

INDO-PAK

A delicate moment

C. RAJA MOHAN

PAKISTAN'S MOVES this week against the terrorist groups operating on its soil are likely to decisively shape the evolution of the current crisis between the two subcontinental rivals.

The international community which has made specific demands on Pakistan at the end of last week will closely watch in the coming days the response from General Pervez Musharraf.

Last Friday, the American and British envoys had called on Pakistan to act decisively against the militant groups. While no details are available, the Anglo-American demarches delivered to the Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdul Sattar, are believed to be quite clear cut.

If Gen. Musharraf takes the opportunity presented by the attack on the Indian Parliament on December 13 to cleanse his nation of the sources of terrorism, relations between India and Pakistan can take a distinctively positive turn.

Such steps will help Pakistan rid its social fabric of extremist groups, facilitating its transformation into a genuinely moderate Islamic State and letting it prosper in cooperation with its neighbours.

However, if the Pakistan President fudges the issue, India will have to consider additional moves against Pakistan, including further downgrading of diplomatic relations, the cancellation of over flight rights, and scaling down of economic relations.

If the Pakistani response remains negative, India will have to examine non-diplomatic options. India is in no position to assume today that America will be able to persuade Gen. Musharraf to change Pakistan's ways on Kashmir.

And to maintain the credibility of its implicit threat to use force, India has to press ahead with its mobilisation of military forces. If and when the diplomatic effort is seen as reaching a dead-end, India will have no choice but to turn to the military option.

India is also taking into account the possibility that Gen. Musharraf might initiate some cosmetic measures against these groups without really doing anything to break their back.

It is also possible that he will try and hedge an offer to move against terrorist groups with a number of conditions or seek quid pro quos from New Delhi.



Such moves, he might hope, will ease the pressure from the United States to do something and put the ball back in the Indian court without changing anything on the ground.

India would want to know if the American demands on Pakistan are simply "pro-forma" or linked seriously to the objective of destroying terrorist groups operating in Pakistan, whose track record was so well-known.

For India, which has sought strong action from Pakistan against terrorist groups, the results from Gen. Musharraf's moves must be transparent and be able to convince India of a fundamental change of attitude in Islamabad.

One theme which has run through American statements with some consistency since the attacks on Indian Parliament is that groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad are working to undermine Gen. Musharraf in Pakistan as well as destabilise Indo-Pak relations.

That approach in Washington gives considerable benefit of doubt to Gen. Musharraf by suggesting he is as much a victim of terrorism as India is.

But, New Delhi is in no position to cut so much slack for Gen. Musharraf, unless he moves vigorously against terrorism emanating from Pakistan.

Courtesy: The Hindu of India.

The need for restraint

DR IJAZ AHSAN

WHETHER THE present Indo-Pak stand-off results in war or not, one thing is certain: India means business. They have recalled their ambassador, they are closing the border to road, rail and air traffic from the 1st of January, they have threatened to prohibit overflight of Pakistani civilian planes over their airspace. More importantly, they have threatened to unilaterally scrap the Indus Basin Treaty. This solemn international agreement of the 1960's gave the rights over the waters of our eastern rivers namely Sutlej, Beas and Ravi to India, and of the western rivers Chenab and Jhelum to us.

India has blamed the Lashkar-e-Tayyaba and Jaish-e-Mohammad for the attack on its parliament. The Lashkar has denied responsibility. However, for the last many years these Lashkars have been emitting barhaks. They have been saying that Kashmir is only a "trailer", and that their real target is India. They said they would hoist their flag on Delhi's Red Fort, and in due course they actually attacked the Fort. They then threatened they would attack the Indian Prime Minister's residence. The attack on the parliament may have been carried out by India's own agencies to implicate Pakistan. But if India now accuses the Lashkars and succeeds in convincing the international community about it, surely the Lashkars' belligerent statements of the past are to blame for the situation. At the same time the question is: even if the Lashkar succeeded in attacking the Red Fort, iss ka Bharat ki sehat pe kia asar parha? The only thing it did was to provide the Indians with ammunition in their propaganda war against Pakistan.

