



Institute of Foreign Affairs

Issue Brief 3

January 2005

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Foreign Secretary Gives Away Certificates

Foreign Secretary Madhu Raman Acharya gave away certificates to the participants of a month-long computer training course at a function held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on December 31st 2004. Organized by the Institute of Foreign Affairs, altogether 18 MoFA officers and staff had gone through extensive training on segments such as Microsoft word, excel, front page, power point, e-mail, intranet and internet. Speaking on the occasion, Foreign Secretary Acharya congratulated all the participants who had gone through the training and said that he wished to see the IFA organizing more of these trainings and orientation in the months and years ahead.

Joint Secretary of the MoFA and IFA Board Member Nabin Bahadur Shrestha was also present on the occasion.



Foreign Secretary Madhu Raman Acharya giving away certificate to a participant of a month-long computer training course organized by IFA.

Secretarial Management Course for MoFA Staff

Institute of Foreign Affairs (IFA) has organized a month-long secretarial management course for five non-gadzatted staff of the Department of Hospitality, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The course will focus on segments such as office management, basic training on computers, file keeping and telephone communication.

New Board Members of IFA

Former Foreign Secretary Prof. Biswa Pradhan, Former Chief Secretary and Former Royal Nepalese Ambassador to the United States of America Damodar Prasad Gautam, Former Royal Nepalese Ambassador to Germany Dr. Novel Kishor Rai and foreign policy expert Dr. Posh Raj Pandey have been appointed Board Members of IFA

Pandey visits Thai Institute of Foreign Affairs

Officiating Executive Director of the IFA Mr. Nishchal N. Pandey visited the Thai Institute of Foreign Affairs from December 21-24th 2004. It may be recalled that the then Director of the Thai Institute of Foreign Affairs Ms. Urachata Rodprasert had visited the IFA a couple of years ago.

During the visit, Pandey had a meeting with the Director of the IFA-Thailand, Mr. Isorn Poemontri and also got acquainted with the various functions, objectives and training activities of the Institute. Poemontri hosted a luncheon in honor of Mr. Pandey in which senior officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Institute were also present. Officiating Executive Director Pandey thanked the Thai Institute for making all the arrangements and hoped that this visit would open up friendly and collaborative programs between

the two like-minded Institutes in the future.

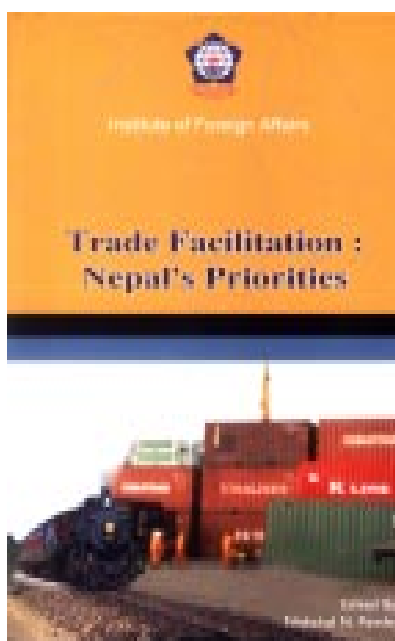
On December 22nd, he also called on the Director General of the Department of South Asian, Middle Eastern and African Affairs Mr.



Officiating Executive Director of the IFA Mr. Nishchal N. Pandey presenting a plaque of the Institute to his counterpart Mr. Isorn Poemontri, Director of the Thai Institute of Foreign Affairs in Bangkok on Dec. 23, 2004

Noppadon Theppitak at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangkok.

The IFA has brought out a new publication on “Trade Facilitation: Nepal’s Priorities”. It has 4 thought-provoking articles by Prof. Biswambar Pyakurel, Krishna Hari Baskota, Dr. Durgesh Man Singh and Mr. R. B. Rauniyar on themes such as trade, economic diplomacy, customs reforms, etc. This book is a proceeding of a seminar that the IFA organized in cooperation with the SAWTEE last year.



Left-Wing Extremism in India

P.G. Rajamohan

Despite the efforts to resolve the 35 year long left-wing extremism in the Indian subcontinent, the violence has been continuing and we are witnessing a gradual increase in the left-wing extremists' (commonly termed as Naxalites) activities in the region. The recently held peace talks between the state governments and Naxalites clearly exemplifies the lack of vision while addressing the problems in the society. It has been widely pronounced that there is an absence of any comprehensive strategy to tackle the Naxalites threat between the Union Government in India and the Naxalism infested states.

Peace talks: Hope for new beginning?

The Indian National Congress (I) won with overwhelming majority in the assembly election in Andhra Pradesh and formed a coalition government at the Center as well. Its gestures declared an unofficial ceasefire with the Naxalites. Since the Indian State of Andhra Pradesh has been the primary victim of the Naxalite violence and the People's War Group (PWG) has been the most prominent among the (existing 40 odd left-wing extremist groups) Naxalite groups operating in India, with a strong base in Andhra Pradesh, the peace talks centered around these two actors.

