

## ARCELOR TO SEVER & STAL (L) MITTAL STEELS TAKEOVER BID

# STEEL



**Agencies & Our Bureau**  
LUXEMBOURG/MUMBAI

**F**RENCH steelmaker Arcelor on Friday announced its intention to buy Russia's Severstal. This will not only create the world's largest steel company but also may thwart LN Mittal's plan to become the No. 1 steelmaker.

According to the deal, Severstal chairman Alexei Mordashov, who owns 89.6% stake, is scheduled to provide 11.73 billion euros worth of assets and 1.25 billion euros in cash in exchange for Arcelor shares.

The combined company would surpass Mittal in terms of revenue and production. Arcelor CEO Guy Dolle said the "industrial logic" of the Severstal deal made more sense because it concentrated more on value than on volume.

Mittal Steel, though, criticized it as a "second-class combination", saying Arcelor's board seemed to be manipulating shareholders to its own ends. Mittal said it was convinced its offer would succeed and result in the Severstal deal unwinding. Mr Mittal had earlier made an unsolicited bid to acquire Arcelor, which he revised upward by 20% after the French and Luxembourg governments — prominent stakeholders in

Arcelor — opposed his efforts. At present, Mittal Steel is the world's largest steel company in terms of capacity, but ranks second to Arcelor in terms of revenues.

Arcelor CEO Guy Dolle has been reported as saying that though his company's plans to buy Severstal had been there for over three years, Mr Mittal's hostile bid hastened the efforts.

Arcelor said the transaction would go through by the end of July unless shareholders reject it. Dolle expressed confidence that they would approve it and said the vote showed Arcelor's commitment to corporate governance.

### LNM VS Arcelor: Act II



"The board has the right to do this without the agreement of the shareholders but ... has decided to organize an EGM to validate this transaction," he said.

Mr Mittal's existing bid values Arcelor at around 23 billion euros, with one Mittal Steel share and 11.10 euros in cash for every Arcelor share.

Though Mr Mittal had drawn attention after developing an expertise in buying cheap steel mills in previous communist bloc countries and turning them around into profitable units, the world sat up and took notice of this Kolkata-born Marwari after he made the bid to buy Arcelor in January 2006.

But once Arcelor completes its Severstal bid, Mr Mittal may find it difficult to pitch for the combined entity as the valuation will rise steeply. If the deal with the Russian company is completed, the new entity will be valued at 44 euros a share.

Mittal spokesman Paul Weigh said Mordashov could quickly have a large say in how Arcelor is run. "Effectively, he can do whatever he wants with the company," he said, adding that Mr Mittal has discussed its bid with governments and shareholders and promised to respect labour deals.

► Deal may discourage other steel cos: P 12

27 MAY 2006

# ✓ Arcelor ✓ dumps LN for ✓ Russian firm

## Mittal Dubs It 2nd-Class Combo

**Brussels:** Arcelor SA, fighting a hostile bid from rival Mittal Steel Co, on Friday announced that it was merging with Russia's Severstal in a deal that will give it a controlling stake in Russia's largest steelmaker.

Mittal Steel Co immediately criticised the deal as a "second-class combination", saying Arcelor's board seemed to be manipulating shareholders. Arcelor fought hard against Lakshmi Mittal's bid, complaining about the company's corporate governance, which is heavily weighted toward the Mittal family. Arcelor also complained that Mittal's original offer of 18.6 billion euro undervalued the company. Last week, Mittal offered to raise its bid to 25.8 billion euro.

An Arcelor statement said, under the deal announced on Friday, Severstal's controlling shareholder Alexei Mordashov would pay Arcelor 1.25 billion euro in cash and give it his stake in all of Severstal's steel assets and Italian steelmaker Lucchini Spa.

In exchange, Mordashov will own 32% of the enlarged Arcelor group. Existing shareholders, who will own the remaining 68%, can vote on the deal at a shareholders' meeting next month.

Arcelor chief executive Guy Dolle said the deal—worth 44 euro per share, excluding a planned 1.85 euro per share dividend—represented the "real value" of the company. Arcelor said the transaction would go through by the end of July unless over 50% of the current outstanding shares voted against it. However, Dolle expressed confidence that shareholders would approve of the bid.

Hitting out at the deal, Mittal said it was unprecedented and prevented shareholders from having a real choice in the future of the company. "Arcelor's shareholders are being forced to hand over control of their company whilst being

### DREAM SHATTERED



Arcelor's shareholders are being forced to hand over the control of their company

MITTAL STEEL

denied a premium," Mittal Steel said in a statement. Mittal spokesman Paul Weigh said the way the deal had been structured—and Arcelor's plans to spend up to 7.6 billion euro buying back shares—meant that Mordashov could quickly have a large say in how the company is run.

"Effectively, he can do whatever he wants with the company," he said, stressing that, in contrast, Mittal had discussed its bid with governments and most Arcelor shareholders and had promised to respect labour deals. "Can shareholders get the same kind of commitments from Mordashov and Severstal," he asked.

Mordashov, however, called the deal a "breakthrough" for his company and the Russian industry's international image. Severstal has grown rapidly in the past decade and has holdings in the US as well as Italy, but its bid for Arcelor raises its profile.

"It's a new culture for Russians, it's a big step forward," Mordashov said. "With Russian participation and a big chunk of Russian capital, a huge and undisputed leader in world steel market is being created." AGENCIES

27 MAY 2006

# Arcelor snubs Mittal for Russian hug



5/1 2005

Associated Press

BRUSSELS, May 26: Arcelor SA, long fighting a hostile bid from rival Mittal Steel Co, announced today that it would merge with Severstal in a deal that gives it a controlling stake in Russia's largest steel maker. Mittal Steel immediately criticised the deal as a "second-class combination."

Arcelor fought hard against Mittal's bid, complaining about the company's corporate governance, which is heavily weighted toward the Mittal family. Arcelor also complained that Mittal's original offer of 18.6 billion euro undervalued the company. Mittal offered last week to raise its bid to 25.8 billion euro.

Under the deal announced today, Severstal's controlling shareholder, Mr Alexei Mordashov, will pay Arcelor 1.25 billion euro in cash and give it his stake in all of Severstal's steel assets and Italian steel maker Lucchini SpA, according to an Arcelor statement.

STEP BY STEP	THE DEAL
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Severstal's controlling shareholder, Alexei Mordashov, will pay Arcelor 1.25 billion euro in cash and give in his stake in all of Severstal's steel assets and Italian steel maker Lucchini SpA</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Mittal bids for Arcelor offering 18.6 billion euro</li> <li>■ Arcelor opposes bid</li> <li>■ Mittal raises bid to 25.8 billion euro</li> <li>■ Arcelor says it is studying the revised offer</li> <li>■ Mittal fears Arcelor move to merge with Russia's Severstal</li> <li>■ Arcelor fends off Mittal bid by merging with Severstal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ In exchange, Mordashov will own 32 per cent of the enlarged Arcelor group</li> <li>■ Existing shareholders, who will own the remaining 68 per cent, can vote on the deal at a shareholders' meeting next month</li> </ul> 

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rent outstanding shares voted against. Mr Dolle expressed confidence that shareholders would approve the bid.

Mittal said this was unprecedented and prevented shareholders from having a real choice in the future of the company. Shareholders are being forced to hand over control of their company.

27 MAY 2005

# Arcelor rejects LN's new offer

## But Says It Is Willing To Hold Second Round Of Talks

Rashmee Roshan Lall | TNN

London: Mittal Steel and Arcelor continued their five-month war of words, smoke-and-mirrors battle strategy and media duelling over Lakhmi Mittal's hostile takeover bid for the European steel giant, even as the world's second largest steel-maker said it had formally rejected the unsolicited offer.

Arcelor said in a statement on Monday that its "Board of directors met on Sunday, June 11, and unanimously decided to reject Mittal Steel's current revised offer". But it indicated that it was willing to hold a second round of talks with Mittal to explore possibilities he would pay more to complete the steel industry's largest-ever acquisition in history. However, Mittal Steel indicated that it had "no intention" of improving its 22-billion euro offer for Arcelor.

Arcelor's board, including its combative French-born chief executive Guy Dolle, first met Mittal to discuss the takeover bid on June 8, after months of refusing face-to-face talks.

Monday's formal rejection by Arcelor, which is seen by industry experts as a slap in the face for Mittal's tenacity in clinging on to the belief it will win through, came as the Luxembourg-headquartered company found itself increasingly on the backfoot. Arcelor is currently facing a damaging shareholder revolt over its plans to fight Mittal by hooking up with Russian steel company Severstal.

Arcelor's decision to go with the white knight option of merging with Severstal has set off a storm of protest within the company with some shareholders requesting a new meeting to allow a two-thirds vote on the deal. A highly sus-

### MITTAL TEST



- Arcelor's board first met Mittal to discuss the takeover bid on June 8

- Arcelor is facing a shareholder revolt

- ✦ The difference in price between the Mittal and Severstal deals is roughly nine euros per share

picious Arcelor management, however, said, it would not call an emergency early meeting on the issue because a "fraction" of shareholders would win the "right to eliminate" the Severstal deal.

The Russian deal would give the country's 41-year-old, relatively unknown nouveau riche tycoon, Alexei Mordashov, up to 38% stake in Arcelor. The difference in price between the Mittal and Severstal deals is roughly nine euros per share. The Severstal deal values Arcelor at 44 euros a share, while Mittal's Rotterdam-listed company's cash and stock offer values Arcelor at about 35 euros.

Till now, Mittal Steel has been offering Arcelor shareholders one share plus 11.10 euros in cash if they decide to go with its plans for a new merged steel entity. Late on Monday, the 16-country Mittal Steel empire continued to insist its offer was "very compelling", adding contemptuously that the 44-euro-a-share valuation under the Severstal agreement was "entirely fictitious".

# U.S. makes a return to Cold War rhetoric

Vladimir Radyuhin

**H**AS THE United States declared a new Cold War on Russia? This question is being asked by Russian politicians and analysts bewildered by a virulently anti-Russian speech U.S. Vice-President Dick Cheney made at a conference in Vilnius, Lithuania, last Thursday.

Addressing a meeting of Baltic and Black Sea states, including some former Soviet Republics, Mr. Cheney lashed out at Russia, accusing it of curbing civil liberties and using its energy resources as "tools of intimidation and blackmail."

"In many areas of civil society — from religion and the news media to advocacy groups and political parties — the [Russian] government has unfairly and improperly restricted the rights of her people," Mr. Cheney said.

"Other actions by the Russian government have been counterproductive and could begin to affect relations with other countries," he warned. He asserted that "no legitimate interest is served when oil and gas become tools of intimidation or blackmail, either by supply manipulation or attempts to monopolise transportation."

It was the harshest attack on Russia by a senior member of the U.S. administration since the closing days of the Cold War, when President Ronald Reagan branded the Soviet Union an "evil empire." Curiously, Mr. Cheney nostalgically described Mr. Reagan as "beloved President" in his Vilnius speech.

The U.S. Vice-President's remarks prompted an angry response in Moscow. Kremlin deputy spokesman Dmitry Peskov rejected his criticism as "completely incomprehensible," while former President Mikhail Gorbachev described the speech as a "provocation and interference in Russia's internal affairs."

Russian commentators compared Mr. Cheney's address to a 1946 speech by British leader Winston Churchill in Fulton, the U.S., which gave the green light for the Cold War. "The Cold War has restarted, only now the front lines have shifted [from Eastern Europe to the former Sovi-

## Washington's change of heart has been largely provoked by Moscow's increasingly assertive foreign policy and determined upholding of national interests.

et Union]," Russia's top business daily, *Kommersant*, said.

The White House said Mr. Cheney in Vilnius expressed the views of President George W. Bush's administration. Mr. Cheney's anti-Russian diatribe therefore reflected a general hardening of tone in Washington towards Russia. This was earlier evident in a Council on Foreign Relations report on Russia, which said the country was heading in the "wrong direction" and urged "selective cooperation" with it. A National Security Strategy report released in March warned Moscow that "efforts to prevent democratic development at home and abroad will hamper the development of Russia's relations with the U.S., Europe and its neighbours."

Washington's change of heart towards Russia, since the time when Mr. Bush struck a friendly rapport with President Vladimir Putin during their first meeting six years ago, has been largely provoked by Moscow's increasingly assertive foreign policy and determined upholding of national interests. In the past few months alone, Russia has stood up to the U.S. on all major foreign policy issues. Moscow has defied Washington on Iraq, rejecting its call for sanctions against Teheran, going ahead with the construction of Iran's first nuclear power station, and refusing to back down on a \$700-million deal to sell anti-aircraft missile systems to Iran.

Following the victory of Hamas in Palestine, Mr. Putin welcomed its leaders in Moscow and gave financial aid to the new administration against the wishes of the U.S. and the European Union. Adding insult to injury, the Russian leader lectured the West on Palestine, telling it: "to burn bridges is the easiest, but not the most effective thing to do in politics."

As global demand for oil and gas soared, Russia has boldly used energy resources as a political weapon to tighten its grip on former Soviet states and win a bigger foothold in European energy markets. Moscow has firmly rejected the West's demand to relinquish government monopoly on energy transit pipelines and open its energy resources to foreign companies.

Washington's efforts to forge a united front of European states against "excessive" dependence on Russia for oil and gas has fallen through when Germany broke ranks. It first signed a historic deal to build a new pipeline across the Baltic Sea to pump more Russian natural gas to Europe, then gave Russia access to the European energy distribution network through a partnership agreement between Russia's Gazprom and Germany's BASF companies.

While praising the strategic energy partnership with Germany, Mr. Putin sternly warned other Western nations that their attempts to prevent Russian companies from acquiring energy assets would force Russia to diversify oil and gas exports to the East. Moscow has also acted on its threat, launching last month the construction of its first oil pipeline to East Asia.

What enrages Washington most is that it can do precious little to bring Moscow to heel. Russia no longer needs Western credits, with its economy rebounding and its coffers bursting at the seams from record oil export windfall. Moreover, Russia has been repaying ahead of schedule the multi-billion-dollar loans President Boris Yeltsin took in the West. When the U.S. put spikes in Russia's bid to join the World Trade Organisation, Moscow retaliated by ditching Boeing in favour of Airbus for the purchase of two dozen long-distance airliners and threat-

ened to cut out American companies from lucrative natural gas projects in Russia. Washington cannot hope, either, to instigate a Ukraine-type "coloured revolution" in Russia, where Mr. Putin enjoys a 70 per cent support rating.

While he could hardly hope to influence the Kremlin leadership, Mr. Cheney had other audiences in mind when he engaged in Russia-baiting in Vilnius. His prime goal was to knock together a regional grouping of former Soviet states and new European Union members in Eastern Europe that would form a *cordone sanitaire* around Russia and hamper its emerging axis with Germany and France.

The conference in Vilnius, called to discuss "a common vision for a common region," brought together the pro-America leaders of Lithuania, Ukraine, Estonia, Latvia, Georgia, Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria. Many of these leaders met in Kiev in December to announce the establishment of a "Commonwealth of Democratic Choice," proposed by Georgia and Ukraine as an alternative to the Russia-dominated Commonwealth of Independent States and a vehicle of "coloured revolutions" in the region. Addressing the Vilnius conference, Mr. Cheney praised the Georgian and Ukrainian leaders as "heroes" of our time, while denouncing Russia as an enemy of democratic change in the former Soviet Union.

"No one can justify actions that undermine the territorial integrity of a neighbour, or interfere with democratic movements," Mr. Cheney said in clear reference to Russia's assertive policies towards its ex-Soviet neighbours.

A few days earlier, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said Washington expected Moscow to "recognise that we have legitimate interests and relationships with countries that are in their neighbourhood even if those countries were once part of the Soviet Union."

Mr. Cheney showed where the U.S. saw its "legitimate interests" in Russia's neighbourhood when straight from Lithuania he went to energy-rich Kazakhstan to push it to join oil and gas routes that go through Azerbaijan and on to Turkey bypassing Russia.

However, Russia has made it abundantly clear it is not prepared to give up its own interests for the sake of the U.S. In the past few months it has tightened control over energy flows from Central Asia, securing agreements to invest billions of dollars in the region's energy sector and to pump its oil and gas for export through Russian pipelines. Moscow has also slapped economic sanctions on those ex-Soviet states, namely Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova, which openly embraced the U.S. agenda to the detriment of Russia.

The Bush administration's recent war of words on Russia also has a domestic agenda. Back in 2000, U.S. Republicans faulted outgoing Democratic President Bill Clinton for "losing Russia." In 2008, Democrats are likely to make a similar charge against the Bush team. To counter these accusations, Republicans are adopting a tougher line on Russia.

White House sources said the Bush administration compiled a list of "recommendations" to Moscow of what it could do to help silence neocon critics of Mr. Bush's planned trip to Russia to attend a G8 summit meeting in St. Petersburg. The Kremlin has agreed to play up to the White House by including in the pre-summit events a non-government forum on national security and human rights. But there is no chance Washington can win any substantive concessions from Moscow.

When Mr. Cheney bemoaned in Vilnius the fact that "in Russia today, opponents of reform are seeking to reverse the gains of the last decade," he hit the nail on the head. Only Russians see them as the gains for the West, not for Russia. Commenting on Mr. Cheney's speech, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov ironically remarked that the U.S. Vice-President may have been let down by his advisers.

"I don't think the Russian people need to be explained what kind of gains we had at a time when the country was on the verge of collapse," Mr. Lavrov said. "What the Russian leadership is doing today is to preserve Russia as a single, integral and strong nation in the interests of its citizens." As one commentator remarked, the Russian train has gone for America, Russia has finally left the Western orbit.

