

Reinforcing border security

Despite sporadic expressions of new-found friendship and good neighbourliness by Beijing, the ground situation is that Chinese hostility towards our country remains in place. Sugar coated words and smiles are not based on true intentions and the Chinese are adepts in the art of masking their intentions. But it does not mean that India will be bullied every time. The Chinese would be making a big mistake if they think that India of today is what they conjectured about her in 1962 when they betrayed trust and launched incursion through our eastern border into Arunachal Pradesh. Chinese history is replete with incidents of territorial aggrandizement and expansion. The British during their rule over India had drawn the McMahon line, which the Chinese had not contested. But soon after the British left India, China began staking claim on large chunks of Indian territory thus throwing to wind the established borders. In violation of previous understanding and commitments, China grabbed Tibet, an autonomous region and then began laying claim to Arunachal Pradesh and raking a dispute over the border line in Ladakh. As China has grown in her economic power and has become an active member on international political scene, she has inducted fresh blood into her territorial ambitions primarily against India to her west and to Japanese islands in the east.

Some months back Chinese troops clandestinely intruded twenty miles inside Indian territory in Daulat Baig Oldi sector in Ladakh and pitched their tents. When confronted by Indian side, the Chinese commanders entered into a dialogue with the Indian field commanders and then withdrew to their side. This was followed by exchange of views on the border issue by the two sides on political level and the Chinese agreed that small incidents needed to be resolved by bilateral talks among the field commanders. They gave the impression that if at any time they strayed erroneously into our side of the border, this would be resolved by the local commanders jointly. This was taken as a genuine approach to the question. But the Chinese behaved differently ever since the Daulat Beg Oldi incident happened. We are told that the Chinese have been making intermittent attempts to intrude clandestinely into our side of the line and thus vitiate the peaceful atmosphere on the border. It is just that the Chinese are testing the ability of the Indians to counter their intrusion. But we will reiterate that Beijing should understand that China and India are two big countries of the Asian Continent in terms of landmass, human resource, and technological dimension, and also in terms of moral responsibility of maintaining peace and order in the region. China should not be under the wrong impression that India of 2013 is the India of 1962. China has changed a lot ever since. So has India. The two countries have to tell the world that big neighbours can live in peace and harmony and not push forth their territorial or other irritating agenda.

India has to respond to Beijing's stance, the stance of making frequent intrusions and vitiating the atmosphere. As a result, a high powered team of the National Security Advisory Board led by its Chairman has landed in Ladakh and got engaged in serious consultations with concerned seniors as well as the representatives of Ladakh. The Ladakhis are reported to have made very useful and suggestive input while discussing the measures that could be taken to neutralize Chinese expansionist designs in Ladakh. We cannot understand why the Government of India imposes restrictions on local villagers and shepherds of border areas in Ladakh from moving their flocks into the meadows and grass lands that stand on the border as they have been doing so for decades in the past. Why should the Indian citizens be denied the right of movement in the territory of their own village? The Ladakhi leadership has rightly pointed out that when the nomads are kept away from the pastures, the Chinese soldiers seize the opportunity of filling the gap. They move in by stealth and then claim that the area belongs to them. This is a tactical mistake and should be rectified immediately.

China should stop testing our patience. Entire nation stands behind the Government in taking any step to counter Chinese menace on our borders. We welcome the visit of the NSAB and are hopeful they will make positive recommendations. There are two areas that need to be addressed. One is to streamline security mechanism along the border with China in Ladakh. The second is that of upgrading security and defence infrastructure along the border. The Chinese have been engaged in building roads and air strips close to our border in Ladakh. In contrast, we have neglected these unavoidable requirements. We would surely skip these requirements if the neighbor was a peace loving country and respected international laws of good neighbourliness. That is not the case. The presence of local people in the border and their cooperation, which has always been there, are of great value. The nation is behind the Government in whatever steps it takes to ensure dimensional security of our borders with China and Pakistan.

Infant mortality at Pant Hospital

Much distress was caused by huge rate of mortality at the GB Pant hospital in Srinagar last year. It had triggered criticism of the Health Department. The Chief Minister was personally distressed on this situation. Immediate steps were taken to bring about sea change in the manpower, infrastructure and other requirements of the hospital. Despite all reforms introduced in the Hospital, the reports for April, May and June show that there has been increase in infant mortality from 3.5 per cent last year to 4.55 per cent. This is alarming and has to be probed into. New and ultra-modern medical gadgetry has been inducted and manpower has been considerably increased. Mortality rate should have come down. The reason of not controlling the mortality rate has to be investigated into and necessary steps have to be taken to arrest the downslide. This is a prestigious hospital and it has to function efficiently.

