

# Small arms big threat to national security

By Sudha Passi

NEW DELHI: A small gun in the hands of a criminal or a terrorist poses a greater threat to national security than nuclear stockpiles of a hostile neighbour, experts say.

Having gone nuclear to ward off external threats, India should now move fast to check the increasing use of sophisticated guns and weapons by terrorists and criminals at home, they say.

While a nuclear weapon is an insurance against future, the threat from small arms like AK 47, sniper rifles, machine guns, pistols and the like is already there and is tearing the country apart, says Ved Marwah, former police commissioner of Delhi and advisor to Jammu and Kashmir governor.

More people have died in the low intensity conflicts in insurgency ridden areas than in all the wars the country has fought since independence, says Marwah suggesting that enforcement of arms act, which restricts possession of weapons "leaves much to be desired."

According to an official report, in Jammu and Kashmir alone nearly 4,000 people have died and 9,000 injured in militancy while the army has seized more than 20,000 small arms of various hues in the last eight years.

The induction of AK-47 in the late 80s first through terrorists and then criminals has changed the pattern of violence in India, says KPS Gill, retd director general of state police, noting that "there should be stringent laws to deal with organised gangs."

Gill says there's no substitute to effective policing and the country's forces are doing a good job in recovering small arms but Tara Kartha, a research associate at Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) rues that India's participation in international efforts aimed at curbing the menace is negligible.

As countries like UK and in the European Union are slowly harmonising their laws to prevent cross border terrorism, India should also join hands internationally first at a regional level at the global level to nab terrorists and organised criminals working against it, suggests Kartha.

The only Indian effort worth mention is the SAARC law on terrorism, wherein the South Asian nation states had promised not to support insurgency against neighbours on their soil and hand over the accused to the affected country.

The law, with the exception of Pakistan that describes its

action in Kashmir as "bleeding (India) by a thousand cuts," has been welcomed by all the member nations, she notes.

According to Kartha many South East Asian nations, notably Indonesia, are having problems controlling small arms in the hands of dissidents and looking towards having pacts at the regional level.

Given that insurgents in the northeast are drawing strength from that region, it would be beneficial for India to harmonise its arms laws with those countries.

"It's a CBM (confidence building measure) for them and good diplomacy for us too and it helps in that our terrorists won't get safe havens there," asserts Kartha.

With the evolution in information technology and great strides in communication, it has become easier for ganglords to subvert peace and security from other countries, says Marwah stressing that India should bring the issue of cross border terrorism high on the international agenda.

Says Marwah: nuclear weapons, conventional wars are destructive and expensive for a country, even the US but countries have not changed their expansionist designs, they have only changed their

strategy and moved towards subverting other nations by inducting small arms, which are cost-effective, easy to operate and have very low rate of obsolescence.

In addition to specific designs by enemy countries that promote the proliferation of small arms in targeted nations, which Kartha refers to as the grey market, there is a huge black market with huge profits for these arms.

Proliferation of small arms in the last two decades has been a worldwide phenomenon and any state which is on the border of a conflict invariably ends up as a conduit for such arms and a victim of it, notes Kartha citing Pakistan's port city of Karachi.

Kartha who has done extensive research on the topic, attributes the demand for small arms to pockets of discontent, misgovernance, politician-criminal nexus as also the waning of gold and silver as items fetching high currency.

Today there are 40 to 50 institutions in the world that are grappling with the problem of small arms and the danger involved when they fall into the hands of non-state actors.

-PTI



Threat from small arms like AK 47, sniper rifles, machine guns, pistols and the like are more likely to tear the country apart than nuclear stockpiles.

## Indo-Pak trade hostage to political acrimony

NEW DELHI: Despite little success of the Indo-Pak dialogue, bilateral trade has grown steadily nearly seven times in as many years, but observers say sky is the limit if politics is not mixed with business.

From a mere Rs 100 crore in '91, bilateral trade has grown to nearly Rs 676.37 crore last year. But the level of annual official trade is only one fifth of the volume of clandestine trade which totals around US dollars two billion. Were it legalised, Islamabad alone would earn at least USD 60 million by way of revenue.

Even as some Indian strategists point that easing trade barriers for Pakistan will lead to a lobby there insisting on doing business with India, Shahid Hafiz Kardar, a Pakistani trade expert says "political will is at the root of slow growth of bilateral trade."