In the past our governments have allowed the Lashkars too much freedom both in their actions as well as in the threats they banded about. They should really have been disciplined at that time and sternly told that they could not be allowed to hurl such threats at a sovereign country. The Lashkars should be outlawed and their leaders hauled up, not just because India wants it but in order that they can be restrained from doing further damage to our interests. President Musharraf has defined our four main interests as the country's security, its economy, our nuclear assets and the Kashmir cause. The Lashkars have harmed all these causes by their actions. We should try and see whether allowing them to operate freely is really in our interest. In any case no one except the army and the law enforcing agencies should be allowed to bear arms and form their own private

militias. For the same reason the tribal areas should be abolished as an anomaly and a hideout for criminals.

As far as the Kashmir cause is concerned, we should learn from the Arab countries. They provide the Palestinians all moral and diplomatic support. However, they do not send their Lashkars to fight side by side with them. You might say that it is heartless. But then it is a cruel world. The first and foremost concern of any country should be its own safety and security. Before the attack on parliament India had invited APHC for talks, and something might have come of it. The attack has put paid to all that kind of activity. If the Indians have not staged the attack themselves, the Lashkars could have done it to prevent any progress through talks.

The situation in Kashmir is as it was in Bangladesh, only in reverse. If we Pakistanis have the means we should do what the Indians did in East Pakistan. They did not call for UN resolutions for her independence. They prepared the world public opinion against Pakistan citing the army's atrocities but saying nothing about Mukti Bahini's massacres. They trained the latter as guerrillas in full view of the world. They finally invaded and occupied East Pakistan and handed it over to the Bengalis to make their Bangladesh. They assaulted and dismembered a sovereign country. Here, in contrast, Kashmir is a disputed territory. If we have the wherewithal we should do exactly as the Indians did. If the world objects, we can say: this is a disputed territory. East Pakistan was not even a disputed area, yet you did not object then. However, and this is the important part, if we do not have the means because India is bigger and stronger, we should tread carefully. We should not bite more than we can chew because it can stick in our throat. We should not endanger Pakistan for the sake of Kashmir. Anyone who thinks we can bluff our way because of our nuclear assets should realise that actually using them will be the ultimate madness. If we vaporise Delhi and Bombay they can do the same to Karachi and Lahore. We would have killed a crore of their citizens for a crore of ours. Has anyone ever considered what a crore deaths mean? So, we should steer the ship of state out of the rough waters with cool nerves with the idea to live and let live.

As for India, Pakistan has offered to cooperate in tracing the terrorists. India should accept the offer. The alternative of a war will further impoverish the two countries, where most of the world's dirt pool live.

Courtesy: The Nation of Pakistan.

SRI LANKA

Enroute to another betrayal?

S. L. GUNASEKARA

ACEASEFIRE is now in operation: checkpoints have been removed; roads which were closed for security reasons have been opened, and the Prime Minister has announced that all restrictions on the movement of goods to 'uncleared' areas will be removed on the 15th January. With all these bounteous gifts being given to Prabhakaran, one is constrained to wonder whether the ship with a cargo of arms for Prabhakaran which was recently reported to be heading for Sri Lanka in international waters will be allowed to berth at the Port of Colombo or Trincomalee and the LTTE allowed to 'clear' their 'goods' es another 'gesture of goodwill'!!!

When President Premadasa removed restrictions on the transport of goods to 'uncleared' areas, large quantities of penlite batteries and cement were promptly transported to those parts of the Country, and when the charade of 'Peace' Talks which were then going on were predictably abrogated by the LTTE, well over a thousand members of our security forces and poor residents of Sinhalese and Moor villages within and around the boundaries of the Northern and Eastern Provinces lost their limbs to the small but deadly home-made anti-personnel mines called 'Johnny Mines' which were manufactured with those penlite batteries and liberally planted by the LTTE during those talks. The cement, of course, was used to build bunkers to protect the Tiger Terrorists from our troops.

Will our governments never learn? President Jayawardene and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi were betrayed by the LTTE in 1987; President Premadasa did not learn from that betrayal and trusted the LTTE soon after assuming power in 1989 and was, in turn, betrayed by the LTTE in 1990; President Kumaratunga did not learn from the betrayals of President Jayawardene, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and President Premadasa and trusted the LTTE once more upon assuming power in 1994: she was betrayed by the LTTE in 1994, and now Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe has chosen to ignore the successive betrayals of

President Jayawardene, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, President Premadasa and President Kumaratunga and has reposed childlike trust in the LTTE again!!!

