা বললেও তাতে কাজের কাজ কিছুই হচ্ছে না। তাতে সব চেয়ে ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হচ্ছে ভারত ও আফগানিস্তানই। তাই পাকিস্তানের



সন্ত্রাস রোধে সাহায্য। আফগান প্রেসিডেন্টকে আশ্বাস ভারতের প্রধানমন্ত্রীর। রবিবার কাবুলে। — রয়টার্স

উপরে চাপ সৃষ্টি করতেও দু'দেশের সমঝোতা খুব জরুরি।

তবে তার আগে যুদ্ধবিধ্বস্ত এই রাষ্ট্রকে আরও সমৃদ্ধ করা, তার ভিত আরও শক্ত করা জরুরি। ঠিক সেই কাজটিই এখন করতে চাইছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ। সেই লক্ষ্যেই আজ আফগানিস্তানের সঙ্গে স্বাস্থ্য পরিষেবায় একটি চুক্তি এবং 'কমিউনিটি ডেভেলপমেন্ট', শিক্ষা ও কৃষি গবেষণায় দু'টি সমঝোতাপত্র স্বাক্ষর করেছে ভারত। দেওয়া হয়েছে পুনর্গঠনে ৫ কোটি ডলারের প্রতিশ্রুতি। ১০০টি আফগান গ্রামকে আদর্শ গ্রাম হিসাবে গড়ে দেবে ভারত। আফগান মহিলা উন্নয়ন মন্ত্রককে দেওয়া হবে হাজারটি সেলাই মেশিন। মনমোহনের উপস্থিতিতে কাল নতুন আফগান পার্লামেন্ট ভবনের শিলান্যাস করবেন আফগানিস্তানের প্রাক্তন রাজা জাহির শাহ। এই কাজেও আড়াই কোটি ডলার জোগাবে ভারত। উচ্ছ্বসিত কারজাইয়ের মন্তব্য, "এই ভবন আমাদের কাছে তাজমহলের মতোই গুরুত্বপূর্ণ।"

পুনর্গঠনের এই প্রচেষ্টা সফল হলে তার পর আসছে সন্ত্রাস রোধে কার্যকরী পদক্ষেপের প্রসঙ্গ। সে প্রসঙ্গে আফগানিস্তানকে আজ কার্যত 'ব্ল্যাক চেক' দিয়ে এসেছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। ভারত এ ব্যাপারে সরাসরি আফগানিস্তানকে কোনও সাহায্য করবে কি না, সে প্রশ্নের উত্তরে মনমোহন জানিয়েছেন, ভারত তৈরিই আছে। ঠিক কী ধরনের সাহায্য চাই, তা জানানোর পালা এখন আফগানিস্তানের। তালিবান গোষ্ঠীর পতনের পরেও আফগান নাগরিকেরা যে ভাবে সন্ত্রাসের শিকার হচ্ছেন, সে ব্যাপারে উদ্বেগ প্রকাশ করেছেন আফগান প্রেসিডেন্ট। কারজাইও মনে করেন, তা রুখতে চাই আঞ্চলিক সমঝোতা। পাক প্রশাসন তাঁকে সহযোগিতার আশ্বাস দিয়েছে। এখন ভারতের কাছ থেকেও আশ্বাস পেয়ে খুশি কারজাই। সেই সঙ্গে তিনি মনে করিয়ে দেন, আঞ্চলিক সমঝোতা জোরদার করতে গেলে ত্রিভুজের তৃতীয় বাহু অর্থাৎ ভারত-পাক সম্পর্ককেও জোরদার করা জরুরি।

ভারত-পাক সম্পর্ক জোরদার হলে

খুলে যাবে ভারত থেকে আফগানিস্তান পর্যন্ত সড়ক পরিবহণের সুযোগও। কারজাই জানান, পাক প্রেসিডেন্টের সঙ্গে আলোচনায় তিনি বিষয়টি তুলেছিলেন। এবং এ বিষয়ে পাক প্রেসিডেন্টের দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি ইতিবাচক। তবে প্রস্তাবটি দীর্ঘসূত্রিতার শিকার হবে বলেই কারজাইয়ের শঙ্কা। তা যে মিথ্যা নয়, আজও তার প্রমাণ মিলেছে। কাশ্মীর সমস্যার সমাধান না হওয়া পর্যন্ত ভারত থেকে আফগানিস্তান পণ্য পরিবহণ সম্ভব নয়, বলে পাক প্রধানমন্ত্রী আজই জানান। আফগান পণ্য ভারতে পাঠাতে ওয়াগা সীমান্ত ব্যবহার হচ্ছে, তবে ভারতীয় পণ্য পাকিস্তানের উপর দিয়ে আফগানিস্তানে যেতে দিতে চায় না আজিজের সরকার।

আঞ্চলিক ভারসাম্য, শান্তি নিয়ে দুই শীর্ষ নেতা কাবুলে কথা বলার সময়েই ইসলামাবাদ ফের উল্লেখ দিল কাশ্মীর প্রসঙ্গ। বুঝিয়ে দিল, মনমোহন-কারজাইয়ের কাজটা মোটেই সহজ হবে না।

— পি টি আই
● দাউদকে চাইবে দিল্লি... পৃঃ ৫
● কাবুলে বললেন রাহুল... পৃঃ ৫

Manmohan To Announce Developmental Projects Worth \$50 Million

PM to herald new dawn in Indo-Afghan ties

New Delhi 27 AUGUST

MARKING a new chapter in Indo-Afghan ties, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh will undertake a two-day visit to Kabul from Sunday. During the visit Dr Singh would discuss cooperation in various areas, including security, and announce developmental projects worth \$50 million for the war-ravaged country.

Dr Singh, who will be the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Afghanistan in 29 years, will hold talks with President Hamid Karzai on the entire gamut of bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual concern. He will also meet Afghanistan's former king Zahir Shah.

During his stay there, the foundation stone for Afghan Parliament building will be laid

by Mr Shah in the presence of Dr Singh. The Parliament House complex is being constructed by India as a symbol of contribution to strengthen democracy in the country, which has seen conflicts for decades. The timing of the construction of the building is significant as the country is going to elect its Parliament on September 18.

Dr Singh, who will be accompanied among others by Congress MP Rahul Gandhi, will also hand over a school, fully renovated by India to the Afghan authorities. New Delhi attaches immense significance to the visit.

"This is a very important visit. Afghanistan is an extremely important country for India and the two share close cultural and historical links," foreign secretary Shyam Saran said ahead of the visit. Mr Saran noted that Afghanistan was strategically

it is in our interest to ensure that Afghanistan does not once again become a centre of extremism or terrorism. Anything that threatens Afghanistan's stability is a matter of concern for us," the foreign secretary said.

Stability of Afghanistan continues to be threatened by activities of "remnant Taliban" operating from Pakistan, he said adding India was ready to expand security cooperation if Kabul requested. India has already trained 800 Afghans in policing and supplied 300 trucks for its military use.

Since the Karzai government took over nearly two years back, India has been providing a broad-based support to Afghanistan aimed at its political and economic stabilisation. In-

dia is providing assistance worth \$500 million to Afghanistan, most of which is focused on building its infrastructure and social sector, including health and education.

New Delhi is also helping the war-torn country in its efforts to emerge democratically. In this regard, India provided indelible ink to it during the last presidential elections and has expressed readiness to train the poll staff, if requested, for the upcoming parliamentary elections.

The developmental works will cover small projects and scholarships. The projects will focus on local community development. Mr Saran said India's efforts to help in Afghanistan's reconstruction is hampered because of denial of transit facility by Pakistan, forcing New Delhi to reach its aid through the longer route of Iran.



HELPING HAND

very important for India and it was ready to give full support, including expanding security cooperation, to help Kabul deal with the remnant Taliban in Pakistan.

"We want Afghanistan to emerge as a democratic, independent, sovereign country, in full mastery of its own destiny...."

—PTI

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India keen on security ties with Kabul

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Manmohan Singh's visit to be the first by an Indian Prime Minister in 29 years

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: India is keen to see a politically and economically strong Afghanistan and it is prepared to expand cooperation in military activities if the Hamid Karzai Government makes a request.

Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran said this at a press meet on Friday ahead of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Kabul on Sunday. India had specific concerns about the "newly-

emerging threat" posed by "remnants" of the Taliban, he said.

Cross-border incidents

"[Recently], there have been some cross-border incidents, incidents coming in from the Pakistani side and indulging in violent acts in Afghanistan. ... We have offered our full support to Afghanistan in dealing with this newly emerging threat to their political stability. It is in our interest to ensure that Afghan-

istan does not again become a centre of extremism or terrorism. Anything that threatens Afghanistan's stability is a matter of concern for us," he said.

Indian security assistance is at present confined to training of 800 policemen and provision of 300 vehicles for the Afghan army.

Asked whether India planned to step up military assistance, Mr. Saran said it was for the Karzai Government to make a request. He denied that the U.S.

would have any role in deciding the shape and form of India's cooperation with Afghanistan on the security front.

During his two-day official visit — the first by an Indian Prime Minister in 29 years — Dr. Singh will announce projects worth \$50 million. This would be in addition to the \$500 million already promised by India for many ongoing economic and reconstruction projects.

Dr. Singh would be present at the laying of the foundation

stone for Afghanistan's new Parliament — to be constructed under the Indian assistance programme — and the handing over of the renovated Habibia School, one of the premier educational institutions in Kabul. Finally, he is expected to announce additional scholarships for Afghan students to study in India.

Mr. Saran said India could do much more for Afghanistan if Pakistan allowed direct transit facilities.

2878 Jammed rifles

506 A ruse for some 'jam'?

There would be cause for some suspicious reading between the lines of a comment from a General of the Royal Nepal Army that his troops suffered considerable losses in an encounter with Maoist rebels because their Indian-made rifles got overheated and jammed during an extended skirmish. Now the 5.56mm INSAS rifle has had its teething troubles but overheating was not one of them, on the contrary some its components were prone to malfunction in conditions of severe cold. Hence the speedy rebuttal of the charge by Indian authorities in Kathmandu and New Delhi, who pointed out that a large number of our units have found the rifle vastly superior to the obsolescent 7.62 mm self-loading rifle which it replaced, and that it had been used successfully in counter-insurgency operations similar to those now being undertaken by the RNA. The offer of another round of training to the RNA should be well-taken, after all not all battalions of the Indian army/para-military have been re-equipped and they might press for expediting issue of the rifle since Nepal appears dissatisfied with it — despite not having to pay a market price.

That the RNA had few previous complaints causes some "motivation" to be seen in the General's comment. Is it a veiled threat of Nepal seeking other sources of military equipment since the supply line from India has been constricted in the wake of the curbing of democracy there? In response to some desperate pleas from the RNA, a limited supply of non-lethal stores had been resumed recently, but is possible that the RNA needs more — there were reports of dwindling stocks of ammunition. The government would do well to check this out fully. While there must be no falling prey to what appears a ploy, the long-term implications of the RNA establishing new sources of arms (Pakistan did offer to help out) cannot be trivialised. Nor indeed can the RNA be rendered so vulnerable that the Maoists get even further emboldened. While keeping up the pressure for restoration of democracy, India must also help keep the rebels on the run — which is not the prevailing reality.

THE STATESMAN

Delhi dares to look at Nepal minus monarch

PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Aug. 18: For the first time in decades, India is mulling the prospect of a Nepal minus the king.

India's Nepal policy has for long been based on the "twin pillars" of constitutional monarchy and multi-party democracy. It has always insisted Nepal's progress and stability depend on these two factors.

Now, a policy shift appears in the making though India may continue to take its earlier line officially for some more time.

The change has come from its deep sense of disappointment with King Gyanendra. Despite repeated promises since his February coup, he has refused to announce a roadmap to restore democracy in Nepal.

Nor has he managed to check the Maoist menace or strengthen the country's economy. Instead, there has been a

flight of capital which has shaken industry and business confidence.

In spite of reservations about the Maoists, India is no longer willing to ignore their importance in Nepal politics. It feels there is no military solution to the present crisis and a political one can be reached only by bringing the rebels on board.

It has also begun to acknowledge how unpopular Gyanendra is getting by the day and how the demand to turn Nepal into a republic is getting shriller.

Although the Maoists first articulated the demand for a republic, a growing number of political parties and members of civilian society have joined in since Gyanendra snatched all executive powers.

However, many in Nepal are against any drastic or hasty move. They prefer a gradual curtailment of the king's powers and a slow transition into a republic.

In such a future scenario, the king could exist but as a figurehead, with the real power resting in the hands of democratically-elected leaders.

India is not willing to jump the gun. It is moving cautiously as it has high stakes in Nepal and is not confident whether political parties will be able to sustain a united fight against the king.

Indications are India will wait and see whether the political parties and the Maoists, now negotiating to join hands against the king, are able to whip up a countrywide movement.

In early September, the political parties are planning a massive agitation in Kathmandu and elsewhere to build up opinion against the king.

At that time, Gyanendra will be on a foreign tour, which includes a visit to New York to address the UN General Assembly.

Indian gun misfires in Nepal army losses

Statesman News Service

India's *Pranab* *Mukherjee* *SP-1*
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KATHMANDU, Aug. 12. — The Royal Nepalese Army today blamed the punishing losses suffered at the hands of Maoist rebels last Sunday on the indigenously-manufactured Insas rifles given to it by New Delhi. With Maoist guerrillas striking in two western Nepal districts in five days, 83 people have died. On Sunday, the underground guerrillas attacked an army camp in Pili in midwestern Kalikot district, triggering an overnight gun battle that resulted in the death of 26 rebels and 43 soldiers apart from a civilian contractor, according to the army. Close on the heels of this attack, the biggest reversal suffered by the government since King Gyanendra took over in February, came a second Maoist ambush in western Nawalparasi district on Thursday.

The rebels blocked a key highway, that connects western Nepal with eastern towns, by felling trees and placing boulders. As a security patrol ventured to remove the obstructions, it came under fire. While 12 rebels were reportedly killed till Friday, the army said it had lost one soldier and four were injured.

The attacks came after Union defence minister Mr Pranab Mukherjee said in

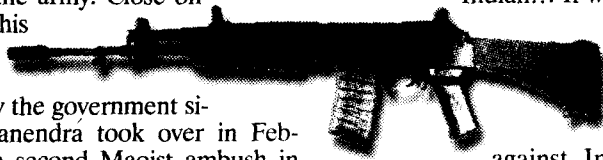
Kolkata on Sunday that the Royal Nepalese Army had failed to combat the Maoist insurgency effectively:

At a press briefing today at its headquarters in Kathmandu, as the army iterated its allegations that the rebels had tortured and killed about 10 soldiers after taking them captive in Pili, a Nepalese journalist wanted to know if there was any link between Mr Mukherjee's comment and the army debacle. "I don't have the authority to say why Mr Mukherjee said what he did," said Brigadier-General Dipak Gurung, spokesman for the Royal Nepalese Army. "I can only say that the weapons the army was fighting with were

Indian... If we had got better weapons, our casualties would have been fewer." Complaints

against Insas rifles, that New Delhi had been offering to Nepal at a 70 per cent subsidy, first surfaced in 2003. Brigadier-General Gurung echoed them: "The rifles are okay if you fight for an hour or two. In Pili, there was continuous fighting." When fired continuously, the spokesperson said, the rifles got heated and started "malfunctioning".

Since the royal coup, India has stopped supplying Insas rifles and other lethal military equipment to Nepal.



Parties' concern over Nepal situation

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: Expressing deep concern over the 'deteriorating political situation' in Nepal, nine political parties that comprise "Nepal Democracy Solidarity Committee", on Wednesday decided to mobilise national and international opinion on it.

At a meeting the Committee decided it would organise an all-India convention here on August 26 to which they would invite representatives of the seven political parties of Nepal that have formed a coalition there.

Situation deteriorating

"The situation in Nepal is deteriorating despite assurance from King Gyanendra to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on a roadmap for restoration of democracy," Communist Party of India (Marxist) Polit Bureau member Sitaram Yechury told a press conference. The Committee also condemned the arrest of former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and another prominent leader Prakash Mansingh by the authorities.

He said the Committee also decided that a delegation would call on either the Prime Minister or the Home Minister urging that the Centre stop authorities

taking action against Nepalese who come to India for treatment. He said besides targeting Nepal citizens on the grounds of being "Maoists" even doctors attending on them were being harassed. The Committee also decided to float a Parliamentary Forum for Democracy in Nepal to mobilise both national and international opinion.

As regards resumption of arms supply by India to Nepal, the CPI National Secretary said the Government of India should not do anything that gives legitimacy to the King and suggested it reconsider the decision.

Besides these two leaders, those who attended the meeting were All India Forward Bloc general secretary Debabrata Biswas, its secretary G. Devarajan, Nationalist Congress Party leader D.P. Tripathi, CPI (ML) member Swapan Mukherjee, Janata Dal (Secular) members Surendra Mohan and Manjoo Mohan, Samajwadi Janata Party member Ravinder Manchanda and Anil Mishra and Vijay Pratap of the Socialist Forum. Mr. Yechury said Anand Sharma of the Congress who too was in the Committee could not attend the meeting since he was scheduled to speak in the Rajya Sabha in a debate.

India bears brunt of Nepal crisis, migrants pour in

By Indrani Bagchi/TNN

New Delhi: India is now confronting the inevitable fallout from the crisis in Nepal. Nepali migration to India is now in the hundreds of thousands, according to international NGOs. And the pressure is mainly on border states like UP and Uttaranchal.

"The 1950 treaty with Nepal is proving to be a safety valve for the king," said senior government sources. This may cease to be an open door in the near future as India has decided to step up regulation of the border, fearing a national and economic security crisis.

Officials said though some of the fleeing Nepalis were seasonal labour, Indian border checks have noted that in recent months, Nepalis were moving with their families and belongings and even after the labour contract was over, refused to return.

In the normal course of events, these economic and conflict migrants would have converged on Nepal's capital, Kathmandu. But according to a Washington-based NGO, Refugees International, "India has become a safety valve for those seeking security and economic survival."

The organisation says in its recent report, "Estimates of people driven to India as a consequence of the conflict are inexact and vary widely, from hundreds of thousands to millions.



SEEKING A SAFE HAVEN

Analysts agree that seasonal migrants who used to come to India temporarily are now moving to India with their belongings. Previously, Nepalis tended to come to India dur-

ing times of economic and political crisis and would go back when the situation stabilised; however, in recent years, these people no longer appear to be returning to Nepal."

In other words, the pressure that would have been borne by the king is now being borne by India. The interesting bit about the migrants is that they are indiscriminate in their fear of the Maoists and the Royal Nepal Army, because they feel similarly persecuted by both.

This reprieve owes its origin to a 1950 treaty of friendship between India and Nepal, whereby Nepalis enjoy the same rights in India as Indian citizens except that they cannot vote.

In fact, according to recent figures, there are some 40,000 Nepalis in the Indian armed forces and around 1,15,000 ex-servicemen in Nepal.

Meanwhile, the Nepal king is using what he believes is a powerful weapon against India — withholding an already promised support for India in UN Security Council.

A recent visit by minister of state for external affairs Rao Inderjit Singh to rally support was inconclusive.

However, analysts here pointed out that with Japan as the largest aid donor to Nepal, Kathmandu will be hardpressed to deny support to the G4 nations.

✓ **'Special'**

envoy on

Nepal

visit

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

✓ **New Delhi, July 20:** India has decided to send minister of state for foreign affairs Rao Inderjit Singh as its "special envoy" on a three-day trip to Nepal, beginning tomorrow.

This is the first ministerial visit from Delhi to Kathmandu after King Gyanendra seized power on February 1.

The decision to send a minister is being seen as another instance when Delhi has blinked first in its diplomatic staring match with the king.

✓ In April this year, Gyanendra had managed to get an assurance from Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, when they met in Jakarta, on India's resumption of arms supply to Nepal.

After widespread protests on India's stand, Delhi said it was only sending non-lethal equipment, but it was clear that it was yielding to pressure.

Singh's visit also comes in the wake of the UN secretary-general's special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi's meeting with the king.

Brahimi had asked Gyanendra to restore democracy in the country but also offered the UN's help to resolve the political crisis in the rebellion-racked kingdom.

Ostensibly, Singh's visit to Nepal is for a discussion on the reforms proposed to the UN by India and the other Group of Four nations. But he will also discuss a number of developments in the country and elsewhere in the region.

Singh was the last Indian leader to visit Nepal. He had gone to Lumbini in November to attend the Second World Buddhist Summit.

The fact that India has decided to send Singh as a "special envoy" is a clear indication that Delhi is keen to keep its communication line open with the palace.

If it was so keen that its position on the proposed UN reforms should be explained, Delhi could have asked its ambassador in Kathmandu, Shiv Shankar Mukherjee, to do so. India has not reacted officially to Brahimi's visit to Nepal. But his offer of UN help to resolve the crisis may not have gone down well with the Indian establishment.

Gyanendra, however, has given no indication of yielding under pressure. In a recent cabinet expansion in the kingdom, ministerial posts have gone to those seen as hardliners, royalists or political light weights.

21 JUL 2005

THE TELEGRAPH

Delhi extends Rs 1,984 cr assistance to Bhutan

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, July 14. — India will disburse an amount of Rs 1,984 crore for the Tenth Plan of the Himalayan kingdom Bhutan that includes a project-tied-assistance of Rs 734 crore.