Dr V R Panchmukhi, director, research information systems for non-aligned movement, says that advantages of the trade have to be recognised at the political leadership level.

"For that both governments should separate trade from strategic issues," says Panchmukhi citing China, which put aside its border disputes with all ASEAN countries to promote trade.

One of the biggest impediments is the environment of hostility and fears anchored in socio-political psyche through years of indoctrination through media and history books, notes Kardar, who has represented Pakistan at several business fora.

As it is the level of contact and degree of integration is low. "Constraints," observes Kardar, have been rendered more formidable due to poor support to intensification of trade and travel restrictions.

"Tangible steps like legalising border trade and easing travel restrictions for business delegations will help a great deal... but administrative set up and styles of embassies dis-

courage flows of intra-region visitors," he says.

Contrary to popular Indian perception that there is a business lobby in Pakistan that fears opening up would sound death knell for the domestic manufacturing sector, economists and businessmen understand that there is immense profit in collaboration, says Kardar.

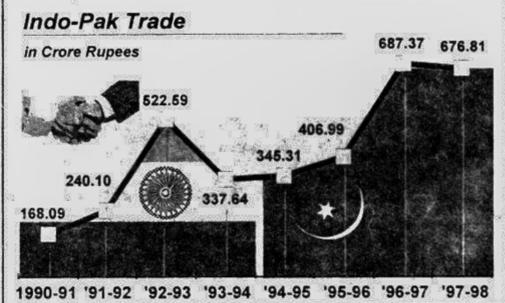
Indeed, Pakistan is the third largest consumer of tea in the world but 60 per cent of it comes

from Kenya. Had Pakistan sourced all its consumption from Sri Lanka and India, it would have saved a whopping USD 110 million annually in the process.

And it's not as if Pakistani goods would stand no competition here. The adverse balance of trade in favour of Islamabad last year only shows how sweet Pakistani sugar can be for Indians, not to mention the onions that India can bank upon during times of shortage.

Besides, the commodities there's a host of domestic industries, specially textiles and auto spares which have a big market in India, notes Kardar.

According to a study by the federation of Indian chambers of commerce and industry, Pak-



Indian steel, but there shouldn't be place for uncompetitive industries which are fleeing the consumer, he argues vehemently.

Even as experts are divided on the outcome of recently concluded second phase of composite bilateral dialogue, FICCI spokesperson Joseph Thatchil observes that the talks had yielded some ground on the power, telecom and railways cooperation front.

The two countries had agreed on a framework to work out modalities of cooperation, says Thatchil, adding "Indo-Pak dialogue needs to discern rhetoric from actualities."

With dogmatic and conservative forces in both countries, feeding off each other and pushing the neighbours into tit-for-tat nuclear tests — sparking off a nuclear arms race — the Forum's role as peace-builder is vital, members feel.

Pakistan's leading rights campaigner I A Rehman who is co-chair of the Forum said the "task of the Pakistani chapter lies in (controlling) Pakistan and that of the Indian chapter in India."

Peshawar could not have been a more appropriate venue for the first meeting of people from the two countries after the May nuclear muscle-flexing.

In the years before martial law, a strong tradition of secularism had existed here. Its independence leader Khan Abdul Gafur Khan was very close to Mahatma Gandhi and was in fact revered as the "frontier Gandhi" for his non-violent and secular politics.

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## Pacificists find a way out

By Rita Manchanda

PESHAWAR, Pakistan: Only two weeks after their governments had concluded futile talks to break the deadlock between India and Pakistan, the people of both countries, at a meeting in this frontier town, resolved to find a way out.

The 'Fourth Joint Convention of the Pak-India Forum for Peace and Democracy' concluded on Monday in Peshawar, near the Afghanistan border, with some 300-odd delegates renewing pledges to scale the walls of hatred between their countries.

Since the idea was first floated in Lahore in 1995, the Forum has provided an opportunity for people in both countries to meet and discuss their common problems.

It has built a network of people and organisations — environmentalists, women's groups, trade unionists, human rights activists, peace activists, academics and professionals — committed to cross border peace and democracy.

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One of his followers, Member of Parliament Latif Afridi, who represents the Tribal Khyber Agency and rarely gets

heard in a parliament-dominated by Sind and Punjab lawmakers, welcomed the Forum's members to Peshawar.

