

India, China forward move

Defence Minister A.K. Antony has concluded his four-day visit to Beijing where he had talks with high dignitaries of that country. The visit of the Defence Minister has come after a gap of seven years. Its significance is that it took place after the April incursion of Chinese troops in Deshpang Valley. But notwithstanding that ugly incident, which however was resolved amicably, there seems a new and welcome phase of Sino-Indian relations likely to emerge soon. In a joint statement issued after the conclusion of the visit, it is said that the two countries have developed consensus on the question of moving towards Border Defence Cooperation Agreement (BDCA). Actually what has bedeviled relations between the two countries in the past is the border dispute. According to experts the border between India and China drawn by the previous colonial power in India and usually called McMahan Line was not acceptable to China. She has been claiming some areas that are on our side of the line. But China staked her claim to the disputed areas only after the British had left and the Indian Government in post-independence period cannot be accused as defaulter. This has been an irritant in relations between the two countries.

The good news is that the Defence Minister is convinced that his talks in Beijing have been fruitful and these will bring positive result. The consensus between the two high-powered delegations was that peace and tranquility have to be maintained on the borders. According to reports available, there has been real forward movement on the issue of making the borders trouble free. A joint statement issued after Antony's meetings with Premier Li Keqiang, his counterpart Gen Chang Wanquan and State councillor Yang Jiechi, said peace and tranquility on the border were important guarantor for the growth of bilateral cooperation. It implies that both sides will desist from changing the existing position on the border while talks between the leadership on both sides continues to arrive at Border Defence Cooperation Agreement. This certainly is a new and healthy development of relationship between the two countries. It is a time consuming process in the sense that so far 16 meetings have taken place between the special representatives of two countries who are assigned the duty of conducting talks on border resolution matters. Defence Minister Antony is right in saying that the contemplated border agreement cannot happen overnight. All of its dimensions are to be discussed and made clear before any agreement can be signed.

It has to be understood that so far there was no positive and meaningful attempt or mechanism between the two countries to address their border disputes. With any untoward happening, the two sides would move in and depute representatives, military as well as civilians, to discuss and resolve the matter. But now it has been formally agreed that in case of any mishap the working agreement and protocols dealing with the maintenance of peace and tranquility will come into force and that process will be further strengthened. During the acrimonious incident of Deshpang Valley it had come to notice that the Chinese found Indian border infrastructure development a direct affront to them. Reflecting on this issue, Defence Minister Antony said that all aspects of the matter including that of infrastructure building were discussed.

Signing of Border Defence Cooperation Agreement (BDCA), if it happens in near future, will be a landmark achievement for both the countries. This will mean putting a final seal to the border dispute that has bedeviled relationship between the two countries for last six decades. As has been hinted at, the only issue between the two countries is of border and that too has been primarily because of China not having accepted the McMahan Line. Any border agreement with India will obviously supersede the McMahan Line and thus the existing irritant between the two countries will be resolved once for all. We shall have to appreciate the statesmanship of the two governments that are engaged in building peace and tranquility in the region. There is vast scope of expanding relationship between India and China, two most powerful countries of the Asian Continent.

Defence Minister Antony has rightly stated that there has to be a new and practical realization of ground situation in both the countries. In all probability, this realization on the part of China might have come with the new leadership in that country now holding the reins of power. Premier Li after he was sworn in as the new President of China made his first visit to India and said that he had purposefully chosen India to be the first foreign country he would like to visit. This new thinking in Chinese leadership had to be responded with equal warm gesture. The harsh reality is that the two countries have to live in peace and tranquility if they mean to play constructive role in the region and the world.

In final analysis we feel our Defence Minister has played positive and constructive role in taking Sino-Indian bilateral talks forward. The process of moving towards a border agreement is going on with full determination and speed on both sides. That is welcome news for observers of international relations. We hail it and we appreciate the new thinking in both the countries of how the long-standing border issue will be solved once for all. As such nothing should be done that would derail the process as it has entered a critical phase. In order to lend further support to border agreement, the two sides have agreed to resume joint military exercise after a gap of five years. Cooperation between all the three wings of defence has been agreed upon. Delegations from army, navy and air force will be exchanging visits. India and China, both working in cooperation can change regional and international situation to the benefit of the Asian countries. There is vast scope of expanding trade and commerce and ushering in a phase of unprecedented prosperity in entire Asian Continent.