It is truly difficult to believe how the supposedly responsible and mature set of citizens who constitute our Government can be so wholly naive and ignore the overwhelming evidence beginning with the so called "Thimphu principles" which not only the Tigers but also their lickspittle lackeys now called the Tamil National Alliance projected and continue to project as being "non-negotiable principles", and the conduct and utterances of the LTTE and their lackeys after the enunciation of those so called 'principles' in 1985, which make patently evident the fact that neither the LTTE nor their lackeys will settle for anything less than a separate state or what they term 'a viable alternative to a separate state', which in simple language means a separate state in all but name for a start, and a totally separate state thereafter.

This suicidal conduct of the UNF is irreconcilable with some of its recent policy statements and declarations of intent. At the opening of Parliament, the Prime Minister announced that the Government was committed to strengthening the powers of Parliament. If that was a truthful statement how can the Government even dream of engaging in an exercise of the further devolution of legislative and executive power? - for such devolution must necessarily erode such powers as Parliament now has. The Government has also announced that it will bring to book the murderers of Udathalawinna and that the conduct of the only survivor of the murderous Politburo of the JVP, Somawansa Amarasinghe, would be probed to level charges against him for the atrocities committed by the JVP during their reign of terror in the 1988-1990 period. Horrendous though the murders at Udathalawinna and the crimes of the JVP were, they are as nothing when compared to the atrocities committed by the LTTE which include the wholesale slaughter of over 600 policemen who surrendered to them and the inhuman butchery of even sleeping infants at

Gonagala. Indeed when compared to Prabhakaran and the LTTE, the murderers of Udathalawinna and Somawansa Amarasinghe would be as pure and as clean as Mother Theresa! What then is the basis on which the Government is intent on prosecuting lesser criminals while negotiating with the vilest of criminals this Country has ever seen with a view to vesting political power in them??

The vast majority of those who voted for the UNF did not do so because of the contents of its manifesto but simply because they were so sick, tired and disgusted with the unprecedented incompetence, bungling, corruption, dishonesty and destruction of all standards under the Government of the People's Alliance [for which state of affairs, the 'born again' devotees of Ranil Wickremesinghe like S.B.Dissanayake and G.L.Peirais are as much to blame as Chandrika Kumaratunge, Anuruddha Ratwatte and Mangala Samarawera] that they simply desired to rid the Country of the pestilence that that Government had become. They voted for the UNF despite the PA propaganda that the UNF had a pact with the LTTE because they believed that while the UNF may divide the Country if elected to power, there would be no Country left to divide if the People's Alliance was re-elected to power. Thus, on no account can the victory of the UNF be deemed to be a mandate to follow a course of action which would lead to National suicide.

The Sinhala Jathika Sangamaya appeals to the Government to draw back from the path to National suicide upon which it has now begun to tread. If the Government stubbornly insists on following that path, the questions that arise for consideration will not be whether the proposed talks will fail; or whether the LTTE will break the ceasefire; or whether there will be a bloodbath; but when the talks fail; when the LTTE will break the ceasefire; when the bloodbath will follow; and how many will pay with their lives and limbs for the folly of the Government.

The author is the President, Sinhala Jathika Sangamaya, Sri Lanka. This piece first appeared in the Islander of Sri Lanka.

INDIA

Is war necessary?

SHAIL MAYARAM

THE SIGNS are ominous: the withdrawal of India's Ambassador to Pakistan, the cancellation of all leave for the armed forces, the movement on the Indo-Pakistan border. As we return from Nagaur to Jaipur we pass a series of heavily-laden Army trucks en route to the Rajasthan border. Friends return from Jaisalmer to report active movement of aircraft. This is clearly not part of what statist vocabulary euphemistically calls a "military exercise". The signs collectively read, war is imminent.

The instrumental use of religion, however, turned out to be a shaky pillar for the BJP to regain lost ground in Uttar Pradesh. Some of the allies of the ruling National Democratic Alliance are in any case constantly wary of the dominant partner revealing its true identity in wolf-in-sheep's-clothing fashion. The abrogation of the issues of Ayodhya and changing the status quo at the other temple-mosque sites have been the conditions of the political contract between the allies. Clearly, constructing a Rama temple could be pushed thus far and no further. At least not till a more comfortable majority in Parliament was attained by the BJP.

