

Kashmir or *Dawn Pak. F.R. India 13-3-03* economic ties?

By Kuldip Nayar

MILITARY heads of state are known to be reticent. Whenever they say something it is more of a threat than rhetoric. President General Pervez Musharraf is an exception. He wants to be in the headlines every day and what he says gets lost in oratory, a politician's trait.

In a recent interview to a pro-BJP TV channel in New Delhi, he has said that no Pakistani ruler could survive if he brushed aside the half-century-old Kashmir dispute and began mending relations with India in other areas such as trade. This is a rhetorical observation and not factually correct.

Had he said that no Pakistani ruler could give up Kashmir, he would have made a factual statement. But to say that the dispute comes in the way of trade or any other economic tie to take place is to express a point of view that has the khaki imprint.

Musharraf should know that before the 1965 war, India and Pakistan had regular trade. Goods trains crossed the border without evoking any attention. So much so that newspapers of one country were available in the other the same day. All the agreements and declarations signed between the two countries, whether at Tashkent in 1966 or at Lahore three years ago, the words used often in the preamble urged "the resumption of trade."

What it conveys was the anxiety to go back to the export and import of goods without losing any time. Kashmir has been part of every pact. But it was realized then and should be realized even better today that if trade and transaction were linked with the settlement of Kashmir, the two countries would be waiting till the cows came home. Kashmir is a political question; trade is an economic one. The two cannot be mixed.

Could it be a difference of perception between military and civilian rulers? It is more than a coincidence that 1965 and 1971 wars broke out when the army ruled Pakistan. The trade thread was picked up later when Pakistan came under civilian rule with elected prime ministers. Tagging any tie with India to the condition that Kashmir

used but must Islamabad insist on using such phraseology when what is required is a settlement?

Musharraf may call the terrorists operating from the Pakistan soil "freedom fighter" or "free lancers," a new term coined by him. But they have aggravated the problem and given a bad name to the movement, indigenous at one time. They have cost the Kashmiris, more than Pakistan, the sympathy which they could evoke on the right to self-determination.

Still worse is the Islamization of Kashmir. A West Asian leader makes an interesting point: the Islamization of Kashmir has driven New Delhi to develop relations with Tel Aviv. His observation was that India, with 120 million Muslims, should not have been driven out of the OIC (Organization of Islamic Conference). New Delhi has, however, made indirect efforts to stay in touch with the OIC. Mirwaiz Farooq, the leader of the All Party Hurriyat Conference, had the government's blessings whenever he attended the OIC meeting.

The Hurriyat on its part did not even appreciate New Delhi's efforts. It was slow in discerning the growing distance between the Muslim-majority valley and the non-Muslim Jammu and Ladakh. The BJP-led government in New Delhi only highlighted their differences because the trifurcation of the state fitted into the agenda of the party's mentor, the RSS.

At times, the central government seems pushing the Hurriyat to the wall. True, its influence is confined to the valley and it admits this belatedly now. But if it is driven to desperation, it is likely to return to

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Could it be a difference of perception between military and civilian rulers? It is more than a coincidence that 1965 and 1971 wars broke out when the army ruled Pakistan. The trade thread was picked up later when Pakistan came under civilian rule with elected prime ministers. Tagging any tie with India to the condition that Kashmir should be settled first appears to be a military agenda. It has nothing to do with the reality that exists. It is not sound politics either.

This will be more or less obvious from the reports of talks the deposed Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had with former Prime Minister Inder Gujral and Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee. At that time Islamabad had come to realize that the revival of trade and economic ties did not have to wait till the settlement over Kashmir.

Nawaz Sharif told Gujral in Maldives, where the summit between the two countries took place: "We cannot take Kashmir from you forcibly; nor can you give it to us peacefully. We have to find a way how to span the distance between the two countries." Maybe, this approach of Nawaz Sharif led to his ousting through a military coup. This was confirmed by Vajpayee's observation soon after Nawaz Sharif's overthrow that "he went because of us."

That Nawaz Sharif agreed to normalize trade and other ties while conducting talks on Kashmir may well have been the reason for the military coup. In other words, the military's agenda was different from that of the elected government. When Musharraf says that no Pakistani ruler can survive if it mends relations with India on trade or other areas without settling the Kashmir issue, he is expressing the military mind, not that of the people.