Both countries are bound by a shared history. A journey to the Peshawar valley, brought alive the common heritage of the Gandhara-Buddhist culture. The emphasis was on the common historical linkage with Central Asia, a political counterpoint to contemporary Pakistan's attempt to forge an Arab identity.

Viewing the past against the present — the busy rewriting of history texts by Hindu fundamentalists and the political Islamic nationalist agenda of Pakistan's government — delegates from both sides denounced the deliberate distortions which incalculated intolerance.

Earlier the Forum's Delhi and Lahore conventions had shown the courage to take a common position on bitterly disputed Kashmir, to reject the stand that it was a mere territorial fight.

In Peshawar, there was a strengthened appeal for a democratic and non-insurgent solution which is acceptable to peoples living on both sides of the "Line of control," as the border is called.

An impassioned plea about the sufferings of the people of Kashmir by Ved Bhasin, editor of 'Kashmir Times' published from Jammu, cut through the cliché of Kashmir being only territorial dispute and the proxy war.

As a result the Forum demanded that the Indian government pull back its troops from civilian areas and that the Pakistan government make a determined effort to stop the armed activities of the militants. This must be done, it said, to make international mediation unnecessary.

The Forum urged the two governments to sign a peace treaty, even though governments on both sides have shown an inability to rise above competitive posturing on their inflexible positions on Kashmir.

-IPS

## Thrive for peace should dictate Sino-Indian ties

NEW DELHI: It is in the interest of both India and China to make peace despite a serious setback in Sino-Indian relations after New Delhi cited China as the prime reason for its nuclear tests in May, China watchers suggest, reports PTI.

Prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's letter to president Clinton alluding to the Chinese threatened its alleged aid to Pakistan's nuclear programme as also defence minister George Fernandes' earlier description of "China as enemy number one" has brought a chill in Sino-Indian relations, they note.

But for all the political rhetoric that resulted in the deterioration of the ties, Prof Shen Dingli, Dy Director of Centre for American Studies in Fudan University here, says that India and China should deal with each other more pragmatically.

He agrees that security among two neighbours can be best promoted in an atmosphere of mutual respect. China has bigger responsibility because of its size and being a nuclear weapon state, he notes but refuses to accept that India's programme was a reaction to that of China.

"I can understand that India has right to develop nuclear weapons but to say that China is a potential threat is questionable because China has never threatened India... that's what China finds offensive," said Prof Shen Dingli.

"We should explore how strongly and realistically we can address this issue," he said.

"India cannot afford to let its relations with China deteriorate — both economically and security wise... for China too in says Cheng Ruisheng, who was ambassador to India between 1991 and 1994, when the agreement to maintain peace and tranquillity along the border was signed.

"I'm still cautiously optimistic about it," Ruisheng, who is now Dy Director General, Chinese International Studies, said noting that Beijing and

South Asian countries had a common stated objective towards total elimination of nuclear weapons and were not party to any international military alliances.

While Ruisheng maintains that "China holds that the Indian tests were more political than military," Yan Xuetong, Director, Centre for Foreign Policy Studies says that "It is not a clever strategy on the part of BJP to use China as an excuse for mobilising support for its government."

"It will be difficult for India and China to improve bilateral relations if they (BJP) don't change their strategy," said Xuetong adding that Beijing would not (not) ally with any other country against New Delhi.

As an initial step towards rapprochement India, he said, should stop naming China as a threat.

Even though India has stated that its nukes were for self-defence and it would abide by no first use, Xuetong expressed doubts that New Delhi would accept such an agreement vis a vis China "because militarily weak countries don't offer such pacts."

According to Xuetong, China is committed to maintaining good relations with all its neighbours as it is concentrating on economic development.

Even as many an Indian hardliner points towards China's growing military capabilities and fear of being targeted by it, Xuetong argues that today capabilities have to be matched with intentions for ensuring security of nation states.

Observing that Soviet Union collapsed despite its military capability and nuclear weapons, Xuetong says it's equally important for a nation to reduce tensions with its neighbours to protect itself.

One has to emphasise on political intentions because it leads to more peaceful environment, he said noting that China is basing its security on this premise.

"If you have good neighbour-

ing who have no intention of settling disputes militarily, there's no problem," said Xuetong stressing that there was need to reduce potential border conflicts by talking with its neighbours.

Ambassador Ruisheng noted that the 1989 and 1993 agreement between India and China in recognising the line of control and maintaining peace and tranquillity along the border is almost a 'de facto' resolution of the problem.