## CARTOONSCAPE



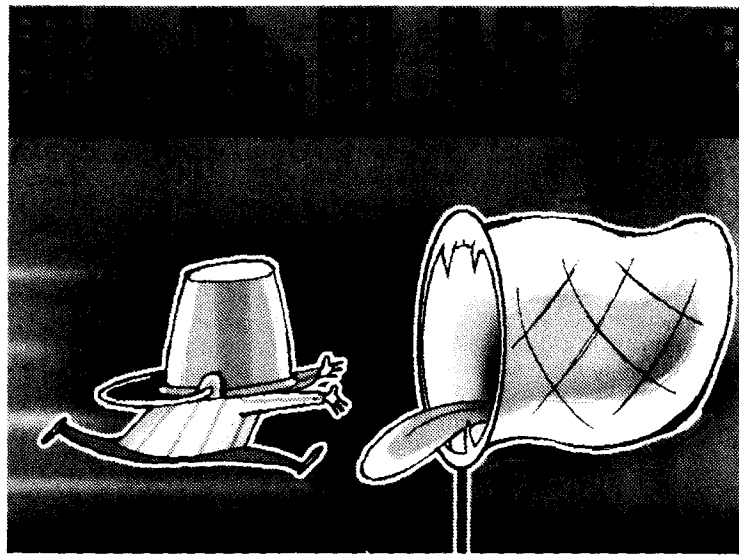
# Dressing up the urban crisis

The vision underlying the National Urban Renewal Mission could result in a huge expenditure on under-utilised infrastructure, even as access to basic services gets more difficult and urban taxes increase inequity, says Narendar Pani

ONE of the pitfalls of policy making in a crisis is that the dire situation tempts us to uncritically accept virtually any response. This is perhaps nowhere more true than in the case of the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission. There is no doubt that the infrastructure in most of our major cities is under severe strain. There is then great relief that the government is willing to pump in huge sums of money to address this challenge. And under the barrage of projects worth thousands of crores of rupees, there is little scope for a critical analysis of whether this is the most efficient response to the crisis. In the process we could be left cheering a Mission that is actually making the situation worse.

The Mission itself does not go beyond a simple, popular notion of the urban challenge. In essence, the argument is that liberalisation will cause a huge spurt in urbanisation, leading to a greater demand for urban infrastructure. This demand can only be met by huge, expensive projects. While the government can contribute to the setting up of these projects, they have to run themselves. The users must then be made to pay the costs of operation and maintenance. And if the cities have to contribute they must raise local resources, particularly property taxes.

The trouble is that this popular notion is based on fudging a number of less convenient facts on the ground. The very contention that liberalisation will lead to a rapid spurt in urbanisation is not as clear-cut as it seems. The National Urban Renewal Mission insists that the proportion of urban population will rise from less than 28% of the population in the 2001 census to 40% by 2021 as a result of liberalisation. But in the first decade of liberalisation, from 1991 to 2001 the proportion only increased by around two percentage points, from just a little less than 26% in 1991. It is then by no means certain that the rate of urbanisation will be trebled over the two decades following 2001. Indeed, given the fact



SASIKUMAR

that economic growth in cities like Bangalore or Hyderabad is more linked to foreign markets than it is to the hinterland, the growth may well be more in terms of the expensive elements of urbanisation rather than the number of people involved.

The tendency to exaggerate size influences the choice of projects as well. Nothing less than systems that deal with much larger numbers, in the largest cities in the world, will do. These symbols of development have to be introduced regardless of cost. The experience of Delhi and Kolkata may show that the people using the metros are much less than estimated, but that will not stop urban policy makers, as well as the popular mind, from believing that these are essential for urban development.

The preference for large glamorous symbols of development also diverts attention from the specific requirements of infrastructure that the economic development of each city needs. An Information Technology led industrial growth for a city would generate a demand for an infrastructure that emphasises

telecommunication. On the other hand, a garment industry led growth would emphasise other more rudimentary infrastructure on a much larger scale. These nuances will only be understood if there is a critical place for the economic impulses in each city. Since the Mission has no significant place for local economic impulses, it can at best offer standardised infrastructure for all cities. There is then the very distinct possibility of expensive infrastructure not being fully utilised since it is not consistent with the direction in which the local urban economy is moving.

THE only check that a market economy would put on such projects is that sooner or later they will be seen to be economically unviable. But one of the major objectives of the National Urban Renewal Mission is to offer assistance to ensure such a stage is never reached. Apart from the usual assistance to enhance the bankability of long-gestation infrastructure projects as well as to enhance resource availability, the Mission will also fill the viability gap of projects.

In other words, once the Mission decides a particular project is essential, it can put in any amount of public resources to make an unviable project viable.

This unchallenged right to throw good public money after unviable projects necessarily constrains the resources available to the urban sector. This increases the pressure to raise user charges on basic services. While there is undoubtedly a need to ensure that prices are used to prevent the misuse and wastage of scarce resources like water, a situation cannot also be created where urban citizens cannot afford basic services. The Mission's response is to create a sub-Mission to provide basic services to the poor. These projects will typically focus on slums. But often, particularly when the poor migrate to the cities, they settle into clusters of huts that are not recognised as slums, thereby keeping them away from these benefits. And there is also the challenge of meeting the needs of those who are not below the poverty line but are not rich enough to be unaffected by spiralling prices of essentials like water.

The possible inadequacies of user charges has contributed to the National Urban Renewal Mission looking for other urban sources of revenue, with property tax being a prime target. But here again the effort could be hurt by a lack of sensitivity to local economic impulses. The real economic growth in a city like Bangalore has been occurring around the IT industry on its periphery. But since the general tendency in property tax is to place a premium on the city centre, there is a real possibility of this tax being iniquitous.

The vision underlying the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission could thus very easily result in a huge expenditure on under-utilised infrastructure, even as access to basic services gets more difficult and urban taxes increase inequity. In other words, existing urban problems can get worse even as they are hidden behind expensive infrastructure projects.

# Communal cops

Misgovernance's ugliest face

Every self-respecting citizen would be reduced to revulsion at reports from riot-plagued Vadodara highlighting that when members of the minority community sought police assistance they were told to "ask Pakistan for help". Every man or woman wearing a khaki uniform stands demeaned, and there is no validity to excuses or suggestions that this is a Gujarat-specific malady. While there must be no underplaying the impact of the despicable brand of politics practised by Narendra Modi & Co. on the issue under focus, it must not be forgotten ~ and this is neither alibi nor justification ~ that similar bias has been evident elsewhere earlier too. Malliana, and the infamous Provincial Armed Constabulary in UP being a prime example to recall. No doubt there are others too. Yet it would be a dangerous oversimplification to write off such communalised functioning ~ and the traditional bracketing of 'Muslim' with 'Pakistan' ~ as a reflection of the thinking of the ruling political entity in a state, it is a putrid manifestation of the cancer of misgovernance that has eaten its way through the administrative apparatus at large. Cries for Modi's "head" are not unwarranted at this point in time, but that is no solution.

Comprehensive police reform is a nationwide imperative. No organ of the state has been more misused. It is tragic truth that the most visible face of "government" is the police. In Indian conditions at least, and it would be a minuscule minority that would deem that a pleasant face. Yet over the years little has been done to reform the police system ~ myopic attempts at "face-lifts" or image-building have fallen flat. Numerous panels have dealt with the malaise at various levels (another such group is currently at work) but only token attempts at reform have been initiated, seldom sustained. No "makeover" will suffice now. From recruitment, pay and allowances to living conditions, training and career prospects, overhaul of the penal and criminal codes (and the local police rules that flow from them) and the insulation of the police from political influence, they must all be placed on the agenda. And dealt with sincerely, even if it requires some modification of the Constitutional position that law and order (read "police") is a state subject. For while in Modi's Gujarat some sections may be told to "go to Pakistan" in the rest of the country the common man is often told to "go to hell". Neither is acceptable.

07 MAY 2006



# Indian security presence in Afghanistan

M.K. Bhadrakumar

THE INDIAN "debate" about Afghanistan is narrowing down to a single agenda: ensuring the security of hundreds of Indian nationals involved in Indian projects in that country. Since the killing of Maniappan Ramankutty in November last, the Government began substantially augmenting the paramilitary forces deployed in Afghanistan. It reportedly decided on deploying the CRPF in Afghanistan even ahead of Suryanarayana's death last week.

It took the Dutch parliament an agonising six months to make up its mind whether a few hundred troops could be sent to Afghanistan. The "debate" deeply divided the Dutch public. An entire team of parliamentarians from the House of Commons travelled to Afghanistan at great risk to their personal safety before the parliamentary select committee could decide what conditions and preconditions had to be fulfilled before British troops were despatched to southern Afghanistan under the commitment to NATO. (Of course, senior British journalists separately travelled to Afghanistan for making their own assessment.)

India, regrettably, is yet to reach that level of sophistication in policy-making — its tragic experiences in Sri Lanka nearly two decades ago notwithstanding. Secondly, Afghanistan is — it has been for a long time and may well remain for the foreseeable future — an enigma. Ambiguities shroud every "incident" like the one involving Maniappan or Suryanarayana. Things are never quite what they may appear to be. This is inevitable when intrigues double up as politics. What Selig Harrison wrote in his classic work *Out of Afghanistan* — that the Soviets actually blundered into Afghanistan in 1978 — has since been borne out by the declassified archival materials of the Cold War period in Moscow and Washington. A perception was deliberately created by the Western intelligence that they were using Afghanistan as a battlefield to threaten long-term

The U.S. and Britain have hitherto been averse to any role for India — in deference to Pakistani sensitivities. Why, now, a change of heart?

Soviet strategic interests.

That is to say, there must be greater clarity as to who killed Maniappan and Suryanarayana. All that can be said with a measure of confidence is that they were political murders (which does not make them any less horrendous). Intriguingly, Hamid Karzai did not blame the Taliban for Suryanarayana's murder. Actually, for the past few days Kabul has been excited about the new overtures being made by the United States and Mr. Karzai to the Taliban leadership for a genuinely serious political dialogue aimed at working out a credible power-sharing arrangement.

The discourse in India has been to point to the possibility of a Pakistani intelligence hand in the killing of Indian workers in Afghanistan. The possibility is fast becoming a probability. With that, the "case file" is all but closed. And, it is time to move on to modalities of augmentation of the Indian security presence in Afghanistan.

While speaking of a Pakistani animus to an Indian presence in the sensitive Afghan border regions, would we countenance with equanimity Pakistani nationals appearing in their hundreds on India's border regions with Nepal or Bangladesh or Sri Lanka? Yet another question arises. Without compromising the commitment to "reconstruct" Afghanistan's economic infrastructure, is it not possible for Indian activities to sidestep for the present the highly explosive region bordering Pakistan and instead concentrate on the west, north, east, and the centre of the country till such time as there is less volatility in Pakistan's Balochistan or Waziristan regions?

After all, the Taliban's insurgency is more or less confined to a certain belt along the border with Pakistan in southeastern Afghanistan. Ar-

guably, the Northern Alliance groups, which are still dominating the other regions, would welcome a deeper Indian "re-engagement" on their turf. Such an approach will not detract from India's sincere desire to show goodwill to the Afghan people either. At the same time, the safety or security of our aid workers will be better taken care of.

Actually, the issues involved in augmenting Indian security troop presence in Afghanistan are profound for the geopolitics of the region. According to reports, the British Prime Minister's Foreign Policy Adviser, Nigel Shinwald, conveyed to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at a meeting in Delhi on May 3 that London would be supportive of any Indian decision to assume a bigger security role in Afghanistan.

The British *demarche* comes on the heels of Suryanarayana's killing and appears a sympathetic gesture. But it signifies a change of course in Anglo-American thinking. The U.S. had been hitherto averse to any role for India — in deference to Pakistani sensitivities. Why, then, such a change of heart?

The shift in thinking has appeared soon after NATO's "informal" meeting of Foreign Ministers at Sofia on April 28, putting the seal on its assuming full responsibility for Afghanistan's security — paving the way for an eventual American troop pullout from Afghanistan.

From all accounts, NATO remains extremely wary of its new role in Afghanistan. The Afghan resistance has a formidable reputation historically. (Britain should know better than any country). There is no certainty that the NATO troop level of 17,000 will suffice. But it is virtually impossible to get NATO member countries to commit additional troops. Washington, on its

part, is raring to wind down its troop strength. The overstretch in Iraq is hurting.

These concerns are legitimate. Not a day passes without leading opinion makers in the Western media highlighting the Taliban's resurgence. The current U.S. overtures to the Taliban are a tacit acceptance of the ground reality.

NATO indeed has an option to approach other regional organisations to lend a hand. The Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) has been on standby for over a year, willing to coordinate with NATO on stabilising the Afghan situation. But as Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov informed President Vladimir Putin at a Kremlin meeting on May 2 regarding the outcome of the Sofia meet, "our NATO colleagues are still not ready to work out cooperation with the CSTO."

Mr. Lavrov indirectly explained the factors behind NATO's reticence. He said: "We conveyed our position that ... we will build our overall relations with NATO depending on what direction the internal transformation process within the alliance takes, and also depending on NATO's expansion plans, and, in general, the extent to which the principles of international laws are observed and Russia's legitimate interests are taken into account in the context of the changing geopolitical situation in the world."

Now, from NATO's perspective, the Russians are literally asking for the moon. As far as NATO is concerned, the Afghan saga is expected to substantiate before the world audience that with or without the U.N., it has the credentials as the sole security organisation with a global reach that is in a position to perform peace-keeping (and peace-enforcing) roles in far-flung regions of the world — be it Central Asia, South Asia or the Middle East and the Caucasus.

All that NATO requires is to "bring into the fold" non-member countries, which are prepared to commit troops that assist its operations. With specific reference to Afghanistan, NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer explained at a press conference in Brussels on April 27: "The sensitivities of countries like Pakistan and India must be considered as NATO takes on missions like its current role in Afghanistan. You have to pay attention to your relationship with India. You are not operating in a vacuum or in a void."

"And, that's why I said, 'bringing them into the fold'. Because I have not a specific structure in mind to do that. One very concrete structure is building it around NATO's operations and missions."

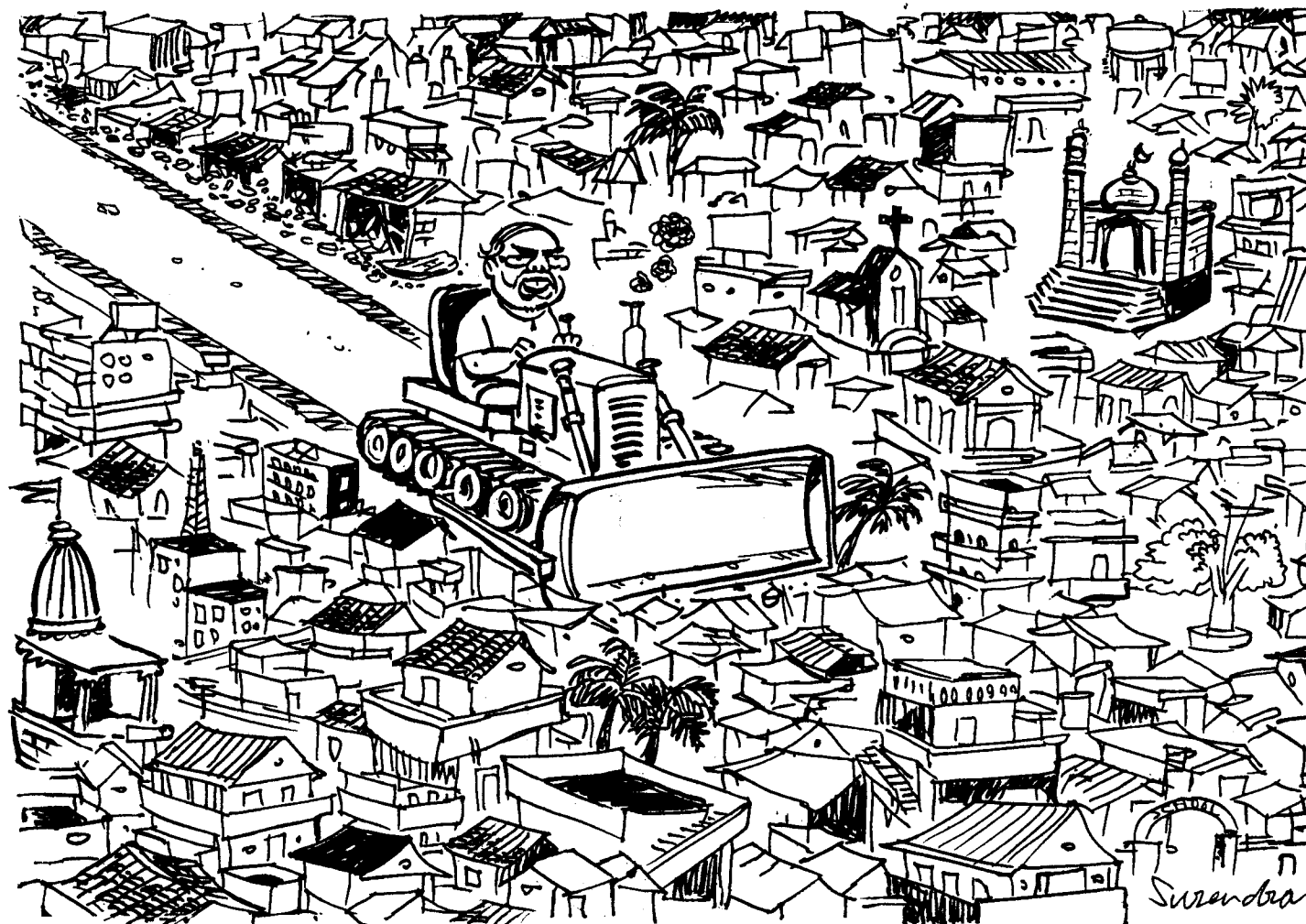
"But, how exactly you're going to develop this political dialogue is, of course, another matter — if you do that in a structured way or if you do that on an ad-hoc basis. This is simply because we are only starting this discussion".

Either way, Mr. Shinwald, who came to Delhi as Tony Blair's envoy, would know that NATO would find it extremely useful if Indian paramilitary forces came into Afghanistan in strong numbers. NATO's concern is to coax the Taliban into accepting the American offer of political reconciliation. Pakistan cannot be pressured.