It is obvious that the complicated problem of Kashmir will take time to solve. It has many ramifications touching New Delhi, Srinagar and Islamabad. Should normalization in the economic field be deferred till then? Both countries have suffered because of that in the last four decades. Must they suffer in the same manner for many more years till discussions on the Kashmir problem throws up a solution which may satisfy all the parties involved? New Delhi has conceded both at Simla and Lahore that "a final settlement" of Kashmir is still to take place. The word 'dispute' has not been

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arms which could assume the early nineties proportion. With some Islamic fundamentalists within India wanting to throw the gauntlet in the name of religion, the Kashmir valley, helped by Islamabad, could become another Afghanistan.

There was a time when New Delhi was keen on talking to the Hurriyat. Rajesh Pilot, when he was minister of state for home, even approached some of its leaders while they were in jail. Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, even after assuming power, said that the government would have to hold talks with the Hurriyat. He has suddenly gone quiet. The peace, if it ever comes, would be unproductive if the Hurriyat or some others, dubbed separatists, were left out.

So long as the bottom line that there is no secession of the valley from the country is made clear, New Delhi would do well to get the support of the "separatists" if possible. This may present Islamabad with a fait accompli. It has taken New Delhi five years to reach the stage when it can have productive talks with the hostile Nagas.

The Hurriyat would have liked such a process to take place. But it is too late for that now. Pakistans finger in the pie has only made things more intractable. Musharraf should still reconsider his stand not to have even trade relations with India until the Kashmir problem is solved. If he does that, it will prove his maturity as a ruler. It will also bridge the gulf between two distant neighbours. People-to-people contact is important for such an endeavour. Even Prime Minister Vajpayee has said in his musings from Andaman that it is a must. New Delhi should at least heed its prime minister.

The writer is a leading columnist based in New Delhi.

Avoiding nuclear confrontation

DOWN 12.3.03
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By Farhatullah Babar

IN a small fishing village Pugwash near the Canadian city of Nova Scotia, for the first time in 1957, about two dozen eminent scientists and intellectuals of the world, including Einstein and Bertrand Russell, met to ponder the threat posed to humankind by atom bombs.

The inspiration for the meeting came from an impassioned appeal made earlier by Bertrand Russell urging men of science to contain this new monster which they had unleashed through their research and inventions.

Since then scientists, academics and concerned individuals have been regularly meeting to seek the abolition of nuclear weapons and a peaceful settlement of international disputes. Their meetings, conferences and workshops are named after Pugwash where the first meeting was held.

These conferences have brought together, from around the world, influential scientists, scholars and public figures concerned with reducing the danger of armed conflicts and seeking cooperative solutions for global problems. The participants meet and discuss issues as private individuals and not as representatives of their institutions. As many as 280 meetings have thus far been held in different countries since Pugwash began its quest for abolition of nuclear weapons and a peaceful resolution of disputes. Over 10,000 scientists, academics and public figures participated in these meetings.

The latest in the series of Pugwash workshops is a two-day moot on "Avoiding an India-Pakistan Nuclear Confrontation" scheduled in Lahore on March 12 where scores of experts, scientists and concerned individuals will discuss issues ranging from avoidance of a nuclear confrontation between India and Pakistan to those of peace and security in the region and a resumption of the stalled Indo-Pak dialogue.

For its pioneering work the Pugwash conference and one of its co-founders, the physicist Sir Joseph Rotblat, were awarded Nobel Prize in 1995. It has also won several international awards, including the 1987 Olympia Prize, the Feltrinelli Prize of Italy, the Einstein Gold Medal from UNESCO in 1989 and the 1992 Albert Einstein Peace Prize.

Chemical Weapons Convention of 1993. Its meetings have played an important role in bringing together key scientists, analysts and policy advisers for sustained, in-depth discussions of the crucial arms-control issues of the day, particularly in the area of weapons of mass destruction.