What could be other modes of creating a unified political community gripped by nationalism? The debate on history textbooks dominated our political stage for a brief moment.

Surely, histories are important. We do not need the intellectual history of the 20th century to tell us how important narratives are to the sense of self, how central histories are to the construction of collective identities.

The economy is in any case hardly in terrific shape, given the global recession. Had it been so, the ruling party might have expected electoral advantage. What other card remains then? That of national-security-at-stake. What else explains the fact that none of the available options has been considered to handle the issue of cross-border terrorism other than the military one? The American attack on Afghanistan and the so-called, self-proclaimed global coalition against terrorism in the post-September 11 scenario has, in any case, given an international legitimacy to unilateral military action. And security has been further spelt in the upper case after the December 13 attack on Parliament.

The modern nation-state claims for itself the right of exclusive and authoritative pronouncement on terrorism, security and war. Tribal and communitarian narratives of battle in pre-modern contexts often describe the consensual declaration of battle. Since the polity did not have a monopoly of the means of coercion, clan and other leaders who commanded armies of warriors had to be consulted first to ensure their participation in war. Ironically, it is in modern democracies that war making is the most secretive, non-

transparent, non-participatory and undemocratic.

Must not "we, the people of India" challenge the state's right to declare war and restate its monopoly over war making? The state's monopoly over history is also another issue that must be actively debated in the public sphere. Should the state have a right to authorise historical texts? Even as historians have been involved in a tug-of-war, the question is whether there should be an NCERT in the first place. The very institution of such a body makes it vulnerable to the reverberations of shifts in ruling ideologies.

The issues of historical pasts, real and claimed, and how to ensure that school children are not the victims of exclusivist ideologies will continue to be contested and debated. But war is a very real possibility for us here and now. It means countless, unnecessary deaths. It means also the diversion of our energies and resources from the goals of tackling suffering, deprivation and injustice.

For the last century we have let sections of the ruling classes in India and Pakistan make and freeze the border and rule on citizenship. Through this period both our countries have flowered into the quintessential nation-state. Like nation-states elsewhere in history, their identity is grounded in the creation of a demonaic other.

All of us have loved ones in our families and among friends who are part of militaries

on either side of the Indo-Pakistan border. The only ones who stand to benefit from war are those who hope for more votes in the wake of nationalist jingoism, the military-industrial complex and the hawks in India and Pakistan who have been urging aggressive postures over the last decade. The attack on Parliament was a dastardly one, symbolising a diabolic imagination. But the organisations involved in it are likely to survive and thrive in such a war. Indeed, such a war would validate their world view of a globe divided along religious lines.

Where are the citizen's groups, the organisations and people committed to strengthening people-to-people relations across South Asian borders, the movement for a nuclear free subcontinent and where is that most important network of women against war? In an era where organisations grounded in regional cooperation and the dilution of state sovereignty are making enormous headway, we ought to be working towards moves to strengthen SAARC or think about a proposals for an Indian Ocean panchayat involving countries around the ocean rim or even a South Asian university. Meanwhile, the mobilisation and muscle flexing on the border grows in intensity each hour. Unless the initiative is wrested from the state through counter-mobilisation, it might be too late.

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NEPAL

Emergency exit

BINOD BHATTARAI

ONE MONTH after the declaration of the state of emergency and an information blackout on the military's campaign against the Maoists, questions arise about an exit strategy. Constitutionally, the government needs to muster a two-thirds majority in parliament by midnight 25 February to extend the emergency by another three months, and after that parliament can decide to extend it for yet another six months. But till then, what? When are we going to know that we don't need the emergency anymore?

"Our constitution deliberately limits the duration of a state of emergency," Narahari Acharya of the Nepali Congress. Acharya said Tuesday at a panel discussion organised by Himal Khabarpatrika. Acharya maintained that the country was still under civilian rule. "An emergency does not mean martial law," he added, "the constitution does not allow that."

Speaking at the same panel, Krishna Khanal, professor of political science at Tribhuvan University, saw no visible presence today of civil authority. "We don't know how free we are to speak out about what we see, and we also don't see an exit from the emergency," he said. "There is danger of the government finding it more comfortable to work under an emergency, and larger parties also seeing their short-term interests secured by backing it."