Overriding domestic opposition, Pervez Musharraf has already signed an agreement for providing logistical back-up for reaching supplies to the NATO contingents in Afghanistan. (Central Asian airspace is controlled by the CSTO). Islamabad has just consented to NATO's inclusion as a full member of the joint commission of the U.S., Pakistan, and Afghanistan overseeing the "war on terror." Thus, Pakistan is graduating into an institutionalised relationship with NATO — like Finland, Sweden, Austria or Switzerland.

"Non-NATO allies" like Pakistan constitute a key element in the alliance's overall strategy. For, as Mr. Scheffer explained, the idea is to make NATO into "an alliance with global partners" — rather than "a global alliance." This might seem a matter of semantics, but it is a crucial distinction for a western alliance of countries that are chary of fighting wars in faraway lands.

## CARTOONSCAPE





# Verdict on quotas in promotions reserved

## Challenged the validity of constitutional amendments on quota

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The 77th amendment was brought to do away with the Supreme Court ruling in the Mandal Commission case restricting quotas to appointments as opposed to promotions. Article 16 (4A) was inserted to provide for reservation in promotions for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes; the 82nd amendment was intended to do away with the provision in Article 335 that allowed reservation, subject to "efficiency of administration" (the government brought this amendment in 2000 to allow reservation by lowering the standards of evaluation); the 83rd amendment was brought in to do with job reservation in certain States and the 85th amend-

• **Validity of 77, 82, 83 and 85th amendments in Constitution debated**

• **Petitioners say amendments would lead to inequity, inequality**

ment widened this scope to provide for reservation in promotions even for the Other Backward Classes.

The petitioners contended that the amendments affected the efficiency of services, which was of paramount importance to national development and existence. They argued that a promotion was earned on the basis of

seniority or good performance. "In the case of reserved category candidates it is given not on account of seniority, good performance or competitive merit, but merely for their birth in a community favoured with reservation. Reservation, if allowed at each successive stage of promotion, enables a reserved category candidate to take a jump over the general category candidate at every subsequent stage of promotion. It would result in leapfrogging and would have disastrous effects on efficiency of the administration."

They contended that injustice, inequity and inequality were writ large on the face of the

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05 MAY 2006

# For Nepal & India, the road ahead is difficult

Siddharth Varadarajan

**M**OMENTOUS THOUGH the events and accomplishments of the past few weeks have been, the struggle for democracy in Nepal is perhaps entering its most difficult phase only now. As the country moves towards elections to a constituent assembly, the ingenuity and wisdom of not just the Nepalese political forces but also of India will be put to the test. The choices each makes will help to determine whether the 'April Revolution' reaches its final destination or disappears in the quicksand of palace intrigue and political cowardice.

Amidst the exhilaration and excitement of the people's movement in Nepal, India's momentary suspension of disbelief following Karan Singh's fatal meeting with King Gyanendra stands out as the one discordant note. Whatever New Delhi intended, people in Kathmandu saw in both the choice of the special envoy and the subsequent

## REALITY CHECK

Indian endorsement of the monarch's cunning first proclamation a sign that India cast its lot with the palace. To make matters worse, this syndrome of mixed signals — of 'tough' messages delivered, sometimes in private, to an intractable monarch by envoys enamoured of kingship, or petrified of the Maoists — continued right up to the bitter end.

At a time when lakhs of people were on the streets protesting King Gyanendra's ploy of asking the Seven-Party Alliance to nominate its Prime Minister and take executive power, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh told journalists accompanying him to Hanover that the king was acting in the "right direction." He also needlessly endorsed the discredited two-pillar theory of constitutional monarchy being as indispensable to stability in Nepal as multi-party democracy. In the same unhelpful vein, National Security Adviser M.K. Narayanan chipped in from Ger-

Among the hurdles: the parties' lack of confidence, as well as New Delhi's anxiety over the U.N. involvement in the disarmament of the Maoists and elections to a constituent assembly.

many that India might resume arms supplies to the Royal Nepal Army if the situation in the country continued to deteriorate.

Mr. Saran's eleventh-hour intervention — at a press conference last Saturday — that India stood with the people of Nepal and not with any royal pillar retrieved India's standing on the streets of Kathmandu. But unless the underlying problem which plagues India's Nepal policy is tackled, ambiguity is bound to crop up again.

India's Nepal problem has two dimensions, which are interlinked. First, New Delhi does not fully appreciate that a thoroughgoing democracy including a republic, if that is what the Nepalese want, will be good for India. Secondly, subsequent governments have allowed multiple channels of communication which amplify the existing policy dissonance in Delhi and create maximum confusion.

Instead of the Indian embassy and ambassador, acting on the instructions of the Ministry of External Affairs, being the sole conduit for messages between India and the Nepalese establishment and political parties, a large number of interlocutors and busybodies have involved themselves in the process. There are the special envoys with their one-on-one meetings with King Gyanendra, where nobody else knows what is discussed. There are the Ministry of Defence and the Chief of the Army Staff, who believe in running their own lines of communication with the RNA. Then there are tantric interlopers and Hindutva fanatics who further contribute to the radio clutter. More noise also comes from our legion of ex-rajahs, rajvadas and 'cadets' who have family ties with the Narayanhiti Palace and who

intercede at crucial moments with the ruling party to ensure that India does not side with the people of Nepal.

Somewhere in the middle of this unholy mess are the intelligence agencies, which also appear not to know what India should be doing. For example, their agents turned a blind eye to meetings between the Nepal Maoists and the SPA, which were crucial to the mass mobilisation witnessed on the streets of Kathmandu in April. But their boss, India's intelligence czar, worries endlessly about the security threat posed by the Maoists and is reportedly keen on turning the RNA's weapons tap back on again.

## Misplaced anxiety

India might have muddled its way through the thicket of policy dissonance to emerge, finally, on the side of the people, but there is one major obstacle still to be overcome. This is the official anxiety about allowing the United Nations to play a role in the implementation of the SPA-Maoist road map for peace.

Now that Nepal's Parliament has unanimously passed a resolution calling for elections to a constituent assembly, it is time for both Kathmandu and New Delhi to get serious about how those elections are to be conducted. Since the Maoists are unlikely to surrender their arms until after the palace's military powers are neutralised, some kind of international supervision will be needed to provide assurances of a level playing field to all during elections to the constituent assembly and even while the body meets. The Maoists say they are prepared to confine their armed fighters to the barracks un-

der U.N. supervision pending elections and their eventual integration into a new national army along with elements of the RNA. Such a formula provides the only viable option for insurgency to end peacefully. But without international oversight, this is impossible to implement. For obvious reasons, India cannot involve itself in this process and would not want the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) there either. Nor would India want the task executed by a 'contact group' led, inevitably, by European countries which are part of Nato's overall command structure. Are there countries, then, that New Delhi can trust? Whose involvement in supervising the sequestering of the Maoists would not compromise India's sense of national interest? These are questions the South Block needs to start asking with a sense of urgency.

In many ways, the U.N. would be the best vehicle. But some sections of the Indian establishment are paranoid about the implications the U.N. involvement in a South Asian election process might have for Kashmir. Such anxieties are completely misplaced. Apart from climate, Nepal and Kashmir have nothing in common. And if the peace process were to falter for want of a via media to manage the entry of the Maoists into competitive politics, it would be King Gyanendra, who ultimately stands to benefit.

## Dangers ahead

So momentous have the changes of the past few weeks been that it is tempting to conclude that the king is already history. This would be a serious mistake. King Gyanendra may not be able to utilise his constitutional powers to dismiss Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala or Parliament — if he did, he would have to contend with a full-blown insurrection that would end with either his flight or execution. But he has managed to buy time for himself, a commodity that is infinitely more useful today than are legal provisions. In the most optimistic scenario, elections to a constituent assembly are surely more than a year away. That provides plenty of time for intrigue behind the scenes. The king also knows he is dealing with political parties which lack confidence in their ability to carry the people's movement forward. Ideally, the SPA should have announced the restoration of Parliament itself. But it didn't have the gumption to do so. Mr. Koirala did well to refuse to take the oath to the Rajparishad but there are many in Nepal who would have found his being sworn in Prime Minister by King Gyanendra a distasteful event.

Mr. Koirala has also failed immediately to operationalise the promise he held out last week of a military ceasefire to reciprocate the three-month ceasefire declared by the Maoists. To make matters worse, an RNA helicopter on Saturday opened fire on a public meeting organised by the Maoists in the Sunwal area of Nawalparasi district. Was this the last act of defiance by an army, which knows it will soon have to change course, or a warning shot to the SPA, of which it is still the boss?

One mistake Mr. Koirala, the SPA and India should avoid making is to disregard the role played by the Maoists in last week's peaceful revolution on the streets. The Maoist slogan of a constituent assembly is what fired the imagination of the people, both as an end in itself and as a way of bringing the insurgents into the mainstream and ending the decade-long armed conflict. The Maoists also mobilised their cadres and sympathisers, in Kathmandu, Dang and elsewhere. True, Maoist leaders Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai lashed out at the SPA for welcoming the king's second proclamation restoring Parliament. But they quickly followed this up with two conciliatory gestures: the lifting of their blockade and a three-month ceasefire.

Mr. Koirala must move swiftly to capitalise on this opening and immediately order the RNA to declare a ceasefire too. Along with removing the terrorist tag from the Maoists and releasing all political prisoners, a ceasefire is necessary to start the dialogue process. He also needs to signal, right from the outset, that the RNA is fully subordinate to Parliament. On its part, India should impress upon the Koirala Government the need for a ceasefire and undertake not to resume arms supplies until it is clear that the RNA reports to Parliament and not the palace.

## CARTOONSCAPE







# LESSON FROM THAILAND

The relevance of the South-east Asian debate cannot be lost on Indians because we, too, have leaders who stretch the bounds of constitutional propriety

Some years ago, I managed to infuriate Philippine president Gloria Macapagal Arroyo when I asked her what percentage of a nation's population would need to take to the streets in order to constitute "People Power" (a phrase appropriated by the Filipinos when they overthrew the despotic President Ferdinand Marcos).

Arroyo had just assumed power after having staged People Power-II and forced the exit of Joseph Estrada, a film-star once hugely popular with the nation's poor but viewed with a circumspection that soon turned into loathing by the country's business elite. Mobs had descended on the palace in Manila, and Arroyo interpreted this to mean that such dissent overrode the electoral mandate that had put Estrada into office.

The same question was put a couple of hours later to Fidel Ramos. The suave and scholarly former President, who had been a part of the intrigues that saw the exit of Estrada, immediately sensed where I was going and replied that People Power was a concept unique to the Philippines, and that it could not be transplanted to other Asian democracies. Was he right?

The most exaggerated estimates had put the size of the crowd that overthrew Estrada at a quarter million or about 0.3% of the Filipino population of about 80 million. If these percentages were transplanted to Singapore, it would need a group of about 12,000 to establish that the Prime Minister had lost support of the people. And it would need a mob of 3 million at New Delhi's Boat Club to suggest that Dr Manmohan Singh ought to quit.

In liberal, representative democracies, clearly the Philippine proposition of People Power is untenable. Power must be secured and lost at the ballot box, and absolute numbers must determine who comes to power. As the *Los Angeles Times* had commented at the time of the Estrada affair, "We are witnessing the use of people power against a leader who was the

The author is Editor, The Statesman

By RAVINDRA KUMAR

winner of a legitimate democratic election. No matter how understandable it was, this outbreak of people power doesn't seem like an advance for the cause of democracy; quite the opposite."

The events in The Philippines have now found an echo in Thailand. From all accounts, Thaksin Shinawatra was a legitimately elected Prime Minister when protests against his government's questionable deals first erupted. Shinawatra, like Estrada, was accused of being a

cotted by several parties was constitutionally proper.

However, as the distinguished Thai commentator Suthichai Yoon, commented in these columns on Friday, Shinawatra "can't possibly rule a country where at least 40 per cent of the populace will not accept him as their leader." Certainly it must be said in defence of Yoon's argument that the bar of People Power has been raised from Philippines' 0.3% to Thailand's 40%.

But is even that enough? Should storms of outrage trans-



Should storms of outrage transplant democratic processes as a means to determine who rules and who does not?

crook, of being a man who used office to line his own pockets, and to secure for his companies gain that may not have accrued to them in transparent commercial transactions.

The democratic remedy for dealing with Shinawatra was the ballot box, but a realisation that he may win in spite of the allegations against him prompted, first, an Opposition boycott of the election and second, a defacement of ballots, or registration of a No vote by those opposed to the incumbent. As many as 10 million voters thus reportedly expressed their opposition to Shinawatra.

But the Prime Minister was quick to point to the 16 million voters who did vote for him to justify his continuance in office. The Thai drama is still unfolding, and the monarchy, which wields a strong and well-merited moral position, has reportedly joined the debate. But strictly, and legally, speaking, Shinawatra is right in much the same way as a Jammu and Kashmir election some years ago that was boy-

plant democratic processes as a means to determine who rules and who does not?

Debates on what reflects the will of the people are not confined to Asia; last year's election in the United Kingdom saw a revival of the debate on the First Past the Post system. But while such debates in Western democracies are carried out through newspapers, and on television, Asia follows a different dynamic.

Former Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew made the phrase "Asian-style democracy" popular. Other South-east Asian leaders, Mahathir Mohamad for instance, took up the argument to suggest Western-style liberal democratic models could not function in developing countries of Asia, where governance had to assume a paternal or schoolmasterly style that allowed, in some cases literally, the leader to cane recalcitrant subjects.

Lee's influence on South-east Asian leaders is unquestionable, although few have walked the fine line between the Western and Asian styles as adroitly as

Singapore's first Prime Minister and his successors. Marcos became a dictator; Mahathir, especially in his last days, became increasingly intolerant and quite ruthless in dealing with dissent. Over the past few years, Thaksin came to believe that electoral success paves the way to whimsical governance.

Asian-style democracy, perhaps not in Lee's construct but certainly as practised by many South-east Asian leaders, essentially suggests that a leader once elected must be allowed to rule with no or few of the checks and balances that democracies would ordinarily impose.

Thus, in certain contexts, a five-year mandate is seen as a five-year licence to loot; in others, notably Singapore, it is construed as unfettered right to administer and to do so without too many people raising a protest.

In any event, liberal democratic processes are jettisoned. And if this is the sort of democracy these leaders seek, they must perhaps also be prepared to accept removal through processes that are a subversion of constitutional means. That is the thrust of Yoon's argument; indeed that was the thrust of Arroyo's argument although now that she is in power she would be reluctant to accept its relevance.

Perhaps this is not the time or place to examine the constitutional debate in the United Kingdom. But certainly, the relevance of the South-east Asian debate cannot be lost on Indians. We, too, have leaders who stretch the bounds of constitutional propriety. We, too, are a nation filled with outrage at the perfidies of our leaders. Our leaders, like the Shinawatras and the Estradas, think nothing of unholy alliances between government and business.

Most important, we too have increasingly a generation of politicians who claim that the power vested in them by the people overrides all else, and confers upon them a licence to do whatever suits them. Our leaders, too, are becoming Asian-style democrats. Our leaders, too, must prepare themselves for Asian-style denouements. That is the lesson from Thailand.

# Bird flu hits Madhya Pradesh

Culling of birds to begin today

Staff Correspondent

**BHOPAL:** Prohibitory orders under section 144 have been clamped and all protective steps are being taken at Ichchapur in Burhanpur district of Madhya Pradesh bordering Maharashtra as a poultry sample from this area has tested positive for the dreaded H5N1 bird flu virus.

The State Principal Secretary Animal Husbandry, Ranjana Chaudhary told *The Hindu* that a sample from Ichchapur had tested positive and all steps were being taken to combat the situation.

She said on Tuesday that adequate quantity of protective gear was available and pits have been dug to start the culling operation.

Arrangements have been made to give compensation to the poultry owners from Wednesday, she added. When asked about the role being played by different Government departments and agencies in combating the situation, Ms. Chaudhary said, "it is an emergency and all steps are being taken."

She said that contingency action plans are already in place to respond effectively to the situation. The Commissioner, State Veterinary department, Rajesh Rajoua, told this correspondent from Burhanpur on Tuesday that culling of poultry would begin in the affected zone on Wednesday morning.

A rapid response team (RRT) has already arrived to supervise the culling operation, he said

• Poultry owners to be given compensation

• Rapid response team arrives in Ichchapur

• Caution against fever with upper respiratory infection

adding that there are 23 villages in Madhya Pradesh and 28 villages in Maharashtra falling within ten kilometre radius of Ichchapur, which forms the epicentre.

The entire affected zone, which is close to Jalgaon in Maharashtra, where the first cases of bird flu virus had been detected, has been sealed. Contingency plans to focus attention on blanket human surveillance activities are being followed and there would be a house to house surveillance of population, especially for cases of fever with upper respiratory infection (URI) in the infected zone. There would also be close monitoring of the health status of poultry workers as well as cullers and veterinary officers.

Meanwhile, people in the affected zone were being advised to avoid direct contact with chicken and not to touch bird feathers, mucous and droppings.

A Government spokesman at the specially set up Control room earlier on Tuesday said that a fax has been received from Government of India confirming that a sample from Ichchapur in Burhanpur district has tested positive for avian influenza.

29 MAR 2005

THE HINDU

# Brimming with confidence for a record 7th

**TAPAN Das**

Kolkata, March 26

*WE ARE quite confident that the people will elect the Left Front for the seventh time on the basis of the achievements of the six previous governments. The Left Front's victory is imperative for speeding up the state's development and progress* — words of a man brimming with confidence about the Left Front's prospects in the forthcoming elections.

In what was probably his last political analysis in the party's theoretical journal *Marxবাদi Path*, Anil Biswas expressed confidence that the "good work" done by the six previous governments would see the Left Front through to a record seventh term.

Biswas examined in detail the six

manifestos issued by the LF since 1977 to drive home the point that winning elections was not merely about capturing power and forming a government for the Left and Communists.