The Lahore workshop on nuclearization of South Asia and peace in the subcontinent is taking place against the backdrop of momentous developments bearing on peace and security in the region. Both India and Pakistan have enunciated, even though vaguely, their respective nuclear doctrines. Pakistan, unfortunately, even flaunted nuclear weapons during the height of the recent stand-off with India.

During the three year military rule of General Musharraf Pakistan and India nearly came to war on many occasions. Nuclear weapons in their armouries have, instead of deterring each other and keeping peace, brought the two countries closer to war. If anything, these have served to heighten tension in the region as the genuine independence struggle by the people of Kashmir is now being increasingly viewed in the world as an issue of cross-border terrorism sponsored and sustained by Pakistan.

Early this year India declared that an attack on Indians anywhere in the world would be taken as a attack on India itself. This declaration came within days of Pakistan flaunting its nuclear capability. General Pervez Musharraf publicly stated in Karachi on December 30 that at the height of the crisis with India he had warned Prime Minister Vajpayee that Pakistan could step "beyond conventional warfare" if it had to defend its territory. The general may not have used the word 'nuclear' but the threat unmistakable even though a government spokesman later tried to clarify that 'unconventional warfare' did not necessarily mean nuclear warfare.

Several experts have opined that there is a possibility that Pakistan would use tactical

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Pugwash has four small permanent offices — in Washington, Rome, London and Geneva — in addition to over 40 National Pugwash Groups around the world, each organized independently.

Prof. M.S. Swaminathan, a renowned Indian agriculture scientist and a recipient of the World Food Prize, is currently its president. Eminent Pakistani physicist and one of the most celebrated peace activists, Prof. Pervez Hoodbhoy, is a member of the 27-man council elected every five years to lay long-term goals of Pugwash and also provide it formal governance.

Born in the tense years of cold war, Pugwash conferences have provided a valuable platform for dialogue when few, if any, unofficial channels of communication were available between the countries of the East and the West. Whether it was the Berlin crisis, the Cuban missile crisis, the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, or the Vietnam war, the Pugwash conferences opened and sustained unofficial lines of communication between the adversaries and played an indispensable role in achieving the goals of peace and disarmament.

Pugwash conferences have brought together government and military figures, scientists and policy analysts to deliberate on issues ranging from Euro missiles to the Star Wars, from the dangers of proliferation in the wake of the break-up of the Soviet Union to the ramifications of the US plans for national missile defence (NMD).

Pugwash laid the groundwork for the Partial Test Ban Treaty of 1963, the Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1968, the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972, the Biological Weapons Convention of 1972, and ultimately the

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nuclear weapons on its own soil against invading Indian troops. It would then be seen as a nuclear attack on India. Pakistan's waving of nuclear weapons and India upgrading its nuclear doctrine are indeed ominous developments in this volatile region.

The extremists' attack on the Indian Parliament on December 13, 2001, provoked New Delhi to amass troops along the Pakistan border and close all doors of dialogue and negotiations. It should not be surprising if another such attack, particularly one involving killing of prominent Indian political leaders, provokes even a stronger reaction leading to war of some sort. The danger is real because jihadi organizations based in Pakistan have been quick in the past to claim credit for such terrorist attacks.

Likewise, a terrorist attack in Pakistan perceived to be of Indian origin would provoke a similar response from this side. In either case there is a strong possibility that, goaded on by public outrage and or by sheer miscalculation, such an incident may escalate into a fullfledged war. Given the nuclear doctrines and rhetoric on both sides, the odds of a nuclear exchange in the region are much higher than anywhere else.

One hopes that unencumbered by the policies of their governments and organizations, participants in the Lahore Pugwash moot will address issues of peace and security in the region and nuclear disarmament candidly and dispassionately.

Close on the heels of the Lahore conference, a three-day workshop is planned in Jordan on March 27 to discuss an Arab plan and a third-party role in the Palestinian peace process. It will be followed by a workshop on South Asian Security to be held in Geneva in May.

Workshops on non-weaponization of space, on the social responsibilities of scientists, on terrorism and on Islamic parties and the democratic experience are also planned in the coming weeks, besides a workshop in Japan on the 50th anniversary of Russell/Einstein and the 60th anniversary of Hiroshima/Nagasaki.

The writer is a Senator belonging to the Pakistan People's Party.