CBI Vs IB

Fraught with serious security concerns

B L Saraf

CBI has declared that Ishrat Jahan and her three associates were killed in a "fake encounter in cold blood" in a joint operation by the Gujarat police and Intelligence Bureau (IB). In a preliminary charge sheet filed in an Ahmadabad court, the CBI charged seven police officers for offences that include murder and wrongful confinement. The CBI sought more time to investigate the role of four officers from IB. The facts of the case which broadly emerge are that in the early months of 2004 the IB had received inputs that Pak sponsored LET terrorists namely, Ishrat, Javed Sheekh, Amjad Ali Rana and Zeeshan Johar had entered Gujarat to assassinate CM Narendra Modi. According to the Gujarat police when they tried to intercept them they opened fire which they returned, resulting in death of all of terrorists. However, the CBI has a different story to tell. According to it, the slain persons were abducted from elsewhere, kept in captivity by the IB persons and the Gujarat police and then bumped off in cold blood. Due to the constraints of space, it can't be detailed here how CBI came into the picture and what went ahead of filing the charge sheet.

The inputs of the IB were evaluated by the Union Home Ministry- to whom the IB reports - and were found credible. That is explained by its affidavit, filed in Gujarat High Court to defend the petition of father of Javed Sheekh, wherein it said that the killed persons were LET terrorists who had come to Gujarat to indulge in the terrorist activities. It is intriguing matter how, as an after thought, the position was changed by the MHA, though the IB still persists with the authenticity of its inputs. The issue, therefore, stands muddled. Competing interests have stepped in.

The fight has, unfortunately, turned political. The Congress party challenges

Narendra Modi's PM candidacy and has been asking questions, who ordered the "fake encounter." On the other hand the BJP sees CBI's move as politically orchestrated by the ruling Congress party to impede the rising political fortunes of the Gujarat Chief Minister, after having failed to meet him politically. BJP accuses central government of manipulating the CBI by not allowing it to probe Ishrat's LET links.

Regrettably, the conduct and working of central premier investigating agency has been such as to lend its working to be evaluated on the considerations not necessarily professional.

It is not prudent to comment there upon the merits of the case, or speculate on the outcome of the trial. But one cannot ignore the implications of the case on the morale of intelligence gathering agencies. The nation has been paying enough on account of lack of credible intelligence to curb the Maoist and other kinds of terror which has snuffed out hundreds of innocent lives and those of the brave security personnel. They pose a serious threat to the national security. If two premier agencies of the GOI, who are entrusted with the job of making nation secure and ensure maintenance of law and order, go on fighting against each other on the issue which has a serious security implication, how adversely would it affect the working of the officers of respective agencies cannot be left to a guess.

Every intelligence officer will think twice, henceforth, before venturing out to gather information and share it with the local police, for fear of consequences.

Here, a law abiding citizen of the country becomes worried. What adds to his worry is the prevailing security scenario of the nation. In the beginning of the month, around 100 armed Maoist terrorists ambushed and killed a SP and four policemen in Jharkhand. In the previous month militants attacked army convoy in Srinagar and mar-

tyred dozens of brave soldiers. Prior to that the armed terrorists nearly wiped out the whole Congress leadership in Chhattisgarh. For a patriotic countryman, so long he has a good governance, it is immaterial whether Congress rules the country or the BJP comes to the helm.

The most disturbing aspect of the case is that the 'bleeding hearts' on the call, the chest beating tribe of the so called H R activists' and libertarians have jumped in and are trying hard to high jack the issue and give it a communal colour. Tender age of Ishrat Jahan, her feminine gender are invoked to claim her innocence and demonise the Gujarat establishment and one of the important institutions of the GOI. Ishrat may be innocent. But she couldn't be so on the pleas debated by the 'Tribes'. It is a known fact that the terrorist organisations across the world have recruited the boys and girls of tender age to commit the dastardly acts of terrorism. Rajiv Gandhi was blown to pieces by a young female LTTE terrorist. And who can forget aeroplane hijacker Laila Khalid of the PLO. The argument may sway the sentiment of some momentarily and build up a negative perception in some sections of the society. But it won't work in the long run.

CBI or any other agencies has a right to indict the culprit and pin down any recalcitrant political figure - howsoever he / she may be. But nobody has a right to bring down India or the Indian State, directly or collaterally. CBI would do a great service to the country-not necessarily to its political masters-by investigating the angle indicated by the IB. Under playing it will only gladden the hearts of subversive elements safely ensconced in a neighbouring country and their friends here.

CBI's silence in the matter-in view of persistent stand of the IB-will dent its image. Country needs to know the truth - nothing but the whole truth.

(The author is former Pr District & Sessions Judge)

Joblessness among engineers

Dr Ashwani Mahajan

Nation may take pride in the fact that we have made significant stride in the field of higher education. If we talk of professional education in engineering and management, we have developed 17 IITs (Indian Institute of Technology) and 13 IIMs (Indian Institute of Management) in the country, which are not only of international standards, but have also established their brand globally.