The assistance is for the period July 2002 to June 2007 and would be funded from the non-Plan Budget of the ministry of external affairs. The amount approved also comprises direct subsidy of Rs 710 crore and other subsidies and refunds of Rs 540 crore.

Today's Cabinet decision in this regard will lead to generation of opportunities for Indian companies to participate in Bhutan's major projects. It will also strengthen India-Bhutan relations

based on the country's strategic and economic interests in the area of high geo-political sensitivity. It will also strengthen the goodwill Bhutan has for India.

India has extended support to Five Year Plans of Bhutan since their inception in 1961. The support is viewed as an essential component of Bhutan's planned development. It is generated in a number of ways, including by expanding the domestic revenue base by undertaking projects which would generate surplus revenues in Bhutan, undertaking projects in that country in social, health, infrastructure and strategic sectors and also to extend cash support to bridge the resource gap. And there has been no dilution of India's role in the developmental and modernisation of Bhutan.

15 JUL 2005

THE STATESMAN

Book exposes Ulfa's links with Bhutan

Former BSF director says Cong govt let Barua flee in 1991

India's foreign minister, Shri. Pranab Mukherjee

H. Khogen Singh
New Delhi, July 6

BHUTAN ISN'T going to like this one. Ditto the Congress.

A new book on the insurgency in the northeast claims that Bhutan government officials used to accompany United Liberation Front of Asom (Ulfa) leaders "to Tibet to meet Chinese officials for the purchase of arms". This was of course, before the Ulfa was driven out of the dragon kingdom in 2003.

The book also claims that in 1991, the Army had trapped

Parash Barua, the Ulfa commander-in-chief, in the forests of Assam during Operation Bajrang. But following a Congress-Ulfa pact, the operation was called off abruptly, allowing Barua to escape.

Authored by former BSF director-general E.N. Rammohan, *Insurgent Frontiers: Essays from the troubled northeast*, will hit the stands soon.

Rammohan, who retired in 2000, was an Assam cadre IPS officer and served long years in the region. He was associated with the northeast even in post-

retirement, being advisor to the Manipur governor in 2001-02.

Rammohan says Bhutan initially maintained indirect links with the Ulfa. Later, the nexus grew with the Ulfa even "using the diplomatic bags of the Bhutan government for sending money to their contacts abroad".

In 1995, a consignment of arms was "delivered off the coast of Cox's Bazaar (in Bangladesh) by a Chinese naval ship and transported into a hired vessel". A second consignment was to be delivered on the Tibet border in the Chumbi valley.

"A senior Ulfa cadre went to take delivery of the consignment accompanied by a senior official from the Bhutan foreign ministry. At the last moment, the Bhutan government asked its officer not to accept the consignment as the Indian embassy in Bhutan got wind of the deal," the book says.

The author was I-G (operations) when Operation Bajrang was launched in November 1990. In April 1991, the Army encircled Parash Barua in the Saraipung reserve forest, although the Army didn't know of this.

Realising that he was a sitting duck, Barua sent for his cousin Rebati Phukan, "who had links with (former Assam chief minister) Hiteswar Saikia". A deal was struck: the Ulfa would not disrupt the elections (the state was under President's rule) as the Congress had a good chance of capturing power. In return, Operation Bajrang would be stopped so that the Army would be off Barua's tail.

As it turned out, the Ulfa kept a low profile during the elections, the Congress returned to power and Saikia became chief minis-



Ulfa commander-in-chief Parash Barua

ter for the second time.

The book also deals at length with the controversial 1983 Assam elections that killed thousands, the Naga insurgency and the ceasefire with the NSCN(IM) that the author says is observed more in the breach, and the Chakma problem.

First lot of supplies after freeze: Jeeps, jackets for Nepal

SHISHIR GUPTA
NEW DELHI, JULY 4

INDIA finally supplied the first consignment of non-lethal military items to Nepal — including bullet-proof jackets — via the Raxaul border, over the weekend. The decision had been taken two months back by the Cabinet Committee on Security.

Government sources said Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had last Thursday approved the decision after King Gyanendra gave his assurance that Nepal would move towards restoring multi-party democracy.

The UPA Government had assured King Gyanendra that it would stick to its commitments on military supplies during the Asian-African conference at Bandung in April. The approval was pending with National Security Advi-



Gyanendra

for M.K. Narayanan since then.

It is learnt that senior officials of the Royal Nepalese Army have already conveyed their appreciation on the resumption of supplies through the military channel.

The supplies included Mahindra jeeps, bullet-proof jackets, concertina security wires, bunker protection devices and mine-proof vehicles.

New Delhi has, however, held back hand-held thermal imagers, used in counter-insurgency operations, and night-vision devices. In the case of thermal imagers, New Delhi feels Kathmandu should sign a protocol on intellectual property rights, ruling out the possibility of the force multipliers falling into the hands of other countries.

South Block is tightlipped

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

First lot of supplies after freeze: Jeeps, jackets for Nepal

about the supplies but, significantly, the decision came after the commission examining the alleged corruption case against former Nepalese prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba found no evidence against him.

Though the King still exercises strict control over the government, opposition leaders like Girija Prasad Koirala and Surya Bahadur Thapa have been allowed to travel to India and discuss the political situation with New Delhi.

Though South Block continues to veto any lethal supplies, like INSAS 5.56-mm ri-

fle or ammunition, it is actively supporting efforts to bring the Nepal Maoists into the political mainstream.

The visiting opposition leaders had said quite vociferously that they were against India resuming arms supplies to Kathmandu but New Delhi knows it cannot allow positions to harden with Nepal, a special neighbour.

The Indian assessment of the Nepalese situation is that both RNA and the Left-wing extremists are operationally in a stalemate and it is for the opposition parties to bring the Maoists on board through a political dialogue.

Natwar, Abdullah hold talks

gndia
Abdullah

Diplomatic Correspondent

NEW DELHI: External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh and the visiting Afghanistan Foreign Minister, Abdullah Abdullah, held talks on Sunday on Afghanistan and the situation prevailing in the region.

Mr. Singh thanked Afghanistan for its decision to co-sponsor the G-4 resolution, seeking substantive expansion of the United Nations Security Council. He also expressed appreciation for the constructive role played by Afghanistan in the Organisation of Islamic Conference. (This relates to Afghan opposition to resolutions on Kashmir routinely introduced by Pakistan in the OIC).

The External Affairs Ministry said after the talks that India had reaffirmed its commitment to the reconstruction of Afghanistan through its \$500 million debt programme.

The two leaders also discussed the security situation in Afghanistan, especially the recent spurt in incidents of violence attributed to the Taliban.



Afghanistan Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah and External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh prior to the meeting at Hyderabad House in New Delhi on Sunday. - PHOTO: V. SUDERSHAN

APRIL 2005 THE HINDU

বিহার হয়েই ঢকছে নেপালের মাওবাদীরা

সুরত বসু • পটনা

২৫ জুন: গান্ধীজির স্মৃতিজড়িত চম্পারণ এখন নকশাল এবং মাওবাদীদের পছন্দের বিচরণভূমি। তার থেকেও গুরুত্বপূর্ণ, এই অঞ্চলের নেপাল সীমান্ত দিয়েই যোগাযোগ রক্ষা করছে দু'পারের নকশালেরা। সম্পর্ক এখন এতটাই ঘনিষ্ঠ যে, পশ্চিম চম্পারণের জঙ্গলে নকশালদের সহযোগিতায় গড়ে উঠেছে নেপালি মাওবাদীদের প্রশিক্ষণ শিবির। গত দু'দিন ধরে পূর্ব চম্পারণ জেলার মধুবনে মাওবাদীদের সঙ্গে সংঘর্ষের পরে তল্লাশির সময়ে হাতেনাতে দুই প্রান্তের নকশালদের মধ্যে যোগের প্রমাণ পেয়েছে পুলিশ-প্রশাসন।

এই সংঘর্ষে এ পর্যন্ত প্রায় কুড়ি জন মাওবাদী মারা গিয়েছে। সাম্প্রতিক কালে মাওবাদীদের সঙ্গে পুলিশের এত বড় মাপের সংঘর্ষ কোথাও হয়নি। কিন্তু সংঘর্ষের থেকেও তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ নকশাল-মাওবাদী যোগের অকাটা প্রমাণ হাতে পাওয়া। বিহার পুলিশের ডিজি আশিসরঞ্জন সিংহ জানিয়েছেন, চম্পারণে ভারতের নকশাল ও নেপালের মাওবাদীরা যে যৌথ অপারেশন চালিয়েছে, তার অনেক প্রমাণ মিলেছে সংঘর্ষস্থল থেকে।

এত দিন বিহারের নকশাল জঙ্গিরা দক্ষিণ ও মধ্য বিহারের বেশ কয়েকটি জেলার নিজেদের সীমাবদ্ধ রেখেছিল। তবে নওয়াদা, গয়া, পটনা, জহানাবাদ ছাড়িয়ে নকশালেরা যে নতুন অঞ্চল খুঁজে নিচ্ছে, তা বোঝা গিয়েছিল ৫ জানুয়ারি মুঙ্গেরে ল্যান্ডমাইন বিস্ফোরণের পরে। ভারত-নেপাল সীমান্তেও যে তাদের দৌরাত্ম্য বাড়ছে, তার ইঙ্গিত দিয়েছিল গোয়েন্দা দফতরের বিভিন্ন রিপোর্ট। এ বারে হাতেনাতে প্রমাণ পেয়ে গিলেন বিহার পুলিশের পদস্থ কর্তারা।

বিহার পুলিশের গোয়েন্দা দফতরের এক পদস্থ কর্তা জানিয়েছেন, নেপালের মাওবাদীদের সঙ্গে হাত মিলিয়ে ভারতীয় নকশাল জঙ্গিরা গড়ে তুলেছে শক্তপোক্ত এক নেটওয়ার্ক। পশ্চিম চম্পারণের বাগহা জঙ্গলে

চলছে দুই দেশের জঙ্গিদের যৌথ প্রশিক্ষণ শিবির। এতে যোগ দিয়েছে বহু মহিলাও। সামরিক বাহিনীর ধাঁচে জলপাই রঙের পোশাক পরা নকশালেরা নেপাল থেকে শুরু করে বিহার-ঝাড়খণ্ড, মধ্যপ্রদেশের দণ্ডকারণ্য এলাকা এবং অন্ধ্রপ্রদেশ মিলিয়ে একটি 'কমপ্যাক্ট রেভলিউশনারি জেন' তৈরির পরিকল্পনা নিয়ে এগোচ্ছে।

ওই পুলিশকর্তা আরও জানিয়েছেন, একই সঙ্গে নকশালদের নজর উত্তরবঙ্গের দার্জিলিং ও শিলিগুড়ির উপরেও। এই দুই অঞ্চলে নিজেদের নেটওয়ার্ক তৈরির চেষ্টা করছে নেপালের মাওবাদীরা। নেপাল থেকে পালিয়ে এসে তাদের অনেকেই আশ্রয় পাচ্ছে কামতাপুর লিবারেশন অর্গানাইজেশন-এর কাছে। তাদের সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ রয়েছে ডুটান, বাংলাদেশ এবং শ্রীলঙ্কার জঙ্গিদেরও। ওই সব দেশের মাওবাদীদের এক ছাতার তলায় আনতে জঙ্গিরা তৈরি করেছে 'কো-অর্ডিনেশন কমিটি অফ মাওইস্ট পার্টিজ অ্যান্ড অর্গানাইজেশন'।

নেপালের মাওবাদী জঙ্গিদের অন্যতম শীর্ষ নেতা বুবুরাম ভট্টরাই এখন ভারতেই গা ঢাকা দিয়ে রয়েছে বলে মনে করছেন গোয়েন্দারা। দিল্লির জওহরলাল নেহরু বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের ছাত্র বুবুরামের সঙ্গে ভারতের নকশাল জঙ্গিদের ঘনিষ্ঠ সম্পর্ক। সেই ঘনিষ্ঠতা বাড়িয়ে ভারতে তাদের বিচরণ আরও অবাধ করতে নেপালের মাওবাদী গোষ্ঠীর প্রধান কমরেড প্রচণ্ড সম্প্রতি এ দেশে এসে নকশালদের সঙ্গে বৈঠক করেছেন। দু'তরফের আলোচনায় মোটামুটি যে সব সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া হয়েছে তা হল—

- নকশালেরা বিহারের দক্ষিণ ও মধ্য ভাগের সঙ্গে উত্তরাংশে নেপাল সীমান্তবর্তী জেলাগুলিতে ক্রমশ সরে আসবে।
- দুই দেশের জঙ্গিদের মধ্যে সামরিক অভিজ্ঞতা ও অস্ত্র বিনিময় চলবে।
- প্রশিক্ষণের জন্য যৌথ শিবির তৈরি হবে।
- আত্মগোপনে পরস্পরকে সাহায্য করা হবে। হামলাও চালানো হবে যৌথ ভাবে।

Indian news channels back on air in Nepal

Statesman News Service

KATHMANDU, June 12. — After being absent from Nepal for over four months, private Indian news channels finally made a comeback in the kingdom last night. Aaj Tak, Zee News, Star News, NDTV and India TV programmes were resumed by cable

operators who had suspended them since early February when the Indian media erupted in criticism of Gyanendra's sacking of the Sher Bahadur Deuba government and assumption of direct powers.

According to Mr. Manaraja Ranjit, president of Nepal Cable TV Sangh, cable operators received a letter from the ministry of

Koirala holds talks with Yechuri

NEW DELHI, June 12. — The Nepal Congress leader, Mr Girija Prasad Koirala, today met the CPI-M Politburo member, Mr Sitaram Yechury, to hold deliberations on the political developments in Nepal. After a 40-minute meeting with the Nepalese leader, Mr Yechury said: "Mr Koirala briefed us about the Nepal people's struggle for restoration of democracy there." He added: "We are with the Nepalese struggle for democracy and we fully support it." —SNS

57-3-1876
The letter came during the nearly three-month-old period of emergency when Nepal's media too were reined in by various regulations. Though emergency was lifted in April-end, most Indian news channels, except Doordarshan, remained off air. The council of ministers held a meeting on Wednesday where it was

reportedly decided that the suspended Indian channels would be allowed.

Mr Ranjit said the cable operators had started beaming the Indian news channels on the basis of media reports that the government had decided to lift the suspension order. The operators, however, were yet to receive a formal letter from the ministry, he added.

Nepalese influx up

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, June 8. — There has been an increase in the number of Nepalese coming across the border, mainly due to the escalation in Maoist violence.

Officials here said the checkpoints along the India-Nepal border have reported an increase of one and a half times to double the normal number of Nepalese coming into India. "There are reports that several villages in the far-western part of Nepal have become depopulated due to insurgency," an official said.

The foreign minister, Mr Natwar Singh, today met with the former Nepalese Prime Minister, Mr GP Koirala, at South Block. Mr Koirala briefed the minister



Mr Natwar Singh meets Mr GP Koirala in New Delhi on Wednesday. — AFP

Scribes court arrest

KATHMANDU, June 8. — Over 50 journalists courted arrest this afternoon defying a newly imposed ban on rallies in the city. An independent body of journalists, the Federation of Nepalese Journalists, had called a rally in the heart of the capital — a stone's throw away from the Prime Minister's Office and the Supreme Court — to protest against the government's decision to introduce new press curbs, tightening its control over the independent media. In a related development, Nepal's Supreme Court has overturned the royal government's order to close a communication centre which was supplying programmes to several radio stations in the country, adds PTI. — SNS

about the roadmap to democracy prepared by the seven political parties. Mr Singh welcomed it, saying that it was a good basis for a dialogue, which could be the first step for restoring multi-party democracy and constitutional monarchy.

Mr Singh reiterated India's conviction that the multi-dimensional and complex challenges facing Nepal can only be addressed by forging a broad national consensus on an eventual political settlement.

The political parties have to work out how to bring the Maoists to the mainstream by making them give up violence.

Delhi to seek middle path during Koirala visit

By Indrani Bagchi/TNN

New Delhi: India is preparing to pick up the pieces of its Nepal policy with the visit of former Nepali prime minister G P Koirala here this week. It will be one more way of exhibiting India's relevance in the evolution of Nepal's politics, after it openly supported the seven-party alliance in Nepal, in the face of stiff opposition from King Gyanendra.

Although the stated purpose of Koirala's visit is a medical check-up, he is expected to hold meetings with India's leadership. India's present aim seems to be to ensure that this political alliance remains together, so as to provide Nepali politics with some alternative apart from absolute monarchy or Left-wing extremism of Maoists.

In fact, CPM leader Prakash Karat's meeting with Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai was also intended to integrate Maoists into the Nepali political mainstream. India will stress on the message that political parties have to make space for Maoists.

Sources said that India's senior MEA official Ranjit Rae, on his first visit to Nepal after the February coup, was exposed to the full gamut of Nepal's reaction to Indian policies, not all of them complimentary. As is becoming increasingly clear, India's micro-management of Nepal's political firmament is not paying dividends.

India is not too pleased with the king ei-

ther, because he has not fulfilled a large number of promises he made to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in Jakarta to get India to release arms supplies. The king, say senior government sources, is playing his own games with India. The MEA counsels patience and is determined to see this policy through, trying hard not to use India's numerous leverages to make Nepal obey.

One of the main reasons why India is faltering on Nepal is that its professed preference for multi-party democracy and constitutional monarchy has very little to do with the reality of present-day Nepal. The two pillars, as India likes to call them, are pitted against each other and it will take more than diplomatic ingenuity to bring them on the same side.

In fact, Nepal sources say that India's current position is difficult to explain when the king's real coup was in October 2002, when he sacked the government of Sher Bahadur Deuba. The way the king was headed was clear then, but India barely reacted. New Delhi's flip-flops on arms supplies too have not won friends or influenced the king or the Royal Nepal Army.

Sources here maintain that confusion regarding Nepal resulted from the profusion of interests within India that retain a stake in Nepal - from the royal family's connections, to the political parties, intellectuals, army and supporters of the world's only Hindu king.



31 MAY 2005

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Delhi's flop show in Kathmandu

KESHAV Pradhan
Kathmandu, May 30

INDIA'S CHANGING stands on Nepal since the post-February 1 coup has brought to the surface the inherent contradictions in New Delhi's policy vis-à-vis Kathmandu. Owing to this, India now looks more vulnerable to attacks from its critics, especially monarchists, than ever before. Three recent events prove how dismal India's position in Nepal has become.

They are — the Royal Nepalese Army's disclosure of an audio-tape in which Maoist chief Pushpakamal Dahal talks of his party's interaction with India, the controversy over a secret meeting between CPM general secretary Prakash Karat and top Nepalese Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai in New Delhi and the delivery of a demarche to New Delhi by Kathmandu in protest against India's support to the coming together of seven mainstream parties who are opposed to the coup.

India's attempts to defend itself in the first two cases suffered a serious setback after communist rebels themselves confirmed the authenticity of the tape and the presence of Bhattarai in India. Following this, even hardcore pro-democracy Nepalese journals have accused India of "double-dealing."

All this may have an adverse impact on New Delhi's goodwill among Western powers — particularly the US and Britain — that support its stand on Nepal.

New Delhi branded Nepalese Maoists "terrorists" two months before Kathmandu did so in 2001. Despite this, its policy on them has been inconsistent. It has arrested and deported a handful of them to Nepal, but continues to detain most others in its prisons. This has annoyed both Kathmandu and the rebel leadership.

The other factor that has turned the Maoists against New Delhi is its opposition to their demand for a republican state. And by banning them, it has blocked its own chances of directly interacting with them. India's actions have left the Nepalese people wondering about how it will deal with the mainline parties who now want the king to choose between republicanism and total democracy.

A similar inconsistency and confusion marks India's stand on democratic par-

ties. Democrats claim that King Gyanendra staged his coup in two phases, the first one taking place with the October 2002 sacking of Sher Bahadur Deuba. They feel that India's strong intervention at that time would have discouraged the monarch from seizing power after frequently changing PMs for three years.

Making a mockery of democracy, he even put out a notice asking for names for the PM's post, ahead of Natwar Singh's Kathmandu visit last year.

Two major pro-India parties — the Nepali Congress and the Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Anandi Devi) — did not recognise these palace-installed governments, but Delhi showed no reservations while dealing with them on key issues like extradition and water resources. That not only caused a setback to the parties' stir for a democratic government but also created a wrong impression of India as a neighbour that fishes in troubled waters.

In the wake of the coup, India hastily stopped arms assistance to Nepal. Now, as the mainline parties have just begun a joint stir against the coup, New Delhi is hotly debating whether to resume military supply to Kathmandu, especially after the Jakarta meeting between the king and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.



India's dilemma: To arm or not to arm Nepal

Did Karat talk with Maoists from Himalayan kingdom?

ALOKE Banerjee
Kolkata, May 30

A SECRET meeting between CPI(M) general secretary Prakash Karat and Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai might indeed have taken place in the second week of this month if the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) is to be believed.

In an e-mail, Prachand, chairman of CPN (Maoist) said Bhattarai and top party leader Krishna Bahadur Mahara were sent to India to meet political leaders. The objective was to assess India's stand if the CPN(Maoist) accepted the multi-party system as a political solution to the ongoing situation in Nepal, and agreed to work with other political parties in a constituent assembly.

Karat, a friend of Bhattarai during their days in the Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, however, denied

having met the Nepalese leader, who carries a red-corner Interpol notice. But CPI(M) central committee leaders in Kolkata told HT that the meeting had indeed taken place in the second week of this month and that Karat had insisted that Maoists in Nepal should give up violence and join the political mainstream.

