

The triangular affair gets tougher before BRICS summit

Recently, an eight-member Indian military delegation arrived in China for a six-day visit to Beijing, Shanghai, and the Xinjiang region. The arrival marks a resumption of military ties that India broke off last July over a visa dispute.

Since 2008, China had been stapling paper visas to the passports of visitors from Jammu and Kashmir, instead of just stamping them, in an effort to contest New Delhi's sovereignty over the territories. Beijing finally backed down and started stamping passports again after Prime Minister Manmohan Singh met with his Chinese counterpart, President Hu Jintao, on the sidelines of the BRICS summit this April.

In perhaps another sign that Beijing has eased off, the Indian delegation that arrived in China on Sunday is headed by Major General Gurmeet Singh of the Northern Army, which holds Jammu and Kashmir under its command. This is quite a change from a year ago, when Beijing triggered the visa dispute by refusing to



stamp the passport of a former Northern Army commander.

During the year-long freeze in ties, the two militaries maintained phone and other contacts, and now the relationship has supposedly returned to normal. Yet intractable differences remain between the

two nations over Jammu and Kashmir, as well as other border hotspots.

Chinese patrolling of their disputed boundaries has become more aggressive in recent years, and China's generals have been bulking up their forces on the Indian border. Moreover, Beijing has been

building the transportation infrastructure necessary for rushing reinforcements into the area.

New Delhi, for its part, has sought to downplay incidents that have been occurring between its troops and China's, perhaps as a means of buying time to strengthen its forces in disputed territory. At the moment, China's soldiers there hold the upper hand. Neither side has been willing to make territorial concessions to settle long-running border disagreements, but both countries have been largely willing to ignore the matter to pursue better overall relations. The feeling in New Delhi is that there must be some way to come to an accommodation with Beijing.

At first glance, the Indian view looks like wishful thinking. As an initial matter, there is China's recent hostility to its southern neighbours. Moreover, Beijing has been supporting anti-India militants, who have been become bold in their attacks. And China has been basing troops close to Indian-controlled territo-

ry. There are, for instance, reports of thousands of Chinese soldiers in what Islamabad now calls Gilgit-Baltistan, in northern Pakistan.

The Foreign Ministry in Beijing denies claims that Pakistan has ceded control of Kashmir to China, but last August and September Chinese diplomats confirmed that their troops were there to deliver supplies and to help Pakistan with flood relief work. In any event, the presence of the People's Liberation Army so near to India is making New Delhi nervous, especially because it highlights the closer interaction between Islamabad and Beijing and the deeper anti-India hue of their tie-up.

It's unlikely that the delegation can make any difference while in China. Perhaps the most India can expect is to cool tensions so that its military can get ready for a conflict that Beijing is contemplating.

Source: World Affairs Journal

Iraq, Afghanistan Wars Cost US Nearly \$4 Trillion: Report

A new report issued by Brown University says the cost of America's wars in Iraq and Afghanistan - and operations in Pakistan - will cost the country nearly \$4 trillion. The report's total is more than three times higher than U.S. President Barack Obama's estimate in a recent speech.

When Obama recently announced a drawdown of U.S. troops from Afghanistan, he said America's wars have cost the country \$1 trillion dollars.

But a report by Brown University's Watson Institute for International Studies estimates the total cost at \$3.7 trillion.

The study includes spending on wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as operations in Pakistan. Catherine Lutz is one of the study's co-authors.

"The reasonable estimate is approximately \$4 trillion for the war, up to... today and including some of the future costs that we are obligated to pay for veterans care," said Lutz. "In addition, another \$1 trillion in interest payments on the debt, we estimate will be required through 2020."

Lutz said costs such as long-term care of wounded veterans, and projected war spending from 2012 through 2020, were included in the figures. Report co-author,



Boston University Political Science Professor Neta Crawford, said other costs include lost opportunities because money was spent on war materiel.

"So if you think about the annual budget of these wars, let us say it averages \$130 billion each year for the last 10 years, then you get more than 900,000 jobs in education that could have been created," said Crawford.

The human costs also are also high.

The report says between 224,000 and 258,000 people have died directly from warfare, with 125,000 of them civilians in Iraq.

Even with the president's planned drawdown of 33,000 troops, there will still be almost 70,000 troops in Afghanistan at an estimated cost of \$1.2 million each.

Source: Voice of America

Anna..