Left governments, he wrote, are the means for social transformation through hard-fought political and class struggles. It is of great significance how far the LF succeeds in raising the mass consciousness, mobilising and equipping them ideologically through formulation and implementation of development programmes. The government's success reflects the LF's political advance, believed Biswas.

Tracing the genesis and long history of the LF movement for the benefit of the downtrodden over the last six decades, Biswas claimed the LF did not come into being suddenly. Nor

was it an "opportunistic conglomeration" to win elections and grab power. Through its selfless work for the common people, the Front has been able to testify before the majority that the only alternative to it is a qualitatively better LF.

Even while lauding the achievements and milestones of LF governments, Biswas did not sidestep the glaring lapses and failures. Highlighting the drawbacks by way of "self-criticism", he admitted to the people before the 2001 elections that there remained many deficiencies in the state's primary and preventive healthcare systems. The drawbacks prompted the LF to call for decentralisation of healthcare services, increased accountability

of doctors and involvement of the common people in this initiative. It was also for the first time that the LF spoke about medical education in the poll manifesto.

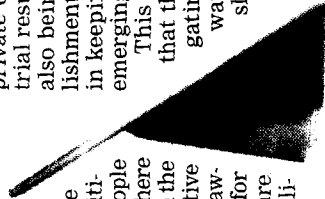
It was also a conscious decision of the Front based on tactical readjustment to invite domestic and foreign private capital for the state's industrial resurgence. Private initiative is also being encouraged in the establishment of institutions of learning in keeping with the demands of the emerging situation, stressed Biswas.

This was obviously to reiterate that the Left was capable of navigating the torturous course towards progress despite the onslaught of globalisation and economic liberalisation, that too without diluting

its political ideology.

Long years in power, Biswas wrote, had helped the Front make people aware not only about the government's limitations and constraints of working within the framework of the federal constitution, but they have also been taught how to carry on with the "class struggle" for a better morrow under the LF's stewardship.

Even while sounding predictably upbeat, Biswas did not hesitate to underline that each of the nine parties in the Left Front had a separate political programme and divergent ideology. Problems did arise in the past, and difference of opinion cannot be ruled out in future too. But any difference is sorted out by a free and frank exchange of opinion across the table among the contending parties.





# Oil on their minds, and all that gas

By Shobhan Saxena/TNN

In the '60s, Russians and Chinese were two Socialist peoples divided by a common ideology. By the end of the decade the ideological dispute turned so nasty that suddenly the Kremlin bear hugs stopped, the Russians cut off arms supplies to China, the

leader is carrying a bag full of promises: a deal on supplying Russian electricity to China, gas from Gazprom to China's National Petroleum Corporation, a new Russian-Chinese business forum, and hopes of reaching an understanding on complex international issues including Iran's nuclear programme and the situa-

China for years, but despite many rounds of talks the Chinese haven't got a drop of Russian oil.

The Russians proposed to build a pipeline from East Siberia to the Pacific, with a branch line to China, in 2000, but the project never took off due to border and environmental disputes. This delay can complicate the bilateral ties again. With its energy-hungry economy booming, China is desperate for oil and gas. Due to limited energy resources, China is not able to grow as fast as it wants to.

The delay in Russian energy supplies has frustrated the Chinese so much that they have begun to look for oilfields everywhere, from Africa to Latin America.

During Putin's visit, the Chinese expect an agreement that will facilitate "pragmatic comprehensive cooperation".

This pragmatism rests on energy and cash. China needs oil. Russia needs money. An energy deal between the two countries could mean energy for China, money for Russia. But with a 4,700-km-long porous border between them and a shared disturbing history, the Russians can't be in a hurry to facilitate China's quantum jump to economic prosperity.

In the post-Cold War era, Russians and Chinese are united by all that oil and gas on their minds.



ENERGY DIPLOMACY: From Russia With Love

Chinese exploded their own bombs and major gunbattles broke out between the two Red Armies on Damansky island on the Ussuri river, leaving dozens of soldiers dead. And in the early '70s, Henry Kissinger drove the final nail into the coffin with his Shuttle Diplomacy. That was the end of a great friendship and the beginning of a bitter rivalry.

If his body language at Beijing airport on Tuesday morning was any signal, Russian President Vladimir Putin doesn't seem to be carrying any baggage from the past. On the contrary, the Russian

## NEWS ANALYSIS

tion in North Korea.

If Russia and China succeed in inking an energy deal in the next two days, it will be a giant leap forward in the bilateral relations between the two nations who have made a lot of progress since resolving their border dispute in 2004. But it's not going to be easy.

The Russians have been very high on promises and pretty low on delivery. Moscow has been promising oil and gas pipelines to

## Agenda for Khaleda's visit: Revive Tata deal, new connections

**W**E'VE been hearing non-stop about how the North-east is supposed to be growing economically and even "Looking East", not to its immediate neighbour Myanmar which is in far worse economic and political condition than this region, but to the fast-growing boom economies of South-east Asia. How we will reach South-east Asia without traversing Myanmar is beyond me but our planners, politicians and international donors obviously believe that they can do so through Trans-Asian Highways and Trans-Asian Railroad, parts of which are in the building.

But there's a road block just announced: Bangladesh, our favourite whipping boy after Pakistan (in fact, Pakistan is high up on our good guys list, since we embraced Bushism and walked away from moderation [- what's that?] in a big bad world where you're always required to take sides), has said that it wants no part of the TAH which is to go through that country into West Bengal and then out across Northern India to the world.

This is bad news for the North-east: we've been landlocked for decades, perhaps the third landlocked region the size of a small nation after Bhutan and Nepal in South Asia, and unless President Khaleda Zia decides to bend a little, we will remain inaccessible to the gleaming cities and markets that our policy planners are dreaming of and proclaiming from the rooftops.

Of course, given the fact that the Begum is coming visiting next week, this is probably one of Dhaka's usual bargaining ploys, seeking to strategise its limited agenda to get access to Indian markets, get a better deal on its products and setting the bar high for the talks. Bangladesh's foreign secretary is coming ahead of the Begum, to look at ways of ironing out the many wrinkles which exist in the Indo-Bangladesh relationship.

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18 APR 2006

THE STATESMAN

BIRD FLU | Govt to survey 38 districts between March 19 and 23

# Culling in Jalgaon, alert in state

ENS & PTI  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 16

**S**TEPPING up surveillance measures against avian influenza following an outbreak in Jalgaon, the government has decided to pick up poultry samples from 38 districts adjoining affected areas in Maharashtra in two phases beginning March 19. This, even as 17,150 birds have been culled in four talukas of Jalgaon district.

"Samples from 18 districts would be collected between March 19 to 25 and sent to Bhopal for bird flu tests, while samples from another 20 districts would be lifted in the following week... This exercise is to prevent the spread of avian influenza," Joint Secretary Anil Husbandry Department Upma Chaudhary said today. There are no reports of any human case so far.

She, however, maintained there

**A health department official prepares for culling operations in Jalgaon. Express photo**

have started in four talukas of Jalgaon district.

"Over 17,150 birds have been culled and compensation have been given on spot to the poultry owners," she said.

Meanwhile, the state governments of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh have been asked to step up surveillance and other states have also been suggested to be vigilant.

Animal Husbandry Commissioner S K Bandopadhyaya said Bhopal, where over 5,000 samples are reaching every week, has diverted manpower from other departments to keep pace with testing facility.

"We are also contemplating to open five regional testing facilities in Bangalore, Kolkata, Guwahati, Jalandhar and Pune, while a central facility would be opened at IVRI Bareilly," he said.



were no reports of disease from these districts (where the samples are lifted) and the measures were being taken to prevent the spread of bird flu. Culling

Bandopadhyaya said besides chickens, the government is also monitoring pigs and cats. "We have asked the state governments to monitor pigs and cats. So far, no case in animals have come to light," he said.

While rapid response teams are already in place conducting operations, the Health Ministry has deployed 147 health workers for door-to-door surveillance in the infected zone of three kilometer radius in Jalgaon district, Joint Secretary Health Vineet Chaudhary said. "Active house-to-house surveillance has been started today in 3 kilometer radius and the district hospital in Jalgaon would be the referral hospital," he said.

Two hospitals near the surveillance zone are being strengthened and would be used as isolation units, he said. The health ministry has airlifted 2,500 capsules of Oseltamivir (bird flu drug) which is besides 23,750 capsules supplied earlier, he added.

17 MAR 2006

# Culling of 70,000 birds begins

## 4 Jalgaon Villages Declared Bird Flu-Hit, Birds Are From Backyard Poultry

Jalgaon: Culling of 70,000 birds began on Wednesday after the district administration declared four blocks in a 10-km area of the district as bird flu-infected.

"The government has identified the presence of bird flu in four talukas comprising of 173 villages in a periphery of 10 km. We started the culling operations of 70,000 birds of these villages from today," district collector Vijay Singhal said. He, however drew a difference between the bird flu situation in Nawapur and Jalgaon. "In Nawapur, the majority of the birds infected were in a formally built poultry farm. Here most of the birds are backyard poultry. They have to be sought from the villages and then culled," Singhal said.

Four villages in Jalgaon district have been declared infected by bird flu, while 25 other villages are categorised as infected zones.

"The villages declared infected are Savda and Marul (Yawal taluka), Hated (Chopda), Salva (Dharangaon). Twenty five other villages in the district are declared as infected zones and 149 villages from six tehsils are under surveillance," Singhal told reporters here late Tuesday night. For this, the collector will begin holding gram sabhas from Wednesday to persuade villagers to hand over their birds to the animal husbandry authorities for culling. The outbreak of bird flu was confirmed late Tuesday after the Bhopal-based laboratory detected four positive samples out of the 26 sent from here.

The collector, however, refused to commit any deadline for the completion of culling operations, saying it would be over soon.

villages between three to ten km radius.

Of the 173 affected-villages in the four talukas, the worst-hit villages are Savda, Hated, Salva and Marul as they have the maximum number of birds in the region.

The administration has formed 59 teams for culling. Of this, three teams are specially arriving from outside. These teams would be equipped with Tamiflu anti-bird flu capsules, sources said. As a contingency measure, special observation wards have been opened in the general hospitals of all the five affected talukas.

High alert has been sounded in the tehsils around Jalgaon. Police have sealed the borders of all the infected villages and those under surveillance. The district administration has urged the people not to consume poultry products till the virus was contained.

Meanwhile, state animal husbandry minister Anees Ahmed on Wednesday said the bird flu virus in Jalgaon district had been contained and the people of the district could start eating poultry products. "The disease is under complete control. There is no need to panic. I am repeating my earlier appeal that people can start consuming poultry products if it is cooked at 70 degree celsius," Ahmed told reporters here.

He said "It (eating poultry products) was must to do so to support the state's poultry industry" which has taken a huge beating after bird flu outbreak in Nandurbar district last month. According to him, the samples found with bird flu positive was not a new case. Agencies



"Here the greatest advantage is the number of birds to be culled is very less in comparison to Navapur, where the figures touched 2.5 lakh birds. Once the villagers decide to cooperate with us, the work should be over soon," Singhal said.

Of the 70,323 birds to be culled, 12,591 are from the infected zone and 57,732 are from the surveillance zone. While the infected zone comprises villages within three-kilometre radius, the surveillance zone covers

## **Court: jolt for panchayats**

(Continued from page 1)

from the constituency comprising any part of the village.

Under Article 243C of the Constitution of India, the seats in a panchayat are required to be filled by persons chosen by direct election from the territorial constituencies in the Panchayat area.

Mr Anupam Kumar Chatterjee and Mr Goutam Kumar Thakur

who appeared for Panjipara Gram Panchayat Pradhan in Uttar Dinajpur, pointed out that the provision of the Panchayat Act was contrary to the provision of the Constitution.

According to the Constitution, the election of members of Upa-samitis from Gram Panchayats must be direct. The provision for indirect election in the State's Panchayat Act was contrary to the pro-

vision of the Constitution.

They gave an instance of how a member of a Panchayat Samiti had been elected member of an Upa-samiti, Krishi O Prani Sampad Bikas, in an indirect election without being elected from a Gram Panchayat.

Mr Rabilal Maitra and Mr Sumitra Dasgupta appeared for the State. Mr Mohammad Alim appeared for the private respondents.

16 MAR 2006

THE STATESMAN

# Bird flu spread confounds experts

Miscell  
HD-4

## Species carrying the virus not known

7/3

Elisabeth Rosenthal

**OZZANO EMILIA (ITALY):** As new outbreaks of bird flu have peppered Europe and Africa in recent weeks, experts are realising that they still have much to learn about how migrating birds spread the A(H5N1) virus, leaving the continents vulnerable to unexpected outbreaks.

After new scientific research published in February clarified the role of wild birds in spreading the disease from its original territory in southern China, the virus promptly moved into dozens of locations in Europe and Africa, following no apparent pattern and upsetting many scientific assumptions about the virus and its course around the world.

### Prediction impossible

In fact, knowledge of how the virus is spreading in Europe and Africa is so rudimentary that experts say there is no way of predicting where it will strike next, though they are now certain that it will, again and again.

"We know next to nothing about this virus; we have only anecdotal information about

where it exists and what birds it infects," said Vittorio Guberti, head veterinarian at the Italian National Institute for Wildlife here in a rural corner of north-eastern Italy, who has been studying influenza in wild birds for more than 10 years.

"We don't even know where to focus. We have to sit and wait for the big epidemic to occur, and in the meantime there will probably be small outbreaks all the time." Scientists do not know, for example, which species are the major carriers of A(H5N1). While they suspect that there may be a few areas at the fringes of Europe that are perpetually infected with the virus, they are not sure exactly where. And while they are convinced that the virus can be carried on trucks, on soles of shoes and in fertilizer, they are not sure how significant those routes are. "Think about this," Mr. Guberti said in his cluttered laboratory here. "Two million ducks from Nigeria, where there is a big problem, will arrive in Italy. And we don't know a thing about them." Outbreaks in Nigeria have occurred in commercial poultry. —New York Times News Service

07 MAR 2005

THE HINDU



Miscellaneous  
9-16

# Chinese man dies of virus, H5N1 spreads in Europe

## Two Children Likely To Have Died In Azerbaijan Due To Infection

**Hong Kong:** China confirmed on Sunday that a ninth person had died from bird flu, state media reported, while Azerbaijan said it was checking if two children may have died from the illness.

As the inexorable spread of the disease continued—with France, Germany, Greece, Poland, Romania and Switzerland all announcing new confirmed or suspected cases in birds—authorities in Europe, Asia and Africa stepped up measures to prevent a pandemic.

since 1968”, are due to meet in Geneva on Monday to work out a rapid response system to stop the virus becoming a pandemic and killing millions of people.

The latest death in China brings to 95 the number of people reported to have died from bird flu since 2003—all of them in Asia except for four in Turkey and two in Iraq.

China’s health ministry said a 32-year-old man who had frequented poultry markets had succumbed to bird flu in Guangdong, the first case

straddling Europe and Asia to have recorded human victims.

Tests are also being conducted on four of the children’s relatives, who are in hospital.

Further west, the veterinary service in Poland said two dead swans found in the city of Torun “probably” had the highly pathogenic strain of H5N1. The two dead swans found in northern Poland had the deadly H5N1 strain of bird flu, Polish public television reported.

Warsaw, which has been on high alert since cases of the virus were detected in neighbouring Germany and Slovakia, introduced a protection zone and traffic restrictions in Torun and urged the public not to panic.

Elsewhere, Greece confirmed four more cases of highly pathogenic H5N1 in wild birds and France confirmed two, one of them in a previously unaffected region near Marseilles. Berlin said it was checking a suspected new case in a wild goose, which could bring to six the number of German states affected by virulent H5N1. Switzerland said it was testing four wild geese and Romania, the European country worst hit by the virus, announced another suspected death in poultry.

In Africa, where bird flu has been discovered in Nigeria, neighbouring Niger and Egypt, Nigeria promised protective equipment for Niger’s three-billion euro emergency eradication plan. This came a day after the World Bank pledged financial aid to the impoverished state.

Experts meet at the WHO in Geneva on Monday and Tuesday to agree on a global system for detecting mutations and acting to head off a health catastrophe.

US Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns said on Saturday the United States was preparing for an outbreak of avian flu and assured consumers that poultry remains safe to eat.

“There is no way to put a big cage around the United States. I think it is fair to assume we’ll deal with ... avian influenza,” said Johanns. “We could see it in domestic flocks as well as (wild) birds.” AFP



SHOULD WE FEAR OUR FEATHERED FRIENDS?

Hong Kong, which borders the province of Guangdong where the latest Chinese fatality occurred, slapped a ban on imports of poultry and other birds from Guangdong.

Poland and France imposed hygiene safety defences around new infected areas and Nigeria promised neighbouring Niger equipment and training to stem the virus’ advance.

Experts for the World Health Organisation, which last week warned the world was “closer to another influenza pandemic than at any time

in the province, the official Xinhua news agency reported.

Hours later Hong Kong—which suffered the world’s first reported major bird flu outbreak among humans in 1997, when six people died—suspended imports of live poultry and pet birds from Guangdong for three weeks.

On the other side of the world, Azerbaijan said it was checking samples from two children who died in the Asian part of the country. If confirmed, Azerbaijan would, after Turkey, be only the second country

# Mittal versus Arcelor: The hypocrisy within

Lakshmi Mittal is the kind of guy who makes India proud. He represents the new, confident and successful face of India that is able to give the jitters to businessmen and governments around the world. It is a heady feeling after half-a-century of insular policies, ridiculous protectionism and suffocating red-tape.

Mittal is the world's largest steel producer and we feel proud of his global empire and his wealth (he is supposed to be the third-richest man in the world); although he has carefully stayed away from India after a default to Indian financial institutions several decades ago. In fact, his success outside India only seems to confirm how the license-permit raj killed entrepreneurship. Mittal lives out of a \$128 million home in London and has his headquarters in the Netherlands but we don't mind that since he proudly carries an Indian passport.