In his message, Prachand said, "Taking the constituent assembly as the means of a minimum political solution, the party is maintaining relations with different political parties and forces not only within the country but of the world including (those of) India, Europe and the US.

"To learn the position of Indian political parties — including that of the Indian government — and also to explain the party's viewpoints, the central office had dispatched comrade Krishna Bahadur Mahara and comrade Baburam Bhattarai for this purpose."

However, he skipped mention of the political leaders or the parties in India, who had been approached.

Meanwhile, the CPN(Maoist) chairman, described as mere propaganda the reports of his differences with Bhattarai and that he was against any of the Nepali Maoist leaders meeting their Indian counterparts. "The reactionary elements who are making up these internal disputes are trying to intensify their conspiracies to create a split in the party. Our party requests all the pro-people forces to stay cautious against such propaganda," Prachand said in his statement.

The CPN (Maoist) chairman also dismissed speculation that his party was seeking Indian mediation. "Our party has not asked any country for mediation. But obviously, we are ready to accept mediation of the United Nations or reliable international human right organisations for a political solution," he said.

31 MAY 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Karat denies Maoist meet

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, May 26. — CPI-M general secretary Mr Prakash Karat today denied that he had met the Nepalese Maoist leader, Baburam Bhattarai, for talks "organised by Indian intelligence agencies".

In a separate statement issued from Kathmandu, the Maoist leader said he did not need the help of Indian intelligence agencies to meet anyone. He neither denied nor confirmed his meeting with Mr Karat.

Also today, India condemned the Maoists in Nepal for indulging in terrorism and asserted that there had been no change in its policy towards the outfit. The statement was issued in reaction to media reports that Bhattarai had a meeting with Mr Karat.

The foreign ministry spokesman, Mr Navtej Sarna, said there was no change in India's policy with regard to the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). "We unequivocally condemn their terrorist and violent activities." He, however, added that it was India's conviction that "there is no purely military solution to the Maoist insurgency".

He said: "Durable peace and stability in Nepal can only be achieved through a political settlement, which requires the Maoists to forswear armed struggle and lay down their arms."

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THE STATESMAN

India and Maoists deny any links

KESHAV Pradhan
Kathmandu, May 25

INDIA, ALONG with Nepal's Maoist rebels, seems to have got caught in the vortex of the kingdom's turbulent politics. In the wake of the royal regime's attempts to prove links between them, the two sides on Wednesday categorically stated that they have nothing to do with each other.

Baburam Bhattarai, who earlier headed the Maoists' parallel government, described attempts to label him pro-India as "a move to break the current anti-monarchy agitation." He was first accused of being soft on New Delhi after he insisted on fighting against the palace in the wake of the February 1 coup. The Royal Nepalese Army on May 20 released a tape on which Maoist chairman Pushpakamal Dahal talks about how India pressed his party to withdraw disciplinary action taken against Bhattarai.

A statement issued by Bhattarai said: "It's shocking that questions are being raised about the patriotism of a person like me who has written a doctoral thesis

which says Nepal's all-round development is not possible as long as all unequal treaties signed between it and India are not updated in a progressive manner."

"To call someone a foreign agent immediately after differences over ideological matters is the height to political bankruptcy.... If anyone calls me pro-India just because my party and I have chosen the monarchy, not India, as our main enemy, he too automatically becomes an agent of the palace," Bhattarai added.

Bhattarai refuted reports about Indian intelligence agencies helping him meet Indian politicians. "Considering my background, I do not need help from such agencies to contact people across the globe." He added his party had assigned him and some colleagues to the international community in favour of a democratic republican system and a constituent assembly.

Indian embassy spokesperson Sanjay Verma said: "Our position on the Maoists has not changed (India calls them terrorists). We want them to eschew violence and return to the mainstream."

26 MAY 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Koirala lines up Delhi date

PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, May 25: Nepali Congress president Girija Prasad Koirala is planning to visit India on June 1, a move that is likely to put to test King Gyanendra's intentions of restoring democracy in the country.

Sources in the Nepali Congress said Koirala will not slip out of the country surreptitiously but is likely to take the flight from Kathmandu. Whether he is allowed to leave the country will give an indication of the king's intention.

The veteran Nepalese leader has gone on record saying no compromise with Gyanendra was possible till he took serious and urgent steps to bring back democracy.

Koirala's trip will also clear the air on the Indian leader-

Although India decided to resume defence cooperation with the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) early this month, relations between Delhi and the monarch have been under strain lately.

There are murmurs in Delhi about opening links with the Maoists being an option to deal with the situation in Nepal, especially when Gyanendra is trying to renege on the promised roadmap to democracy.

24 MAY 2005

THE TELEGRAPH

India takes up tape issue with Nepal army

Sudeshna Sarkar
in Kathmandu

May 24. — India has officially conveyed its displeasure at the Nepalese army making public an audio tape last week that sought to create an impression that Nepal's Maoist rebels were in touch with the Indian government.

The defence attache at the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu met senior officials of the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) on Sunday following the RNA playing an audio tape, wherein, a man described as Maoist supremo Prachanda claimed that he had been asked over to India for talks by the Indian authorities. The speaker said he had counter-invited Indian officials to come to his party's base in Nepal, where they could meet other top rebel leaders as well.

The speaker also claimed the Indian government was ready to send back two Maoist leaders it had arrested on Indian soil but changed its mind following reports of a rift between

the Miss Hanoi contest to have the final say on whether Ms Hang can represent Vietnam.

Miss Universe pageant organisers were told of Ms Hang's situation weeks ago and agreed to allow her to compete, said Ms

Get off our back, Nepal tells India

By Indrani Bagchi/TNN

New Delhi: India maintained a prudent silence on Saturday as Nepal, under the direct rule of King Gyanendra, again upped the ante against New Delhi. Nepalese foreign secretary Madhuraman Acharya issued a diplomatic censure to India, asking it (and the European Union) to desist from interfering in Nepal's internal matters.

This, coupled with the Royal Nepalese Army's publicised videotape about India's contacts with the Maoists and the king's renewed exertions to reimpose curbs on press and political freedoms, points to a glaring fact. Gyanendra is not interested in democracy and is bitterly opposed to any roadmap the Indian government may want him to follow.

This is the second time in the past few months that the king has blatantly disregarded any commitment to India about restoring democracy in Nepal. The first time was after the Jakarta meeting with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh when he publicised India's decision to send arms to Nepal. India quickly let it be known that he had agreed to a roadmap on democracy. Within a day, he had put former prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba in prison, embarrassing New Delhi.

Top government officials had told reporters after India's decision on May 6 to resume pending arms supplies to Nepal that Kathmandu would make some announcements on restoration of democracy "soon".

Not only has that not happened, Gyanendra's actions in the past few days indicate that he has no intention of loosening his grip on the power that he took in the royal 'coup' of February 1, said government sources. The sources also say that the king thinks that with India courting every vote it can get for the UN Security Council seat, it will turn a blind eye to his excesses.

Although the Indian government has denied the allegations of cutting a deal with the Maoists, it is clear that the king's actions are a sharp reaction to any contacts that India might have been building with the rebels. Gyanendra seems to be hoping that the revelations might undermine India's standing with the political parties.

Now India is likely to support all further cohesive action by the seven-party alliance in Kathmandu, diluting the king's claims of getting undivided attention from New Delhi. Some analysts go so far as to suggest that the king might be looking to come to an understanding with the Prachanda faction of the Maoists.

Nevertheless, the recent events will make it doubly difficult for India to justify its about-turn on resumption of arms supplies to Nepal.

On top of that, the Royal Nepalese Army said on Friday that it had not received any military assistance from New Delhi although India had approved a shipment following the lifting of emergency rule in the Himalayan kingdom.



King Gyanendra

ঘোষণা সত্ত্বেও শুরু হয়নি অস্ত্র সাহায্য

মাওবাদী যোগ নিয়ে নেপালের অভিযোগে বিব্রত নয়াদিল্লি

জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল • নয়াদিল্লি

২১ মে: নেপালের সঙ্গে ভারতের কূটনৈতিক সম্পর্ক ফের জোর ধাক্কা খেল।

চলতি মাসের গোড়ায় ফের সামরিক সাহায্য শুরুর প্রতিশ্রুতি দিলেও এখনও কাঠমান্ডুকে কার্যত কিছুই দেয়নি নয়াদিল্লি। এ পর্যন্ত পাঠানো হয়েছে সেখানকার ভারতীয় দূতাবাসে পড়ে থাকা কিছু রোদ চশমা আর সীমান্তে দাঁড়িয়ে থাকা কয়েকটি জিপ। ফলে স্বাভাবিক ভাবেই ক্ষুব্ধ নেপাল। তাদের আর মাত্র এক মাস চলার মতো গোলাবারুদ মজুত আছে। দিল্লির প্রতিরক্ষা মন্ত্রকে ইতিমধ্যেই এসে পৌঁছেছে কাঠমান্ডুর এসওএস।

ভারতের উপরে চাপ বাড়াতে কালই আর একটি কাণ্ড ঘটিয়েছে নেপালের সেনাবাহিনী। সাংবাদিক বৈঠক করে তারা দাবি করেছে, নেপালের মাওবাদীদের সঙ্গে ঘনিষ্ঠ যোগাযোগ আছে দিল্লির। নিজেদের দাবির সমর্থনে মাওবাদী নেতা পুষ্পকুমার দহল ওরফে 'প্রচণ্ড'-এর একটি অডিও ক্যাসেটও শুনিয়েছেন রয়্যাল নেপাল আর্মির শীর্ষ কর্তারা। তাতে প্রচণ্ড দাবি করেছেন, শিলিগুড়ি ও চেম্বাইয়ের জেলে বন্দি দুই মাওবাদী নেতাকে ছেড়ে দেওয়ার আশ্বাস দিয়েছে ভারত সরকার। বিনিময়ে মাওবাদী নেতা বাবুরাম ভট্টরাইকে তাঁর পদ ফিরিয়ে দিতে হবে। দলে প্রচণ্ডের একাধিপত্য নিয়ে প্রশ্ন তোলায় বাবুরামকে পদচ্যুত করা হয়।

প্রচণ্ডের এই বক্তব্য ভারতের সঙ্গে মাওবাদী নেতাদের যোগাযোগের নজির বলে দাবি করছে নেপালি সেনাবাহিনী। নেপালের বহু রাজনৈতিক নেতার মতো বাবুরামেরও পড়াশোনা ভারতে, দিল্লির জওহরলাল নেহরু বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে। এ দেশে তাঁর অনেক বন্ধুবান্ধবও আছে। নেপালের মাওবাদীদের মধ্যে তিনি ভারতপন্থী বলেও পরিচিত।

কাঠমান্ডুর এই আচমকা অভিযোগে ভারতের বিদেশ মন্ত্রক খুবই ক্ষুব্ধ। ওই টেপের সত্যতা অস্বীকার করে তারা বলেছে, এটা রাজা জ্ঞানেন্দ্রের ভারতের উপরে কূটনৈতিক চাপ সৃষ্টির কৌশল ছাড়া আর কিছু নয়।

প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায় আজ দিল্লি ফিরেই প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে বিষয়টি নিয়ে কথা বলেন। রণকৌশল ঠিক করতে শীঘ্রই মন্ত্রিসভার নিরাপত্তা বিষয়ক বৈঠক হবে। তবে রাজা জ্ঞানেন্দ্র যে মনমোহন সিংহকে ফের বড় ধরনের অস্থিতিতে ফেলে দিয়েছেন সে ব্যাপারে সন্দেহ নেই।

১ ফেব্রুয়ারি প্রধানমন্ত্রী শের বাহাদুর দেউবাকে গদিচ্যুত করে রাজা ক্ষমতা দখলের পরে নেপালকে সব রকম সামরিক সাহায্য দেওয়া বন্ধ করে দিয়েছিল ভারত। কিন্তু মাত্র তিন মাস পরে রাজা গণতন্ত্র ফেরানোর ব্যাপারে তেমন গরজ না দেখানো সত্ত্বেও ফের সামরিক সাহায্য দেওয়ার সিদ্ধান্ত হয়। যদিও এ ব্যাপারে যোর আপত্তি ছিল ইউপিএ সরকারের অন্যতম সমর্থক বাম দলগুলিরও।

কেন তড়িঘড়ি এই সাহায্য শুরুর সিদ্ধান্ত? বিদেশমন্ত্রক সূত্রে বলা হচ্ছে, ২৯ মার্চ উচ্চপর্যায়ের এক পাক-প্রতিনিধি দলের কাঠমান্ডু সফর নয়াদিল্লিকে নতুন করে ভাবতে বাধ্য করে। এই সফরে নেপালের রাজার সঙ্গে বৈঠকে পঞ্চাশ লক্ষ ডলার অর্থ সাহায্যের প্রতিশ্রুতি দেন পাকিস্তানের অর্থমন্ত্রকের প্রতিমন্ত্রী হিনা রাব্বানি। তার মধ্যে সামরিক সহায়তার বিষয়টিও ছিল। এই ঘটনায় প্রচণ্ড অসন্তুষ্ট হয় ভারত। নেপালে ভারতের রাষ্ট্রদূত শিবশঙ্কর মুখোপাধ্যায় এই অসন্তোষের কথা জানান। আমেরিকা এবং ব্রিটেনের প্রতিনিধিদের কাছেও এ ব্যাপারে অভিযোগ জানায় ভারত।

তারও আগের আর একটি ঘটনা ভারতকে চিন্তায় ফেলেছিল। সেটি নেপালে জরুরি অবস্থা জারির পরেই সে দেশে পাক রাষ্ট্রদূতের উক্তি। বিদায়ী রাষ্ট্রদূত জামির আক্রম ফিরে যাওয়ার আগে নেপালকে সামরিক সহায়তার আশ্বাস দিয়েছিলেন। সেই আশ্বাস নিয়ে ভারতের বিদেশমন্ত্রক ও প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রকে উত্থালপাতাল চললেও পাকিস্তান কিন্তু আক্রমের বিবৃতি খারিজ করার কোনও ইঙ্গিত দেয়নি।

কেন্দ্রীয় গোয়েন্দারা তখন প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে এমনও বলেছিলেন যে, নেপাল সম্পর্কে ভারত বেশি কঠোর মনোভাব নিলে পাকিস্তান তাদের

সাহায্যের হাত বাড়িয়ে দেবে। সে ক্ষেত্রে সরাসরি সামরিক সাহায্য পাঠাতে না পারলে চিনা ভূখণ্ডের মধ্যে দিয়ে তা নেপালে পাঠানোর চেষ্টা করতে পারে ইসলামাবাদ।

এই অবস্থায় খানিকটা দোলাচলে পড়ে ভারত। নেপালকে সামরিক সাহায্য দেওয়া নিয়ে ভারতীয় সেনাবাহিনীর মনোভাব পুরোপুরি উপেক্ষা করতে চাননি প্রণববাবু। এমন একটা পরিস্থিতিতে জাকার্তা সফরের আগে রাজা যখন মনমোহনের সঙ্গে দেখা করতে চাইলেন, তখন প্রধানমন্ত্রী রাজি হয়ে যান। প্রথমে প্রস্তাব ছিল, শুধু বিদেশমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গেই রাজার দেখা হোক। কিন্তু প্রণববাবু বলেন, রাজার অনুরোধ সত্ত্বেও প্রধানমন্ত্রী দেখা করবেন না, এটা কূটনৈতিক সৌজন্যের পরিপন্থী।

২৩ এপ্রিল জাকার্তার বৈঠকের পরে জটিলতা বাড়ে। রাজা ঘোষণা করেন, তিনি সামরিক সহায়তার আশ্বাস পেয়েছেন। অন্য দিকে, প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সচিবালয় জানায়, বিষয়টিকে সঠিক প্রেক্ষিতে দেখার আশ্বাস দেওয়া হয়েছে। এ দিকে বিদেশমন্ত্রক দশ দিনের মধ্যে সামরিক সহায়তা দেওয়ার আশ্বাস দিয়ে দিয়েছিল প্রধানমন্ত্রী দেশে ফেরার আগেই। তিনি দেশে ফিরতেই বিদ্রোহ করেন প্রকাশ কারাট। বিষয়টি থমকে যায়।

এই সময় গোয়েন্দাদের কাছে খবর আসে, নেপালে পাকিস্তানের নতুন রাষ্ট্রদূত আবার অস্ত্র সাহায্যের ব্যাপারে আলোচনা শুরু করেছেন। কাঠমান্ডুর কিছু সংবাদপত্রে সে খবর প্রকাশিতও হয়েছে। আর এর পরেই ৬ মে সরকারের সিদ্ধান্ত হয় যে, সামরিক সহায়তা চালু করা হবে। এই সিদ্ধান্ত গ্রহণের মধ্যে দিয়ে চিন ও পাকিস্তানের প্রভাব ঠেকাতে চেয়েছে ভারত। কিন্তু বাস্তবে 'ধীরে চলো' নীতি নিয়েছে। বিদেশমন্ত্রকের সূত্রের মতে, সামরিক সহায়তা কূটনৈতিক ভাবে চালু রাখা হলেও গণতন্ত্র না ফেরা পর্যন্ত সে ভাবে প্রক্রিয়াটি চালু হচ্ছে না। সামরিক প্রশিক্ষণ শুরু করা বা সেনাদের জন্য ওষুধ পাঠানো হলেও এখনও অস্ত্র সরবরাহের সিদ্ধান্ত কার্যকর হয়নি। আপাতত এ ভাবেই লাঠি না ভেঙে সাপ মারার চেষ্টায় আছে ভারত।

Delhi sniffs king's ploy

PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, May 21: The Royal Nepal Army's decision to announce India's alleged links with Maoists possibly stems from King Gyanendra's anger with Delhi for backing political parties in their campaign for democracy.

Hours before the army released the audio tape yesterday on which Maoist leader Prachanda was allegedly speaking about an invitation for talks from Delhi, the Indian ambassador was handed a demarche (formal protest) over what Kathmandu calls an attempt to "interfere in Nepal's internal affairs".

Ambassador Shiv Shankar Mukherjee had gone to the Nepalese foreign office to discuss "multilateral issues" with foreign secretary Madhu Raman Acharya when he was handed the demarche.

Later, the army released the audio tape at its headquarters. This followed a report in *Gulf News* that some key Maoist leaders, including Baburam Bhattarai, held meetings with CPI leader A.B. Bardhan and his CPM counterpart Prakash Karat recently.

India has dismissed the charge as "baseless". It has also wondered why the Nepalese army made the tape public without first bringing it to India's notice.

Officials pointed out that the audio played by the army was part of an old tape it had earlier used to expose a rift in the Maoist leadership. "This clearly shows they had the tape for some time. Why did they not share its content with us?" a senior Indian official asked.

Questions are also being raised about how the army is

sure the voice on the tape is Prachanda's since the Maoist leader is a shadowy character and few have met him or heard him speak.

But Delhi is more concerned about Nepal's motive behind releasing the audio than whether the tape is genuine or not. It feels the army, prompted by the king, was "trying to play hardball" since Kathmandu is disappointed with Delhi over arms supply as well as its encouragement of the political parties' campaign for democracy.



Shiv Shankar Mukherjee

On May 16, India issued a statement welcoming the coming together of the seven big parties in Nepal and said the common agenda they had agreed upon could form a "good basis" for talks with the king to find a solution to the political crisis. On February 1, Gyanendra had dismissed the government and seized power.

Neither the king nor his close aides took the Indian statement lightly. The palace, unhappy with critical reports that have appeared in the Indian media in the past few weeks, feels these reflect the view of the government.

Delhi in Maoist plot: Nepal

J. HEMANTH

Kathmandu, May 20: Amid speculation that the Indian government is using Left allies to establish contact with Nepal's Maoists, the Royal Nepal Army today alleged New Delhi had invited rebel leader Prachanda alias Pushpa Kamal Dahal for talks.

Top officers of the army played an audio tape at a hastily convened news conference this afternoon, in which a man, whom it identified as Prachanda, is heard telling his cadre that New Delhi has called him for talks.

The allegation came two days after the Dubai-based *Gulf News* reported that three leaders of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist, including its legendary commander Baburam Bhattarai, were in Delhi this week. They met intelligence officials as well as CPM chief Prakash Karat and his CPI counterpart A.B. Bardhan, the newspaper added.

In the tape, the man claims Delhi stalled the release of top Maoist leaders C.P. Gajurel and Mohan Baidya, both in Indian prisons, after Prachanda stripped his deputy Bhattarai of his official post. He implies that Delhi wants Bhattarai to be reinstated as he is one of the few Maoist leaders with a pro-India tilt.

Bhattarai studied in the Delhi School of Planning and Architecture and the Jawaharlal Nehru University.

The Nepal army's director general of operations, Major General Kiran Shumsher Thapa, said several audio tapes and documents were captured during counter-insurgency operations after February 1, when King Gyanendra assumed power, declaring emergency. It is believed that the army played the same tape during a media briefing earlier by editing out the remarks about India as New Delhi was toying with the idea of resuming arms supplies.

Analysts believe the fuller tape was played once again today as the army wants to pressure India into resuming the military supplies suspended after the February 1 royal coup.

The Indian embassy questioned the authenticity of the tape and said the allegations were false, baseless and far-fetched. It said Delhi had been consistently helping the Nepal army to face challenges posed by the Maoist insurgency.