The peace process had begun with the PWG's prerequisite demands in a statement issued by the 'State Committee Secretary', Ramakrishna insisting for 'simultaneous ceasefire' and safe passage for their representatives to hold talks with the State Government. On June 16, 2004 the Andhra Pradesh (AP) Government responding to the first demand of the extremist group had officially

declared a three-month ceasefire with PWG and other like-minded groups in the State. The Andhra Pradesh Home Minister, K. Jana Reddy announced that the other demands of the PWG - constitution of a supervisory committee, initial dialogue with mediators and final discussions between ministerial representatives and PWG 'State committee' representatives – were also acceptable to the Government. He also assured for suspension of stern actions against the Naxalites during the ceasefire period. On June 22, PWG reciprocated the Government's "goodwill" gesture and announced a cease-fire for three months and nominated Ramakrishna, as secretary of one of its three committees, to interact with the Government on holding talks. The Andhra Pradesh Government from its side nominated S R Sankaran as the head of the team of mediators for discussions with the PWG.

Further developments in peace talks were seen when PWG named a team of six mediators for holding peace talks. On July 13, Home Minister, Jana Reddy, initiated the official talks with the PWG emissaries, Varavara Rao, G. Kalyana Rao and Balladeer Gaddar at the Secretariat in Hyderabad. As part of the confidence building measures the PWG 'State Secretary' Ramakrishna's name was deleted from the police website's category of 'most wanted man.' The other initiatives included the constitution of a monitoring committee with representatives from nine organisations, for overseeing the cease-fire implementation and giving permission to the PWG to hold its 'martyrs day meeting' at Mogilicherla in the Warangal district on July 28, signaling that any democratic

meeting without weapons was permissible. Above all, on July 21, the Andhra Pradesh Government announced that the ban on PWG and its six frontal organizations - Radical Students Union, Radical Youth League, Singareni Karmika Samakhya, All India Revolutionary Students Federation, Dandakaranya Adivasi Kissan Mazdoor Sanghatan and Andhra Pradesh Rythu Coolie Sangham - was not extended.

Meanwhile, the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Janashakti, submitted a 42 point socio-economic issues including creation of an autonomous tribal State merging all tribal areas including Dandakaranya area, creation of a separate Telangana and acknowledged the Government's invitation to participate in the proposed discussions along with the PWG.

On September 29, the AP Home Minister, Jana Reddy, announced the names of eight representatives, including three ministers, who would participate in the proposed direct talks with the Naxalites under his leadership. Subsequently, on October 5, mediators of the PWG and the Janashakti finalised their agenda for the October 15 peace talks with the Andhra Pradesh Government and handed it over to Home Minister Jana Reddy for the first round of talks. Release of political prisoners, distribution of land to the landless, ensuring social justice to disadvantaged sections, creation of a separate Telangana state, development of Rayalaseema and North Andhra areas and imposition of prohibition are the issues proposed to be taken up by the Naxalites during the talks. Also, the People's War Group (PWG) leaders, 'secretary' Ramakrishna, secretary of the 'Andhra-Orissa Border Special Zone Committee', Sudhakar, member of the 'North Telangana Special Zonal Committee', Ganesh and Janasakthi representatives, Amar and Riyaz were declared to be the participants in the peace talks.

The negotiations had failed to make headway

further as the Naxalite representatives insisted on a commitment to end repression against the 'people's movements' before taking up the main agenda and put forth four demands — withdrawal of criminal cases against participants in 'people's struggles', release of political prisoners, scrapping of rewards on the heads of 'revolutionaries' and disbanding the armed mafia gangs. The land issue, the list of agriculture land gifted to various corporate houses and "lack of sincerity" in implementing land reforms dominated during the talks with Andhra Pradesh government on October 17. Consequently, Home Minister Jana Reddy said "We proposed to set up a committee to identify the surplus and undistributed land in endowments, works, agriculture and other categories" and the Naxalite representative handed over a letter to the Government furnishing details of 43 individuals, owning hundreds of acres of land in and around the twin cities.

Meanwhile, the AP Chief Minister, Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy, ruling out the possibilities of taking back and redistributing the allotted lands, advised the Home Minister not to allow differences to derail the talks. Further he said that the demands would be accepted, which were within the purview of the Indian constitution.

The four days peace talks chiefly centered on the issue of prisoners and land distribution and have with decisions of high-level commission would identify government land for distribution and a land bank would be floated in cities. The Home Minister assured that the government would review all cases of prisoners, including those under Prevention of Terrorism Act 2002 (POTA) and Public Safety Act (PSA), while he did not specify a date for the next round. Admitting the difficulties in meeting their demands, the Naxalite leaders gave five to six months period but demanded high sincerity from the Government side.