Time for tough action on borders

Col (Dr) PK Vasudeva (Retd)

In the early hours of Wednesday a heavily armed group of 15-20 terrorists and Pakistani troops ambushed an Indian Army patrol along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch sector killing five Indian soldiers and injuring one. The incident occurred just hours after another ceasefire violation on Tuesday 6th August evening at the Samba sector in which one BSF soldier was injured.

According to the Army, "the attack took place around 450 meters inside our territory at Lam near the Sarlah post of Poonch Brigade near the Chakkan-da-Bagh area, over 200km away from Jammu."

Undoubtedly, it is a well-planned and deliberate attack as the Pakistani troops crossed over and accosted the Indian patrol without provocation. Moreover, the ambush is the most serious incident after the killing of two soldiers and beheading of one of them in January last. There have also been a series of other provocative actions recently in which a number of BSF personnel were injured in firing.

Pertinently, the assault has also to be seen in the context of the attack on the Indian consulate in Afghanistan's Jalalabad city in which the head of Pakistan's ISI cannot not be ruled out. Notwithstanding, Islamabad's denial.

Importantly, this incident coming just prior to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's meeting with his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York next month has put a big question mark on the tête-à-tête. Many foreign policy experts are of the opinion that the Prime Ministerial meeting should not be held under such circumstances.

Parliament plagued by obstructionism

Kalyani Shankar
Once again there is a monsoon session and once again there are hopes of a normal functioning of Parliament. But will it remain only a hope or will our lawmakers really sit and discuss and debate the issues besides passing pending legislations? A productive monsoon session will go long way in restoring the faith of the people in Parliament even at the flag end of the 15th Lok Sabha.

It is regrettable that there has been a steady decline in the work done by Parliament over the years. Compared to the 140 days that it used to meet in the 1950s and 1960s, it now meets for 60 to 70 days a year. Parliament has been a washout in the past few years both because of the obstructive behaviour of the opposition and also the mismanagement of the government. The current Lok Sabha has lost over a quarter of its scheduled time till now. Almost the whole of the second half of the Budget Session was wasted due to disruption. Only the essential financial business could be transacted. A long list of bills (about a 100) is pending and regrettable bills are also being passed without discussion.

It is indeed heartening to hear that the main opposition party, the BJP wants Parliament to run smoothly. The change of strategy has come almost at the flag end of the 15th Lok Sabha. The BJP has decided to change its tactics for three reasons. One is that it wants to change its image in the public that it is the stumbling block for the smooth functioning of Parliament. The second is that it has realised that there are other opposition parties, which have enough ammunition to attack the

Adding, that bilateral talks too should not be resumed as serious doubts abound on Pakistan's ability and sincerity in pursuing the peace process. Given that there are elements in Pakistan, which are intent on subverting the process. Despite, Nawaz Sharif expressing his Government's keenness to restart the dialogue after taking charge in Islamabad.

Notably, whether it is a case of double dealing or helplessness on the part of the Pakistan Government, it only further viti-



ates the atmosphere and makes progress much more difficult.

This apart, the recent Pakistani attacks along-with the intrusions by the PLA gets one to think about the reasons for the Indian Army's inability to counter these ambushes and intrusions. Raising a moot point: Is the Army incompetent, unprofessional or lacks guts and courage?

Significantly, the Army is neither to be blamed nor accused of incompetency alone. The boot is on the other foot. The UPA Government is suffering from policy paralysis on crucial defence and national security issues. Wherein, the Army is facing three main hurdles in thwarting the attacks from across the LoC.

First, there is a shortage of 14,550 officers in the Army alone. How can it then carry out

further. True, there has been a decline in the effectiveness of Parliament as an institution. The complexion of the Lok Sabha has also changed over the years. Parliament has gradually become more an oppositional space rather than a forum for genuine debate. Gone are the days of repartee, wit, and debating skills provided by people like Piloo Modi. The use of var-

ious motions on the floor, oversight powers and the committee system are slowly becoming less effective. International treaties now increasingly govern much of economic decision-making. The number of bills passed by Parliament has also declined over the last few decades. While the 1st Lok Sabha passed an average of 72 Bills each year it has come down to 40 Bills a year in the 15th Lok Sabha. Parliament passed 118 Bills, the highest in 1976 and the lowest number of Bills in 2004.