The *Gulf News* report said Krishna Bahadur Mahara and Kishan Pykural accompanied Bhattarai to the India talks with Prachanda's mandate.

21 MAY 2005

THE TELEGRAPH

Military aid from India not received, says Nepal Army

SHIRISH B. PRADHAN
KATHMANDU, MAY 20

THE Nepalese Army on Friday claimed it has not yet received any military assistance from India despite New Delhi's announcement that it has partially resumed the arms supply pipeline suspended after the royal takeover in the kingdom.

"We have not yet received those materials, which were on the pipeline before February 1," Army spokesman Deepak Gurung told a press conference here. "We have neither received any material nor any

official information about the resumption of arms supply by India," he said while acknowledging that the Army was fighting the war on terror with limited resources.

Maj Gen Kiran Shumsher Thapa, who was also present at the news conference, claimed that the security situation has significantly improved across Nepal over the past three months after the February 1 takeover of power by King Gyanendra. The guerrillas are in a "defeated mentality" so they can become more destructive, he cautioned. —PTI

21 MAY 2005

INDIAN EXPRESS

Don't Arm This Despot

Is India committed to democracy in Nepal?

By HARI ROKA

India's decision to 'resume' supply of arms to the dictator of Nepal has disappointed democrats everywhere. Expectations were high that for once in the long history of relations between the two countries, India would support the cause of democracy in Nepal. These expectations were misplaced. There is more than passing doubt that India had ever really terminated the supply of arms officially.

South Block periodically made impressive statements about the need to restore democracy in Nepal, but New Delhi never mounted any real pressure. What the Indian establishment really said was that no arms had left for Nepal since February 1 and that the issue of arms supply was under constant review. It did not clarify whether supply had been terminated and resumption was under review or supply was continuing and its termination was under review. Carried away by optimism, the media and most advocates of democracy in Nepal merely assumed that supply had been terminated.

The security establishment in India was against terminating arms supply. In early February, while South Block was speaking on behalf of democracy, the defence minister, as a member of the Cabinet Committee on Security, unequivocally ruled out termination of military supplies. Likewise, even as the minister of state for external affairs was expressing concern about the setback to democracy, the home minister cryptically informed the Rajya Sabha that India would like to "help and not complicate the situation in Nepal". As an afterthought he added, "We will be happy if the democratic system is restored in Nepal".

While arms supply was allegedly under review, in early March India signed a securi-

ty agreement with Nepal on containing terrorism. This news was first announced not by India but by the Nepali media.

India's official policy on arms, first announced by the Nepali despot, has finally been confirmed by the Indian government. Therefore, the diplomatic chatter in New Delhi, Washington and London about restoring the political process in Nepal should not carry much weight with those who are struggling against the internationally financed dictatorship in Nepal. This ought to be the first principle of the democratic struggle within Nepal, at least in the initial phase.



Nepal's political parties have too long been accustomed to align their position on monarchy with the interests of the New Delhi-Washington-London axis. This will not fetch them any dividends. The parties are yet to learn their lesson from the recent Indian betrayal. In response to the official Indian position, Nepal's Maoists offered a joint campaign with the political parties against royal dictatorship. Paralysed by new developments, the parties have rejected the offer. They have instead demanded that the Maoists give up arms.

This demand by the parties suits the international coterie, but it does not necessarily suit the strategic needs of democracy in Nepal. The dictator's henchmen have categorically declined to consider the recent seven-party demand for restoration of parliament. Instead, the parties have been invited

to participate in municipal elections. If the democratic parties do not change their strategic thinking, they are likely to be reduced to municipal status.

There are currently three forces in Nepal — the royalist dictatorship and its international allies, the Maoists and the political parties, in that order of significance. Should the Maoists unilaterally give up arms at this stage, there will be only one force in Nepal — the military state. The fear that the political parties could forge an alliance with the Maoists was a restraining factor with international hawks.

Political parties should reconsider their rejection of the Maoist offer. All that the parties needed to ask of Maoists was to refrain from killing civilians, without any demand to cease attacking the royal army, which is a private force of the despot.

Such a course of action will not only help those sections of the Indian establishment which support democracy in Nepal but also help establish institutional mechanisms for inducting the Maoists into the political mainstream, as and when the mainstream is restored to the people of Nepal. There is no mainstream for anyone to occupy and the space for it

must be wrested from a tyrant through pragmatic alliances.

It is, therefore, necessary for the political parties to give up their timid expectations from foreign powers, formulate a strategy suited to the needs of Nepal's democracy and initiate a face-off with the coteries that determine the fate of Nepali people. The twin pillars of stability are multiparty democracy and mainstreaming the Maoists. The first step is for the political parties to recognise that they are the third force and to convert the three-way struggle into a polarised conflict by striking a hard moral bargain with the Maoists.

They must also remind India that it is not wise to allow the Indian army to dictate India's policy. The current state of Nepal is proof of such folly.

The writer is a Nepali journalist in exile.

The lesser evil

Keeping the RNA battle-fit

Defence and diplomacy are opposite sides of the same coin, but all too often their interests appear at variance when rooted in the same objective — what is best for the nation. That bottom line must be borne in mind when trying to come to terms with the decision to resume arms supply to Nepal — what was in the pipeline to start with — the diplomatic pressure on Kathmandu to restore democracy, in which endeavour turning off supplies was a powerful tool. While those fortunate enough to be able to take “principled” positions without having to deal with situations on the ground condemn any move to sustain the monarch’s (mis)rule, Indian army officers will appreciate assistance being rendered to their brothers-in-arms across the border. The military mind perceives the supplies as benefiting the Royal Nepal Army, now stretched to its limits, tackling violent Maoist insurgency, rather than propping up the Palace. In political circles, particularly Left-wing ones, the perception would be decidedly different. So perhaps it would be best if the government turned the tap on and off in a manner graduated to keep the King on his promised pathway to a revival of popular rule.

The military perception has some solid basis. Insurgents show scant respect for national frontiers, and with the indigenous Naxal problem showing no signs of abating, the threat of a link-up is real. True, there is no military solution to a problem of socio-economic origin, but only application of force can create the “space” for which negotiations to commence. The RNA has been running short of stores, without Indian help pressure on the Maoists would dissipate. A frightening prospect would be the RNA seeking alternative sources for munitions: China, Pakistan? We also have to think about our own Gorkha soldiers, some 40,000 of them. Many of their relatives serve the RNA, their loyalty would be strained if they felt that India was allowing them to lose out to the Maoists. Gorkhas are simple fellows, they see things in black and white. Which throws up another potential problem for the Indian army. The need to guard against disruptive elements in Nepal exerting influence on Indian Gorkhas. Comparisons are never pleasant, but our officers will have to now provide the quality leadership that was so palpably lacking, when another section of soldiers were misled and provoked after Operation Bluestar.

16 MAY 2005

THE STATESMAN

A policy in search of a rationale

Siddharth Varadarajan

THE MANMOHAN Singh Government's decision to formally announce the lifting of its embargo on military supplies to Nepal marks the end of the first chapter of a passionate — and sometimes acrimonious — internal debate in which the External Affairs and Defence Ministries squared off against each other.

At stake are not just safari-suited — or uniformed — egos, or even the question of military aid to Nepal. For what the King's February 1 palace putsch has done is triggered the most sweeping reassessment of India's Nepal policy since 1990. Influential sections in New Delhi are now beginning to think of what life in the Himalayan kingdom might be like without the king. Officially, India still clings to the twin-pillar formula — that constitutional monarchy and multi-party democracy are equally crucial for Nepal's political stability. But privately, senior officials say that the King and his ambitions are the root cause of the instability in his country. "Of course we believe in the twin pillars," one senior official told me recently, "but if we have to choose between Nepal and the monarchy, India is going to choose Nepal."

To be sure, this assessment is not universally shared within the upper echelons of the Government. On February 1, officials in the Ministry of External Affairs were quite clear that the King's action was a shameless power grab aimed at undoing the 1990 Constitution and turning the clock back to the bad old days of the panchayat era. Never comfortable with the King's decision to dismiss Parliament in the first place, the MEA argued that now was the time to take a tough line in favour of democracy. This assessment was shared by other sections of government, notably the National Security Council Secretariat. But even as the issue of an arms embargo began to be

With the Foreign and Defence Ministries at loggerheads, it isn't surprising that India took 17 days to confirm King Gyanendra's statement in Jakarta that military supplies to Nepal would continue.

openly debated, a counter-view surfaced which sought to portray the palace takeover as essentially a defensive action aimed at dealing with the Maoist insurgency.

Working on parallel tracks, King Gyanendra sought to use all his royalist and military connections in India as a means of pressing his case with New Delhi. Had the BJP still been in power at the Centre, the Nepal king would doubtless have activated the 'Hindu' network of his friend Vishnu Hari Dalmia as well. Be that as it may, he nevertheless did manage to get a number of individuals with 'royal' or 'Gurkha' connections to lobby for him in the corridors of power.

With most opposition leaders in jail and the palace clamping down on media freedom, the Manmohan Singh Government wisely decided to announce an arms embargo. Given the internal divisions, however, it also chose to be guarded and ambiguous in making that announcement — perhaps to make room for a future U-turn. "Let me give you the correct and exact position," the MEA spokesman was instructed to say on February 22. "The issue of military supplies to Nepal has been under continuous review taking into account the evolving situation in that country. In view of the current disturbed conditions in Nepal, it is a fact that no military supplies have been delivered since the 1st of February 2005."

The "correct and exact" words are important here. What was being announced was not a policy but a statement of "fact". "That no military supplies have been delivered," and that the reason for this was not the palace coup or the state of emergency but merely "the current disturbed conditions in Nepal."

Preoccupation with ambiguity

It was obviously the same cultivated but clumsy preoccupation with ambiguity that led Dr. Manmohan Singh's advisers to have him inform the press in Jakarta on April 23 that the question of military supplies to Nepal was being looked at "in the proper perspective." The fact that this formulation — as unhelpful as it was tautological — came hours after King Gyanendra told reporters in Jakarta he had received "specific assurances" from the Prime Minister that military supplies would continue only heightened suspicions that New Delhi had something to hide.

That countries make U-turns in policy is not surprising. The least that one can expect for a country that wants a permanent seat in the U.N. Security Council, however, is that it not shy away from providing a rationale for its policy switch. Instead, all we got was studied silence. If it took the Government of India 17 days to confirm something that the Nepalese monarch had already announced, the only logical explanation is

the deep divide which exists between the MEA and MoD on the issue. The Cabinet Committee on Security finally puts its imprimatur on the resumption of military supplies on May 6. But even now, say officials involved in the process, there is enough fuzziness in the decision to ensure the bureaucratic tug-of-war continues for some time.

Officially, the Government says it has only undertaken to transfer supplies that were already in the pipeline. Though this is not being articulated publicly, senior officials also insist the supplies being handed over are "non-lethal" and include, mainly, a handful of Casspir mine-resistant troop carriers, some refurbished trucks and bullet-proof jackets. When U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Christina Rocca stopped by in New Delhi earlier this week on her way to Kathmandu, she was told that no lethal supplies would be handed over for now. The Royal Nepal Army is anxious to replenish its stock of ammunition for the Indian-supplied INSAS rifle and has asked the Indian Army brass to expedite delivery; however, a decision on this issue is apparently still pending.

I asked a senior Defence Ministry official about the Army's view on supplying arms to Nepal. The problem, he said, was that there were too many views, that every general with any Gurkhas serving under him considered himself an expert on Nepal and its problems. But the Indian Army had institutional links with the RNA and was not keen that these be jeopardised. Indeed, some officers see the Army's links with the RNA as an insurance policy for the retention of influence in a post-Gyanendra Nepal. Even in Nepalese army circles, there is little appetite to see Prince Paras crowned king. His son, Hridayendra, could be made regent with the RNA guaranteeing power. "The monarchy may or may not be there forever, but the Nepalese army will," seems to be the logic of those favouring the resumption of military aid. However, given the intense loyalty to the palace of Maj. Gen. Rukmangat Katuwal, the RNA's second-in-command, the links between the monarchy and the army may be stronger than many in India think.

The Gurkha factor

What has irritated the Government's Nepal watchers elsewhere on Raisina Hill is the claim by their uniformed counterparts that the suspension of military supplies was lowering the morale of Gurkha soldiers in the Indian Army, or rendering their families in Nepal vulnerable to attack by the Maoists. For years, the MoD has refused to recruit Gurkhas settled in India into the Army, saying the recruitment of Nepalese Gurkhas provided India with 'leverage' in Nepal; now it turns out, it is the King of Nepal who has all the leverage and India has none at all. Besides, the Gurkhas in the Indian Army have no ethnic or institutional ties to the soldiers in the RNA. "It's ridiculous. The whole issue is a red herring," an official said.

Regardless of the internal divisions, the UPA Government's decision to announce the resumption of military supplies could not have been more poorly timed, coming as it did on the day Nepal's factious political parties announced the formation of a joint platform against the King.

In Nepalese political circles, there is growing awareness of what King Gyanendra's political project really is. Under the guise of fighting the Maoists, he has already revived certain panchayat-era institutions like the *anchaladhis* and *chhetradhis* which allow the Palace to administer the country directly through hand-picked zonal administrators. Old, discredited names from the panchayat era and even pre-panchayat era have come out of the woodwork such as Sharad Chandra Shah, who led the strong-arm tactics of the mandales against pro-democracy protestors in the 1980s.

The 'lifting' of the emergency on April 30 has not made any material difference to the people of Nepal; indeed, the repressive apparatus of the King's regime has toughened in other respects. Before Gyanendra is further emboldened, the Indian Government must immediately reverse course and stop the further flow of any military supplies to him. Democracy is the future of Nepal. The King has made it amply clear that he does not want to be a part of that future.

14 MAY 2005 THE HINDU

India needs to reverse the decision regarding Nepal

The harakiri decision

CUTTING CORNERS

ASHOK MITRA

New Delhi's decision to resume supplies of military aid to Nepal's royalty is astounding. Even more astounding is the reason proffered for the decision.

The issue of resumption of aid to Nepal, the prime minister has said, is still being reviewed, but he had to "let go" the arms in the pipeline. The prime minister is deluding neither himself nor his countrymen nor the suffering people of Nepal. Military aid was stopped in early April as soon as King Gyanendra clamped his Emergency; the Indian authorities did not then "let go" aid in the pipeline. It was a moral issue and the government of India took a moral stand. The formal Emergency has been withdrawn in Nepal but the objective situation has not changed, the repression continues, yet New Delhi resumes military assistance. Sorry, the glaring contradiction the Indian prime minister has entrapped himself in evokes only derision, and no sympathy.

What are the facts? The decision to resume military aid was taken within 48 hours of the plaintive public appeal made by the Nepali National Congress patriarch, Girija Prasad Koirala, to New Delhi not to embark on such a dangerous step. Obviously, it is no longer the government of India's concern whether the Nepal Congress or the other "democratic" party in that country survives or withers away. Nepal's salvation, the Indian authorities were in the habit of asserting till the very other day, lay neither in an absolute monarchy nor in a Maoist mayhem, but in a democratic set-up where democratic parties will function under the auspices of a written constitution on the basis of periodic elections.

That point of view has suddenly undergone a sea-change. In more senses than one, the resumption of military aid to the king will signal the demise of the parliamentary parties, including that of the Nepali National Congress. Already overwhelming sections of the erstwhile base of support of these parties in the countryside have crossed over to the Maoists. They however still retain some not-altogether-negligible influence amongst the urban middle class, particularly those located in Kathmandu. These urban elements had stayed loyal to the Nepali National Congress and the other parliamentary parties in the belief that royal intransigence was not the final word, they — the constitutional parties — enjoyed the confidence of the government of India which was vociferously for a constitutional democracy and would support them to the hilt. India's unilateral decision

to underwrite the king in the face of strong reservations expressed by the Nepali National Congress implies that whatever urban sections in Nepal were still with the democratic parties will now switch over in scampering promptitude towards the direction of the Maoists. If the Indian authorities are hoping that by bolstering royalty through military aid, they would contain the advance of Maoist adventurism, they are living in a fool's paradise. Their initiative will actually accelerate the spread of Maoist influence all over Nepal.

too: if India did not immediately come to the aid of the king, the Americans themselves would enter the scene and that would make the picture much more complicated for all, including the government of India. This will of course be blackmail of a sophisticated species. Nonetheless, New Delhi could have sought to counter this piece of blackmail by suggesting that, should the US stick in its finger in the Nepal pie, China would not sit back, and even Vladimir Putin's Russia might take a dim view of it.

It does not seem that the repre-

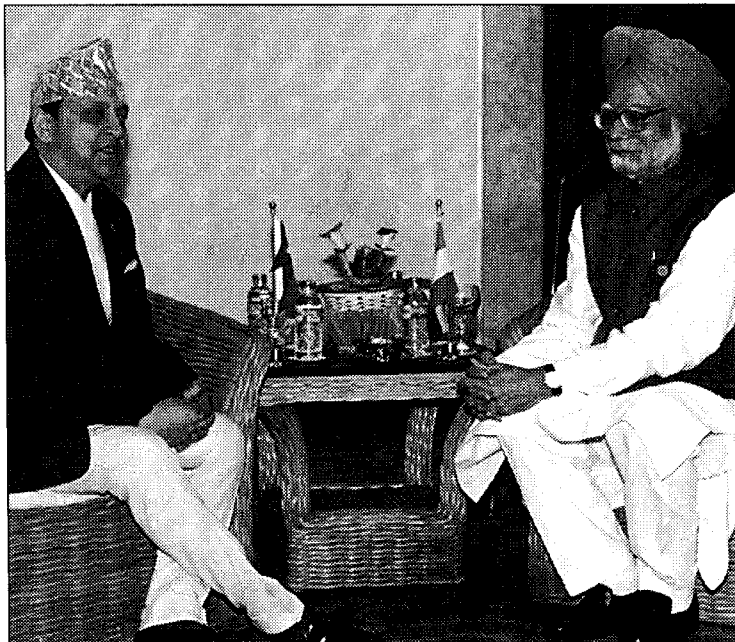
United Nations security council, with, what do you know, even the prerogative of the veto thrown in. (Whether Pakistan or Germany or Japan will be amused by such a gesture towards India is a different matter.)

Unless the Indian authorities reverse the suicidal decision they have taken on the sly, the suspicion aired above will not be dispelled. And the suspicion will be accompanied by the posing of an overt question. Who takes the crucial decisions encompassing India's foreign policy? Do the United Progressive Alliance and its constituents have no role in it? Does the major political party in the alliance involve itself in this crucial decision-making process? Are the government's decisions taken independently of the party's preferences and predilections? Or are the decisions the exclusive preserve of the foot-permanently-in-the-mouth external affairs minister — or, not even his, but of a coterie of foreign service officials?

Parliament is being adjourned, but the nation will still demand an answer to these queries from the regime in New Delhi. For the long-term consequences of the kind of snap decision New Delhi has taken will have to be borne ultimately by the Indian people. It has been fairly well known that, over the past few months, a debate was going on within the conclave of Nepal's Maoists whether they should not attempt to open a line of direct communication with New Delhi. The principal plank, on the basis of which the Maoists have succeeded in establishing such a major toehold over Nepal's countryside, is their elaborate programme of land reforms.

The other point they have ceaselessly stressed is a constitution for the country which will have no place for a monarchy, whether absolute or constitutional. Land reforms in the northern country should not, *per se*, induce sleepless nights for India's rulers. Nor should they have any obligation to shed tears over the prospect of a monarchless Nepal. A genuine possibility was therefore hovering on the horizon that, provided goodwill was not lacking on either side, New Delhi could have established some sort of an understanding with the Nepal Communist Party (Maoist). That possibility has been demolished by the foolish decision announced on the evening of May 10. The Maoists will now have no hesitation in indulging in pinpricks to Indian authorities by making naughty imaginative use of the Nepal-India border.

The Indian authorities will have no one else but themselves to blame. One reaps what one sows.



‘ To sum up the matter squarely: New Delhi has flouted public opinion in Nepal ’

The puzzle nonetheless does not dissolve on its own. There should be still enough perspicacity within official circles in New Delhi to enable them to assess what impact the revival of military aid is likely to have on Nepalese minds. There are also others on the periphery to enlighten the authorities with regard to the likely repercussions of coming to the rescue of the king even when he continues with his authoritarian style. To sum up the matter squarely: New Delhi has flouted public opinion in Nepal. It has brushed aside the entreaties of Nepal's parliamentary parties. It has defied the judgment offered by the Indian left.

A suspicion is therefore impossible to avoid with regard to the factor underlying the odious decision taken by the authorities despite the series of contrary advice tendered to them. The pressure mounted by the administration of the United States of America was perhaps enormous. Conceivably, the pressure was accompanied by a threat

representatives of the US were so naïve as to play this rather transparent ploy. Could it however be that the American administration offered New Delhi a much more alluring *bakshish*? The presence of Christina Rocca in the neighbourhood at the time the government of India took the decision may be altogether coincidental; but maybe it is not so. The following may not be purely an exercise in speculation: in the course of that rather crowded week, a hint was thrown towards the direction of New Delhi: should India prop up that American lackey, the tottering monarch in Kathmandu, the Americans would recommend India for a permanent seat in the

11 MAY 2005

THE STATESMAN

India to resume Nepal arms supply

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, May 10. — Exactly 100 days after King Gyanendra removed the multi-party government, India had announced that it would be resuming military supplies "currently in the pipeline" to the Himalayan kingdom.