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Anna visited the project and decided to implement it in Ralegan Siddhi. By keeping an eye on conserving every drop of water and preventing erosion of the fertile soil, he steered the villagers to begin working towards water conservation. At the outset, they completed 48 Nala Bunding work, contour trenches, staggered trenches, gully plugs, meadows development and of forestation of 500 hectares of land. Thereafter, they constructed five RCC weirs and 16 Gabion Weirs.

This resulted in increase in the ground water level. After that, Anna along with his team worked out the cropping pattern suitable to the quality of soil and the water volume available for farming. This led to increase in the water table by making water available for 1,500 acres of land instead of 300 acres. As a natural sequel, this effort led to yielding of food-grains and the villagers became self-sufficient in terms of food. The table turned turtle - earlier there was no work available for the villagers, now manpower was required to be imported from neighbouring villages.

The changes in the economics brought all the villagers under one roof of unity and people voluntarily contributed in terms of labour and money to build a school, a hostel, a temple and other buildings. Mass marriages, grains bank, dairy, cooperative society, self-help groups for women and youth mandals helped develop the village in all aspects and gave a new face to it.

Anna opines that proper planning of natural and human resources can result in the betterment of a person, area, village instead of exploiting such resources. He says, "Today we all are exploiting the earthen resources like petrol, diesel, kerosene, coal and water. This can never be termed as perennial development as it is going to lead a state of destruction one day. The sources of energy are limited and hence I am concerned about the next generations. Today many of the villages of almost every state are feeling the brunt of water shortage. Building concrete jungles does not mean development as Gandhiji had rightly said.

Creation of a human idol should be the main objective rather than creating towering buildings. Surely, one needs to live for oneself and the family but simultaneously one owes something to your neighbour, your village and your nation too. For this, you need an idol who could lead to this goal. Such leadership is not created by power or money but only by virtues like pure thinking, matching action and willingness to sacrifice.

Anna's Ralegan Siddhi became the first role model of an ideal village and has become a tourist spot for many visitors across the nation, since it shows the metamorphoses from the worst village to an ideal village. Visitors include politicians, researchers, social workers and students. Four postgraduate students have completed Ph. D. thesis on Ralegan Siddhi.

Anti-Corruption Crusade

Anna rightly thought that Development is marred by corruption and started a new venture in 1991 called Bhrashtachar Virodhi Jan Aandolan (BVJA) or public movement against corruption. It was found that some 42 forest officers had duped the state government for crores of rupees through corruption in confederacy. Anna submitted the evidences to the government but the latter was reluctant to take action against all these officers as one of the ministers of the ruling party was involved in the scam. A distressed Anna returned the Padmashree Award to the President of India and also returned the

Vriksha Mitra Award given by then prime minister of India Rajiv Gandhi.

He further went on an indefinite hunger strike in Alandi on the same issue. Finally, the government woke up from deep slumber and took action against the culprits. Anna's sustained campaign on this issue had a great effect - six of the ministers were forced to resign and more than 400 officers from different government offices were sent back to home.

Anna realized that it was not enough to merely take action against fraudulent ministers or officers but to change the entire system that was studded with loopholes. Hence, he campaigned for the Right to Information Act. The state government turned a blind eye towards the pleas in this regard and so he first agitated in the historical Azad Maidan in Mumbai in the year 1997. To create mass public awareness about RTI amongst the youth, Anna traveled extensively throughout the state. The government kept promising that RTI Act would be made but never raised this issue in the house or the state assembly. Anna did not relent - he agitated at least ten times.

Finally, again he went on an indefinite hunger strike at Azad Maidan in the last week of July 2003. At last, the President of India signed the draft of the Right to Information Act after his 12-day-long hunger strike and ordered the state government to implement it with effect from 2002. The same draft was considered as the base document for the making of the National Right to Information Act-2005.

After the implementation of the RTI Act-2005, Anna travelled for more than 12,000 Kms across the state creating awareness about the Act. In the second phase, he interacted with more than one lakh college students and also conducted mass public meetings across 24 districts of the state. The third phase included daily 2-3 public meetings in more than 155 tehsil places. In this massive campaign, posters, banners were displayed and more than one lakh booklets of the provisions of the Act were distributed at a nominal price. This created enough of awareness and people were educated on the issue of rights of citizens.