That is why, when Lakshmi Mittal made an audacious, \$22-billion hostile bid for Arcelor, Europe's

largest steel-maker, all thinking Indians cheered (the reaction of tens of thousand bloggers are a good indication). Time magazine wrote that Mittal's bid "roiled markets and infuriated governments", but the India media was all gush and praise when he made a high-profile, whistle-stop visit to attend the wedding of another powerful global Indian and quietly canvassed national support.

Juncker, declared: "This hostile bid by Mittal Steel calls for a reaction that is at least as hostile." If Spain and Luxembourg officially opposed the bid, we expected the Indian government to respond suitably.

Consequently, Commerce Minister Kamal Nath warned his European Union counterpart against a politically-motivated effort to block Mittal's bid based on his skin colour. Even Prime Minister Manmohan

government will behave differently if and when a foreign company makes a hostile bid for any of our Indian bluechips?

A quick look at the history of Indian hostile takeovers would show that none of them have succeeded against an entrenched, family-owned company. It is political muscle alone that has kept BAF out of the management of ITC Ltd in spite of being its largest shareholder. So much so, that the UFI Specified Undertaking held on to a crucial 10 per cent stake to block BAF acquiring management control, instead of collecting a handsome premium by selling the shares. BAF had no say in ITC's change in business profile from a cigarette maker to a hotel, FMCG and agro-based company. ITC has also blocked BAT from taking a 51 per cent stake in VST.

Starting from Swaraj Paul's attempt to take over H.P. Nanda's Escorts, hostile bids have always caused a stink in India. When Manu Chhabria went on an acquisi-

tion spree in the 1980s—Hindustan Dorr Oliver, Shaw Wallace, Gammon India, Mather & Platt, Falcon Ives, Gordon Woodroffe, Cencile and Lezpur Tea—the carefully-cast professional managements or multinationals not family-controlled Indian companies. The fight was tough but often successful, even though the government frequently backed the 'professionals' who behaved like owners.

When Reliance acquired BSES through a long ten-year process, it worked through the management and the government to ensure a smooth transition. Forget foreigners, even Indian industrialists stay away from hostile bids, because they are too messy and political. The rare hostile bid in recent years (the A.H. Dalmia bid for Gresco Corp) has invariably fizzled off, or turned out to be mere attempts at driving up stock prices or greenmail. In Gresco, the management preferred to hand over the company to the Mahindras rather than allow an upstart raider to get the

better of them.

When Arun Bajoria attempted a raid on Bombay Dyeing by acquiring a 14 per cent stake, it caused Ratan Tata and Keshub Mahindra to rush to Nusli Wadia's aid; they even met the Sebi chairman to plead his case. The worry then was that Bajoria was backed by a big industry house.

Will Manmohan Singh and Kamal Nath take a consistent stand if a French or American company were to bid for Grasim (Birla holding is officially below 25 per cent)? Here, one must remember that the BJP government has given Indian companies plenty of opportunity to shore up the promoters' holding and protect ownership.

Would we not be outraged if their government's told us not to be racist? If the bid is at a substantial premium to market price, will government-controlled institutions have the freedom to tender their shares and book profits? Nationalised banks and financial institutions are the vehicle through which

government has always intervened to block hostile takeovers.

Aren't we also being hypocritical about Foreign Direct Investment? We expect Europe not to look at business in 'national' terms. But we don't practice what we preach. So much so that FDI in the retail sector did not even find mention in the Budget speech even though Indian acquisitions abroad in the technology space have made frequent headlines. FDI in the print media is also blocked under pressure from some 'nationalist' media barons.

Neither those newspapers nor the government is embarrassed at our diametrically different attitude when it comes to domestic policy. If our official stand on the Lakshmi Mittal bid leads to a reconsideration of domestic policies, the global Indian would have made an important contribution. He has already shown that the fear of foreigners is completely unwarranted now that Indians are ready to take on the world.

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*Cheques and*  
**BALANCES**

**SUCHETA DALAL**

When Europe's objection to the Mittal bid acquired a racist hue, Indians wanted the government to support him more overtly. Newspapers headlines and bloggers again spewed anger when the Prime Minister of Luxembourg, Jean-Claude

Singh raised the Arcelor issue with the French President Jacques Chirac in an official meeting.

This is all very well. But now that we have waved our national flags and supported Lakshmi Mittal, can we apply our minds to whether the

## Indonesia, China report flu deaths

Jakarta, March 4 (Reuters): A three-year-old boy from Indonesia's central Java province has died of bird flu, a senior health official said today while a man died of suspected flu in China.

If confirmed by a UN-recognised laboratory, the boy would be Indonesia's 21st death from the H5N1 virus, which is now endemic in poultry in the world's fourth most populous nation.

"A local test of (the boy) who died yesterday or a day before yesterday, was positive," Hariadi Wibisono, director of control of animal-borne diseases at the national health ministry, said.

A sample of the boy's blood has been sent to a laboratory in Hong Kong recognised by the WHO for confirmation, he added. The boy had been in contact with fowl, according to initial information. Contact with infected birds is the most common means of transmission of the H5N1 virus to humans.

The health department of Guangdong province and ministry of health told the Hong Kong government that a 32-year-old Chinese man developed fever and pneumonia on February 22 and died on March 2, the centre said in a statement late yesterday.

The risk of avian influenza appearing in people in Hong Kong was also increasing, the head of the Centre for Health Protection, Leung Pak-yin, said.

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THE TELEGRAPH

# Lost civilisation found

**NARRAGANSETT (RHODE ISLAND):** Scientists have found what they believe are traces of the lost Indonesian civilisation of Tambora, which was wiped out in 1815 by the biggest volcanic eruption in recorded history.

Mount Tambora's cataclysmic eruption on April 10, 1815, buried the inhabitants of Sumbawa Island under searing ash, gas and rock and is blamed for an estimated 88,000 deaths. The eruption was at least four times more powerful than Mount Krakatoa's in 1883.

## Study by researchers

Guided by ground-penetrating radar, researchers from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington and the Indonesian Directorate of Volcanology recently dug in a gully where locals had found ceramics and bones. They unearthed the remains of a thatch house, pottery, bronze and the carbonised bones of two persons, all in a layer of sediment dating to the eruption.

University of Rhode Island volcanologist Haraldur Sigurdsson, the leader of the expedition, estimated

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that 10,000 people lived in the town when the volcano erupted in a blast that dwarfed the one that buried the Roman town of Pompeii.

The eruption shot 360 million tonnes of sulphuric gases into the atmosphere, causing global cooling and creating what historians call "The Year Without a Summer." Farms in Maine suffered crop-killing frosts in June, July and August. In France and Germany, grape and corn crops died, or the harvests were delayed.

The civilisation on Sumbawa Island has intrigued researchers ever since Dutch and British explorers visited in the early 1800s and were surprised to hear a language that did not sound like any other spoken in Indonesia. Some scholars believe the language more closely resembled those spoken in Indochina. But not long after Westerners first encountered Tambora, the society was destroyed. — AP

THE HINDU

চিন্তা নেই, বলছে কেন্দ্র

# নবপুর ছেড়ে বার্ড ফ্লু এ বার সংলগ্ন সুরাতে

আমদাবাদ, ২৫ ফেব্রুয়ারি: মহারাষ্ট্রের পরে বার্ড ফ্লু এ বারে গুজরাতে।

সুরাতের উচ্চ তালুকের কয়েকটি খামারের মুরগির দেহে এই রোগের জীবাণু মিলেছে বলে জানা গিয়েছে। বিষয়টি প্রকাশ্যে আসার পরেই নড়েচড়ে বসেছে গুজরাত সরকার। সংক্রমণ ঠেকাতে উচ্চ ও সংলগ্ন এলাকার খামারগুলিতে মুরগি মেরে ফেলার কাজ শুরু করা হয়েছে। এ ছাড়া, ওই অঞ্চলে পোলট্রির সঙ্গে জড়িতদের তীক্ষ্ণকরণ এবং জীবাণুনাশক ছড়ানোর কাজও শুরু হয়েছে।

সুরাতের যে এলাকায় মুরগির দেহে বার্ড ফ্লু-র জীবাণু পাওয়া গিয়েছে, সেটি মহারাষ্ট্রের নবপুরের খুব কাছেরই। প্রসঙ্গত, নবপুরেই প্রথম মুরগির দেহে বার্ড ফ্লু-র জীবাণু পাওয়া যায়। উচ্চলের দু'টি খামারের তেরোটি মুরগি পরীক্ষার জন্য ভোপালের 'হাই সিকিউরিটি অ্যানিম্যাল ডিজিজ ল্যাবরেটরি'-তে পাঠানো হয়েছিল। ফলে ওই পরীক্ষার রিপোর্ট রাজ্য সরকারের কাছে আসে। মোট ৬টি মুরগির দেহে বার্ড ফ্লু-র জীবাণু পাওয়া গিয়েছে।

গুজরাত সরকারের গো পালন দফতরের সচিব ডি কে রাও জানিয়েছেন, সংক্রমণ ঠেকাতে প্রথম পর্যায়েই আক্রান্ত মুরগিগুলিকে মেরে ফেলার সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া হয়েছে। তিনি বলেছেন, "উচ্চলের ১০ কিলোমিটারের মধ্যে সমস্ত মুরগি মেরে ফেলা হবে। শনিবারেই প্রায় ১৯ হাজার মুরগি মারা হয়।" এ ছাড়া, প্রত্যন্ত গ্রামগুলিতেও মুরগি মারা অভিযান চলবে বলে জানানো হয়েছে। উচ্চ এলাকার প্রায় ৬৫ জনের দেহ পরীক্ষা করা হয়েছে। কিন্তু কারও শরীরেই এই রোগের জীবাণু মেলেনি বলে গুজরাতের স্বাস্থ্য দফতরের কমিশনার অমরজিৎ সিংহ জানিয়েছেন। নবপুরে বার্ড ফ্লু ছড়িয়ে পড়ার পর থেকেই গুজরাতেও প্রতিরোধমূলক ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া শুরু হয়েছিল। অমরজিৎ জানিয়েছেন, চলতি সপ্তাহেই গোটা রাজ্যে প্রায় ৭৩ হাজার মুরগি মেরে ফেলা হয়েছে। কয়েক লক্ষ ডিম নষ্ট করা হয়েছে। বহু মুরগিকে প্রতিবেধক ইঞ্জেকশনও দেওয়া হয়েছে। বার্ড ফ্লু সংক্রমণ ঠেকাতে ব্যাপক হারে মুরগি নিধন যজ্ঞ চলার পাশাপাশি আক্রান্ত এলাকাগুলি থেকে মুরগি বাইরে নিয়ে যাওয়াও বন্ধ করে দেওয়া হয়েছে।

কিন্তু তা সত্ত্বেও বার্ড ফ্লু-র সংক্রমণ যে ঠেকানো যায়নি তা পরিষ্কার। তবে, সুরাতের ঘটনাকে বিশেষ আমল দিতে নারাজ কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার। কেন্দ্রীয় পশুপালন দফতরের সচিব পি এম এ হাকিম বলেছেন, "নবপুরের আক্রান্ত এলাকার খুব কাছেরই উচ্চল। দু'টি এলাকাই খুব কাছাকাছি। তাই এটা কেন্দ্র ও বিচ্ছিন্ন ঘটনা নয়। আতঙ্কিত হওয়ার কোনও কারণ নেই।" পুরো পরিস্থিতি নিয়ন্ত্রণেই রয়েছে বলে দাবি তাঁর।

সুরাতে বার্ড ফ্লু ছড়িয়ে পড়ার খবরের মধ্যেই মহারাষ্ট্রের আকোলায় গত কাল থেকে আজ পর্যন্ত কয়েকশো মুরগির মৃত্যু হয়েছে। আকোলার হিংনা গ্রামে এই ঘটনার পরেই পশুপালন দফতরের কর্মীরা ঘটনাস্থলে ছুটে যান। তবে মৃত মুরগিগুলির দেহ পরীক্ষা করে বার্ড ফ্লু-র কোনও লক্ষণ পাওয়া যায়নি। স্বাস্থ্যকর্মীরা জানিয়েছেন, 'হোয়াইট ডিসেপ্তি' রোগেই সেগুলির মৃত্যু হয়েছে। তা সত্ত্বেও, মুরগিগুলির মৃত্যুর কারণ জানতে নমুনা পাঠানো হয়েছে ভোপালের ল্যাবরেটরিতে। মহারাষ্ট্রের পরে গুজরাতেও বার্ড ফ্লু ছড়িয়ে পড়ায় উদ্ভিন্ন মধ্যপ্রদেশ। দুই সপ্তাহের মধ্যে রাজ্যের লাগোয়া মধ্যপ্রদেশের জেলাগুলিতে বিশেষ সতর্কতাগুলক ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া হয়েছে। ওই দুই রাজ্যের পোলট্রিজাত পণ্য ব্যাপারে নিষেধাজ্ঞা জারি করেছে রাজ্য সরকার। এ ছাড়া, সংক্রমণ ঠেকাতে প্রতিরোধ ব্যবস্থা জোরদার করার জন্য রাজ্য সরকারের তরফে সওয়া দু'কোটি টাকা বরাদ্দ করা হয়েছে।

বার্ড ফ্লু এড়াতে সতর্ক নাগাল্যান্ডও। কিছু দিন আগেই ডিমাপুরে কয়েকশো মুরগির মৃত্যুতে আতঙ্ক ছড়িয়েছিল। কিন্তু পরীক্ষায় জানা গিয়েছে, কোনও মুরগিই বার্ড ফ্লু-তে আক্রান্ত হয়নি। সাধারণ মানুষকে বার্ড ফ্লু সম্পর্কে সচেতন করতে বিশেষজ্ঞদের একটি দল নাগাল্যান্ডের গ্রামগুলিতে প্রচার শুরু করেছে।

তবে, দেশের প্রথম যে এলাকায় বার্ড ফ্লু সংক্রমণের খবর পাওয়া গিয়েছিল, সেই নবপুর ধীরে ধীরে স্বাভাবিক হয়ে আসছে। নবপুর জুড়ে মুরগি মেরে ফেলার কাজ প্রায় শেষ। শেষ হয়েছে গোটা এলাকা জীবাণুমুক্ত করার কাজও। আগামী কয়েক দিনের মধ্যেই সেখানে যাতায়াতের উপরে যে নিষেধাজ্ঞা রয়েছে, তা-ও তুলে নেওয়া হবে বলে প্রশাসনের পক্ষ থেকে জানানো হয়েছে। রাজ্য সরকারের এক পদস্থ কর্তার আশা, আগামী ২-৩ দিনের মধ্যেই নবপুর পুরোপুরি স্বাভাবিক হয়ে যাবে।

— পি টি আই

● বার্ড ফ্লু সংক্রান্ত আরও খবর কুড়ির পাতায়

2006

AMADARA

# E.U. plans awareness campaign

## Move to stem fears as bird flu spreads across continent

VIENNA: European Union Health Ministers agreed on Friday to launch an awareness campaign on bird flu to stem fears over the virus as it spreads across the continent.

Health Minister Maria Rauch-Kallat of Austria, which holds the rotating E.U. presidency, made the announcement after a meeting here of Ministers and other representatives of the bloc's 25 nations plus Turkey and the Balkan states.

"We want to prevent a feeling of uncertainty and panic from spreading," she told reporters.

"Different situations in the E.U. have led to varying media coverage creating a certain confusion," Health Commissioner Markos Kyprianou said.

### Officials' meet

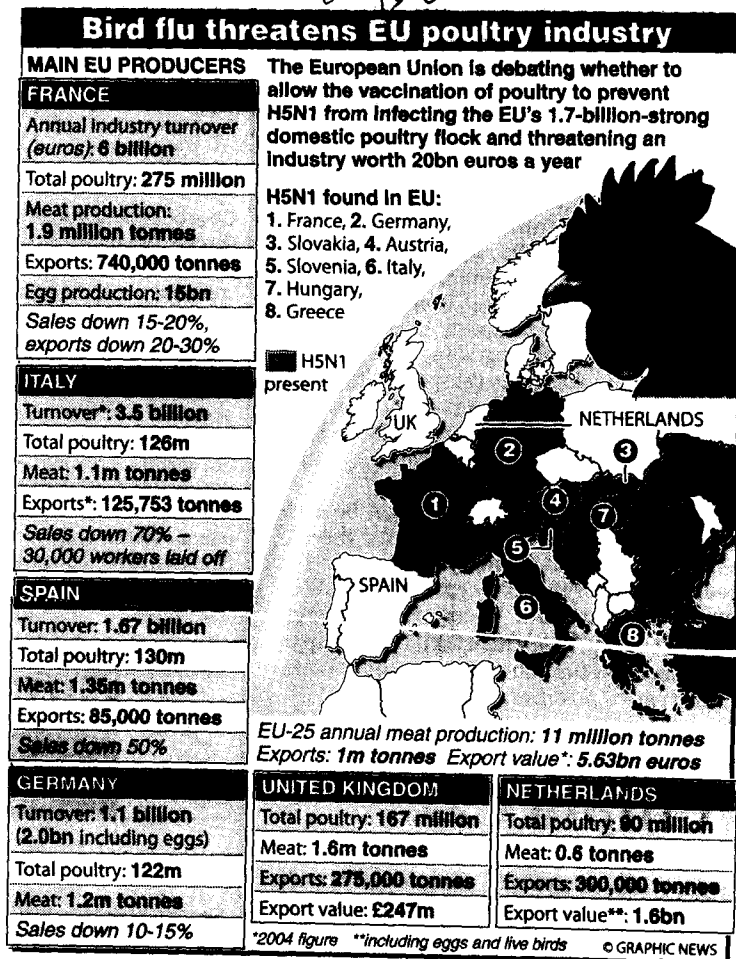
He said officials would meet next month to define a "clear and transparent communication" strategy.

The deadly H5N1 strain of bird flu has so far affected eight E.U. countries — Austria, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Slovakia and Slovenia.