The decision has been taken keeping in mind the possibility of Pakistan stepping in as a supplier, despite reluctance in the external affairs ministry to make any such move. The MEA feels the King has not made any concrete moves

to restore democracy though he has officially lifted the Emergency.

"With the lifting of the Emergency on 29 April, 2005 and the release of several leaders, the Indian government has decided to release some of the supplies currently in the pipeline, including vehicles," an MEA spokesperson said. He indicated that the King would have to do more on the path to democracy. "It is our expectation that in future, His Majesty's government will take further and early steps for restoration of multi-party democracy and constitutional

monarchy, which remain, in our view, the two pillars of political stability in Nepal and for meeting the challenges of the Maoists," the spokesperson said.

Even as India made this announcement, the US assistant secretary of state for South Asia affairs, Ms Christina Rocca, is in Kathmandu talking to the Nepalese Establishment — the highest-level US visit since 1 February.

The Centre decided on the resumption of military supplies after a high-level ministerial meeting on Friday. This was conveyed to the

King by the Ambassador, Mr Shri Shankar Mukherjee, yesterday.

NGO report on rights abuse

Ironically, the Indian announcement came on a day when the director of the Asian Centre for Human Rights, an NGO, released a report on alleged human rights atrocities since the King imposed an Emergency. The report said nearly 535 persons had been killed by security forces since 1 February.

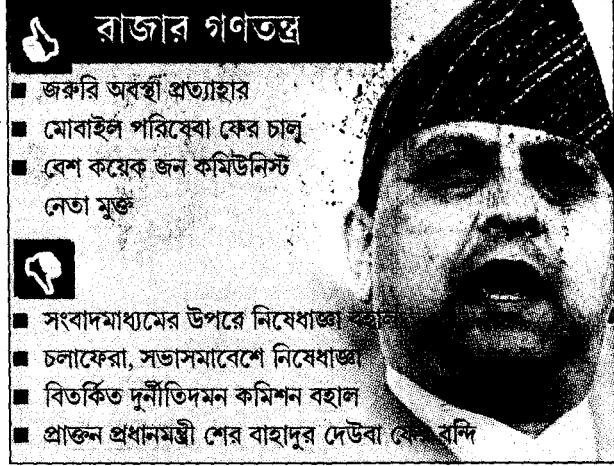
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গণতন্ত্রে ফেরার গরজ নেই, তবু নেপালকে অস্ত্র দেবে দিল্লি

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ১০ মে: ভারতের প্রায় কোনও কথাই শোনেননি রাজা জ্ঞানেন্দ্র। মনমোহন সিংহকে আশ্বাস দেওয়া সত্ত্বেও ঘোষণা করেননি গণতন্ত্র ফেরানোর 'রোড ম্যাপ'। দিল্লির রক্তচক্ষু উপেক্ষা করে ফের গ্রহণ করার করেছেন বরখাস্ত প্রধানমন্ত্রী শেরবাহাদুর দেউবাকে। ছাড় বলতে কেবল নামকাওয়াস্তে জরুরি অবস্থা প্রত্যাহার। তবু তাঁর দাবি মেনে শীঘ্রই নেপালকে ফের অস্ত্র সরবরাহ করতে চলেছে মনমোহন সিংহের সরকার। কারণটা আর কিছুই নয়, মাওবাদী জুজু।

মস্কো থেকে দিল্লি আসার পথে আজ প্রধানমন্ত্রী সাংবাদিকদের বলেন, "এই সামরিক সহায়তা দেওয়ার বিষয়টি অনেক দিন ধরেই বিবেচনার মধ্যে রয়েছে। আর বেশি দিন একে আটকে রাখা সম্ভব নয়।" মনমোহন যখন বিমানে এ কথা বলেছেন, ঠিক তখনই দিল্লিতে বিদেশমন্ত্রকও জানিয়ে দিয়েছে সরকারের সিদ্ধান্ত। সরকারি মুখপাত্র বলেছেন, "২৯ এপ্রিল নেপালে জরুরি অবস্থা তুলে নেওয়া হয়েছে এবং বেশ কিছু রাজনৈতিক নেতা ও কর্মীকে মুক্তি দেওয়া হয়েছে। এই প্রেক্ষিতে ভারত সরকার সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে, সামরিক যান-সহ যে সব সরবরাহ এই মুহূর্তে নেপালে পাঠানোর কথা ছিল, সেগুলি পাঠিয়ে দেওয়া হবে।" শুক্রবার রাতে মন্ত্রিসভার নিরাপত্তা বিষয়ক কমিটির বৈঠকে অস্ত্র সরবরাহের বিষয়টি চূড়ান্ত হয়।

কেন অস্ত্র সরবরাহ চালু করার সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া হল তার ব্যাখ্যা দিয়ে প্রধানমন্ত্রী বলেছেন, "নেপাল আমাদের সব চেয়ে কাছের প্রতিবেশী রাষ্ট্র।



রাজার গণতন্ত্র

- জরুরি অবস্থা প্রত্যাহার
- মোবাইল পরিষেবা ফের চালু
- বেশ কয়েক জন কমিউনিস্ট নেতা মুক্ত



- সংবাদমাধ্যমের উপরে নিষেধাজ্ঞা হ্রাস
- চলাফেরা, সভাসমাবেশে নিষেধাজ্ঞা
- বিতর্কিত দুর্নীতিদমন কমিশন বহাল
- প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী শের বাহাদুর দেউবা বেস বন্দি

তাদের সঙ্গে আমাদের সম্পর্ক ভাল। জাকার্তায় আমি রাজার সঙ্গে বৈঠক করে তাঁকে গণতান্ত্রিক প্রক্রিয়া শুরু করার পরামর্শ দিয়েছিলাম।"

এটা ঠিক যে জাকার্তায় মনমোহন-জ্ঞানেন্দ্র বৈঠকেই স্থির হয়েছিল যে, নেপালকে সামরিক সহায়তা দেওয়া হবে। দশ-পনেরো দিনের মধ্যেই এই সহায়তা শুরুর কথা বলেছিল ভারত। কিন্তু তার প্রাকশর্ত ছিল এই যে, এপ্রিল মাসের মধ্যেই জরুরি অবস্থা প্রত্যাহার করে, রাজনৈতিক নেতাদের মুক্তি দিয়ে গণতন্ত্র ফেরানোর 'রোড ম্যাপ' ঘোষণা করবেন। ২৯ এপ্রিল রাজা শুধু জরুরি অবস্থা তোলার পরে মনমোহনের মন্তব্য ছিল, "এই ব্যবস্থা ভাল, কিন্তু যথেষ্ট নয়।" অস্ত্র সরবরাহ নিয়ে তাঁর ইউপিএ জোটের প্রধান সমর্থক বামেদের ঘোরতর আপত্তি আছে। রাজাকে সামরিক সাহায্য না-দিতে দিল্লিকে অনুরোধ করেছিলেন

নেপালের প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী গিরিজাপ্রসাদ কেরালাও। আজ এই সব আপত্তি উপেক্ষা করে মনমোহন বুঝিয়ে দেন, কাঠমান্ডুকে সামরিক সাহায্য না দিয়ে গতান্তর নেই।

আসলে গরজ বড় বলাই। মাওবাদীদের ঠেকিয়ে রাখা আর নেপালকে চিন-পাকিস্তানের ঘনিষ্ঠ হতে না-দেওয়ার দায় থেকেই সামরিক সাহায্য চালু করতে চলেছে দিল্লি। অভ্যন্তরীণ নিরাপত্তার কারণেই নেপালকে দিনের পর দিন সামরিক সরবরাহ বন্ধ করে রাখা ভারতের পক্ষে সম্ভব নয়। বিদেশমন্ত্রকের সমীক্ষা বলছে, রয়্যাল নেপাল আর্মি শুধু কাঠমান্ডুকেই সুরক্ষিত রাখতে সক্ষম। কিন্তু সে দেশের বিস্তীর্ণ উপত্যকা এবং উত্তরপ্রদেশ, পশ্চিমবঙ্গ বরাবর ভারত-নেপাল খোলা সীমান্তে আস্তানা গেড়ে মাওবাদীরা নিয়মিত ভাবে এর পর সাতের পাতায়

নেপালকে অস্ত্র দেবে দিল্লি

প্রথম পাতার পর, ভারতও অস্ত্র সামরিক সাহায্য সরবরাহের বিষয়ে এখনই আগল খুলে দিতে চাইছে না। অস্ত্র দেওয়ার সঙ্গেই নেপালকে চাপে রাখার কৌশলও নেওয়া হচ্ছে। যাতে জ্ঞানেন্দ্র শীঘ্রই গণতন্ত্র ফেরাতে উদ্যোগী হন।

সরকারি সূত্রের খবর, শুক্রবারের ওই বৈঠকে বলা হয়েছে, আপাতত বকেয়া সাহায্য পাঠিয়ে দেওয়া হলেও 'ভবিষ্যত পরিস্থিতির দিকে ক্রমাগত নজর রাখা এবং পর্যালোচনা করা হবে।' আজ বিদেশ মন্ত্রকের মুখপাত্র নভতেজ সারনাও সেই ইস্তিতই দিয়েছেন। তাঁর বক্তব্য, "আমরা আশা করছি ভবিষ্যতে রাজা জ্ঞানেন্দ্র বহুদলীয় গণতন্ত্র এবং সাংবিধানিক রাজতন্ত্র ফিরিয়ে আনার জন্য শীঘ্রই আরও কিছু ব্যবস্থা নেবেন। আমাদের মতে, এই দু'টি বিষয় নেপালের রাজনৈতিক স্থায়িত্ব এবং মাওবাদীদের মোকাবিলায় দু'টি স্তম্ভবিশেষ।"

ইউপিএ সরকারের এই সিদ্ধান্তের বিরুদ্ধে রীতিমতো বিবৃতি দিয়ে সরব হয়েছে বাম দলগুলি। সিপিআই বলেছে, "জরুরি অবস্থা তুলে নেওয়ার মটনা ঘটেছে শুধু খাতায় কলমে। নেপালের পরিস্থিতি এতটুকু বদলায়নি। কয়েক জন নেতা গৃহবন্দি অবস্থা থেকে মুক্তি পেয়েছেন ঠিকই, কিন্তু শ'য়ে শ'য়ে রাজনৈতিক কর্মী এখনও জেলে। খবরের কাগজ এখনও রাজার কঠোর নিয়ন্ত্রণে। বহুদলীয় গণতান্ত্রিক ব্যবস্থা ফিরে আসার কোনও প্রমাণ পাওয়া যায়নি।"

India's Nepal policy: dangerous flip-flop

New Delhi would be ill-advised to resume military supplies to the regime in Kathmandu.

Satish Chandra

AFTER WEEKS of hanging tough on Nepal, characterised by the suspension of military supplies and exhortations to the King to revert to democratic norms, following his assumption of absolute power on February 1, 2005, India now seems to be on the verge of reversing its position and resuming military supplies to Nepal. Such a flip flop is unwarranted. It will have unfortunate consequences for us, not only in Nepal but elsewhere as well, as it will confirm the belief amongst many, particularly in our neighbourhood, that we are the ultimate soft state which can be easily pushed around.

India's suspension of military supplies to the Nepalese Army, so astutely and promptly put in place by the Ministry of External Affairs immediately after the King's dismissal of the Deuba government, was the perfect response. It was predicated on the well established principle that stability in Nepal rests on the twin pillars of constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy and on the belief that the effective management of the Maoist problem demands that the King and the political parties work together in a cooperative mode. The King's assumption of absolute power, by declaring an emergency and dismissing the government, undermined both the foundations of Nepalese polity and the possibility of finding a lasting solution to the Maoist problem. In these circumstances, and taking into account the fact that the King's actions were regressive and unpopular, our initial moves cannot be faulted and were appropriate.

Regrettably, instead of seeing reason, the King not only continued on his authoritarian path but also chose to thumb his nose at India. Accordingly, our advice was not heeded, our Ambassador in Kathmandu was denied access; our radio stations were taken off Nepal's airwaves, arms were sought from both China and Pakistan etc. In the light of these distinctly unfriendly actions it is astonishing that, rather than further tightening the screws on the King, we are contemplating the resumption of military supplies to Nepal. The lifting of the emergency cannot be regarded as an indicator of the King's reverting to democratic norms and, therefore, as a justification for this move, as it is no more than an eyewash. Most of the obnoxious restraints imposed under the emergency remain in place and, above all, the democratic forces continue to be denied their rightful space in Nepalese polity. In this backdrop it would, therefore, be instructive to analyse as to what is it that has induced us to contemplate changing tack on our Nepal policy?

Flawed arguments

It is no secret that the Armed Forces are against our suspension of military supplies to the Nepalese Army. This opposition is based, in part, on the concern that the suspension of military supplies would lead to a Maoist takeover of Nepal, and, in part, on the apprehension that it would adversely affect



CRACKDOWN ON DISSENT: Nepali police personnel in action against protesters in Kathmandu. — REUTERS

the institutional ties between the Armed Forces of the two countries. Both arguments are to an extent flawed and in any case should not carry much weight. It may, at the outset, be pointed out that the Maoist threat has been somewhat attenuated by the dissensions between Prachanda and Bhattarai.

Thus, while a cut-off in military supplies will, over time, lead to a serious weakening of the Nepalese Army, a consequent Maoist takeover would not happen overnight and could occur only several months down the line. The King would, hopefully, blink well before that occurs and there would be the possibility of re-establishing the *status quo ante*. In case, however, he has a death wish, and does not blink, and there is a Maoist take over at some point in time, then so be it. In such an eventuality we should be prepared to accept it as the lesser of the two evils.

The assumption of power by the Maoists in these circumstances may not turn out to be such a bad thing. Should they come to power as a result of our denial of arms to the King they are unlikely to be unfriendly to us. Moreover, to come to power, and to retain it, they would be compelled to resolve their internal differences and mainstream which will demand a moderation of their policies. As regards the Army-to-Army ties, while suspension of military supplies would, no doubt, disrupt them this would only be a temporary phenomenon. Once links be-

tween the two countries are normalised Army-to-Army ties would also revert to their normal pattern. In any case, an institution's interest must not be placed above the national interest.

There are, in addition, a number of other factors that militate against our rushing to resume arms supplies to Nepal. The King is ambitious, authoritarian and determined to greatly enhance the powers of the monarchy beyond those envisaged in the Constitution. Cohabitation between him and the democratic forces in Nepal is, in the best of times, going to be difficult and a conflictual relationship is on the cards. He, and more so his son, are not held in high esteem in Nepal and, in any case, do not evoke the same reverence as did their predecessors.

In these circumstances, our resumption of military supplies to Nepal today will be viewed with disfavour, not only by the Maoists but also by the democratic forces, who are likely to react adversely against our nationals and business interests in Nepal. We need to keep in mind that, in the long run, it will be the popular forces that will prevail in Nepal with, or without, the King. As a matter of *realpolitik* it would be a mistake to be out of sync with these forces. If the King remains obdurate, and does not reach a *modus vivendi* with the democratic forces, he is in danger of being brushed aside by the rising tide of republicanism.

It has sometimes been argued that in case we do not support the King, others like Pakistan and China, will quickly move in to fill the vacuum. This is too simplistic. Few will venture into Nepal in support of the King knowing that the tide of history is against him and that both the Maoists and the political parties will be opposed to it. Should they do so they risk ruining their future in that country. In any case, China has shown little interest of embarking in this direction and Pakistan, after an initial flicker of interest, has made a public disavowal of the same through its newly appointed Ambassador.

It would be evident from the foregoing that the suspension of military supplies to Nepal was, *ab initio*, prompted neither by mawkish sentimentality in support of democracy, nor by any lack of concern on how to effectively defuse the Maoist problem, but, on the contrary, by hard-nosed considerations of what is in our best national interests taking into account all relevant factors.

We need to not only stay firm on the suspension of military supplies but, in addition, to put in place further restrictions such as an embargo on POL supplies for the Army and such other measures which will compel the King to heed the voice of reason.

(The writer is a former Deputy National Security Adviser to the Government of India.)

10 MAY 2005

THE HINDU

Nepal Bound And Gagged

India Should Get Tough
With Gyanendra

By G PARTHASARATHY

Large nations surrounded by smaller countries express exasperation over being disliked across their borders, despite having the best of intentions towards their neighbours. We have to mould our policies towards Nepal in this context, guaranteeing our security while doing what we can to promote stability and economic progress in that country. We cannot remain indifferent to political developments in Nepal, as they inevitably spill over into neighbouring Indian states.

Nepal has been facing a Maoist insurgency since 1996. Maoist leader Prachanda has made no secret that he regards groups in India like People's War and Maoist Communist Centre as his allies and that he visited Andhra Pradesh to learn about the "practical problems" of armed struggle. He has said, "Ultimately we will have to fight the Indian army". Roughly 80% of Nepal is today under Maoist control.

Neighbouring Indian states like Bihar and Jharkhand are so badly governed that large parts of the countryside are under Maoist influence.

Nepal's monarchy has shown similar contempt for democratic values. Successive monarchs have tried to rule through a so-called panchayat system that has perpetuated a rural oligarchy and stifled reform. The monarchy has also tried to acquire domestic support by fostering anti-Indian sentiments. The introduction of democracy in 1991 did widen the participatory base in Nepal, but squabbling politicians did little to usher in socio-economic change. The Communist Party of Nepal (CPN-UML) steadily gained support. Contrary to earlier fears, the CPN has not been anti-Indian. Against this background King Gyanendra, who had earlier

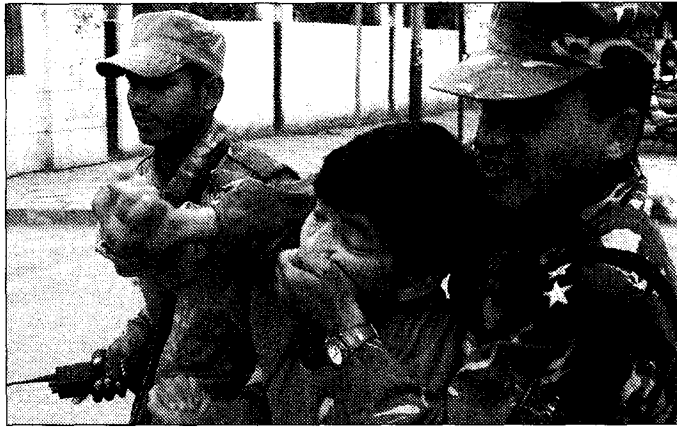
dissolved parliament in 2002, dismissed Sher Bahadur Deuba's government and assumed dictatorial powers on February 1, 2005.

New Delhi provided extensive military and economic assistance to fight the Maoists till the royal takeover. But after careful consideration, the Indian government concluded that chances of prolonged anarchy and even a possible Maoist takeover would increase if the king sought to single-handedly take on the Maoists without broad political support. The international community backed the Indian stand and urged the king to restore democracy and civil liberties. India decided to withhold arms supplies to

Reports about the possibilities of resumption of Indian arms supplies to Nepal raise a number of questions. While the king may have lifted the emergency, political activity remains banned and political leaders and hundreds of activists are still incarcerated. Worse still, one of the first acts of King Gyanendra after returning to Nepal was to arrest Sher Bahadur Deuba, signalling to India and the world that he could not care less about Indian or international sensitivities. The monarchy in Nepal knows how to influence events in India. Apart from constant references to Nepal being a Hindu kingdom, the palace has extensive business, family and other links with former Indian royals and politicians. Then there are sections of our defence establishment who draw up imaginary links between the morale of Gurkha soldiers in the Indian army and our relationship with the monarchy. The monarchy also regularly plays its China and Pakistan cards without realising that no international affairs expert accepts the argument that China might replace India as arms supplier to Nepal.

There is little prospect of the Maoists prevailing over the Royal Nepal Army in the short term. We can resume arms supplies to Nepal when there are clear indications that such an action will enjoy public and political support there. We should remember that many of the reforms demanded by the Maoists enjoy genuine public support in Nepal. But like all such armed groups, the Maoists are likely to eventually split with sections joining the political mainstream. The challenge to Indian diplomacy lies in moving events in Nepal in a direction where tendencies to accumulate absolute power are replaced by participatory democracy that is sensitive to the need for socio-economic change. We should seek to fashion a new relationship with Nepal where anachronisms like the Nepal-India Treaty of 1950 that are resented by large number of Nepali citizens are replaced by trade agreements based on sovereign equality.

The writer is a former diplomat.



Nepal till there were clear signs that the monarch was moving towards restoring democratic freedoms and participatory governance. The US and UK, who were also providing weapons, backed this approach.

Domestically, prime minister Manmohan Singh crafted a national consensus by taking senior BJP leaders into confidence. The expectation was that when the prime minister met King Gyanendra in Bandung, this policy would be firmly reiterated. What emerged instead was a dramatic flip-flop in the Indian stand, with the king claiming that he had been assured that India would lift the arms embargo. A senior member of the prime minister's delegation told journalists that what the king had said was substantially true and the PM had indicated that he would look into the issue "in a proper perspective".

09 MAY 2005

09 MAY 2005

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Bhutan starts blocking 'bad' Indian TV channels

performing well in studies because of TV, concerns of cultural degradation... (so) we decided to reduce the channels."

There was, however, no criteria outlined on the basis of which the channels would be selected. As it turns out, Indian channels like Zee News, Aaj Tak, Sun TV along with a bouquet of international channels like FTV and Ten Sports are no longer being aired in Bhutan.