Anna deservedly won the coveted Padmashree and then Padmabhushan. Care International of the USA, Transparency International, Seoul (South Korea) also felicitated him. Apart from this, he received awards worth Rs 25 lakh and donated the entire amount for the Swami Vivekananda Kritadnyata Nidhi (social gratitude fund). Out of the two lakh rupees received from the above amount, mass marriages are carried of at least 25-30 poor couples every year.

The state government promoted opening of cooperative societies, credit societies & urban banks. Believing in the principles of cooperative sector, the utmost lower class of the society invested their savings with such cooperative societies. However, the directors of such societies devoured the money and failed to pay back the basic amount to the members of the societies. This created havoc and people were duped for crores of rupees and did not have money for the marriages of their daughters or for medical treatment. Anna agitated for over eight months. The result was that more than Rs 125 crore was recovered from defaulters and the members of such societies heaved a sigh of relief. Recovery of around Rs. 400 crores is in the pipeline.

Actually the government should train the members of NGOs who can work in the sector of prevention of corruption. Then and then only we can dream of corruption-free state, according to Anna.

France sent weapons to Libyan civilians

PARIS - France sent weapons this month to Libyan civilians to fight Col. Moammar Gadhafi's forces, a military spokesman said Wednesday, making it the first country from the North American Treaty Organization (NATO) to announce it has armed rebel fighters.

The deliveries of guns, rocket-propelled grenades and munitions took place in early June in the western Nafusa mountains, when Col. Gadhafi forces had encircled civilians and his government refused a United Nations request to allow in a humanitarian aid shipment, Col. Thierry Burkhard said.

After informing the United Nations, France dropped humanitarian aid including water, food and medical supplies to besieged civilians in the region, but the situation then deteriorated further, he said.

"So France also dropped equipment that allowed them to defend themselves - self-defense assets - which is to say weapons and munitions," Mr. Burkhard said by phone.

The weapons were parachuted in by air and included assault weapons, machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades and munitions, he said.

France and Britain, backed by the United States, have been among the main powers behind a months-long NATO-led air campaign to protect civilians from assaults by Col. Gadhafi's forces.

In Brussels, a NATO official said that until now, no alliance member had shipped weapons to the rebels since the

fighting started in the north African country in March.

Officials in the West and beyond have debated whether the U.N. resolution in March that authorized a no-fly zone over Libya and NATO's air campaign to protect civilians also left room for weapons shipments to rebels.

Security Council permanent members Russia and China have been among the most wary of the NATO-led campaign in Libya, and several French diplomats in Paris dodged the question about how a decision was made to airlift in the weapons.

Italy's foreign minister, Franco Frattini, has made the case that U.N. resolutions on Libya did not prohibit providing weapons to the rebels, and said this spring that it was "morally justified" to aid the opposition.

Francois Heisbourg, director of the Foundation for Strategic Research think tank in Paris, said the French weapons drop was likely to raise questions among opponents of the NATO-led intervention - and in particular about an U.N. embargo on weapons shipments to Libya.

"There's a question as to whether aiding the rebellion is part of the embargo or not, but it isn't clear cut," he said. "That question will presumably be raised by those who expressed reticence in the Security Council."

"Some NATO allies like Turkey were against the campaign against Gadhafi to begin with, so this isn't going to make them any happier," he said.

Mr. Heisbourg noted the region is

inhabited by many ethnic Berbers who oppose Col. Gadhafi. "The point could be made that in this case they really do serve for the protection of civilians, which is what the U.N. resolution says."

The press office at the Chinese mission to the United Nations referred requests for comment to the Foreign Ministry in Beijing. The press office at the Russia's U.N. mission did not immediately respond to an email requesting comment.

Meanwhile, in London on Wednesday, British Foreign Secretary William Hague said Libya's cash-strapped opposition has received donor funds to pay salaries to public-sector workers in rebel-held areas.

Last week, a first payment of \$100 million in international aid money was made to Libya's main opposition group, based in the eastern city of Benghazi, Mr. Hague told lawmakers.

He said a meeting of the contact group in Istanbul next month would seek to ensure "the international community is ready to support the Libyan people in building a stable future."

Libya's Transitional National Council said that funds would be used to pay teachers, street cleaners and other workers providing essential services.

Opposition Finance Minister Ali Tarhouni has made repeated pleas for urgent funds, and warned on Tuesday that hospitals in the eastern city of Benghazi were running low on medical supplies.

Wall Street Journal