With almost 90,000 km being claimed by both sides a de jure solution, says Ruisheng is impossible.

This point is seconded by an Indian diplomat here noting that such disputes can only be settled depending on the terms. The Sino-India border dispute remains so because India has not conceded to all their terms," he said.

He further contends that strengths of a country are decided not on intentions and utterances or assurances but on capabilities of a nation.

Commenting that at the official level it's business as usual after the tests, despite the political outbursts, he notes that there is an urgent need to initiate a public debate on Sino-Indian relations and the 'threat' issue in both the countries.

Li General (Retd) A N Vohra in Delhi said that real politik dictates that Sino-Indian relations should be bettered and "E should bear in mind the sensitivities of those people."

"We have to find a Modus Vivendi in improving our relations with China," says Gen Vohra suggesting that the joint working groups (JWG) on defence should be revived.

While Ruisheng notes that some amends were made at the meeting of Jaswant Singh with Chinese Vice Foreign Minister at the last Asean Regional Forum, experts here feel that both the countries might gradually move towards improving ties.

But it's going to take some time before it's hindi chini bhai bhai again at the official level.

-Sudha Passi from PTI

## Special Supplement 71st Birthday Anniversary of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej and National Day of Thailand

### Royal Flood Management Initiatives

FLOODING in Thailand is caused by many factors. Located in the monsoon belt, Thailand receives frequent and heavy rain. Before Bangkok was built up into a modern area filled with people, roads, and buildings, it was full of waterways, streams, swamps, and ricefields. In their absence, Bangkok is facing unavoidable flood problems. Other areas of Thailand face similar difficulties.

His Majesty the King has shown great concern for flooding in regions outside of Bangkok. To meet these flooding problems, His Majesty has suggested various methodologies be utilized according to local conditions. His Majesty suggests also that these methodologies be made to conform with the availability of government officials and budgetary constraints.

#### Solving Flood Problems in Different Areas

1. Dike construction. In applying this ancient practice to modern flood protection, the dikes should be built to a size suitable for the job and at an appropriate distance from the bank of the canals. This will prevent water overflowing the banks from undermining the dikes and can be carried out at the Muno and Pileng Projects in

#### Narathiwat Province.

2. Water diversion ditches. These can be used to divert all or part of the floodwaters. Building these ditches or new canals can be linked with existing waterways so that floodwaters are drained away. Alternatively, these diversion ditches can be linked directly to the sea. Activities under this project are being carried out by the Royal Irrigation Department to prevent Kolok River water from

damaging rice fields, as happens to tens of thousands of rai annually. Building the Muno canal, for example, was of much help.

3. Watercourse Improvement. This enables floodwaters to drain out effectively or the water to flow more rapidly. This method of flood prevention is carried out as follows: — excavate the canal bed to make water flow quicker — smooth the banks to reduce obstacles to water flow — remove weeds, water hyacinth, and other objects that impede water flow — if a waterway has many curves, dig new straight courses for water to flow more efficiently

and swallow the banana whole and keep it in his cheek. A monkey can keep almost an entire bunch of bananas inside its cheeks. Only later will the monkey take the bananas out, chew and swallow them."

#### Kaem Ling Projects

1. Divert water from the north of Bangkok by north-south waterways to be stored in large canals near the sea, including the Chai Tha-le canal east of the Chao Phraya River. This canal will be filled with water like a Kaem Ling at times of high water.

The Chai Tha-le canal that runs close to the seashore in Samut Prakan, serves as the water storage reservoir. Swampy areas and vacant land were examined for use as additional reservoirs. Waterways running from north to south, such as the Phra-ong Chaiyanuchit, Bang Pla, Dan, Bang Ping, Tamru, and Chai Tha-le canals are used for draining water out of the reservoirs.