Country has made significant progress in the field of higher education, which is revealed by the fact that enrolment in higher education has increased by 250 per cent in the last 25 years. Technical education has a significant contribution in this development. Today the country possesses a huge infrastructure in the field of technical education, more specifically in engineering education. Our engineering institutes enroll more students than the USA and China combined. Our engineers have made their own place internationally. However, according to a recent finding, today nearly 10 lakh engineering graduates are struggling to find a suitable job for themselves.

According to Nasscom, apex body of IT companies, Indian IT companies, which employ majority of software engineers, are expected to employ 50,000 less engineers this year. Though the argument in the official quarters is that, though companies are employing less people, unemployment amongst engineers is primarily due to the economic slowdown.

But the reality is that, unprecedented increase in the number of engineering institutes, and resulting increase in new graduates in engineering, is the major cause of rising unemployment among engineers. Economy does not have the capacity to employ all the new graduates. Due to limited capa-

bility of the IT sector and ever rising number of engineering institutes, nearly two to three lakh engineering graduates fail to get employment and an equal number, though manages to get some job, but not a suitable job, according to their degree. Obviously in this scenario, engineering graduates are getting dismayed. Along with this a large amount of investment in these new engineering institutes is also endangered, as popularity of their courses is diminishing.

Mushrooming of Institutions of Technical Education

According to the regulatory body of technical education AICTE (All India Council of Technical Education), in 2006, there were 1268 engineering institutions in the country, which increased to 3346 by the year 2012. Engineering institutes had only 5.5 lakh seats in 2006, which increased to 14.75 lakh seats, thanks to new institutes and increased intakes by old ones. Mushrooming of engineering colleges in such a short span is putting a question mark on the standards of teaching, quality of students and the infrastructure. With rising number of unemployed engineering graduates, utility of investment in these institutes is also eroding.

Lack of Planning

Though the Planning Commission draws plan for opening of new colleges and institutes under government sector, as a part of overall plan for education, there is total lack of national planning, about how many colleges or institutes are required or should be opened, in different disciplines. Permission is granted to various engineering, polytechnics, management, teacher training, nursing and medical institutions, if they qualify the norms set for the purpose. Sometimes, we do find relaxation or circumvention in the rules. However, there does not exist any national, state or regional level assess-

ment or survey; about the need for human resources, trained in different fields. Opening of new educational institutions has been solely left to the market forces. Greed to earn more by charging hefty fees, has led to the mushrooming of educational institutes. Thanks to establishment of new private sector educational institutes; though students are getting more opportunities to study, but at much higher cost. Easy availability of education loans, have proved to be a boon to these institutes, as they get students, however, these days, due to declining number of placements, these institutes are not getting sufficient number of students. As a result, many engineering and management institutes are at the verge of closure.

Needed Judicious Manpower Planning

For the development of any nation, it is imperative to have judicious manpower planning, so that education and training of the human resources is provided according to the needs of the country. For the development of agriculture, industry, commerce and other services, we need people with appropriate education and training. We need engineers, managers and technicians for the purpose of industrial development. In the last few years the nation has made rapid development in the field of software, and software companies have made their place in the world. Most of the employees of these software companies are engineers. Up to 2012, these software companies had about 8 lakh employees. Though lesser than software, country has also made some progress in computer hardware too, which has also helped in employment of some engineers.

Progress in the field of software is continuing unabated. According to Nasscom, the IT industry recorded a growth of 21.5 percent in the year 2012-13. This growth has led to rising

employment opportunities in this field. But the creation of new jobs is falling short of, number of engineers being produced by our ever rising number of engineering institutes. The result obviously is ever raising unemployment of engineers.

In the past too, the nation has been facing the problem of brain drain. Had the condition been conducive for our educated human resources, in terms of employment opportunities, they would also have been contributing to the development of the country. However, our Indian Diaspora, has not only made India proud due to their proven skills and capabilities, they have also filled our empty foreign exchange reserves and saved the nation from the shortage of valuable foreign exchange. But today we need manpower planning, which could take care of the requirement, and education and training be imparted to our youth according to the needs of the nation, to save the nation from any further brain drain.

Need of the hour is that the government make an assessment, by way of a detailed survey of the need for the institutions of higher education; including medical and colleges, polytechnics, nursing and teacher training. Permission for new educational institutes should be granted based on the requirement of trained manpower in each sector. Due attention be given to the standards of education and quality of infrastructure and the faculty. Nation should not be starved of required manpower and all should get opportunity to learn according to his/her capabilities. Today upper middle class is able to provide education to their off springs, but a majority is still deprived of the education, especially from private sector institutions. We will have to ensure education for all; then only we can ensure inclusive development.