The list of channels was reportedly drawn up through discussions between the Bhutan government's media department, BCA and the

Association of Private Cable Operators. Thimpu is said to be keen on also promoting production of local programmes through this move.

For its part, India has not voiced outright protest to the decision. It has pointed out that there are several Indians in Bhutan who patronise Indian news and entertainment channels, and such a move deprives them of information and restricts their entertainment options. This was conveyed last month but there is still no response.

What has peeved New Delhi is

that Korean channel Arirang, Chinese CCTV and Japanese channel NHK, all of which have lesser viewership than Indian channels, continue to be aired. India has so far desisted from upping the ante and has confined itself to underlining the larger viewership of Indian channels.

Though Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran was in Bhutan last month to brief King Jigme Singye Wangchuk on the visit of the Chinese Premier, the matter did not come up as India felt that this could be sorted out through regu-

lar diplomatic channels. But with no change in situation, concerns are gradually growing in New Delhi.

Meanwhile, the Bhutan Embassy here said there was no plan to target Indian channels. According to Deputy Chief of Mission Thinley Dorji, the Embassy had no specific information on Indian channels not being shown in Bhutan. "We will have to check that, but the government is not directly involved in choosing the channels that are to be shown," he maintained.

Bhutan starts blocking 'bad' Indian TV channels

News channels, others showing soaps dubbed 'culturally degrading'

PRANAB DHAL SAMANTA
NEW DELHI, MAY 6

WHILE India's busy trying to get Nepal to lift media restrictions, neighbouring Bhutan has sprung a surprise on New Delhi by blocking some Indian news and regional channels on grounds that they have a "bad social and cultural" influence on its citizens.

Stumped by the move that came into effect on April 1, the Indian Embassy in Thimpu has taken up the matter with Bhutanese authorities after reports that a dozen more channels would be taken off the air. While diplomats try to make sense of this, South Block officials feel that Bhutan's decision cannot be equated with what was happening in Nepal.

It's learnt that some of

the Hindi news channels and entertainment channels, mostly from the South, showing popular soap operas have been blocked. While some Indian channels are still being aired, sources said, the fear is that they too may be removed.

This apparently flows from a 2003-04 media impact study carried out by the Bhutan Communication Authority (BCA), which concluded that many foreign channels were a "bad influence" on Bhutanese social and cultural values.

In fact, the decision to remove some channels was taken sometime in March when BCA Director Phub Tshering was quoted in Bhutanese dailies as saying, "We heard a lot of public concerns of children not

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Question mark over arms for Nepal

India expresses concern at arrest of Deuba

Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI: A question mark hangs over resumption of arms supplies to Nepal after India expressed concern at the re-arrest on Wednesday of the former Prime Minister, Sher Bahadur Deuba, and the detention of political leaders by the Gyanendra regime. This action is contrary to the "assurances" conveyed to New Delhi.

The issue of resuming arms supply occupied centre-stage after King Gyanendra told a television channel on Sunday last, after a meeting with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in Jakarta, that India had given "assurances" that the supply would "continue."

'Proper perspective'

Dr. Singh said in Jakarta that the King had raised the issue of arms supplies with him and that New Delhi would look at the matter in "the proper perspective."

In response to a question, the External Affairs Ministry spokesman on Wednesday said it followed from what the Prime Minister said in Jakarta that "all factors and all developments will be taken into account" before taking any decision on re-

suming arms supply. Asked to explain the "proper perspective," the spokesman said: "I am not going to be able to second-guess that statement and to define what the proper perspective means. Obviously, when we say it will be considered in the proper perspective it means that we would take into account all developments, all situations and balanced decisions will be taken."

'Contrary to assurances'

Official sources suggested that the "logical interpretation" of the "proper perspective" would be that the supply of arms would again be put on hold.

"We are ... concerned that the

arrest and detention of political leaders, student leaders and workers of political parties continue, as do the restrictions on travel and movement of some academicians, human rights activists and students, contrary to [the] assurances conveyed to us," the spokesman said.

"We believe that these developments would further complicate efforts for a reconciliation between [the] political parties and the constitutional monarchy in Nepal. It has always been India's conviction that the problems confronting Nepal today can be addressed effectively only on the basis of [a] national consensus between the two constitutional forces," he added.

Deuba held on graft charges

KATHMANDU: The ousted Nepal Prime Minister, Sher Bahadur Deuba, 59, was arrested early on Wednesday from his residence here on alleged graft charges. The arrest comes a week after he refused to appear before a royal anti-corruption commission set up by King Gyanendra.

Armed policemen arrived at

Mr. Deuba's residence at Budhanilkantha, 10 km from here, shortly after 2 a.m., cut off the telephone and electricity lines and forcefully took him into custody, the Nepali Congress spokesman, Minendra Rijal, said. — PTI

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25 APR 2005

THE HINDU

Is it right for India to resume arms supply to Nepal?

India has no choice. If we don't, Nepal will turn to China and Pakistan



Ashok K Mehta
Defence Analyst

In 1952, King Tribhuvan requested India to train and reorganise the Royal Nepal Army. An Indian military mission was established in Kathmandu, which stayed there till 1970. In 1963, King Mahendra asked India to re-equip the RNA. Then again in 1990, India undertook the modernisation of the force with a Rs 500 crore equipment package. After the Maoists attacked the RNA in its barracks at Dang in 2001, the package was revived in a big way. The Indian Army's training and re-equipment assistance together with the formation of the India-Nepal bilateral group on security are the cornerstones of RNA's conversion from a ceremonial army into a counter-insurgency force.

The Indian Army has 43 Gorkha battalions, almost as large as the RNA infantry. Besides, there are nearly 1,50,000 Indian ex-servicemen of Nep-ali origin in Nepal, who together with the families of serving soldiers make a strong pro-India constituency. The Indian Chief of Army Staff is an honorary General in the RNA and vice versa. In short, the military-to-military relations are longstanding and abiding. One can say the RNA is a clone of the Indian Army.

The RNA is firmly loyal to the King. Its officers agree that they have not known democracy the way the Indian Army has. They nurse a 'healthy disrespect' for the political class. But despite a lacklustre operational record, they have a job to do: to fight the Maoists, seen as a common threat by both countries. The Maoists are unlikely to seize power in Kathmandu any time in the future, nor are they likely to join the newly formed Maoist groups in India and become a part of the Communist Revolutionary Zone from Nepal to Andhra Pradesh. Yet, they control 80% of territory in Nepal and have blocked elections creating a political stalemate.

The supplies and training for RNA cannot be blocked indefinitely, as it would require new weapons and ammunition soon. Under treaty obligations and MoUs, Nepal is obliged to seek arms from India. Should India continue to maintain the freeze on supplies, Nepal would be forced to seek weapons from China and/or Pakistan. Besides, we would lose the goodwill of the RNA and our leverage over it. It would adversely affect RNA's operational capacity and morale.



Hari Roka
Nepali Political Analyst

India's decision to resume military assistance to the king betrays a lack of prudent judgment. Leaving aside moral and democratic issues and focusing purely on the strategic aspects, the decision is just so much wasted money, material and hope. The RNA is nothing more than a private

army of the king, funded by the people of Nepal without their consent. India, the US and the UK have assiduously nursed this force to help it combat an insurgency that is largely reliant on a limited arsenal of crude weapons and seized ordnance. Thanks to foreign generosity, the RNA's numbers increased from 58,000 in 2001 to about 80,000 in 2005.

With the introduction of the unified command, including police and armed police, the counter-insurgency has a total deployment strength of 1,40,000. Against this, the insurgents have a core troop strength of between 6,000-8,000, supplemented by a poorly-equipped militia of between 20-25,000. In terms of the numerical asymmetry of the main fighting force, the counter-insurgents outnumber the insurgents 10:1. As for hardware capability, the insurgents possess a large quantity of easily replenishable devices unknown to the conventional military arsenal, and some sophisticated weapons seized from the state's armoury.

By contrast, since 2001, India, the US and the UK have, in the course of helping it, reduced the RNA to a state of complete hardware dependency by foisting on it irrelevant sophisticated equipment that requires the continuous inflow of supplies

It will merely strengthen the military against an unarmed population

and fuel.

In the years since the RNA was upgraded from a ceremonial force into an alleged fighting machine, complete with 20,000 M16 automatic rifles, and other such equipment unsuitable for counter-insurgency operations, it has managed to lose ground to an ill-armed guerrilla force. The more the counter-insurgency was armed, the more the insurgency gained. Assistance to RNA runs into hundreds of crores as against a Maoist military budget that is a tiny fraction of this.

Further assistance from India will not reverse the trend, considering India's own record of dealing with insurgency. The IPKF fled from battle after a dismal rout in Sri Lanka. The Indian army's abject failure in the north-east has been reaffirmed over decades. Moreover, India's image in Nepal is nothing to boast of. Help from India will not quell the insurgency in Nepal.

Friends of the king will merely strengthen the military against an unarmed population and terrorise it into submitting to the will of a tyrant. The RNA has a heroic record of killing civilians. In the circumstances, wholesale slaughter by both sides can be expected. India needs to cultivate new friends in Nepal in other ways.



Neeleeb

নেপালকে সামরিক সাহায্য নিয়ে ভাবনায় কেন্দ্র

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২৮ এপ্রিল: বামপন্থীদের চাপ তো রয়েছেই, তার উপরে প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী শের বাহাদুর দেওবাকে গ্রেফতার করে নেপালের রাজা জ্ঞানেন্দ্র ভারতীয় নেতৃত্বকে আরও বেকায়দায় ফেলে দিয়েছেন। ফলে নেপালকে সামরিক সাহায্যের বিষয়টি সরকার আবার নতুন করে ভেবে দেখছে বলে বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহ রাজাসত্য জানিয়েছেন।

কেন এই ভাবনা, তা অস্পষ্ট না- রেখেই নটবর বলেন, “ভারতের প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে কথা বলে নেপালের রাজা দেশে ফিরে গেলেন। আর তার পরেই এক জন প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে

গ্রেফতার করার কথা ঘোষণা করা হল। অথচ তাঁর বিরুদ্ধে অভিযোগ এখনও প্রমাণিত হয়নি। এটা দুভাগীজনক।” জ্ঞানেন্দ্রের সঙ্গে মনমোহন সিংহের বৈঠকের পর থেকেই বামপন্থীরা অস্ত্র সরবরাহ না-করার জন্য সরকারের উপরে চাপ তৈরি করে আসছেন। আজও রাজাসত্য সিপিএমের নীলোগপল বসু বলেন, নেপালের সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ নিয়মিত রাখা উচিত ঠিকই। কিন্তু এমন কিছু করা উচিত নয় যাতে সেখানকার গণতান্ত্রিক শক্তিগুলি ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হয়। বামেরা এর আগেও সরকারকে বলেছেন যে, সমস্ত গণতান্ত্রিক শক্তির ঐক্যবদ্ধ লড়াইয়ের

মাধ্যমে মাওবাদী উপদ্রব ঠেকানো সম্ভব। কাজেই রাজা যত ক্ষণ না গণতান্ত্রিক বাসস্থা ফিরিয়ে আনছেন, তত ক্ষণ সামরিক সাহায্য বন্ধ রাখা উচিত। নীলোগপলও এই মনোভাবেরই প্রতিধ্বনি করেছেন।

এই পরিস্থিতিতে নটবর এখনই সামরিক সরবরাহ শুরু না-করার কথা স্পষ্ট করে দিয়েছেন। তিনি বলেছেন, সামরিক সহায়তার বিষয়টি সারাঞ্জনই পর্যালোচনা করা হচ্ছে। এবং এখন যা ঘটছে, তার পরিস্রোক্ষিতে ভবিষ্যতেও তা পর্যালোচিত হতে থাকবে। তিনি বুঝিয়ে দেন যে, নেপালকে চাপে ফেলার মতো অনেক অস্ত্রই ভারতের

কাছে রয়েছে। কিন্তু ছাঁচ কেনওটাই ভারত ব্যবহার করেনি। নটবরের কথায়, “আমরা দেখতে চাই গণতন্ত্র ফিরে আসুক, মাওবাদীদের দমন করা হোক, রাজনৈতিক প্রক্রিয়া শুরু হোক। নেপালের মানুষকে যাতে আর ভুগতে না-হয়। এটাই আমাদের নীতি।” তাঁর মতে, “গত তিন মাসে নেপালের পরিস্থিতির দ্রুত অবনতি ঘটেছে।”

দিল্লি সফররত রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের মহাসচিব কোফি আন্নানও আজ নেপাল পরিদর্শন নিয়ে সরব হয়েছেন। তিনি জানিয়েছেন, সেখানকার পরিস্থিতি খতিয়ে দেখতে রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জ একটি মানবাধিকার কমিটিকে নেপালে

পাঠাচ্ছে। আন্নান বলেন, তিনি রাজার সঙ্গে নিয়মিত যোগাযোগ রাখছেন। সেখানে ‘যত দ্রুত সম্ভব’ সাংবিধানিক আইন ফেরানোর কথা রাজাকে বলেছেন। “রাজার সঙ্গে যা আলোচনা হয়েছে, তাতে মনে হচ্ছে তা শীঘ্রই ফিরে আসবে,” বলেছেন আন্নান।

কাঠমাণ্ডু থেকে সংবাদসংস্থার খবর, দ্রুত প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী শের বাহাদুর দেউবাকে সোমবার পর্বশু বিচারবিভাগীয় হেফাজতে রাখার নির্দেশ দেওয়া হয়েছে। তিনি আজ দুর্নীতি দমন কমিশনে সাক্ষ্য দিতে অস্বীকার করায় তাঁকে বিচারবিভাগীয় হেফাজতে পাঠানো হয়েছে।

29 APR 2005

ANADABAZAR PATRI

PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, April 26: India might adopt a "carrot-and-stick" policy to ensure that King Gyanendra delivers on some of his assurances while helping him in his fight against the Maoists by opening the tap a little on military assistance.

India had assured Nepal it would soon resume arms supply, put on hold since the king's February 1 coup, after a meeting between Gyanendra and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in Jakarta last week.

But the Left parties, which are opposed to resumption of military supplies till the king restores democracy in his country, appear to have succeeded in putting a stop to an immediate delivery of an arms consignment.

The biggest challenge before the Indian establishment is when to resume supplies

and whether what it sees as an appropriate time would also be acceptable to the CPM and the CPI.

Left leaders who met Singh yesterday have made it clear that apart from lifting the emergency, Gyanendra has to release all political prisoners, allow them to function independently and remove the censorship on the Nepalese media.

Conventional wisdom in South Block suggests April 30 could be a significant date when the first signals of what Gyanendra proposes to do would come. The ordinance he issued on February 1 to im-

pose emergency expires on that day. The king may not extend it to assure Delhi and some key western allies, particularly the US and the European Union, that he is moving to restore democracy. But the question remains whether India would see this as a good enough step.

The flip-flop on the arms issue has also brought to the fore serious differences in the foreign policy establishment in Delhi. It is not clear yet whether foreign minister K. Natwar Singh, who met Gyanendra on Friday, had already given him an assurance on resuming arms supply even be-

fore the king met the Prime Minister. It could be that when the monarch repeated the request, Singh could only go along with what his foreign minister had already told Gyanendra the day before.

It is evident that the commitment given by India was to be kept a secret for some time. However, the king gave it away when he told a TV reporter about Delhi's assurance. The Prime Minister's aides tried to control the damage when they realised that the king's comments had started making news back home by asking Singh to tell the Indian media that he would look into the king's request in the "proper perspective".

Presumably, the Left parties came out with a strong protest. But even after that, senior sources in the government emphasised that "the first consignment of arms which was in the pipeline" would go through very soon.

Nepal wait and watch

27 APR 2005

THE TELEGRAPH

27 APR 2005

Relook at arms aid to Nepal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

JAKARTA, April 23. Breaking a three-month chill in relations, King Gyanendra and Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh met here today after which the Indian leader promised to consider the monarch's request for resumption of military aid from a proper perspective. Dr Singh described the meeting, held at Nepal's request on the sidelines of the Afro-Asian Summit, as "constructive".

The aid was suspended after King Gyanendra had

dismissed the Deuba government, imposed emergency and assumed full powers on 1 February.

At a press conference here, Dr Singh said he had made it clear to the King that India wanted the two pillars of constitutional monarchy and multi-party democracy to work together in harmony.

Dr Singh said he had told the King that it was "important to take effective steps to restart the political process and work out a roadmap for this purpose." The King was "quite sensitive to India's

concern over the developments in Nepal," the Prime Minister said. Emerging from the meeting, King Gyanendra claimed that he had got an assurance from India on resumption of military aid.

Trade barriers

India today sent clear signals to industrialised nations that their trade-distorting farm subsidies should be phased out and barriers to agricultural exports removed in a bid to protect the millions of farmers in developing countries.

24 APR 2005

THE STATESMAN

24 APR 2005

India to review Nepal arms request

PM's assurance after King's promise to restore democracy

HTC and Agencies
Jakarta, April 23

favourably with: "I will look at this from proper perspective".

BREAKING A three-month chill in India-Nepal relations, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and King Gyanendra met on Saturday after which the Indian PM promised to look at the monarch's request for the resumption of Indian military aid from a "proper perspective". The aid was suspended after the royal coup on February 1.

The issue of resumption of military aid to Nepal was raised by the King and the PM responded

democracy in the Himalayan kingdom "as early as possible".

Meeting on the sidelines of the Asian-African Summit here, the two agreed that it was "necessary to restart the political process and this in turn would enable His Majesty's government to deal with the Maoist insurgency," secretary of the external affairs ministry Rajiv Sikri told reporters.

During the 45-minute meeting, which was also attended by external affairs minister K. Natwar Singh, the PM and the king deliberated on the situation in Nepal in a "frank

and cordial" manner, Sikri said.

The Prime Minister had said on Friday that Nepal was India's "closest" neighbour and whatever happened there was of interest to India. "The two countries should return to the process of close consultation," he had remarked.

The monarch, on his first visit abroad after he seized power, addressed the summit on Friday and assured world leaders that he would end the emergency and that his "commitment to multi-party democracy and human rights is total and unflinching".

এপ্রিলের শেষেই গণতন্ত্রের 'রোডম্যাপ' ঘোষণা নেপালে

জাকার্তা, ২৩ এপ্রিল: অবশেষে ভারত ও নেপাল সম্পর্কের বরফ গলতে চলেছে।

ভারতীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের সঙ্গে নেপালরাজ জ্ঞানেন্দ্রের বৈঠকে পারস্পরিক প্রতিশ্রুতি বিনিময় করলেন দু'জনেই। গণতন্ত্র ফেরানোর লক্ষ্যে চলতি মাসের শেষেই নির্দিষ্ট প্রতিশ্রুতি দিয়ে ঘোষণা করবেন বলে জানিয়েছেন জ্ঞানেন্দ্র। সেই ঘোষণায় 'সঙ্কট' হলে ভারতও ফের নেপালকে সামরিক সাহায্য দেওয়া শুরু করবে বলে আশ্বাস দিয়েছেন মনমোহন। ফেব্রুয়ারিতে জ্ঞানেন্দ্রের ক্ষমতা দখলের পরে আজই প্রথম তাঁর মুখোমুখি হলেন মনমোহন।

আফ্রো-এশীয় শীর্ষ সম্মেলনের অবকাশে আজ সকালে ৪৫ মিনিটের বৈঠকে মনমোহনকে নেপালরাজ বলেছেন, গণতন্ত্র ফেরানোর প্রক্রিয়া শীঘ্রই শুরু করবেন। শের বাহাদুর দেউবার সরকারকে বরখাস্ত করে রাজা জ্ঞানেন্দ্র জরুরি অবস্থা ঘোষণা করার পর থেকেই গণতন্ত্রে ফেরার জন্য নেপালকে চাপ দিয়ে আসছে ভারত। পরিস্থিতি নিয়ন্ত্রণে এলেই গণতন্ত্রও ফিরবে, এর বাইরে রাজা আগে কোনও প্রতিশ্রুতি দেননি। কিন্তু আজ তিনি মনমোহনকে বলেছেন, এপ্রিল মাসের শেষেই গণতন্ত্রের 'রোডম্যাপ' ঘোষণা হবে।

নেপালি সংবিধান অনুযায়ী, প্রথম দফায় জরুরি অবস্থা থাকতে পারে তিন মাস এবং সেই অনুযায়ী ১ মে জরুরি অবস্থার মেয়াদ ফুরোচ্ছে। কূটনৈতিক সূত্রের খবর, এই সময়সীমার কথা মাথায় রেখে দিল্লি চেয়েছিল, ১ মে-র আগেই গণতন্ত্র সংক্রান্ত নির্দিষ্ট ঘোষণা করুন জ্ঞানেন্দ্র। নেপালরাজ সেটাই করার কথা বলেছেন। বিনিময়ে দিল্লির কাছ থেকে আশ্বাস পেয়েছেন, গণতন্ত্র বা আরও স্পষ্ট করে বললে দ্রুত নির্বাচন আয়োজনের ব্যবস্থা হলে স্থগিত থাকা সামরিক সাহায্য ফের শুরু হবে। গণতন্ত্র পুনর্প্রতিষ্ঠার বিষয়ে ভারতের বক্তব্য গত কালই জ্ঞানেন্দ্রকে জানান বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহ। বৈঠক শেষে মনমোহন বলেন, নেপালকে ঘনিষ্ঠ প্রতিবেশী হিসাবে দেখে ভারত। সেখানে সাংবিধানিক রাজতন্ত্র ও বহুদলীয় গণতন্ত্রের সমঝোতাই দরকার।