2. On the western side of the Chao Phraya River, the Kaem Ling project comprises parts of Ang Thong, Ayutthaya, Pathum Thani, Nakhon Pathom, and Samut Sakhon Provinces as well as Bangkok. Water is drained through the Mahachai-Sanam Chai canal and the Tha Chin River to enter the sea in Samut Sakhon Province.

and drinking water. The Middle Tha Chin Kaem Ling Project needs the following three projects in place to work effectively:

- 1. MIDDLE THA CHIN KAEM LING PROJECT WITH THESE COMPONENTS
  - watergates to seal off the Tha Chin River
  - mobile aquatic watergates
  - earthen banks to close old waterways
  - fish ladders
  - large pumping stations
- 2. MAHACHAI-SANAM CHAI CANAL KAEM LING PROJECT—
  - Sahakon Sai 3 Canal Watertgate
  - Chek Canal Watertgate
  - Khok Kham Canal Watertgate
  - Saem Dam Tai Canal Watertgate

### Concepts and Theories of His Majesty the King on Development

Continued from page 9 cleaner river water. This easy harnessing of the natural flow of water is a "conservation-oriented management of a resource combined with simple development," a management method in harmony with nature.

He spoke on the matter, saying "public parks are regarded as lungs while 'Bueng Makkasan' (Bueng = small lake) is comparable to kidneys, cleansing the city's blood. If they work poorly, we die. This principle should be understood." As Bangkok's natural kidneys, Makkasan lake has efficiently performed its duty of reducing water pollution in Bangkok and provides a site for studying environmental problems, vocational promotion, and recycling wastes.

will reduce water pollution in the Bangkok Metropolis and other major cities of Central Thailand and will yield many indirect benefits. His Majesty's concern is expressed in his observation that: "If we delay action, we will have to do without water, this land will become a desert, and we will have nowhere to migrate. Two reservoirs, one on the Pa Sak River and the other on the Nakhon Nayok River, will together store enough water for drinking and other uses in Bangkok and nearby areas in the central plain of Thailand."

The need for water retention facilities to store water for use in the dry season and to control wet-season flooding was perceived from the following facts: Of the average annual 2,400 million cubic metre runoff of the Pa Sak River, 1,600 cubic metres is the runoff in the rainy-season months of September and October alone. Sadly, however, owing to the lack of an adequate water-retention system, this water all drains into the sea. Much good would come if it could be stored for agriculture, drinking, household and other uses in the

dry season. Reservoirs would also reduce damage caused by the seasonal flooding.

His Majesty the King has often stressed the importance of this project, for its early implementation would quickly mitigate the problems and crises Thailand faces from flooding and drought.

Southern Thailand also suffers from water problems, such as flooding, acidic water, and salinization which reduce agricultural yields. Particular difficulties are faced in areas around or in the vicinity of peat swamps such as those in the Pak Phanang River basin and the Bang Nara River basin. Here His Majesty recommended setting up systems that separate water of '3 tastes', i.e. a system to prevent acidic swamp water (taste 1) from contaminating agricultural lands, a system to forestall the encroachment of salt water (taste 2), and a system to convey fresh water (taste 3) for agriculture, drinking and household needs. The methods His Majesty has devised to separate these three types of waters on the same piece of land testify to his ingenuity.

Building reservoirs is an important component of projects to control flooding during times when there is ample water. These can keep the water out of areas frequently inundated by heavy flooding. Many such reservoirs are being built under this Royal Initiative in such places as:

- Pa Sak Watershed Development Project
- Pak Phanang Watershed Development Project
- Upper Nakhon Nayok Watershed Development Project

This area will receive and store water flowing southward. Water will drain from here into the Gulf of Thailand according to the tidal cycle. Drainage will be powered by gravity in coordination with occasional pumping. Existing canals are used to drain the water during the rainy season while preventing the incursion of salt water through rivers and canals and into agricultural areas. In addition, the watergates will store freshwater to the north for use in various ways.

3. SUNAK-HON CANAL KAEM LING PROJECT consists of:

- Watertgate and Related Structures to close the Sunak Hon Canal
- Pumping Station to remove water from the Sunak Hon Canal

The Kaem Ling Project is a vision of new ways to help the Thai people avoid suffering and enjoy a happy life. His Majesty had this to say about this Royal initiative to control flooding.

"We have been heading in the right direction. Please help hurry to improve the project in the future because this Kaem Ling Project will help many areas."

Based on these principles, the Royally-initiated project then sought to use existing swamps or vacant land as the area for the reservoirs. Drainage out of the reservoirs should be as appropriate to each locality. The results of this search were two-fold:

- 1. The Kaem Ling project east of the Chao Phraya River is carried out in Saraburi, Ayutthaya, Pathum Thani, and Nonthaburi provinces as well as in Bangkok. In this project,

Identify sites to serve as storage reservoirs and divert water into them.

Build waterways leading to the water storage reservoirs.

Drain water out of these reservoirs continually.

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