Food Security Bill

Sir, It is a good news that the Food Security Bill promising the supply of food grains and cereals at the rate of 5 Kg per person at very nominal price has been made applicable by the president. About 82 crore population of the country shall be benefited by this bill. The aim of this bill is that no person in the country sleeps empty stomach. But one fails to understand how this number of 82 crores has been arrived at. The population of the country below poverty line is about 30 percent and accordingly the number of poor people can be estimated at 40 crore. It means that the lower middle class and middle class population has also been included among the beneficiaries. If this is so then the bill cannot be considered as justified keeping into view the great burden on the state exchequer as these classes do not deserve ration at such a high subsidy. Also the source of availability of huge stock of food grains is not clear. No doubt at present there is huge stock of food grains but the regular supply of about 50 crore quintals annually over and above the already being distributed through PDS is doubtful. This is also because the agriculture land is shrinking on account of industrialisation, housing requirements and other development activities. The opposition has raised objections about the ordinance route of the bill instead of legislation through the parliament. But for this the opposition is itself responsible as they have not allowed to discuss the bill in the previous session of the parliament. They have also stalled the parliament proceedings in preceding sessions and missed much of the valuable discussions.

Yours etc.,
D R Bhagat
Ekta Vihar
Kunjwani

Jammu-Poonch railway line

Sir, This has reference to the news item 'Take up Jammu-Poonch railway line work' DE July 5.

The people of the twin towns of Rajouri have been demanding early execution of work on Jammu-Poonch railway line- a project which has been already passed- but no one listens to their pleas. Now, when the matter has been taken up with the Railway Minister by a former Parliament and senior vice-president of PCC, the project may draw the attention of the Railway authorities.

It may be mentioned here that the Railway link will play an important role in the economic development of these two towns which are presently seeped in poverty and backwardness. Besides, the two towns are strategically important, and it is imperative that these remain well connected with the rest of country.

Since the two districts are dotted with numerous tourist spots, there is every possibility that the tourism sector would receive the much needed thrust with the commissioning of the project. The region would emerge as a tourist's dream destination.

The region is also home to numerous sacred shrines belonging to almost all religious denominations--- Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. Therefore, the region has the prospects of emerging as centre for pilgrimage tourism. Keeping these facts in view, there should be no further delay in execution of work on this projects.

Yours etc....
Nissar Ahmad Khan
Rajouri

Inequity of Hydropower

Dr Bharat Jhunjhunwala

Our forefathers gave the formula Dharma-Artha-Kama-Moksha for good governance. 'Dharma' here should be understood as holistic welfare of the people. 'Artha' stands for economic growth and 'Kama' stands for consumption. Moksha is, of course, spiritual salvation. The formula states that money should be earned in a way that does not hit at the holistic welfare of the people; and consumption should be undertaken such that economic growth is not hit. This principle has been enshrined in law via the concept of 'Public Good' superseding private interests. Advertisements of cigarettes and liquor are banned because they lead to public harm even though they may be beneficial for the economy.

Making of hydropower projects on the Ganga hits at Moksha. Water of the Ganga flows beneath the shrines of Kedarnath and Badrinath. The water brings spiritual charges from these shrines. These charges are contained in the molecular clusters of water. Molecules of H2O do not exist in individual chaotic state. They form six-cornered clusters with different designs. Japanese scientist Masaru Emoto has shown that clusters of spiritually charged waters display very different designs when compared with polluted water. There are no clusters in distilled water. These clusters get destroyed when the water hits at the turbine blades. The water that comes out from turbines is spiritually 'empty'. Proof is that pilgrims are increasingly going to Gangotri. They do not find water at Haridwar as invigorating as it was previously. My friend living at Knaun in the plains also complained that water of the Ganga has lost its freshness. Such loss of spiritual power would take place in other holy rivers like Narmada and Krishna as well.

The Srinagar hydropower project is under construction at Srinagar on the Alaknanda which is the major tributary of the Ganga. The Dhari Devi Temple is located in the submergence zone of the 30 km long reservoir of this project. The Temple consists of a Holy Rock akin to one at Vaishno Devi. An idol has been placed in front of the rock. Adi Shankaracharya is believed to have done penance here. He had fallen sick. Then Dhari Devi appeared before him in form of a village girl and told him to seek relief from Brahman alone because, she said, Adi Shankaracharya believed in Brahman alone. Then Shankaracharya accepted his folly and worshipped Dhari Devi and was cured. The Company making the project has proposed to submerge the Holy Rock and reinstall the idol at a platform built on pillars at the same location. This means that mankind will be deprived of the spiritual charges of the rock forever. It is like submerging Hemkund Sahib, Mecca or Jerusalem for the generation of hydropower. The hydropower projects on the Ganga are, therefore, contra Moksha.