It has also been found in Turkey — where four persons have died — as well as Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia and Ukraine.

Before the meeting here started, Ms. h-Kallat said the increasing number of H5N1 infections "calls for special attention and a need to coordinate. e must speak a common language in order to avoid contradictory messages. The information must be the same, wherever it comes from" in Europe. — AFP

25/12 minutes 11-14





# 4 of 5 human samples test negative



Villagers are seen walking as a road barricade stands in the foreground, following orders for restriction of entry and exit points in Nawapur

**New Delhi:** Fears that humans have been infected with bird flu appear unfounded, as samples collected from four of five people suspected to carry the virus tested negative, even as the government on Thursday said it would continue further tests on the fifth sample.

Out of the five samples sent to the National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD), four have been found negative, while one would be sent to the National Institute of Virology, Pune for further testing," director general of health services R K Srivastava said on Thursday. There have been no reports of the virus in humans so far.

A day after the completion of culling of birds, the state government would begin burning of feathers and removal of all faecal material from the affected poultries in the three-km radius area of the bird flu-hit Nawapur on Thursday. The animal husbandry commissioner Dr Vijay Kumar, who is stationed in Nawapur, said "We will also be uncovering the burial done by the farmers prior to government machinery began its work and disinfect the area in a scientific manner and all these operations will be completed in the next two days."

Kumar said that till Wednesday night, about 2.51 lakh birds were culled, 5 lakh eggs and 50 metric tonnes of bird feed were destroyed. However, precau-

tionary measures and preventive steps taken by the government machinery will continue, Kumar added.

A senior ICAR scientist said a vaccine to counter the Indian strain of Birdflu would be ready in six months, even as the deadly virus has been contained in the infected areas. "We have been able to contain the avian influenza rather fast because of the guidelines prepared in 2004 and we are now preparing a vaccine to

tackle birdflu, which will be ready in six months time," ICAR deputy director gener-

al (animal services) V K Taneja said.

He said ICAR Director General Mangala Rai had expeditiously cleared Rs 8 crore for the vaccination project.

Taneja, a former animal husbandry commissioner, played a major role in formulating the guidelines in 2004 to prepare the country to tackle bird flu following its outbreak in some East Asian Countries during that period.

Those preparations had helped in containing the disease, he said, adding that the ready availability of "serums and primers" had facilitated in carrying out the tests for bird flu.

The bird flu tests in the county were completed in a record four to five days, which is fast going by international standards, Taneja said. Agencies

BIRD FLU  
VIRUS

# No human infected yet: Centre

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Feb. 23. — The Union health ministry today said 94 of the 95 clinical samples tested for the bird flu virus in humans had been found negative while one sample had yet to undergo a confirmatory test at the National Institute of Virology, Pune.

"The one sample left to be re-tested at the Pune laboratory tested negative at the NICD, New Delhi. But, somehow, the leftover clinical sample couldn't be sent to the Pune laboratory. There is no way

that the leftover sample wouldn't match the test conducted negative at the NICD," said Dr NK Ganguly, director-general of the Indian Council of Medical Research. He told reporters that 239 samples of chickens found dead in West Bengal had tested negative for bird flu.

Dr Ganguly questioned the Maharashtra government's decision to close schools and colleges in Navapur, the area affected by bird flu. He said it was not needed. Dr Shiv Lal, director of the NICD, told The Statesman that even if all the samples tested neg-

ative, it could not be assumed that India was "bird flu-free". There have been instances of bird flu re-emerging in many countries.

Categorically denying that any human was afflicted with bird flu, a health ministry statement said all the patients isolated at Navapur sub-district hospital were normal and clinically clear.

The government said culling operations had been completed in Maharashtra. About 2.72 lakh birds were culled while over 5.87 eggs were destroyed. Compensation

of Rs 7.58 lakh has been paid to the backyard poultry owners.

Mrs Upma Chawdhry, the joint secretary, animal husbandry, said the government had enough stock of poultry vaccines at present. Moreover, with culling of infected chicken being preferred to vaccination, there was no need to approach private players to import the vaccine. This comes in the backdrop of pharmaceutical companies seeking permission from the government to import poultry vaccines.

**Traders have no cure clue, Kolkata Plus I**

27 FEB 2009

THE STATESMAN

# Bird flu: intensive farming link

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Animal farming and man's intrusion into the environment are major factors in the spread of new diseases.

John Vidal

TEN YEARS ago next month, the United Kingdom's Government first reported a link between the cattle disease bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) and its human equivalent Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD); five years ago this week, the cull began of millions of sheep and cows suspected to have foot and mouth disease; and three years ago, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) threatened global health. Now poultry farmers around the world are on full alert as country after country reports the virulent H5N1 avian influenza virus in wild birds, which it is feared could cross to humans.

As dead swans are found with H5N1, and Europe locks up its poultry, a consensus is emerging among scientists, ecologists and human health experts that this strain of avian flu, as well as diseases such as monkeypox, HIV/AIDS, West Nile virus, Ebola, SARS, BSE, and Lyme disease are emerging and crossing more easily to humans because of environmental changes taking place and the intensification of farming. Diseases are then spread rapidly around the world with the globalisation of trade and aviation.

Diseases have spread from wildlife to humans throughout history but we now interact with animals in a very different way, says Danielle Nierenberg, a researcher with the U.S. Worldwatch Institute. "In the last 40 years the world has gone through a livestock revolution, not unlike what happened to crops with the green revolution," she says.

Since 1961, she explains, worldwide livestock has increased 38 per cent, to about 4.3 billion today. The global poultry population has quadrupled in that time, to 17.8 billion birds, and the number of pigs has roughly trebled to 2 billion. As the numbers of animals bred for food have vastly grown in a very short period, humankind's relationship with them has changed.

"Raising animals has morphed into an industrial endeavour that bears little relation to landscape or natural tendencies of the animals. Wherever [industrial farming] is introduced it creates ecological and public health disasters," she says.

Others argue that intensive confinement of animals promotes emerging viruses, stokes the development of antibiotic-resistant strains of bacteria and can transform animals into disease "factories." According to Hans-Gerhard Wagner, an officer of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation based in Thailand, the "intensive industrial farming of livestock is now an opportunity for emerging diseases."

## Susceptible to disease

Caroline Lucas, Green MEP (member of the European Parliament) for south-east England, says intensive farming now plays a major role in the spread of diseases. "There is a reduction in the diversity of breeds in order to have the fastest growth, and animals are becoming more susceptible to diseases because of the way they are bred and kept. The search for profits leads to animals and then humans becoming more vulnerable. Our current policies are encouraging farming that overlooks basic husbandry."

Ecologist Vandana Shiva says: "Food hazards have increased with industrialisation of food production and processing. On a global scale, new diseases are emerging and more virulent forms of old diseases are growing as globalisation spreads factory farming and industrial processing and agriculture. Disease epidemics and food hazards are the outcome of food production methods based

on hazardous inputs and processes."

Peter Daszak, director of the Consortium for Conservation Medicine, which strives to understand the link between human alterations to the environment, wildlife disease, public health, and conservation, says emerging diseases such as the H5N1 strain of avian flu are causing a crisis of public health.

Mr. Daszak, who helped connect Asian bats in China with SARS, says diseases such as SARS, Ebola, BSE, CJD, HIV/AIDS, and H5N1 bird flu are entirely driven by environmental change, which is almost always caused by humans. Because humans share so many pathogens with animals, humans' impact in driving wildlife diseases, in turn, threatens public health.

The SARS virus, which killed at least 700 people, emerged from the trade in wildlife for food and was spread by air travel. It is similar situation with bird flu, Mr. Daszak says.

"All these diseases are driven by human activities, like roadbuilding, agricultural changes, population movements, people moving to cities. Environmental change, linked to demography and the unprecedented speed at which environmental change is taking place, are responsible.

"The global poultry industry is clearly linked to avian influenza. It would not have happened without it. There has been an explosion in the global poultry industry. There has always been a close link between people and poultry," he says.

Once an emerging disease such as H5N1 avian flu breaks out, he says, globalisation in the form of greatly increased world trade and the growth of the aviation industry can spread it fast. "We are certain to see more and more of these diseases emerging with very high impacts on health and the economy."

Keeping forests and other ecosystems intact could be the best protection against new diseases. Intrusions into the world's areas of high biodiversity disturbs biological "reservoirs" and exposes people to new forms of infectious disease, says Diversitas, a group of scientists exploring biodiversity.

By diluting the pool of virus targets and hosts, biodiversity reduces their impact on humans and provides a form of global health insurance. "Biodiversity not only stores the promise of new medical treatments and cures, it buffers humans from organisms that cause disease," says Anne Larigauderie, director of Diversitas.

This week she urged doctors and ecologists to share knowledge more. "The medical community should invest more in understanding the environmental origins of viruses, and what can become diseases. Viruses are always there, in the forests or the fields. As the environment is disturbed, people have become closer to them and they become diseases.

"The best security against [diseases like H5N1 bird flu] is conservation, and awareness by governments and the medical community that these diseases are not medical problems to begin with. Nature keeps them in check. Once they are in humans then it is almost too late."

"As the human population continues to grow, our needs for space and resources result in further encroachment into a diminishing natural world," says Andrew Cunningham, a reader in wildlife epidemiology at the Institute of Zoology, in the *British Medical Journal*.

"Through emerging infectious diseases, the medical, veterinary, and wildlife conservation professions share a common agenda. The problem is not small, and tackling it will not be easy, but recognising a common problem is a start."

— ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2006

# 1.5 lakh birds killed so far: govt

**New Delhi:** Government on Tuesday said that there was no cause for panic on bird flu as it was confined to a small area of 10-km radius in Maharashtra, with agriculture minister Sharad Pawar saying culling of infected poultry would end by Tuesday evening.

"There is no need to panic. The incident of bird flu is a localised event confined to 10-km radius area," he said. He said the incident had been blown out of proportion and urged the media to observe restraint while reporting such events, which are directly linked with the country's rural economy. "It is wrong to believe that whole country is affected by the bird flu," he said.

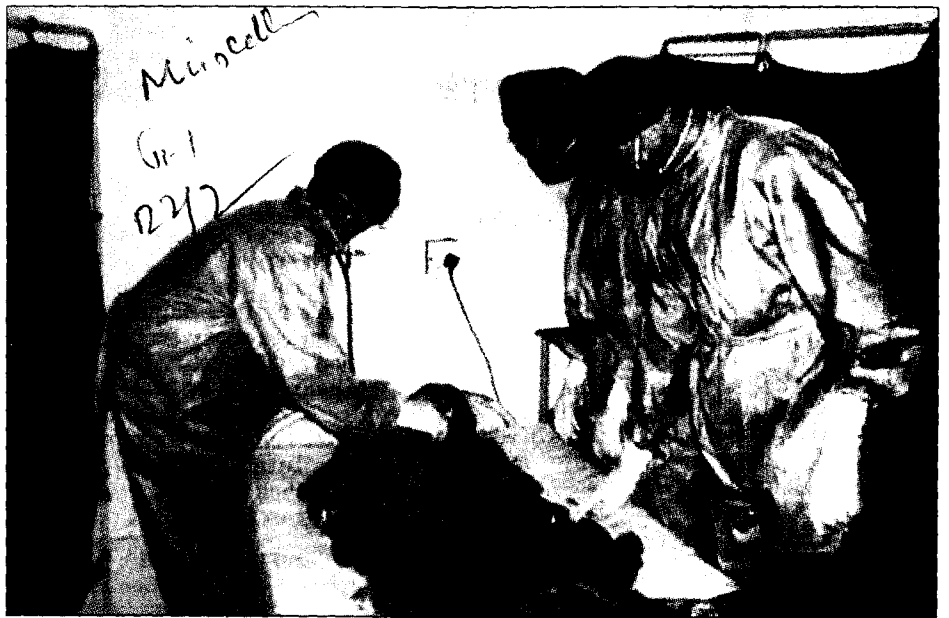
Such reports would hit the Rs 35,000-crore poultry sector which has been witnessing an impressive 17 per cent growth, he said and added the sector provides employment opportunities to about three million people.

On reports that airlines and railway authorities have stopped serving chicken to passengers, he said these reports were found to be false after cross-checking with the respective authorities.

The state government said more than 1.5 lakh birds have been killed and 1.58 lakh eggs destroyed in Maharashtra as part of efforts to stop the spread of bird flu. Twenty-five metric tonnes of feed material has also been disposed of, Uma Chaudhary, joint secretary, animal husbandry department, said at a press conference.

Chaudhary said the birds were being buried at sites which have been marked for future reference. She said people having backyard poultry farms have been directed not to set there birds out in the open for scavenging. Ten earthmoving machines have been deployed in the Nawapur area of Maharashtra where the outbreak of avian influenza was reported on Saturday.

The department of animal husbandry and the divisional commissionerate on Tuesday denied any outbreak of bird flu in Marathwada amidst reports of poultry deaths in the local press. At the same time, officials said that as a precautionary meas-



Doctors examine a patient at a Navapur health centre in Nandurbar district on Tuesday

ure "so far 13 samples have been sent to the animal husbandry's Diseases Investigation Section, Aundh, Pune, while two samples were rushed to Bhopal to be examined at the High Security Animal Diseases Laboratory.

Scotching rumours of widespread poultry deaths, deputy divisional commissioner Dilip Shinde pointed out that only 25 birds died on Monday while seven were found dead on Tuesday in Kalamnuri village of Hingoli district. Over 1,000 chickens were reported to have died in a poultry farm in Kalmnury, about 20 km from Hingoli, in central Maharashtra. Cause of the poultry deaths, that took place on Tuesday, was not immediately known and officials have rushed to the farm to assess the situation and collect samples, they said. Agencies

While officials at the district collector's office confirmed deaths of birds, deputy collector Uddhav Goge said officials have rushed to the area and details were awaited. Agencies

## Army 'chickens out'

**Pune:** After the railways, airliners, and restaurants, the bird-flu scare has now hit defence establishments in Pune. The National Defence Academy, acting on a circular issued by the Southern Command, has restricted the consumption of chicken and eggs for its 1,800 cadets and the 200 officers. The Armed Forces Medical College also decided not to draw chicken or eggs from the army supply depot until the products were certified afresh as fit for consumption.

The Army has decided to avoid chicken dishes and eggs. The circular has instructed its unit heads not to feed chicken to the troops till further notice, a senior military official from the Army's supply corps at Pune confirmed to TOI. While the directors (health and veterinary) of the Southern Command are in contact with government agencies, a senior official of the supply corps said the supply of poultry and eggs has been completely stopped. TNN

# Lessons from beyond the Himalayas

India could learn from the way China handled the outbreak of bird flu.

Pallavi Aiyar

**A**S BIRD flu spreads its deadly wings over India, what lessons can be learnt from across the Himalayas where China has been waging a battle against the H5N1 virus for months? The two countries have much in common that make them uniquely susceptible to the spread of a potential pandemic: their vast size, massive populations, suspect medical care, and large numbers of backyard farms. China has, in fact, reported more than 30 outbreaks of bird flu since the beginning of 2005 (the majority occurring after October), and a total of 12 human cases, eight of which have proved fatal. The World Health Organisation's China Coordinator for Epidemic Alerts and Response, Julie Hall, says India should learn from China's experience the necessity of setting up multiple channels of surveillance and detection of the virus in both animals and humans.

In China, every time an outbreak of H5N1 is reported in birds, an enhanced surveillance effort goes into operation. Every human who has had contact with the infected birds is monitored for 10 days. If anyone is detected to have a fever or other flu-like symptoms, he or she is immediately isolated for further tests. At the same time, China is also trying to improve its hospital-based surveillance in all parts of the country irrespective of whether any cases of bird flu have been reported there. That this attempt is having some success is proved by the fact that nine of the country's 12 human infec-

tions have, in fact, been found in areas with no previous known outbreaks of the virus in birds.

Currently all hospitals and clinics in China are expected to report cases of humans with flu-like symptoms if the cause of the symptoms cannot immediately be identified. Ninety per cent of health centres from the county level and up are wired to an Internet-based databank through which doctors must report these cases. The information then goes to all the different levels of government (local, provincial, and central) simultaneously.

Dr. Hall explains that during the SARS epidemic in 2003, "sharing of information between the localities and the centre was found to suffer from a huge time lag which was detrimental to the government's response. The Chinese learnt from this." Healthcare workers are also being trained to ask all patients suffering a fever a set of standard questions, querying their contact with poultry and other birds.

The problem, Dr. Hall points out, is that since only some 10 per cent of the rural Chinese population has any medical insurance, a substantial proportion of those who fall ill never report to hospitals, fearful of the costs. Hence, China is also now trying to move beyond its hospital-based surveillance system and set up a volunteer system of the kind that Thailand has successfully created. Thailand today has some 750,000 volunteers, one for every 15 rural households, who help identify early signs of bird flu, in poultry and humans. Volunteers regularly advise

neighbours about dos and don'ts for the disease.

China's volunteer system is not anywhere as developed. It mainly deals with the monitoring of animals. In a recent experiment, however, the Government asked all schools to start reporting to the local authorities if any students were absent for an extended period of time.

## Incentives, the key

According to Dr. Hall, the key to preventing the spread of bird flu is providing incentives for people to report sick birds. Compensating farmers for birds culled is thus crucial. She adds that compensation should ideally cover not only the cost of the slaughtered bird, but also the loss of income the farmer suffers as a result of the time lag between culling and re-stocking.

In China the national standard for compensating farmers is RMB 10 (\$1.2) per bird. For the richer provinces the central government provides 20 per cent of the compensation funds, while it contributes 80 per cent for the poorer regions. The remainder of the funds has to be found by the provinces themselves. According to official data, the Chinese Government spent a total of RMB 200 million (\$24.4 million) in compensating farmers for the millions of birds that were culled through the year.