এখন প্রশ্ন থাকছে নেপালরাজের প্রতিশ্রুত 'রোডম্যাপ'-এর বিষয়বস্তু নিয়ে। কূটনৈতিক মহলের বিশ্লেষণে, পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট জেনারেল পারভেজ মুশারফের দৃষ্টান্ত অনুসরণ করে দীর্ঘমেয়াদী পরিকল্পনার কথা জানাতে পারেন জ্ঞানেন্দ্র। সব কিছু ঠিকঠাক থাকলে, এই বিষয়ে একটি কমিটি গড়ার কথা বলা হবে 'রোডম্যাপে'। এখনকার মতো রাজার মনোনীত মন্ত্রিসভার সদস্যেরা নন, বিভিন্ন রাজনৈতিক দলের প্রতিনিধিরা সেই উপদেষ্টা কমিটিতে থাকবেন। তার পরে সেই কমিটি নির্বাচনের সম্ভাব্য সময় ঘোষণা করতে পারে।

দেড় বা দু'বছর পরে যদি নির্বাচন করার কথা বলা হয়, তা হলে সামরিক সাহায্য দেওয়ার পথে হাঁটবে না ভারত। কূটনৈতিক সূত্র জানাচ্ছে, খুব তাড়াতাড়িই যে ভোট করা চাই, জ্ঞানেন্দ্রকে সেই ইঙ্গিত স্পষ্টই দিয়ে রেখেছে দিল্লি। মাওবাদী

সমস্যা মোকাবিলায় ভারতীয় সামরিক সহায়তা নেপালের দরকার। আর তা বৃদ্ধিই নির্বাচনী প্রক্রিয়ায় ফেরার শর্ত নিয়ে চাপ দিয়েছে ভারত। সম্প্রতি নেপালে পঞ্চায়েত ভোটের ঘোষণা হয়েছে। কিন্তু সেই ভোটে জনগণের অংশগ্রহণ এতই কম থাকে যে, তাকে আমল দিচ্ছে না ভারত।

সামরিক সাহায্য আবার চালু করার জন্য নেপালের দাবি শর্তসাপেক্ষে মেনে নেওয়ার পিছনে ভারতেরও কিছু বাধ্যবাধকতা রয়েছে। নেপালকে নিজের বাড়ির উঠানের মতোই মনে করে ভারত। স্বভাবতই ভারতের আশঙ্কা, তারা সাহায্য না-দিলে চীন, পাকিস্তান, এমনকী আমেরিকার দ্বারস্থ হতে পারে নেপাল। তেমন পরিস্থিতি তৈরি করে নিজের



জাকার্তায় জ্ঞানেন্দ্র ও মনমোহন। — এ এফ পি

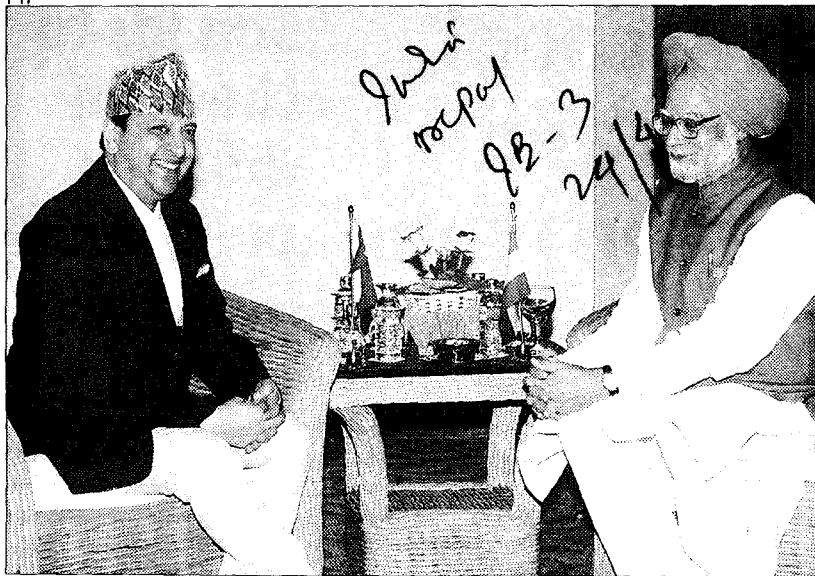
প্রতিবেশী দেশে অন্যের প্রভাব বাড়তে দিতে চায় না ভারত।

তা ছাড়া, নেপালি সেনাকে সাহায্য করা মানে শুধু রাজার মন রাখা নয়। যে-বাহিনী মাওবাদীদের বিরুদ্ধে লড়ছে, সেই ফৌজে নিজেদের প্রভাবও এতে বাড়ানো যায়। আর নেপালি সেনা দুর্বল হয়ে গেলে মাওবাদী উপদ্রব ভারতে উপচে পড়ার আশঙ্কা আছেই দিল্লির। ভারতীয় শীর্ষ নেতৃত্বের সঙ্গে বৈঠকে বসতে মরিয়া ছিলেন জ্ঞানেন্দ্র। দিল্লির সঙ্গে যোগ না-রেখে যে চালিয়ে যাওয়া যাবে না, সেটা বুঝতে পারছিলেন তিনি। মনমোহনও জ্ঞানেন্দ্রকে এড়াতে চাননি। বিদেশ মন্ত্রকের বক্তব্য, নেপালে নিজেদের গুরুত্ব লঘু হতে দেওয়া মানে দক্ষিণ-পূর্ব এশিয়ায় প্রভাব হাঙ্কা হতে দেওয়া।

দিল্লির ভাবনায় রয়েছে রাজার সঙ্গে মাওবাদীদের গোপন বোঝাপড়ার 'সমঝোতা'ও। সেটা হলে যে ভারতের পক্ষে মারাত্মক হবে, তা জানে বিদেশ মন্ত্রক। নরমপন্থী নেতা বাবুরাম ভট্টরাইয়ের মাধ্যমে মাওবাদীদের সঙ্গে সমঝোতার তলায় তলায় একটা চেষ্টাও চালাচ্ছে ভারত। আর কূটনৈতিক মঞ্চে অঙ্ক কষে পেশ করা হচ্ছে রাজনৈতিক বন্দি মুক্তি, বহুদলীয় গণতন্ত্র ফেরানো ইত্যাদি প্রসঙ্গ।

PM to consider King's military aid request

PTI



Prime Minister Manmohan Singh with Nepal's King Gyanendra in Jakarta on Saturday

AJAY KAUL
JAKARTA | APRIL 23

BREAKING a three-month chill in Indo-Nepal relations, King Gyanendra and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh met today. The PM promised to look at the monarch's request for the resumption of military aid from a "proper perspective".

The aid was suspended after Gyanendra dismissed the elected Deuba government, imposed Emergency and assumed full powers on February 1. India has been demanding restoration of multi-party democracy in the kingdom. The royal palace's unhappiness with the Indian stand has been obvious.

The issue of resumption of military aid to Nepal was raised by the King during the 45-minute meeting and the PM told him that he "will look at this from proper perspective".

Addressing a press conference here,

'Not much importance should be given to Jakarta meeting'

■ NEW DELHI: A senior Nepalese politician on Saturday said that not much importance should be attached to the meeting between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and King Gyanendra in Jakarta at the Asia Africa summit.

"Don't read much into the meeting. After all, the other countries can't treat the Nepal king as pariah," Pradip Giri, a senior leader of Nepali Congress (Democratic) told PTI in New Delhi.

It would not have been "civil" on the Indian Prime Minister's part not to meet the King, he said. Giri was in the city to attend a seminar on the topic 'Constitutional crisis in Nepal'. — PTI

Singh said he also explained to the King that as a close neighbour, India regarded constitutional monarchy and multi-

party democracy as the two pillars of Nepal's polity.

He said India's "action was guided by the recognition that the two pillars must work together in harmony".

The king, Singh said, explained the circumstances and compulsions under which he assumed absolute power. The PM said he told Gyanendra that it was "important to take effective steps to restart the political processes and work out a roadmap for this purpose".

Singh told the king that India was concerned about developments in Nepal as it was a "close neighbour" with which it shared civilisational ties and a unique intimate relation. The king was "quite sensitive to these concerns", the PM said, describing as "constructive" the overall meeting during which the two discussed the evolving situation in Nepal and perceptions on it.

The meeting was held at Nepal's request on the sidelines of the Afro-Asian summit.

Emerging from the meeting, Gyanendra claimed that he had got an assurance from India on the resumption of the military assistance.

During the meeting, Gyanendra promised to restore political process in the kingdom "as early as possible", Rajiv Sikri, Secretary (East) in the External Affairs Ministry, told reporters. External Affairs Minister K. Natwar Singh was also present at the meeting. Sikri said the two sides agreed that it was "necessary to restart the political process without delay and this in turn would enable his majesty's government to deal with the Maoist insurgency". — PTI

PM arms monarch with hope

9/2/05 Nepal 2/1 20/4

PRANAY SHARMA

Jakarta, April 23: Strategic compulsions have forced India to temper its concerns over democracy and take a "look" at resuming military assistance to Nepal.

The signal was conveyed at the first meeting between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and King Gyanendra since the monarch seized power through a coup on February 1.

The king claimed that he got an assurance from India to continue the military assistance, which was put on ice after the elected government

Gyanendra. Asked whether military supplies were discussed, the monarch said: "We have agreed on certain things. We have got assurances that they will continue."

But Rajiv Sikri, the secretary (east) in the Indian foreign ministry, refused to give details on whether the arms supply came up for talks at the meeting between the two leaders. The clarification came from the Prime Minister later in the evening.

The two back-to-back meetings with the king — yesterday foreign minister Natwar Singh had met him — despite India's attempts to play down their significance had raised questions whether Delhi was trying to bring about a course correction in its tough policy.

However, the Prime Minister made it a point to clarify that his meeting with Gyanendra came after a request from the king. "Being our close neighbour, a country with which we have standing civilisational and intimate relations, I agreed to the meeting," he said.

Singh said he took the opportunity to tell the king that "it was important to take urgent steps" to restore democracy in the country.

The Prime Minister said Gyanendra has assured him that he has a roadmap for restoring democracy. But Singh did not say whether the king mentioned a time frame.

Asked when he would lift the emergency in Nepal, Gyanendra said: "We have already called for municipal elections." The king hinted that he would take a decision on lifting emergency only after assessing how the political process moves forward.

India has been stressing that constitutional monarchy and multi-party democracy were the "twin pillars" on which Nepal's stability and progress depend.

Tsunami call

The Asia-Africa summit, the reason why Singh is in Jakarta, adopted a resolution to establish an integrated strategy to develop a multi-nodal early warning system with "mechanisms for preparedness, prevention, mitigation and response" to minimise casualties in calamities like tsunamis.



Singh, Gyanendra

was overthrown in Nepal.

But the Indian side put in a rider, saying the Prime Minister had assured the king "to look into it in a proper perspective". Indian sources suggested that Delhi is trying to link the arms supply with an assurance from Nepal of a "roadmap" to restore democracy.

Other sources said India has little option but to resume the military aid that is vital for the kingdom in its fight against Maoists.

After India froze the assistance — though by then Nepal had got most of what it wanted for the time being — Pakistan had rushed in with an offer to arm the kingdom. The king's stopover from Indonesia — China — also must have played on Delhi's mind, though Beijing has tried to put India at ease.

The army also feels that an arms embargo will hurt India in the long run because of the spillover effect of the insurgency in Nepal.

The confirmation about India's arms rethink came from

Reach consensus, Natwar tells King

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, April 22. — As a prologue to the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh's meeting with King Gyanendra of Nepal, the external affairs minister, Mr Natwar Singh, today had a 45-minute-meeting with the King on the sidelines of the Asian-African summit in Jakarta.

Mr Natwar Singh told the King that a process of reconciliation between the political parties and the constitutional monarchy should be initiated. He conveyed India's belief that the problems confronting Nepal could only be addressed by a national consensus between the two constitutional forces in Nepal. The King said he was "greatly looking forward" to meeting Dr Singh.

This was the highest level of political contact between the two sides since the 1 February royal takeover, indicating the beginning of a rapprochement between India and Nepal. Dr Manmohan Singh is likely to meet the King before the latter leaves tomorrow evening.

The PM told reporters accompanying him to Jakarta that he would convey India's concern about the situation in the kingdom "if I get an opportunity to meet the King". Describing Nepal as the "closest" neighbour and that whatever happens there is of interest to India, he said: "The two countries should return to the process of close consultation."

Another report on page 3

Delhi springs Gyanendra double date

PRANAY SHARMA

Jakarta, April 22: Nepal's King Gyanendra, whose February coup had led to frosty ties with India, appears to be on his way to rebuilding diplomatic bridges.

He met foreign minister K. Natwar Singh today and is set for a date with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh tomorrow morning.

Although neither side is willing to admit it, the back-to-back meetings are clearly an attempt to break the status quo that has been going on for months.

And the king will not go back empty-handed. While Prime Minister Singh insisted on being "friends" with Nepal, Delhi's statement on Natwar's meeting indicated a softening of stand.

India's first reaction to Gyanendra's dismissal of the Sher Bahadur Deuba government and imposition of emergency in Nepal was sharp.

Although it continued to maintain contact with the palace through its am-

bassador in Kathmandu, Shiv Shankar Mukherjee, the need for a meeting at the highest level was obvious to both sides.

The king's proposal to meet the Prime Minister on the sidelines of the Asian-African Summit in Jakarta had been doing the rounds for some time.

But Delhi kept denying its knowledge as Gyanendra had not "formally" approached India.

It remains a mystery, however, why the foreign ministry refused to announce Natwar's meeting with the monarch.

The Prime Minister, though, was candid about the priority Nepal enjoys in India's foreign policy, when asked about his scheduled meeting with the king.

Underlining the close ties between the neighbours, he today pointed out how Nepalese nationals are not seen as "foreigners" when they come to India.

"We wish Nepal well. I will be very happy to meet him. We are friends of Nepal. What happens there affects us."

The Prime Minister even suggested "close consultations" between the two sides. However, he did not let go of the opportunity to remind Gyanendra that "constitutional monarchy" and "multi-party democracy" are the "twin pillars" of his country's stability and progress.

India, which has been the main supplier of arms to the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) and has been training its personnel to fight Maoist rebels, has suspended all defence cooperation with Kathmandu since February 1. This is bound to have caused problems for the RNA, but the king has not admitted it in public.

Asked whether weapons supply would be part of tomorrow's discussions, the Prime Minister was non-committal. He was not even willing to comment on whether the situation in Nepal has improved.

"It is too premature to say. I will discuss with him all the issues, get his assessment of the situation and learn to what extent our concerns can be taken on board," Singh said.



Natwar Singh meets King Gyanendra in Jakarta on Friday. (PTI)

Natwar, Gyanendra make first contact

Indian's call for restoring multi-party democracy stressed at meet

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 22

FOR the first time after the dismissal of the Sher Bahadur Deuba Government and declaration of emergency in Nepal on February 1, King Gyanendra made a political contact with India on Friday by meeting External Affairs Minister K. Natwar Singh at the Asian-African Summit in Jakarta.

The meeting set the stage for the first meeting between Gyanendra and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who left for Jakarta on Friday to attend the Summit commemorating the golden jubilee of the Bandung Conference. The King told Natwar Singh that he was looking forward to meet the Prime Minister.

During a 45-minute meeting, Natwar Singh emphasised the Indian position for restoration of multi-party democracy, speedy release of political prisoners, lifting of emergency and media censorship.

This is the Monarch's first visit abroad after he seized power on February 1. His actions were strongly condemned by the international community, particularly India, the US and the UK.

India, which has suspended military aid to Nepal since the royal coup, has been working closely with the US to put pressure on the King. Gyanendra is upset with New Delhi's response. The surprise developments in Nepal also led to cancellation of the SAARC Summit at Dhaka. The King recently met Indian Ambassador to Nepal S S Mukherjee after nearly two months.

Earlier in the day, Natwar



Nepal's King Gyanendra (left) with Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono in Jakarta on Friday

Gyanendra defends coup

JAKARTA: Nepal King said on Friday that he was forced to seize power in February because his insurgency-racked country was on the "edge of a precipice", and pleaded for international support while promising a return to democracy.

Gyanendra described the Communist rebels in Nepal as terrorists who had killed more than 11,000 people since 1996 and said his decision to sack the government and assume absolute power was meant "to prevent the nation from further sliding down to chaos and anarchy". "Terrorism and the self-induced inability of the political parties and various governments to rise to the challenge of ever emboldening terrorists were driving the country to the edge of a precipice," he told leaders from about 80 countries in his speech. —PTI

PM to meet Nepal King

ON BOARD SPECIAL AIRCRAFT: Observing that India and Nepal should return to the process of close consultations, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said on Friday that he would meet King Gyanendra on the sidelines of the Asian-African summit in Jakarta and convey India's concerns to him about the situation there. "If I get an opportunity, I will meet the King and convey India's concerns" over the situation in Nepal, he said. Officials said the meeting between the Prime Minister and King Gyanendra was likely on Saturday. Observing that Nepal is the "closest" neighbour, Singh said whatever happened in the Himalayan kingdom was of interest to India. —PTI

Singh conveyed to the King that a process of reconciliation should be initiated between Nepal's political parties and the constitutional monarchy for early restoration of multi-party democracy. India, he told the King, strongly felt that the problems confronting Nepal, including the Maoist insurgency, could be ad-

ressed only on the basis of national consensus between the "two constitutional forces".

On his part, the King explained the circumstances that led to the declaration of emergency and outlined the steps that he had already taken. He also proposed to lift the emergency soon and restore the democratic process in the kingdom.

Need to look at Kashmir from different perspective, says PM Singh

AJAY KAUL
ON BOARD SPECIAL
AIRCRAFT, APRIL 22

MAINTAINING that India and Pakistan needed to look at the Kashmir issue from a "different perspective", Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said on Friday, that "no overnight solution" could be expected.

He, however, warned that the peace process could be threatened by terrorism which has "not been fully controlled" yet.

"India and Pakistan have to look at the Kashmir issue from a different perspective. Territorial disputes are not solved overnight. They take time," Singh told reporters accompanying him to Jakarta for the Asian-African summit.

Asked about President Musharraf's remark that converting the LoC into a "soft border" was no solution to the Kashmir problem. The PM said the two countries had "charted a course of action which will yield substantive results in coming years".

On Wen Jiabao's visit to India, Singh said the two countries will have to accelerate the process of delineating the Line of Actual Control (LAC) after they signed the guiding principles and political parameters on the boundary question during Wen's visit.

He observed that controversy over Sikkim was over with China recognising it as a part of India. —PTI

Nepal sets free 61 political prisoners including ex-DPM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KATHMANDU, APRIL 22

FORMER Nepalese deputy prime minister Bharat Mohan Adhikari, placed under house arrest since King Gyanendra sacked his government and assumed absolute power, was among 61 political detainees released by authorities in the kingdom, police said on Friday.

The announcement of their release came a day after human rights group Amnesty International claimed that over 3,000 people had been detained in Nepal since the February 1 royal takeover.

Security guards were withdrawn from the residence of Adhikari, who was the deputy PM in the sacked Sher Bahadur Deuba government, last night after he was kept under house arrest for 81 days, police said.

After he was set free, Adhikari, also the standing committee member of Nepal Communist Party-UML, told reporters that the royal government's act of detaining a politician without any reason for such a long time was a "gross violation" of the Constitution.

"It was a conspiracy hatched by the government to

root out the achievements of the 1990 popular movement, that restored democratic rights," said Adhikari, whose party was one of the four coalition partners of the sacked government.

Adhikari was prohibited from using the telephone and

Security guards were withdrawn from the residence of Adhikari, who was Dy PM in the Sher Bahadur Deuba government, last night after 81 days under house arrest

meeting his supporters during the house arrest. Deuba, who was also held under house arrest after the sacking of his government by the King, was released last month.

The government released 60 other political prisoners, including Nepali Congress leader Trailokya Pratap Sen, from various districts, police said.

Their release came at a time when the King was in Jakarta to attend the Asian-African summit.