There is confusion about the do's and don'ts of emergency regulations. The bottom line: who is calling the shots? Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba has repeatedly assured the public that the government will use emergency powers only against the Maoists, but the emergency automatically suspends civil rights including press freedoms. The Royal Nepal Army has requested media to get reports, commentary and

pictures on the war "fact-checked" before publication, while the government says there are no restrictions whatsoever. This week two journalists were picked up from their homes at night on unspecified charges, and released more than 12 hours later.

There are also reports of arrests in the districts, but the government hasn't divulged who have been taken in and where they are being held. The human rights organisation INSEC estimates as many as 1,300 people may be in custody. "We've not been able to verify the incident reports, or question eyewitnesses," Subodh Pyakurel of INSEC told us. "We don't have access."

Official tallies show more than 80 Maoists and security personnel killed after the emergency was declared on 26 November. This does not include the estimated 250 killed between 23-26 November in Dang and Salleri. So far, 24 Royal Nepal Army soldiers have been killed in action and another 58 wounded since the Maoist attacks in Dang. There is no independent verification of these casualties, or the numbers of wounded, from human rights groups or the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) which have no access to the front.

The independent Human Rights Commission tried to do some fact-finding on Monday by inviting the Home and Defence Secretary for a Q&A. The Commission was concerned about emergency medical equipment, hospitals in conflict zones which have rarely had doctors in the past, and the security and whereabouts of those arrested. "We were unable to get a satisfactory answer," a Commission member told us. Shanker Pokhrel of the UML's Rapti Zonal Committee, who is just back from Dang, is concerned about the reliability of official reports of deaths on the frontline. He asks: "How is such information going to affect the credibility of the state and democracy?"

Some critics say the media's credibility has already been compromised, and actions like the detention of the two editors this week will intimidate others. "This ultimately calls into question the credibility of the civil government," researcher Pratyoush Onta told the panel on Tuesday. Media commentator, CK Lal, was more worried about self-censorship in media and how this would undermine democracy.

The UML's Shanker Pokhrel is convinced it would be in the government's interest to let civil society function more independently. He told the forum on Tuesday: "I know of locals that have been killed in the offensives, some were even Congress supporters. In the villages people are frightened of being shot from the sky."

The other civil society concern is about the economic cost of the war, and the lack of transparency in procurements. "It is a national tragedy we're being forced to divert funds from development to armaments," said professor of political science Dhruva Kumar. He asked: "Can we afford this? How long can we fight the Maoists using the army?" Kumar was also concerned about the tendency for "rightist forces" wanting a greater say in government decisions in times of conflict. The military was planning major weapons upgrades even before the fighting began, and there is an added sense of urgency about it now.

The Nepali Congress' Narahari Acharya is sanguine that after the emergency is over, there will be an opportunity to take excesses to court. Trouble is, no one knows when that will be. However, there is one constitutional clause saying the king can cancel the emergency order at anytime while it is in effect.

By arrangement with the Nepali Times.

SAARC SUMMIT

A time to heal, not to kill...

Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury

THE NEXT summit of the SAARC leaders, which had been hanging in the balance for more than two years, now appears set to be staged in Kathmandu on January 4-6, 2002. Certain degree of uncertainty surrounding the event stemming from the tensions between rival South Asian neighbours - India and Pakistan - has been broadly put to rest by the prime minister of host country Nepal Sher Bahadur Deuba. Deuba said the summit is going to be held according to the schedule.

The out-going Secretary General of the regional forum with its secretariat in Kathmandu also confirmed during a visit to Dhaka the other day that the event is taking place belying some scepticism because of Indo-Pakistan problems. Still there can be some elements of uncertainty but barring developments of serious magnitude the event is unlikely to be postponed this time. True, SAARC has a history of summits being deferred at the last moment because of eruption of such problems that prevented unanimity over the conference of heads of government.

Nonetheless, we would like to believe that this time there would be no further delay to this much-awaited summit despite bilateral problems involving two main members of the grouping.

The decision of the SAARC "standing" committee made up by the foreign secretaries of the seven member-countries in Colombo nearly four months ago that the conference of their heads of government would be held late December or beginning of the New Year came as a shot in the arms of the 16-year-old South Asian Association for regional Cooperation.