But Dr. Hall points out that financial incentives on their own are insufficient. The Chinese have also appealed to people's sense of patriotism in the fight against bird flu. "They have got the message out that all the

Chinese have to pull together even if it means some personal sacrifice because its in the national interest and this has been quite effective," she says. Another incentive is to stress the risk that non-reporting will cause to the health and security of poultry workers' children. "In China we found that shifting the message from the adult to the safety of children made a significant difference," says Dr. Hall.

China has faced tremendous challenges in battling bird flu. It has the second largest poultry industry in the world, comprising 14 billion birds, 75 per cent of which are in backyard farms. The majority of the country's 1.3 billion people live in the countryside, usually in close proximity to animals. An official culture of secrecy that prevents the timely sharing of information, and a tendency for government officials lower down in the pecking order to always present their superiors with "good news" are additional obstacles that the country has had to deal with.

Given this uphill struggle, China has done a "reasonably good job" according to Dr. Hall. The WHO chief in Beijing, Henk Beke-dam, recalls a conversation with the Chinese Premier who said to him: "Henk, before SARS the only acronym we knew was GDP, after SARS we also know CDC." CDC or communicable disease control is an acronym Indian authorities will also now need to get familiar with. Bird flu has arrived in India relatively late. This is an advantage India should press home by learning from the experience of its neighbours.

TAMIFLU RETAIL SALE BANNED ■ PAK, SRI LANKA & NEPAL SHUT OUT INDIAN POULTRY

# 9 lakh birds set for slaughter

Statesman News Service

MUMBAI/NEW DELHI, Feb. 20. — Wrapping up his visit to the quarantined district of Nandurbar today, Maharashtra chief minister Mr Vilasrao Deshmukh told reporters that 9.5 lakh birds had been marked for slaughter for suspected bird flu and claimed that prompt action by the state's administration had managed to contain the outbreak of the disease. But fear of misuse of the anti-avian flu drug for human consumption — Tamiflu — prompted the Centre to ban its retail sale today. The government would issue an advisory on flu drugs tomorrow.

A "high alert" was sounded in Delhi today in view of the flu scare and the government drew up an action plan which included deployment of 42 doctors to screen the poultry in the Capital.

A state health official said doctors and paramedics were conducting door-to-door checks in Navapur and other parts of Nandurbar to detect human cases of bird flu. They have so far drawn a blank, but — to be on the safe side — have sent blood samples of 80 people to a Pune virology laboratory for further tests.

Ms Anuradha Desai, the president of Nasik-based National Egg Coordination Committee (NECC) has, however, again disputed the government's stand of confirming an outbreak of bird flu. She claimed the NECC was in contact with



A rooster awaiting slaughter peers out of its cage in Navapur, Maharashtra, on Monday. — AFP

the Indian Veterinary Research Laboratory which was yet to confirm an outbreak of avian flu. She blamed the Centre for coming to a "hasty conclusion" in this regard and spreading panic among people as well as poultry farm owners.

Reacting to the NECC's assertions, the Union health secretary, Mr PK Hota, who announced the ban on the retail sale of Tamiflu, said: "Instead of going into a generic denial and expressing apprehensions about the credibility of the tests, the NECC should try not to create panic among people. There is nothing to worry about." On the anti-

flu drug, he said: "Tamiflu is a prescription drug which has to be administered within 24 hours of a person's exposure to a bird flu-affected area," he said, adding that it was not advisable to prescribe the medicine to children. The ban aside, pharma giants are free to supply generic versions of Tamiflu and sell it through proper means.

In Navapur, Maharashtra's minister for animal husbandry, Mr Anees Ahmed, said lack of machinery and inadequate manpower had affected the pace of "selective killing" in the bird flu-hit areas. Lack of machines required to dig

pits to bury birds with suspected bird flu has also hit the pace of culling of chickens. The manpower required for culling of birds was inadequate too, officials added.

A mother and son, hospitalised with suspected symptoms of the disease and quarantined yesterday, left the hospital today though health department officials said they had not been officially discharged. There were no fresh cases of persons with these symptoms, they added.

#### Poultry imports

Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and some Gulf countries today banned the import of

poultry and allied products from India in the wake of the outbreak of deadly bird flu in Maharashtra. Bangladesh has stepped up vigil along its borders with India to prevent smuggling of live birds and other poultry products. Pakistan has banned poultry imports from Iran and France too. Nepal had already banned import of poultry products from Thailand, Germany and Indonesia. Bahrain and the UAE were among the Gulf countries to ban poultry imports from India, adds PTI.

■ Vector alert, page 3  
Chicken rules the roost, Kolkata Plus I

## Airlines say no to chicken, eggs

NEW DELHI/KOLKATA, Feb. 20. — Last night, at a hurriedly convened Press conference on the suspected bird flu outbreak, Union health minister Dr Anbumani Ramadoss declared that it was perfectly safe to eat properly cooked chicken and eggs. This morning, government-owned airline, Indian, scrapped eggs from its breakfast menu and withdrew all chicken preparations in meals. "We will monitor the situation and see when we can resume serving these dishes," a spokesman for Indian told The Statesman. Air-India too has chosen to offload chicken and eggs from its planes. It wants to take no chances with panic setting in across the country and the authorities taking stringent measures. An Air-India spokesperson said the changes had been made on directions from the national health authorities. While a large number of vegetarian dishes have been included, alternative non-vegetarian dishes, including mutton, fish and prawns are being offered, it was said.

Among private carriers, Jet Airways has decided to go vegetarian till the crisis blows over. So has Air Sahara, though it continues to serve a few mutton dishes on special demand from passengers. In Kolkata, the catering manager of Indian, said: "We have decided to serve only vegetarian food, but we will make the menu more attractive. We are serving delicacies like paneer butter masala, chana masala, fried rice and pulao. We received the (no-chicken) directive yesterday and it has come into effect from this morning."

However, Mr Bharat Mahadevan, MD, eastern India, Singapore Airlines, said the food on their planes is loaded on their flights from Singapore, so there's no risk of bird flu since it is not prepared in India. "The majority of passengers travelling on the airline are vegetarians. We do serve chicken, but for those disinterested in chicken, we have a lot of vegetarian options to choose from like Jain food, Hindu meals and Oriental vegetarian," he added. Mr Sambudhya Gupta, MD, Eastern India, Jet Airways, said they had stopped serving chicken and instead asked their official caterer, Taj Snacks, to serve fish items. Mr Christopher Yek, regional manager, South Asia, Malaysian Airlines, said in Kolkata: "We received a notice yesterday and hope to make changes in our menu from tomorrow. Being a Muslim carrier, we do not serve pork, and in keeping with Hindu sentiments, we do not serve beef. So I am left with fish and mutton for those who prefer non-vegetarian meals." But chicken dishes were on the menu of a lunch hosted by the Prime Minister for the French President at Hyderabad House this afternoon. Amidst all these conflicting signals, Dr Ramadoss' fervent appeal to people not to cut poultry products from their diet, however, seems to be based on scientific evidence. The World Health Organisation and the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation have confirmed that cooking of poultry (chicken, ducks, geese, turkeys and guinea-fowl) at or above 70°C will kill the H5N1 virus which causes bird flu. In layman's terms, fowl cooked for about 20 minutes on a relatively high flame would be safe to eat. Where eggs are concerned, proper cooking inactivates the virus present in them. — SNS

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THE STATESMAN



# Govt swings into action

## AVIAN FLU THREAT

**CHETAN Chauhan**  
New Delhi, February 20

THE OUTBREAK of bird flu in northern Maharashtra appears to have stirred the ministry of environment and forests (MoEF) into action. It is investigating the source of avian flu and seeking necessary clearances for the Central Asian Flyway Action Plan to keep a track on migratory birds coming to India.

In the first action, the ministry on Monday joined investigations with other ministries to find the source of bird flu. At the onset, it appears that the investigation will be long. "There are no wetlands close to the Nandurbur district where migratory birds come", explained RPS Katwal, additional director-general in the ministry. The nearest wetlands is Nar Sarovar in Gujarat.

The investigators may have to widen its scope to areas beyond Gujarat or Maharashtra. "Even one infected bird can spread the disease very fast", an official said. The ministry has asked officials in wetlands in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and even Orissa to find out whether there had been deaths of any migratory birds.

What can hamper the investigation is that many migratory birds may have left for colder areas because of the hot weather conditions in northern and central India. The ministry is also looking into possibility of whether the disease came from Thailand or Indonesia, where birds have died of bird flu this winter.

So far, tests of samples of hundreds of wild birds from wetlands were negative for bird flu, although ministry officials admit there have been deaths of some migratory birds in Orissa some time ago. "We've asked all states to send fresh samples to our laboratory in Bhopal", an official said.

The ministry, however, hopes that, before the advent of next autumn, when birds will return, it will have a monitoring system in place. "Although all countries have agreed for a Central Asian Flyway Action Plan (CAFAN), some modalities are to be worked out", sources said.

India had agreed for CAFAN. Most countries from the UK and Russia till Indonesia have agreed to sign the action plan.



Health workers put culled chickens in a pit for burial at Navapur in Maharashtra on Monday. The state govt also carried out a door-to-door survey in the area. AP

## Orissa gears up to plug Chilika threat

**SOUMYAJIT Pattnaik**  
Bhubaneswar, February 20

**FIRE-FIGHTING MEASURES** have been initiated in Chilika lake to shield the visitors from the migratory birds after bird flu was reported in Maharashtra. Nearly three lakh migratory birds from Central Asia, China and Far East are still in the lake.

The authorities have imposed a ban on the entry of all visitors into the Chilika sanctuary. Announcements are being made through loud-speakers in villages situated adjacent to the lake not to consume the meat of migratory birds and keep their pigs, ducks and poultry in confinement in clean and hygiene condition.

Last month, 1685 migratory birds had died in Chilika lake raising apprehension of bird

flu and samples of dead birds were sent to different laboratories for testing.

Abhimanyu Behera, district forest officer (DFO) in charge of Chilika lake, said, "There is nothing to panic. Samples of dead migratory birds had been sent to the High Security Animal Disease Laboratory in Bhopal and Regional Disease Diagnostic Laboratory in Kolkata. The test reports have not found H5N1 strain of virus. The cause of bird deaths has been ascribed to bacterial infection. Still we are taking precautions".

The DFO says this year 6.7 lakh migratory birds had congregated at Chilika and 3 lakh birds are still present. The authorities are advising the villagers how to handle dead birds without coming in physical contact with them.

## Flu drug skids on safety quotient

**SUTIRTHO Patranobis**  
New Delhi, February 20

**OSELTAMIVIR** — KNOWN by its brand name as Tamiflu — is possibly the only effective drug to treat bird flu. The catch: it's only effective for roughly 50 per cent patients, besides having severe psychiatric side-effects.

Further, manufacturing oseltamivir is complex and time-consuming and cannot be easily transferred from units. The drug's efficacy also depends on its administration within 48 hours after symptoms are seen.

Originally, the drug was meant to treat normal flu. But, because it inhibits a certain enzyme in humans, it is now used to treat avian flu.

But fears of adverse effects remain. In 2004, 12 children and teenagers, undergoing oseltamivir treatment, died in Japan. At least one jumped from a high-rise, another jumped in front of a bus. Subsequently, Japanese health authorities ordered changes in the literature

given with the drug to include neurological and psychological disorders as possible side effects.

A November 2005 report issued by the US Food and Drug Administration says there is no insufficient evidence to prove "causal link" between the use of oseltamivir and child deaths in Japan. But it recommended a warning on rashes.

Other known side effects include nausea, vomiting, allergic reactions, and abdominal pain and headache. In rare cases, it might also trigger liver disorders.

Dr NK Ganguly, director of the Indian Council of Medical Research, said oseltamivir "was the best of drugs though patients quickly become resistant". But there was no alternative as of now. "The side-effects can be minimised by controlling dosage", he said. The health ministry admits, "For cases of human infection with H5N1, the drugs may improve prospects of survival, if administered early."

# Bird flu: lethal and spreading fast

The Government's efforts to check the spread of the H5N1 virus, first noticed at Nandurbar, Maharashtra, may not suffice.

N. Gopal Raj

**I**N THE space of less than a year, the lethal strain of bird flu known as H5N1 has swept out of its strongholds in eastern Asia and spread swiftly to Russia, Europe, Africa, and West Asia. On Saturday, laboratory tests confirmed that the virus had arrived in India with an outbreak that killed thousands of chicken in Nandurbar district of Maharashtra.

For more than two years, the virus has ravaged poultry and caused human illness (and death) in many South-East Asian countries, and China. Between April and June 2005, large numbers of wild waterbirds at Qinghai Lake in western China perished after being infected by the virus. By July-August, outbreaks involving the virus were reported from Mongolia, Siberia, and Kazakhstan. The virus reached Turkey, Croatia, Romania, and Greece by October. Ukraine reported outbreaks in November 2005.

The virus was infecting chicken and humans in northern Iraq by January this year. Earlier this month, Nigeria became the first African nation to report the virus, with an outbreak at a large commercial poultry farm. This month, many European countries, Egypt, and Iran found wild birds infected with H5N1.

Migratory birds have often been blamed for spreading the virus. This perception has grown as the H5N1 viral strains involved in recent outbreaks, including in Nigeria, have been found to be very similar to the one found at the Qinghai Lake. At least some species of migratory waterfowl are now thought to be carrying the H5N1 in its highly pathogenic form and introducing it to new areas along their route, says the World Health Organisation in its fact sheet on avian influenza.

"The death of chickens from an identical viral strain in locations many kilometres apart says nothing about how the virus was transferred between the two places," observes Richard Thomas, editor of *World Birdwatch* at BirdLife International in Britain.

In an email, he said the chicken could themselves have been transported or the virus carried on vehicles as well as on people's contaminated shoes and clothes.

Wild birds could become infected with H5N1 and there was no reason why they cannot carry the virus at least a short distance, according to William Karesh, director of the New York-based Wildlife Conservation Society's Field Veterinary Programme. But the disease could also spread through the shipping of infected poultry and poultry products, as also the movement of trucks, rail cars, and cages that had held infected poultry. All of these



**TOO LATE:** A worker sprays disinfectant at a poultry farm in Navapur town of Maharashtra's Nandurbar district after thousands of chicken died over a few days. The outbreak has now been confirmed as bird flu. - PHOTO: AP

combined could move the virus over long distances, he said in an email.

"Globalisation has turned the chicken into the world's number one migratory bird species," according to Leon Bennun, Director of Science at BirdLife International. "Movements of chickens around the world take place 365 days a year, unlike the seasonal migrations of wild birds."

The *Washington Post* reported recently that the H5N1 virus was probably transported to Nigeria not by migratory birds but through poultry. Nigeria imported more than a million chicks a year from countries that included Turkey and China, according to the newspaper.

In India, the source of the infection that led to the outbreak in Nandurbar district is not clear. Bird migrations into the country were over by around November, points out Tiej Mundkur of Wetlands International. If migratory birds had brought the virus, one would have expected outbreaks well before this. Moreover, such outbreaks ought to have occurred at places further north that the birds would have reached earlier, he told *The Hindu*. The wild birds would now be preparing to return to their spring breeding grounds.

The Bombay Natural History Society's (BNHS) members and staff have been monitoring some 26 wetlands across the

country on a fortnightly basis and had not reported any suspicious illness among wild birds, according to its director, Asad Rahmani. BNHS was sending a small team to visit wetlands in the affected area and look for any wild birds that might be there. Later, a larger team with veterinary specialists could be sent to collect samples from the birds.

But now that H5N1 has arrived in India, the danger is that the virus could rapidly spread to poultry flocks across the country and beyond. Bird flu viruses can be readily transported from farm to farm by the movement of live birds, people (especially when clothing is contaminated), and contaminated vehicles, equipment, feed and cages, according to the WHO fact sheet on avian influenza. Highly pathogenic viruses such as the H5N1 can survive for long periods in the environment, especially when temperatures are low, it adds.

Just last month, Juan Lubroth, head of FAO's Infectious Diseases Group, said: "It is very easy to blame wild birds and migration of birds because nobody is responsible. It is possible that wild birds may introduce the virus but it is through human activities of commerce and trade that the disease spreads."

Although the Central and State Governments acted as soon as the High Security Animal Disease Laboratory at Bhopal confirmed the H5N1 infection in poultry in Nandurbar district, the outbreak is reported to have started a couple of weeks ago. If so, it is possible that the virus has already been carried out of the region in the course of the commercial trade in poultry. The massive cull and quarantine that has been ordered may not then suffice to stop the spread of the virus.

## The dangers and some dos and don'ts

N. Gopal Raj

**T**HE H5N1 virus primarily affects birds. "The virus does not easily cross from birds to infect humans," observes the World Health Organisation in its fact sheet on avian influenza. "Despite the infection of tens of millions of poultry over large geographical areas for more than two years, fewer than 200 human cases have been laboratory confirmed," it points out.

According to the WHO, for unknown reasons, most human cases have occurred in rural and semi-urban households that keep small flocks of poultry.

There is a puzzling concentration of human cases among previously healthy children and young adults, the WHO said.

Surprisingly, very few of the human cases have occurred among high-risk

groups such as commercial poultry workers, cullers, veterinarians and health staff caring for patients without adequate protective equipment.

A statement issued earlier this month by the WHO stated that slaughtering, defeathering or butchering infected, sick or dead birds put people at risk of getting infected by the virus. The home slaughter and consumption of birds that appeared to be sick was highly risky.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation, properly cooked poultry and eggs are safe to consume. Conventional cooking (temperatures at or above 70 degrees C in all parts of a food item) killed the H5N1 virus. Eggs should not be consumed raw or partially cooked. Eggs can carry the H5N1 virus both on the outside (shell) and the inside (whites and

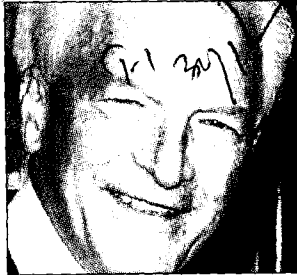
yolk).

The H5N1 virus, if present in poultry meat, was not killed by refrigeration or freezing, the FAO said.