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Political parties, particularly

active operational duties without the junior leadership, which is backbone of all ground operations both defensive and offensive? Why is our top brass silent and the Defence Ministry passive in not taking action in recruiting youth in the defence forces by making it more attractive and lucrative? Underscoring the country's integrity and sovereignty is involved. Remember, it is always young officers (not available due to deficiencies) who are aggressive and fast in

Essentially, the Committee's main objective was to contemporaries the Kargil Review Committee's recommendations, which was tabled in Parliament on 23 February 2000. Besides, the task force was also asked to examine the state of the country's border management and restructuring system.

The salient recommendations of the task force were: One, creation of a new post of Intelligence Adviser to assist the National Security Advisor (NSA) and the National Intelligence Board. Two, appoint a Permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee who would be an adviser to the Government on National Security and defence matters. Last but not least, deputation of officers from services up to Director's level in the Defence Ministry.

Indeed, it is a mystery why the recommendations of such a high-powered Committee are not being implemented by the Government even after its submission last year. It smacks of a lackadaisical attitude of the Government in national security and defence matters.

What next? True, lodging a protest with Islamabad over these killings is the routine response, and it has been done. However, India must read the message of the murders carefully before it moves forward. Has it done enough to secure the borders? INFA

Changing Development Scenario New strategies encouraging

Dhurjati Mukherjee

The economic crisis is not all that bad as made out to be. Though the GDP has been poor during the last financial year (2012-13) and might not reach 6% during the current fiscal, employment and consumption has shown a one-third increase in average household consumption over two years, above the inflation rate.

Moreover, as Prime Minister Manmohan Singh pointed out at the recent Assocham meeting, poverty declined by 2 percentage points per annum between 2004-05 and 11-12. Notwithstanding, this is disputed by many economists and social scientists.

Undeniably, rural areas have been backward wherein social and physical infrastructure needs to be developed to facilitate improvement in livelihood. But it is gratifying that rural real wages have risen faster, 6.8% annually during the 11th Plan compared to an average of just 1.1% in the preceding decade. Urban trends are similar.

Consequently, consumption measures show rural monthly spending per capita increased from Rs 1053 to Rs 1420. Alongside NREGS helped to generate income amongst the rural masses. In fact, between 1993-94 and 11-12 the cereals share halved from 24.2% to 12% in rural and 14 to 7.3% in urban areas.

But the share of non-food items rose from 36.8 to 51.4% in rural areas, showing growing prosperity. The share of beverages, eggs, fish, fruits and nuts increased, indicating that protein content would eventually help in curbing malnutrition to a certain extent.

At the national level, average per person spending grew by 165% in rural and 190% in urban areas between 2000-2012, according to the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) recently. Pertinently, while Kerala, Punjab, Haryana, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh were the top five States in rural households, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Haryana and Punjab topped among urban households.

However, it needs to be mentioned that the income divide between the rich and the poor has grown rapidly. According to NSSO's 2013 figures, spending and consumption by the richest 5% zoomed by over 60% between 2000-2012 in rural areas while the poorest 5% witnessed an increase of just 30%.

The same trend was manifest in urban areas where the richest segment's spending increased by 63% but the poorest saw a nominal increase of 33%. Distressingly, inflation in some rural areas is outstripping urban price rise in pulses, oil, milk and fruits posing a problem for impoverished people.

Notably, there is a concerted effort to improve livelihood conditions by the Government. The recent Food Ordinance is perhaps the

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biggest Government intervention in fighting hunger and malnutrition with around 80 crores people to be covered under it.

Importantly, the scheme gives rights to 75% rural and 50% urban population to buy rice at Rs 3 a kg, wheat at Rs 2 a kg and coarse grains at Rs 1 a kg. Alongside 35 kg of grains would be given to each Antyodaya family irrespective of number of members. Other beneficiary families would be entitled to 5 kg per member per month at the same price. Add to this, the ordinance stipulates an allowance of Rs 1000 per month for lactating women for six months up to two children.

This apart, the National Land Reforms Policy has drafted a unique plan to provide agricultural and homestead land to the 60% landless households, thereby reflecting Vinoba Bhave's Gramdan-Bhoodan movement thinking. Data shows 30% households have no farmland and another 30% are near landless, overall eight million households (4%) lack homestead land.

Towards that end, the Government proposes to provide at least 10 cents (4400 sq. ft.) of homestead land for each homeless family and an unspecified area of agricultural land for landless. But experts believe that till State Governments enforce their land ceiling laws strictly, it would be very difficult to get land for redistribution.