Indeed, it was a good news for the forum which has not made any spectacular achievement since its inception in 1985 but has definitely come a long way in fostering economic and other form of cooperation among the member states. No speedy or remarkable progress in the activities of the SAARC is possible for the simple reason that the region suffers from resource constraints while political differences among the members often thwarting the kind of unity needed for solid economic progress through collective ventures is also a well-known factor. This situation notwithstanding, the gains so far made by the forum is not mean because it has covered several fields under the integrated programme of action (IPA) over the years covering varied areas like trade and commerce, education, sports, culture etc.

Certain major decisions for cooperation in bigger areas are on the anvil but could not be taken up as the next summit was expected to approve these measures. The delay in the hold-

ing the summit which was scheduled in November, 1999, has delivered a body blow to the SAARC because activities of the forum remained moribund during this period. Clearly, when there is no unanimity on such an issue like staging the summit as a fall-out of the political differences between two major countries - India and Pakistan - the forum is gripped by uncertainty and confusion.

Consequently, the assiduously nurtured regional grouping suffered big setbacks during the interregnum of the last summit and coming summit. While the routine work of the forum somehow continued under the aegis of the secretariat in the capital of Nepal, the SAARC lacked the necessary political thrust during the period. The meeting of the foreign secretaries in Colombo had cleared this undesirable hindrance. Obviously, this could not have been possible without the consent of India and Pakistan whose bitter bilateral ties stood on the way of holding the summit. These two countries can be complimented for their cooperation with the smaller nations in the grouping for helping remove the bottlenecks towards the conference of the heads of the government.

The Indo-Pakistan summit in "Agra" further created a positive climate for the SAARC summit since the multilateral event could not be held at leaders of two countries were not ready to meet

each other.

However, this good ambience too was reversed due to the Afghan situation and nose-diving of the Indo-Pakistan lies particularly after the attack on Indian parliament on December 13 which created a near-war condition along their borders. Going by the charter, SAARC has to take decision on the basis of unanimity. It can not discuss contentious bilateral issues that seek to bedevil ties among two member countries. Undoubtedly, these are good conditions to make the forum workable. For, consensus is important for such an organisation like SAARC for the reason that it has only seven members and nothing can move in the absence of unanimity. At the same time, the region is riven by bilateral disputes among members nations although main differences exists between India and Pakistan. As such, vexed issues have been kept out of the forum's purview. But it is necessary to see that the issue of lack of "unanimity" does not adversely affect the forum. Even if a nation does not hold similar view with others on an issue like the timing of the summit, adjustment of approaches is important so that others do not feel to be at odds because of discordant note of a member.

Arguably, a member may strike different views considering its own interest but it is imper-

ative to consider the overall interest of the forum when one belongs to such a grouping. It is a matter of common knowledge that Indo-Pakistan rivalry on the "Kargil" conflict and subsequent rise to power in Pakistan by its army chief caused the postponement of the SAARC summit in late 1999 as India wanted the event to be delayed.

The reason was that Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee was unwilling to meet Pakistan's military ruler General Pervez Musharraf at that stage. But slowly that situation improved through a series of small but good gestures leading to their first summit in "Agra".

The recent developments involving two countries came as a big setback to their ties. Both India and Pakistan took time in agreeing to the concept when Bangladesh floated it whereas smaller countries of the region readily accepted it considering the economic benefits through collective endeavour which is a common phenomenon these days in the form of regional cooperation. New Delhi and Islamabad are as enthusiastic as others in the forum once they gave their consent to the new regional grouping.

After all, all these countries have many things in common - poverty being the main enemy regardless of the fact that India and Pakistan are powerful militarily and even possess atomic power. There is no denying that these two coun-

tries wield considerable clout in the region compared other SAARC members. This advantage also gives them the responsibility to ensure that their individual and bilateral disputes should not deter the progress of the SAARC as they are expected to play a leading role in all constructive programmes.

New Delhi and Islamabad have a bountiful duty to see to it that the forum further blossoms and prospers not only for collective development but also to give the impression that their vastness is for the advantage of the forum and not used against it. The SAARC summit is preceded by a series of meeting at different levels including that of the foreign ministers.

The coming summit should be on the right track as it has to deal with a number of major issues dealing with trade, business, social and other matters those are in the backburner for long for decisions at highest level. When the leaders give their consent to these policy matters, it would not only come as a big boost to economic cooperation but may also significantly improve the political climate in the region as fall-out of the summit which essentially economic in nature.

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