‘United’ Armed Struggle:

The highly speculated unification of these left-wing extremist groups came into force a day before the beginning of the peace talks on October 14. The two prominent Naxalite outfits, the People’s War Group (PWG) and Maoist Communist Centre (MCC), signaled the formation of a “new unified party”, known as Communist Party of India (Maoist) and declared Muppala Laxman Rao alias Ganapathi (former PWG Central Committee member) as the ‘general secretary’ of the newly formed party. According to the Naxalite leaders, the merger “fulfilled the aspirations of the masses” for a strong revolutionary party that would usher in a “new democratic society” by advancing towards socialism and communism. They also stated that the two guerrilla “armies” of the PWG and the MCC — the People’s Guerrilla Army (PGA) and the People’s Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) — have merged and would be called the PLGA from December 2, 2004.

The Naxalites’ activities exemplifies that these groups would never give up ‘protracted armed struggle’ till they achieve the ‘ultimate goal of political power’, but they consider these peace talks would be a ‘possible way to solve the people’s problems.’ The Naxalites representative in the peace talks, Akkiraju Haragopal alias Ramakrishna belonging to PWG, while addressing a meeting during the peace talks called the people to be prepared to “wage a relentless struggle” against the state and declared that the CPI (Maoist) party would continue to People’s Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA), for capturing political power in different regions in India.

The security sources have alleged the Naxalites indulging in extortion, gaining sympathetic cadres and recruiting cadres in villages even during the ceasefire period. In West Bengal, taking advantage of the restricted movements of security forces due to the monsoon, Naxalites have sneaked into the

hilly terrain of the East and West Singhbhum and Seraikela-Kharsawan districts of Jharkhand. The police sources have warned the Maoists’ increasing influence in Midnapore, Purulia and Bankura areas, particularly in the tribal hamlet of Jharkhand, Orissa, and Bihar.

Union Government:

There are a number of doubts as far as the peace talks are concerned and the skeptics are present both within and outside the government. One of the issues that could hamper the peace talks is the belief of the Indian Union Government that the Naxalite violence is continuing unabated, despite the cease fire and the level of Naxalite violence remains high in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa and Maharashtra. Available reports indicate that 125 districts in 12 States have now been affected by Naxalite violence in varying degrees and Naxal outfits were targeting another 24 districts. Till August this year, Naxalite violence had claimed 405 lives in 1,140 incidents against 348 deaths in 1,138 incidents in the corresponding period last year.

Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh stated that a cross-border linkage of the Maoists poses an even greater threat (to India) than militancy in Jammu and Kashmir and the North East. “Large swathes of tribal territory from Andhra Pradesh in the South to the borders of Uttar Pradesh and Bengal in the North and East respectively have become the hunting grounds of left-wing extremists...Left-wing extremism continues to haunt us, albeit in new forms....While many of the best and the brightest had been attracted towards the movement but almost 40 years later, the Naxalite movement has lost much of its intellectual élan, although it has gained in strength and spread to over 150 districts of the country,” the Prime Minister added.

During a meeting of the Chief Ministers and

Home Ministers of the nine Naxalite affected States convened by the Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, on September 21, a majority of the delegates expressed that the Union Government ought to initiate a composite dialogue with the Naxalites instead of leaving it to individual State Governments to tackle the problem. Promising for Central assistance for modernising police forces and development of backward areas, Patil suggested the States affected by left-wing extremist violence to initiate talks with the various concerned groups.

Any such re-alignment or outfits unity moves, is likely to impart a qualitative impetus to the Naxalism that has already witnessed perceptible resuscitation and growth in the recent years in the form of extensive militarisation, increasing violence and geographical spread.

Continuing menace?

While meticulously observing the progress in the peace talks, rest of the States are more concerned about the growing tentacles of the Naxalites influence in their respective areas. As part of the expanding of their protracted armed struggle into the virgin territory i.e., Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, these states are fast emerging as a new base for Naxalites. The Naxalites have been insisting for removal of terrorist tag and release of imprisoned cadres to hold talks with the other State Governments. In Andhra Pradesh, lifting the nine-year old ban on the Naxalites resulted in intensified campaign of recruitment into their cadreship, targeting the uneducated and unemployed youths and mobilization of sympathizers in and around the cities. Torchlight rallies, recruitment parades and *praja darbars* (People's courts) have been held across rural areas. Despite the government's peace initiatives, the Naxalites have been demonstrating their violence in equal intervals. The non-

participation of other left-wing extremist groups would also endanger the peace process.

Though the initial euphoria has now resulted in mutual recrimination, yet it is important that the peace talks momentum is kept alive. The immediate and long-term success of the peace talks would most importantly relieve the people of the violence-affected areas. Clearly both the State governments as well as the Naxalite groups during and before the cease fire periods have worked with a motivation governed by their self interests. This is perhaps the main reason for the current crisis in the process of the peace talks. Also, the piecemeal efforts to solve the problem through negotiations in the past have only helped entrench the movement further, which needs to be recognized before another ill-conceived political gambit creates additional spaces for further Naxalite expansion. Above all, it is more important to derive a coordinated comprehensive strategy, including all the Naxalite infested states as well the Union Government to tackle the left-wing extremists threat in various theaters.

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