Alas, in spite of all positive strategies being taken, the demographic divide is causing concern. Primarily due to two factors, one, there is drastic need to improve the workforce through better education, health and skill development. Two, creation of better livelihood opportunities.

While resources have been a big constraint given the developmental challenges and experts are critical of the meagre achievements, balanced development, especially in the rural areas, needs to be seriously considered.

Another aspect which needs serious attention is employment generation. Whereby, India needs to create 100 million new jobs in the next decade as only 23 million jobs were created between 2004-05 and 11-12, compared to 50 million between 1999-2000 and 04-05.

Indeed, one needs to encourage micro and medium units, especially those that are labour intensive and agro-based industries which can generate large scale employment. This would have a multiplier effect in reviving the rural sector and reducing pressure on agriculture. Reports indicate that a growing segment of the male workforce have become agricultural labour from one-time cultivators.

Admittedly, the IT sector has been successful in creating many jobs though induction of sophisticated technology would give a boost to this sector. Furthermore it has to be ensured that the sector remains competitive to ward off challenges from China, South Korea, Singapore etc.

Meanwhile, the Centre has asked banks to set up dedicated branches to meet cash requirements of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in every district of Bengal and North-East within three months, asserted MSME Minister KH Muniyappa. Greater coordination among entrepreneurs, Government and bankers would greatly improve the competitiveness of the sector and make them viable.

In the ultimate, despite disagreement on figures and development indicators, there is trend of improvement on several fronts specially the backward rural sector which is witnessing growth, no matter one can quibble this should have been faster. Undoubtedly, the decline in poverty levels in some backward States is a welcome sign and with concerted efforts results would be more encouraging in the coming years. (INFA)

Readers Write

Adjust promotee masters

Sir, It is bring in the notice of the Deputy Chief Minister of the State that most of promotee masters have been adjusted in various educational institutions of the State after they were elevated to this post four months ago. Out of this lot, teachers who were promoted as masters and are working in migrant schools have not been adjusted so far. This has caused anxiety among them.

To redress this grievance, it is requested that these newly promoted masters be adjusted in camp schools at various locations in Jammu so that they do not suffer from further dislocation and be able to support their parents who are at an advanced age and secondly the functioning of migrant camp schools do not suffer.

**Yours etc.....
Ramesh Chander Pandita
Jammu**

Strengthen VDCs

Sir, Refer article 'Role of VDCs' DE Aug 8. There are no two opinions about the crucial role played by Village Defence Committees in combating militancy in the strife torn State. It is because of them that people in border villages live a peaceful life. Being aware of the topography of the area, they helped security forces to track down militant easily. The Government should not succumb to pressure tactics adopted by separatists to disband these committees.

Though there may be some elements in the VDCs who may have committed some crime as separatists claim, but that does not mean that all people associated with VDCs are criminals. Besides, which organisation does not have some elements with criminal tendency. There are rouge elements in police, paramilitary and even army, then shall we disband them as well. The system does not work like that. There is law of the land which takes care of such elements.

Rather it is suggested that VDCs should be strengthened by giving them sophisticated weapons, training and monetary benefits. Once militancy is over in the State, they should be merged into police or para military forces.

**Yours etc.....
Sudesh Kumar
on e-mail**

Demand for new states

Sir, The decision of the Union Govt. to grant statehood to Telangana, comprising 10 Districts including Hyderabad, out of a total of 23 Districts in Andhra Pradesh, has stirred a hornet's nest and renewed demand for creation of new states such as Bundel Khand, Gorkha land, Bodoland, Vidarbha etc. The bifurcation of AP, the first linguistic state that was carved out in the 1950's by merging all the Telugu speaking regions, has been done following widespread protest in the region for a separate state and negates language as the basis for a new state. It is good that with the formation of a new state focused attention will be given to remove backwardness of the region and distinct cultural identity is protected.

The Telangana will be the 29th state of India. The question is: Do we really need smaller states for focused attention? It is true that small state such as Haryana which was carved out of Punjab has been doing

well and its growth rates has substantially improved since it was given the state hood status. But same is not the case with the North eastern States. Creation of new states entails a huge amount of funds for building Adm. Complex, Assembly, Courts and other Adm. units and new states should only be created if they have ample mineral, hydel, petroleum and other resources and are thus economically viable.

It is true that creation of new states results in focused attention, efficient delivery of services, improvement in the socio-economic status of the people in the region as the people of the region get an opportunity to rule the states themselves instead of being dominated by the people belonging to the other regions. Carving out a new state is also likely to speed up the development and address the complaints of disparities in an effective.