"People need to be informed about the importance of basic hygiene notably washing hands after touching poultry and disinfecting boots or shoes before entering or leaving a poultry farm," said Juan Lubroth of the FAO a few days ago.

According to the WHO, 169 humans were reported to be infected with the H5N1 virus in Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Iraq, Thailand, Turkey, and Vietnam between 2003 and February 13 this year. Some 91 of them died of the disease.

On the other hand, more than 140 million domestic birds have died or are being culled as a result of H5N1 infections.



## Question for Left

After raising a storm in Delhi and Washington by linking the fate of the Indo-US nuclear deal to India's vote in the Iran crisis, American ambassador David C. Mulford (in picture) has stepped on Left toes.

Parts of the interview he gave to PTI last week, virtually issuing an ultimatum to India to vote against Iran and refer it to the UN Security Council, released on Sunday quote him as asking the Left why it opposes foreign investment in retail.

"Why does Left oppose it? Are they opposed to farmers and business guys and others getting credit developing their livelihoods and their businesses? I don't understand what their opposition is about because the beneficiaries are the regular working people of India."

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THE TELEGRAPH

30 JAN 2006

# 988 2811 Gunning for change

US isn't thrilled with the Hamas win. Neither should be India — it's like Maoists winning Nepal

**H**AVING insisted and got elections organised in Palestine, as part of the larger project of promoting democracy in the Middle East, the US finds itself in a quandary in the wake of Hamas's victory. Before sections of our political establishment relish the thought of seeing the Bush administration and Israel embarrassed, it is important to recognise that India could be a big loser if the Hamas, an extremist religious organisation that is committed to violence as a political instrument, misreads the global response. India could also confront a similar dilemma in Nepal, if the Maoists come to power in a future election and pursue a political doctrine that justifies violence.

The lesson from the Hamas victory is not that democracy is not good for the Middle East. Underlining the recent gains of non-secular forces in various elections in the region — the Shiite parties in

Iraq, the Hezbollah in Lebanon, and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt — some have argued that Middle East may not be ripe for democracy. India cannot subscribe to such cultural relativism. The rise of religious extremism and violence in the Middle East, it could be argued, is in fact a consequence of prolonged authoritarian rule. In the case of Palestine, an additional factor has been at work — the failure of the peace process with Israel to deliver results.

India must certainly welcome the elections as the beginning of a democratic process in Palestine. At the same time, it must also insist that the Hamas must abjure violence and commit itself to peaceful negotiations with Israel before the rest of the world is prepared to engage with the organisation. Settling for anything less would make India vulnerable to the very charge it so frequently hurls at others — of double standards on terrorism.

20 JAN 2006

INDIAN EXPRESS

28 JAN 2006

## *Supreme Court slaps Buta in the face, Centre on the wrist*

only eminent persons free from political affiliations should be appointed as Governors.

The Governor's report contained "fanciful assumptions," which could be destructive to democracy. Terming his action as "drastic and extreme," the bench said the court cannot be a silent spectator to such "subversion of the Constitution." It said that the time has come to consider a national policy outlining common norms for appointment of Governors which would be acceptable to all political parties.

The court held that the Governor enjoyed complete immunity and is not answerable in exercise of constitutional power but

Article 361 does not take away from the court the power to deal with the validity of his action.

The majority judgement was passed by Chief Justice Y K Sabharwal, Justice B N Agarwal and Justice Ashok Bhan. The minority view, of Justice K G Balakrishnan and Justice Arijit Passayat, found nothing wrong with the Governor's recommendation.

Buta had recommended dissolution amid allegations that he prevented the NDA, which was on the verge of cobbling up a majority with breakaway group of Loktantrik Janata Party of Ram Vilas Paswan and few Independents from forming the government.

— (With PTI)



Will India end up as one of the five poorest countries in the UN?

# Impolite predictions

ASHOK MITRA

The extent of Amartya Sen's learning and the depth of his understanding of issues are now part of contemporary legend. What, however, deserves mention in the same breath is his civilization. His politeness is immaculate. He would listen, with gentle patience, even to comprehensive garbage gushing out of the mouths of a company of fools.

Which is why one read, with both surprise and a deep sense of gratitude, a comment Sen made during his recent visit to the country. He did not stand on ceremony. If the economic trends unfolding in the country continue in the manner they have of late, half of India, he is reported to have observed, would resemble California, while the other half would be reduced to sub-Saharan. Sen knew what he was talking about. He has lived in California, and has, for long years, done detailed research on the human condition obtaining in the sub-Saharan region. For want of food, nourishment and minimal health facilities, men, women and children live in dehumanizing poverty and die like flies in that part of Africa. The United Nations keeps going through the motion of organizing relief to the region, but all this adds up to nothing. The rest of the world takes it as granted that the situation in sub-Saharan is something beyond the capability of redress through collective human effort. A natural calamity such as the tsunami can be tackled; the sub-Saharan calamity is supposedly beyond repair.

Amartya Sen and flamboyance do not go together. He must have been provoked to such an extent though by the kind of economic policies and measures which are taking shape in India that he, for a moment, chose to forsake civil society politeness; he spoke his mind. True, with globalization taking splendid wings, segments of the Indian economy are experiencing an exhilarating pace of growth.

The Sensex is about to cross the 10,000 mark. A booming stock exchange, the Union finance minister has pontificated, is synonymous with national prosperity. The industry bosses have endorsed this point of view; so too the media. It is a return to the Bharatiya Janata Party's feel-good aura. The nation's foreign exchange holdings are bursting at the seams. The prime minister is determined to have more foreign direct investment not just in industry and agriculture, but in the services sectors as well, including in wholesale and retail trade. Hints to this effect have already been dropped at the World Trade Organization's recent minis-

terial session at Hong Kong. The IT sector, besides, is galloping ahead, and contributing to the mind boggling zilch in the country's leading urban complexes.

When distinguished Indians living abroad, such as Sen, arrive on short jaunts, specimens of the feel-good lobby capture them, accord them jazzy receptions and look forward to some conventional words of congratulatory cheer from the visiting eminences. For whatever reason, this time Amartya Sen disappointed them. In case present conditions persist, he told them bluntly, while they might succeed in render-

the general state of affairs. With stock exchanges on the high, citizens with money to spare do not care to put it in savings that could help capital formation in industry and agriculture; they rush to gobble up the advice of their stock-brokers. To augment capital formation, the government therefore seeks FDI at terms howsoever detrimental to the nation's interests. Agriculture in particular has suffered the most in the past decade, the rate of growth of farm output has fallen behind the rate of population growth. Yet, roughly two-thirds of the nation are still dependent on agriculture for



ing one-half of India into an arcadia replicating the charm and prosperity of California, another half of India might get reduced to the state of sub-Saharan, characterized by hunger, squalor, misery and the stink of a million deaths.

Sen's words were not palatable to his particular audience, nor to officialdom nor to the media. What he said did not therefore receive the attention they deserved. Truth does not always prevail in India. That should not worry Sen; he can afford to speak what he considers to be right. And there is a silent majority of scholars in the country who will agree with him.

However, particularly since Amartya Sen happens to be the author of *The Argumentative Indian*, may one be permitted to voice a minor query? Is he sure that, if things proceed as they are proceeding, it is only one-half of India that would be reduced to the state of the sub-Saharan region? For consider

**█ Agriculture has suffered the most in the past decade in India █**

their survival. As the process of growing income inequalities has not come to a halt either, roughly 90 per cent of the agrarian community must have experienced a further worsening in their economic conditions over the decade. Should the writ of the WTO be made to prevail, they would be even more immiserized in the immediate future.

The tragedy does not quite come to a surcease here. Foreign investors have told the prime minister point blank; they not only would prefer to take over retail and wholesale trade in the country, extend their grip over insurance and banking activities and have a piece of lu-

crative defence production; they would, in addition, like to send their surplus lawyers and accountants to build a career in India.

Consider the consequences if all, or even, some of these demands are conceded. The informal sector, carrying the load of disguised unemployed in the language of Keynes, perhaps currently provides some sort of livelihood to as many as one hundred million in the country: selling vegetables and fruits in the market, hawking odd bits and pieces of clothing in small neighbourhoods, merchandizing titbits of food items at street corners, running tailoring establishments and engaging in similar modest activities. Once the foreigners walk in, the profession of all these people will be gone. Besides, as call centres spread their tentacles in different directions, employment opportunities are bound to shrivel in big, small and middle scale industries. It is inherent in the pattern of jobless growth that development is accompanied by a shrinkage of work opportunities, and employment gets concentrated in the hands of a very small minority, the great majority of the nation's motion pushed towards the hellish state of joblessness, penury and destitution. In contrast, perhaps less than 5 per cent of the population will be rolling in luxury yielded by share-market shenanigans and IT benevolence will be scaling to dizzy heights of prosperity.

Which is why one has a feeling that, even while in a forthright mood, Amartya Sen's innate politeness did not quite desert him. The future landscape of India, he fears, will consist of one-half California and one-half sub-Saharan. One is tempted to have his statement slightly amended: the India of tomorrow would be only one-tenth California, nine-tenths would be sub-Saharan; we might then slip down to the status of being one of the poorest five amongst member-countries of the UN.

This column has to conclude with a lament. The country is yet to get rid of its colonial hangover. The sort of comments Amartya Sen has made has, in fact, been made, perhaps using a different terminology, by humbler economists resident in the land. They could be, and have been, ignored. Amartya Sen cannot be, because of the global regard and attention he commands. He, however, visits the country only occasionally. One remark by him during one such cursory trip is unlikely to change the order of things. How much one wishes that men like him would return home on a permanent basis and make an everyday nuisance of themselves.

elcome to send copies of their books to *The Hindu* for review. While every effort will be of the books under "New Arrivals", the decision to review a book rests entirely with the newspaper. It will not be acknowledged in response to enquiries.

## BOOK REVIEW

# Prospects for convergence

Examines the areas of comprehensive security and convergence between India and the ASEAN

P. S. Suryanarayana

South East Asia has, in India's foreign policy perceptions, evolved from an enticing new frontier of economic cooperation in the early 1990s to a sphere of new possibilities for security convergence in the 21st Century. And, when security is defined as a comprehensive vision of it, inclusive of the vistas of enhanced economic cooperation between India and Southeast Asia, there is no real loss for both sides even as new gains could be sought by either of them.

Surely, though, this is not how South Block portrays its 'Look East' policy under Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who served as the Finance Minister under P. V. Narasimha Rao, who fashioned this definitive approach in India's foreign policy in the early 1990s.

South Block insiders have not yet publicly articulated the theme of a 'security convergence' involving India and Southeast Asia. It is indeed refreshing, therefore, that Sudhir Devare, a South Block insider of yesteryear, should have now envisioned the prospects of such a convergence. And, doing so in a highly readable style, he has suggested 'cooperative security' as the means that India and the 10-member Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) could adopt to make the vision a reality.

### Cooperative security

Devare's meticulous thesis, and it is no less than that, is founded on the premise that security-related cooperation between India and the ASEAN is essential for peace, stability, and prosperity of the wider Asia-Pacific region. His basic argument

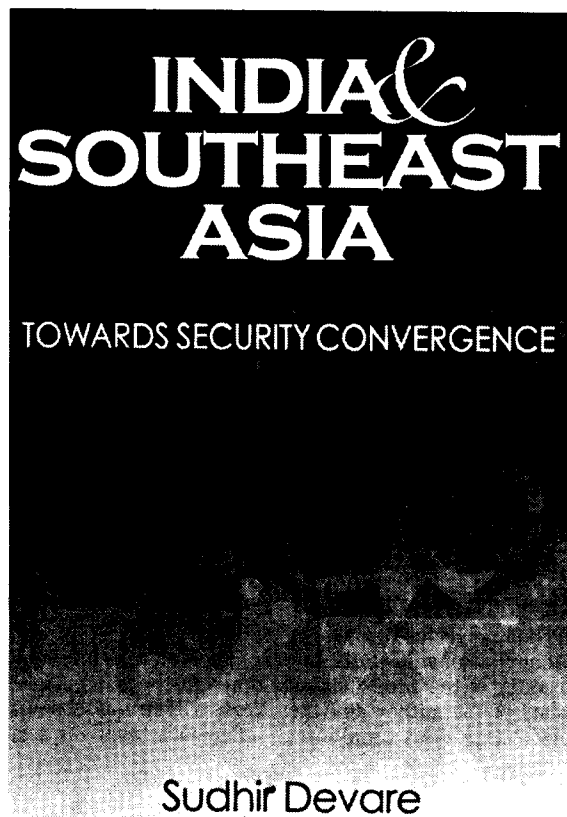
of this magnitude is quite unexceptionable, given three factors which the international affairs specialists cannot miss; the new attempts by the U.S. at smart-diplomacy and smarter military strategies to improve its sway across this region, China's current economic and political ascendancy as a phenomenon, and the hopes and expectations of ASEAN leaders that China and India, no less an emerging major power, will engage each other with a high degree of enlightened neighbourliness and self-interest that could benefit the entire region and not just themselves.

Also relevant to the author's fine presentation are a geographical reality and a conceptual framework. India and Southeast Asia are two distinctive but integral parts of the Asia-Pacific geopolitical theatre. Not only that. The two sides, which have had a long tradition of a conflict-free relationship, are seen by the author to be in a position to think of cooperation across a wide spectrum of security-related issues. 'Comprehensive security', in his view, transcends the narrow conventional wisdom about cooperation of the military kind.

### Linkages

He shines the spotlight on such other aspects, too, as dynamic economic linkages and the increasingly articulated concept of human security as a paradigm of inter-state cooperation in such areas as public health issues as also people-to-people cultural and social exchanges.

Devare's ambitious framework of analysis includes, in particular, ideas on economic cooperation and integration as the 'building blocks of security' that India and the ASEAN can



**INDIA & SOUTHEAST ASIA - Towards Security Convergence:** Sudhir Devare; Pub. in India by Capital Publishing Company, 7/28, Mahavir Street, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi-110002. Rs. 595.

usefully consider and construct. On a different but related plane, he has sought to open a new debate on the role that the Indian Diaspora across Southeast Asia could possibly play in keeping the two sides harmoniously engaged. In this context, attention has been drawn to India's steadfast adherence to democracy at home and the empirical reality that New Delhi has seldom used democracy as a factor in its foreign policy. Significantly, the author believes that India's democratic system itself may therefore be viewed with a feel-

ing of security by Southeast Asian societies. There remains considerable scope for further discussion by the author and others over the sub-text of economic cooperation as a 'building block of security' and Indian democracy as a system that could serve as a confidence-building dynamic in New Delhi's interactions with the ASEAN and others.

What is in fact significant, in spite of the room that exists for a further study of these two sub-themes, is that Devare has made a bold introductory move to en-

large the scope of security as an aspect of inter-state dialogue and action.

### Maritime cooperation

Two other areas of discussion also define the book as a scholarly venture by a former diplomat who retired as Secretary (East) in India's Ministry of External Affairs. It is relatively easy to comprehend the relevance of the subject relating to prospects for maritime cooperation between India and the ASEAN (as also others). The importance of security along the Straits of Malacca in the Southeast Asian theatre and across the Indian Ocean in a global context cannot be exaggerated.

It is insightful of Devare to have brought into focus Myanmar as a challenging frontier in security-related cooperation between India and the ASEAN. He advocates a pan-Asian approach as different from the western perspective to the problems of stability in Myanmar over the democracy dilemma that its military rulers have brought upon themselves. Myanmar's location as a land-link between India, on one side, and the ASEAN as also China, on the other, has tempted the author to conceive of this challenging frontier. And, he has the right credentials to explore this challenge.

With a non-ideological approach and a passion for India's 'Look East' policy, Devare has done well to write a book that could even be considered as a text for students of international relations.

It will be useful for the general readers as well, and it deserves the ASEAN Secretary General Ong Keng Yong's commendation and the sponsorship by the Singapore-based Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

### TAMIL

#### Saiva hagiology

V. Gnanasundaram

**NAVALAR KON NAMBI AARURAN** (Sundarar): Vidwan M. Sivagurunatha Pillai; Thiruvarasu Puthaka Nilayam, 23, Deenadayalu Street, T. Nagar, Chennai-600017. Rs. 100.

THIS BOOK is a documentation of one of the three Saiva saints namely Sundarar or Nambi Aruran based on the Periya Puranam. The book's main focus is the presentation of the 11 pilgrimages undertaken by Nambi Aruran. His pilgrimage includes 84 holy centres in different parts of the then Chola Kingdom, Malai Nadu, Nadu Nadu and Tondai Nadu and Mount Kailash. The kind of Pathigam (the 10 verses) he composed on each of the presiding deities of the holy places he visited, the opening line of the verse and the prescribed tune and time set for the verse are given in tabular columns for reference. The route followed for the 11 pilgrimages are accounted in 17 maps.

The rest of the book deals with anecdotes in his life, his previous birth and Lord Siva's assuming human form to grace Nambi Aruran. The author has given a new philosophical meaning for the Tamil usage 'Yathiraikku Muvar' which refers to three Saiva saints namely Gnanasambandar, Sundarar (Nambi Aruran) and Navukkarasar. The fixing of the date of Nambi Aruran as 790-610 B.C. for which the author's knowledge of astrology appears to have helped is controversial and a subject matter for further research.

### KANNADA

#### Interpretation of the Ramayana

K. S. Parthasarathy

**NAMMELLARA SREERAMA:** Mathoor Krshnamurthi; M.P Birla Pratishthana, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Race Course Road, Bangalore-560001. Rs. 150.

THIS IS the book format of what was earlier serialised in *Mysooru Mitra*. One would recollect the time when Mathoor translated extempore the Tamil lectures on the Ramayana delivered by Thirukudanthai Andavan of the Srirangam Srimad Andavan Ashramam, in Bangalore, in 1963-64. This interpretation of the Ramayana was essentially traditional, highlighting the tenets of Saranagati (surrender). He later published these lectures in Kannada, which has gone in several editions. Why then another edition? Mathoor had the privilege of

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