There are four dimensions of Dharma here. First dimension is of environment. The endangered Mahseer fish lives in the lower Ganga. It migrates to upper Ganga to lay eggs. This migration will not be possible because the Srinagar Dam on Alaknanda will obstruct its path just as Tehri has done on the Bhagirathi. Moreover, all aquatic life like worms and tortoise downstream will be affected because the sediments and debris will be trapped in the reservoir of Srinagar Dam. This is their food. About 350 hectares forest will be submerged in the reservoir leading to loss of biodiversity.

Second dimension of Dharma is of equity. The Directive Principles enshrined in our Constitution require the State to minimize the inequalities in income. Hydropower does exactly the opposite. The environmental loss is mostly borne by poor people. They are deprived of sand and fish. They fall sick due to breeding of mosquitoes and emission of poisonous gasses from reservoirs. Their water sources go dry due to blasting in the mountains for making tunnels. Their houses develop cracks. The livestock do not get fodder as the forests are depleted. The electricity generated, on the other hand, is used by the urban rich for running air-conditioners. The State Government gets 12 percent free power. It sells this to generate revenue. Fifty percent of the revenue is used up in paying salaries and pensions to government officials. In this way hydropower transfers resources from poor to the rich.

Third dimension is of the nation's energy security. The demand for electricity is increasing mainly for purposes of consumption. It has become commonplace for a family of four to burn electricity worth Rs 25,000 per month. Air-conditioners run 24 hours. Some have heated swimming pools. It is simply not possible to meet the demand for electricity arising out of such consumption. We are becoming dependent on imports of oil, coal and uranium to meet this unending demand. Our economy will come to its knees in mere 15 days if the West Asian countries stop the supply of oil. It is simply not possible to meet this demand even if Manmohan Singh succeeds in tapping every inch of every river in the country for generation of hydropower as he plans to do. We must put in place measures to reduce consumption of electricity instead of following this dead end and spoiling our rivers in the process.

Fourth dimension is of international politics. The developed countries want India to reduce thermal generation because the developed countries are affected by the carbon emissions. They want India to increase hydropower generation because the negative environmental impacts are mostly local. The result is doubly harmful for us. We will be affected by the carbon emissions from thermal power generation by the developed countries. Additionally we will bear the negative environmental effects of hydropower. Correspondingly the developed countries will be doubly benefited.

The hyped-up economic benefits from hydropower are also unreal. Hydropower companies only bear the direct costs of generation such as depreciation, interest, labour charges and cost of 12 percent free electricity given to the home state. The indirect costs such as those borne by the local people are not accounted for. People living in the plains also bear many costs. Fewer floods are leading to less recharge of groundwater and affecting agricultural production. Trapping of silt in the hydropower reservoirs is depriving our coasts of sediment nourishment and leading to coastal erosion. Pilgrims are deprived of the pleasure of taking bath in pristine waters. These indirect costs are considerable. My calculations show they are more than double the direct costs that are borne by the generation companies. Hydropower is a loss proposition if all indirect costs are accounted for. Hydropower hits at economic growth because the benefits are less than the total costs.

Hydropower generation, especially from our Holy Rivers like Ganga, Narmada and Krishna is wholly against the objectives of Dharma, Artha and Moksha. This is being pushed by the government to transfer resources from the poor to the rich and to fulfill the objectives of western materialist culture that sees human beings only as consumption machines bereft of any joy of nature.

Readers Write

Power surplus State

Sir, Refer news item 'J&K aims to become power surplus' DE July 5. The State can emerge as a power surplus State only if it has a well defined power policy in place. The present power situation in the State clearly indicates that there is need to take some strident measures to enable the State become a power surplus State.

There is urgent need to harness power potential by constructing mini-hydel power project. These projects are not only cost effective but environment friendly too. These project can supply power to remote areas of the State which have not been electrified so far. The Nimoo-Bazgoo power project is an excellent example in this direction. Then there are big power projects which too are contributing in power sector. The combination of these big and small can meet the power needs of the State.

However, power generation alone can't solve the complex power situation. The Power Department should embark on power reforms on a large scale.

The e-metering has not been successfully implemented in the State. With the result, power situation has not improved much. The transmission and distribution system too is faulty and is causing impediments in improving the situation. When all factors are considered, only than it is possible that the State can emerge as a power surplus State.

Yours etc....
Neelam Mahajan
Jammu