23 APR 2005

INDIAN EXPRESS

কেন অভ্যুত্থান, নটবরকে বোঝালেন নেপালরাজ মনমোহন-জ্ঞানেন্দ্র কথা আজ

২০/৪ ২০/৪ ১৯৫৫

জাকার্তা, ২২ এপ্রিল: সব কিছু ঠিকঠাক চললে আফ্রো-এশীয় শীর্ষ সম্মেলন চলাকালীনই কাল নেপালরাজ জ্ঞানেন্দ্রের সঙ্গে একান্ত বৈঠকে বসছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ। আজ বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহের সঙ্গে জ্ঞানেন্দ্রের প্রায় পৌনে এক ঘণ্টার বৈঠক মনমোহনের সঙ্গে সাক্ষাতের পটভূমি তৈরি করেছে বলে কূটনৈতিক মহলের অনুমান।

ফেব্রুয়ারির গোড়ায় নেপালে গণতন্ত্র বাতিল করে নিজে হাতে ক্ষমতা নিয়ে নেওয়ার পরে এটাই হবে ভারতের প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে জ্ঞানেন্দ্রের প্রথম বৈঠক। নেপালে গণতন্ত্র ফিরিয়ে আনার দাবিতে চাপ সৃষ্টি করতে এতদিন সেই সুযোগ দিচ্ছিল না ভারত। এই বৈঠক হলে উপমহাদেশের সবচেয়ে বড় প্রতিবেশীর কাছ থেকে অনেকটাই বৈধতার স্বীকৃতি পেয়ে যাবেন জ্ঞানেন্দ্র। তবে ভারত যে গণতন্ত্র ফেরানোর চাপ তুলে নিতে রাজি নয়, তারই ইঙ্গিত দিয়ে জাকার্তার পথে বিমানে প্রধানমন্ত্রী আজ বলেন, “সুযোগ হলে নেপালরাজের সঙ্গে দেখা করে আমি ভারতের উদ্বেগের কারণগুলি জানাব।”

নটবর অবশ্য আজই নেপালের পরিস্থিতি নিয়ে ভারতের উদ্বেগের কথা জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন জ্ঞানেন্দ্রকে। অভ্যুত্থানের পরে বন্দি বিভিন্ন রাজনৈতিক নেতার দ্রুত মুক্তি, জরুরি অবস্থা তুলে নেওয়া বা সংবাদমাধ্যমের স্বাধীনতা ফিরিয়ে দেওয়ার

অনুরোধ করেছেন নটবর। পাশাপাশি মনে করাতে ভোলেননি, নেপালে সাংবিধানিক রাজতন্ত্রের সঙ্গে বহুদলীয় গণতন্ত্রের এই সমঝোতাই দেশের মূল সমস্যাগুলির কার্যকরী সমাধান দিতে পারে। যার অন্যতম হল মাওবাদীদের তাণ্ডব। এবং যে সমস্যায় কমবেশি অতিষ্ঠ ভারতও।

সামরিক অভ্যুত্থানের মধ্য দিয়ে নেপালে ক্ষমতা দখলের পরে এটাই জ্ঞানেন্দ্রের প্রথম বিদেশ সফর। ফেব্রুয়ারির গোড়ায় ওই অভ্যুত্থানের প্রতিক্রিয়ায় জ্ঞানেন্দ্রের নিন্দায় সরব হয়েছিল গোটা বিশ্ব। ব্রিটেন ও আমেরিকার পাশাপাশি প্রতিবেশী ভারতের কটর মনোভাবে বেড়ে গিয়েছিল দু'দেশের দূরত্ব। অভ্যুত্থানের সপ্তাহখানেকের মধ্যে ভারতের রাষ্ট্রদূতের সঙ্গে দেখা করলেও ভারতের অবস্থানে হতাশাই প্রকাশ করেছিলেন জ্ঞানেন্দ্র। ঢাকায় সার্ক সম্মেলনে অংশ নেওয়ার ভারতের আপত্তিও এই ঘটনার প্রেক্ষিতেই ব্যাখ্যা করা হয়েছিল। জ্ঞানেন্দ্রকে স্বীকৃতি দিতে না-চাওয়াই ভারতের আপত্তির মূল কারণ, উঠেছিল এমন দাবিও।

আজ প্রথম সুযোগেই অবশ্য অভ্যুত্থানের পক্ষে নিজের যুক্তি সাজাতে ছাড়েননি জ্ঞানেন্দ্র। গত প্রায় ন'বছরে মাওবাদীরা দেশের পরিস্থিতি কোথায় নিয়ে গিয়েছিল, তা বোঝানোর চেষ্টা করেছেন নটবরকে। বলেছেন, কিশোরদের হাতে অস্ত্র তুলে দিচ্ছিল

মাওবাদীরা। নেপালরাজের দাবি, এই পরিস্থিতি নিয়ন্ত্রণে সম্পূর্ণ ব্যর্থ হয় সরকার। এবং অভ্যুত্থানের পরে ক্রমশই ভাল হয়েছে দেশের নিরাপত্তা পরিস্থিতি। কিন্তু বিপরীত ছবি পাওয়া গিয়েছে আজও। চিতবন জেলার কল্যাণপুরে একটি স্কুলে বিশ্ফোরণ ঘটিয়ে এবং স্কুলবাস জালিয়ে দিয়ে জঙ্গিরা ৬টি শিশুকে মারাত্মক জখম করেছে। টাকার অঙ্কেও ক্ষয়ক্ষতির পরিমাণ প্রচুর। আর এই পরিস্থিতিতে আন্তর্জাতিক মহলের সহানুভূতি কাড়তে জ্ঞানেন্দ্রের অনুরোধ, “নেপালে শান্তি ফেরাতে ও গণতান্ত্রিক প্রতিষ্ঠানগুলি জোরদার করতে হলে সন্ত্রাসের বিরুদ্ধে আমাদের এই লড়াইয়ে আন্তর্জাতিক সমর্থন চাই।”

নেপালে গণতন্ত্রীকরণের প্রক্রিয়া শুরু হলেও তা এগোচ্ছে খুবই স্লথ গতিতে। অ্যামনেস্টি কাল দাবি করেছিল, নেপালে এই মুহূর্তে রাজনৈতিক বন্দির সংখ্যা প্রায় তিন হাজার। অভ্যুত্থানের পরে এ পর্যন্ত মাত্র শ'পাঁচেক বন্দি মুক্তি দেওয়া হয়েছে। নটবরের অনুরোধের পাশাপাশি আজই মুক্তি পেয়েছেন প্রায় ৬০ জন বন্দি। তাঁদের মধ্যে প্রাক্তন উপ-প্রধানমন্ত্রী ভরতমোহন অধিকারীও রয়েছেন। এই সংখ্যাটা বাড়ানোর জন্যই সওয়াল করেছেন নটবর।

চিন-জাপান বা দুই কোরিয়ার মতোই বানদুঃ সম্মেলনে শূন্যবর্ষজয়ন্তী ঐতিহাসিক মুহূর্ত আনতে পারে ভারত-নেপালের জন্যেও।—পিটিআই, রয়টার্স

23 APR 2005

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

Messy end to India-Nepal talks

Gyanendra-Singh meeting at Jakarta not likely

Nilova Roy Chaudhury
New Delhi, April 15

TALKS BETWEEN India and Nepal appeared to have completely broken down after the long-awaited meeting on Friday between King Gyanendra and Indian ambassador Shiv Mukherjee. Short of calling for Mukherjee's removal, everything went wrong during Friday's 90-minute meeting, the atmosphere of which can only be mildly described as frosty.

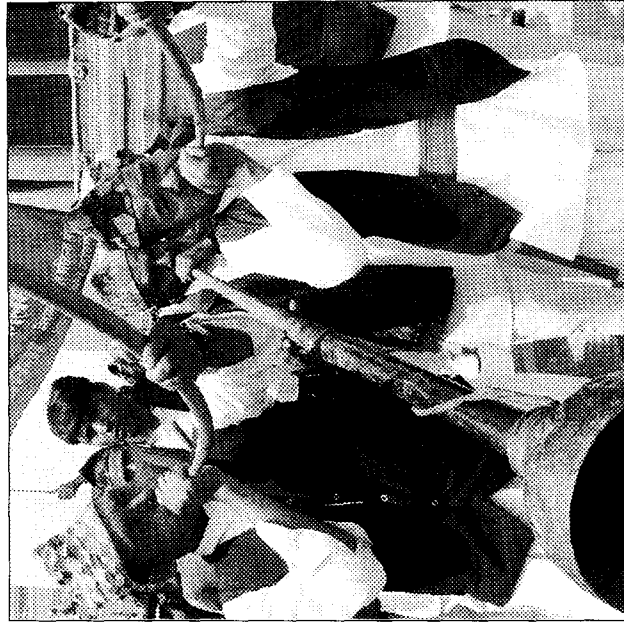
Not only did it fail to remove mutual suspicions, even the possibility of a meeting between Gyanendra and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in Bandung next week has receded, well-placed sources said.

The MEA's official spokesman said, "The ambassador shared the Government of India's assessment of the current situation during the meeting which lasted over an hour. Mukherjee underlined India's commitment towards peace and stability in Nepal."

Mukherjee is understood to have pressed for restoration of democracy and release of political leaders held after the royal takeover, a suggestion that did not go down too well with the monarch. It was Mukherjee's second meeting with Gyanendra since the coup.

His belated response to Mukherjee's February 22 request for talks sparked speculation about a possible one-to-one meeting between him and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on the sidelines of the April 22-24 Jakarta summit. But all that seems to be history now.

"The king conveyed his views and his perceptions on the situation in the country, and recent developments," the MEA spokesman added. The lack of any further information was "clear indication that the talks had failed to yield any forward movement", and "relations are deadlocked", a political analyst said. "It's a real mess," he added. According to diplomatic sources, the fact that



Nepalese men blow traditional horns to usher in the New Year

the monarch met Mukherjee, after keeping him on hold for two months, was "a good gesture", in which direct communication links Delhi", a diplomat said.

Koirala unhappy with VHP

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, April 15

THE NEPALI Congress has taken on the VHP for its support for King Gyanendra. Sujata Koirala, daughter of Nepali Congress chief Girija Prasad Koirala, has said the organisation should realise that the people of Nepal were going through difficult times. "The VHP is supporting a Hindu raja. But this is wrong. They seem to have forgotten that without the backing of the people, nobody can be king."

She was speaking to reporters after meeting BJP vice president Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi here. "Nepalese people need the support of India, an old friend of ours, so that democracy returns in our country."

She said, "I am surprised that the VHP, which is an Indian organisation, is supporting the King who is known to be anti-Indian."

Naqvi assured her of his party's full support.

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THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

ভারত ও নেপালকে কাছে আনছে মাওবাদী আতঙ্ক

নেপালের জখম মাওবাদীরা ঘাঁটি গাড়ছে শিলিগুড়িতে

কিশোর সাহা • শিলিগুড়ি

শিলিগুড়ি লাগোয়া নেপালের কাঁপা জেলার একটি হাটে সামরিক বাহিনীর সঙ্গে তুমুল সংঘর্ষের পরে অসুস্থ ২০ জন মাওবাদী জঙ্গি শিলিগুড়িতে ঢুকে পড়েছে বলে আশঙ্কা করা হচ্ছে। দু'সপ্তাহ আগে ওই হাটে রসদ সংগ্রহ করতে গিয়ে সামরিক বাহিনীর প্রতিরোধের মুখে পড়ে মাওবাদীরা। সংঘর্ষ এমন পর্যায়ে পৌঁছয় যে, সামরিক বাহিনী হেলিকপ্টার থেকেও গুলিবর্ষণ করে। সংঘর্ষে জখম জঙ্গিদের মধ্যে ২০ জন খোলা সীমান্ত পেরিয়ে শিলিগুড়িতে ঘাঁটি গেড়ে চিকিৎসা করতে সক্রিয় বলে ভারতীয় গোয়েন্দারা জানতে পেরেছেন। সম্প্রতি গোয়েন্দা দফতরের কাছ থেকে কেন্দ্র ও রাজ্য স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রকে ওই তথ্য পৌঁছেছে।

রাজ্য গোয়েন্দা বিভাগের একজন পদস্থ অফিসার বলেন, “জখম মাওবাদীরা ঢুকে পড়ার আশঙ্কা রয়েছে বলেই বাড়তি নজরদারি চলছে। ইতিমধ্যেই একটি নার্সিংহোম থেকে একজনকে ধরা হয়েছে। সে কোথায়, কী ভাবে জখম হয়েছিল খোঁজ নেওয়া হচ্ছে।” পাশাপাশি, শুধু শিলিগুড়ি নয়, মাওবাদীদের আনান্দোনা রুখতে গোট্টা উত্তরবঙ্গের বেসরকারি নার্সিংহোমে ‘বিশেষ নজরদারি’ নির্দেশ দিয়েছেন রাজ্য পুলিশের উত্তরবঙ্গের আই জি কিয়ালাল মিনা। আই জি বলেন, “প্রতিটি বেসরকারি চিকিৎসাকেন্দ্রের উপরে বিশেষ নজরদারি শুরু হয়েছে। কোমল ভাবেই মাওবাদীদের শিলিগুড়িতে ঘাঁটি গাড়তে দেওয়া হবে না।”

নেপাল সীমান্তের শিলিগুড়িতে মাওবাদী জঙ্গিদের আনান্দোনা অবশ্য নতুন কিছু নয়। গত এক বছরের মধ্যে নেপালের মাওবাদী সংগঠনের সদস্য সন্দেহে অসুস্থ ১০

জনকে পুলিশ গ্রেফতার করেছে। তার মধ্যে ছিলেন মাওবাদী জঙ্গি সংগঠনের কেন্দ্রীয় কমিটির প্রথম সারির নেতা মোহন বৈদ্য। তিনি চোখের চিকিৎসা করাতে এসেছিলেন শিলিগুড়িতে। পুলিশ ও গোয়েন্দারা সেই থেকেই শিলিগুড়ি ও লাগোয়া এলাকার নার্সিংহোমগুলিতে নিয়মিত নজরদারি চালাচ্ছেন। তার পরেও নাম-পরিচয় ভাড়িয়ে সম্প্রতি সেবক মোড়ের একটি ব্যয়বহুল নার্সিংহোমে ভর্তি হয়ে এক মাওবাদী জঙ্গি গ্রেফতার হয়। তার শরীরে গুরুতর জখম রয়েছে। নার্সিংহোম কর্তৃপক্ষকে ছাদ থেকে পড়ে হয়েছে বলে জানিয়ে ওই জঙ্গি ভর্তি হয়। পুলিশ ও গোয়েন্দারা সন্দেহবশত তাকে জেরা করলে আসল ঘটনা প্রকাশ পায়। দীপক সুব্বা নামে ওই মাওবাদী জঙ্গি নকশালবাজির ঠিকানা দিয়ে ভর্তি হলেও তার আসল নামধাম এখনও সংগ্রহ করা যায়নি। দীপক আপাতত উত্তরবঙ্গ মেডিক্যাল কলেজ হাসপাতালে ভর্তি।

সম্প্রতি উদম্বে নামে গোয়েন্দারা জানতে পারেন, নেপালের হাটে সংঘর্ষে জখম জঙ্গিরা শিলিগুড়িতে চিকিৎসা করাতে মরিয়া। সেই সঙ্গে বিহারের কিয়ালগঞ্জের কায়েকটি নার্সিংহোমের দিকেও তাদের নজর আছে বলে তাঁরা জেনেছেন। তবে বিহারের চেয়ে শিলিগুড়ির নার্সিংহোমগুলির চিকিৎসা পরিকাঠামো উন্নততর। তা ছাড়া শিলিগুড়ির বেশ কিছু এলাকায় নেপালি যনবসতি রয়েছে। ওই সব এলাকায় আত্মগোপন করতেও জঙ্গিরা তৎপর বলে গোয়েন্দাদের অনুমান। দার্জিলিং জেলা পুলিশ ইতিমধ্যেই যিঞ্জি বসতি এলাকা-সহ শিলিগুড়ি পুরসভার প্রতি ওয়ার্ডের বাড়ির মালিকদের কাছে ভাড়াসিঁদা সংক্রান্ত তথ্য দেওয়ার অনুরোধ করেছে।

ইন্দোনেশিয়ায় কথা হতে পারে মনমোহন-জ্ঞানেন্দ্রের

জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল • নয়াদিল্লি

১৫ এপ্রিল: রাজকীয় অভ্যুত্থানের পরে নেপাল সম্পর্কে নয়াদিল্লি যে অনমনীয় অবস্থান নিয়েছিল, এখন তা থেকে কিছুটা সরে আসার কথা ভাবছে। নতুন পরিস্থিতিতে রাজা জ্ঞানেন্দ্রের সঙ্গে বৈঠকে বসার কথাও গুরুত্ব দিয়ে বিবেচনা করছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ।

পরিস্থিতি দ্রুত মোড়ানো হচ্ছে বলেই নয়াদিল্লিকে নতুন ভাবে চিন্তাভাবনা করতে হচ্ছে। নেপালে মাওবাদী তৎপরতা ক্রমেই বাড়ছে। নেপালের রাজা পরিস্থিতি মোকাবিলায় অনেকটা অসহায় বোধ করছেন। তিনি চাইছেন ভারতের সহযোগিতা। প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের সঙ্গে দেখা করার আগ্রহ প্রকাশও করেছে জ্ঞানেন্দ্র। চাপের কাছে নিস্বীকার করে ইতিমধ্যেই তিনি এক বছরের মধ্যে দেশে রাজনৈতিক প্রক্রিয়া ফের শুরু করার প্রতিশ্রুতিও দিয়েছেন।

এই অবস্থায় ইন্দোনেশিয়া সফরের সময় তাঁর সঙ্গে মনমোহনের দেখা করা উচিত কি না, তা নিয়ে নতুন করে ভাবছে ভারত। ২১ এপ্রিল ইন্দোনেশিয়ার বাসু-এ আফ্রো-এশিয়ান সম্মেলনে যাচ্ছেন মনমোহন। জ্ঞানেন্দ্রও যাচ্ছেন ও সেখানেই তিনি মনমোহনের সঙ্গে দেখা করতে চান। আজ ভারতের রাষ্ট্রদূত শিবশঙ্কর মুখোপাধ্যায় নেপালের রাজার সঙ্গে দেখা করে তাঁকে বলেছেন, এর মধ্যে গণতন্ত্র ফিরিয়ে আনার প্রতিশ্রুতি দিয়ে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর পক্ষে তাঁর সঙ্গে দেখা করাটা কূটনৈতিক ভাবে সহজ হবে। এর আগে জ্ঞানেন্দ্রের সঙ্গে তিনি দেখা করলেই বাংলাদেশে সার্ক বৈঠক ভড়ুল হয়ে যায়। ফলে এ বার রাজ্য সন্দেহ দেখা হলে ভারতের অবস্থানে বড় পরিবর্তন ঘটবে।

ভারতের পক্ষে আশঙ্কার কথা, নেপালে মাওবাদীদের বাড়বাড়ন্ত ঘটলে ভারত তার আঁচ থেকে বাঁচবে না। কারণ, ভারতের মাওবাদীদের সঙ্গে নেপালের মাওবাদীদের ঘনিষ্ঠ যোগাযোগ আছে। কাজেই নেপালকে সামরিক সহায়তা বন্ধ রাখার সিদ্ধান্ত এ বার প্রত্যাহার করা উচিত বলে সরকারের মধ্যে থেকেই দাবি উঠেছে। নেপালের রাজাও এই সাহায্য চাইছেন। প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রক ও স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রক দু'পক্ষই মনে করে, গণতন্ত্র ফিরিয়ে আনার জন্য রাজার উপর চাপ সৃষ্টি করার পাশাপাশি রাজাকে সাহায্য করারও ভূ-কৌশলগত প্রয়োজন আছে। প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রকের এমন আশঙ্কাও আছে যে, ভারত দীর্ঘদিন সামরিক সহায়তা বন্ধ রাখলে চিন এবং পাকিস্তানের ঝরসু হবে নেপাল। তবে, ভারত কখনওই তা চায় না।

এক সপ্তাহ আগে, স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রক এক বৈঠকে নকশাল-কবলিত রাজ্যগুলিতে প্রতিরোধ গড়ে তোলার জন্য প্রচুর আধা-সামরিক বাহিনী পাঠানোর সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে। সেনাপ্রধান জে জে সিংহও কদিন আগেই ঘোষণা করেছেন, নকশাল সমস্যা মোকাবিলায় জন্য রাজ্যগুলিকে ত্বরিত সাহায্য করতে প্রস্তুত। স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ পাটিল সম্প্রতি এ বিষয়ে একটি সর্বদলীয় বৈঠকও করেছেন। বিরোধী দলনেতা আডবর্গীও প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে বলেছেন, রাজা জ্ঞানেন্দ্রের সঙ্গে কূটনৈতিক সম্পর্ক ছিন্ন করা ভুল পদক্ষেপ। কিছু দুতের মাধ্যমে কূটনৈতিক সম্পর্ক বহাল রাখা প্রয়োজন।

আজ সকালে শিবশঙ্কর মুখোপাধ্যায় নেপালের রাজার সঙ্গে দেখা করে তাঁকে জানিয়েছেন, নেপালে শান্তি ও স্থায়িত্ব রক্ষার দায়বদ্ধতা থেকে নয়াদিল্লি সরে আসেনি। তবে একই সঙ্গে তিনি জ্ঞানেন্দ্রকে বলেছেন, গণতন্ত্র ফিরিয়ে আনার জন্য রাজাকে আনুষ্ঠানিক ভাবে ঘোষণা করতে হবে।

King's men stage a show in Delhi

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, April 10. — The streets of Delhi have become a virtual battleground for Nepal's political forces. Unusually, a pro-monarchy demonstration was held today on Parliament Street in support of Nepal monarch Gyanendra's move to dismiss the government and declare emergency on 1 February.

It was the first time a pro-monarchy rally was held in Delhi since the "royal coup". On 19 February, Parliament Street had been the venue for a large protest rally of Nepali expatriates staying in India against the King's action. It was addressed by several political leaders of various parties of Nepal. That day, the area had rent with slogans for democracy. Today afternoon, slogans were raised in favour of King Gyanendra and Queen Komal.

The demonstration had been organised by a Kathmandu-based group, Hamro Pyaro Nepal, which had also organised pro-monarchy rallies within Nepal for the last two months.



Supporters of Nepal's monarch at a demonstration in favour of King Gyanendra and Queen Komal in New Delhi on Sunday. — PTI