

HOODA PUTS ONUS ON MADAM



SULKING AFTER LOSING the Ellenabad byelection to Abhey Singh Chautala, son of the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) supremo Om Prakash Chautala, Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda nonetheless tried to put up a brave face highlighting that the party had managed to reduce the victory margin of its rival. However, the loss gave an opportunity to his detractors to attack him and at the recent meeting of the Congress coordination committee Union Minister for Poverty Alleviation Kumari Selja and former finance minister Birender Singh cornered Hooda and questioned the working of the government. These leaders also found an opportunity to ask for their pound of flesh by getting their supporters adjusted in various plum government posts. But Hooda proved to be smarter. "This would be done with the approval of Congress president Sonia Gandhi, anything else?" he said, while putting a stop to the discussion in this regard.

KISSA KURSI KA

IF ELLENABAD WAS the first test for Hooda then his much-awaited Cabinet expansion is proving no less problematic. Many senior leaders are cooling their heels out of the Hooda Council of Ministers whereas all the seven Independent MLAs who supported the then 40-member minority government have been given ministerial berths. Two senior ministers of his previous government, Kiran Choudhry and Savitri Jindal, failed to get a place in the first expansion. Also waiting in the wings is Sampat Singh, considered as Hooda's prize catch after he joined the Congress on the eve of the last Assembly elections, breaking his 35-year-long ties with the Chautalas. There are also five Haryana Janhit Congress (HJC) 'defector' MLAs.

KHAP ARROGANCE TAMED

FINALLY, THE PEOPLE of the state seem to have raised their voice against the arrogant khap panchayats. The Meham Choubisi, the umbrella body of khap panchayats in Haryana, that once took on former Haryana Chief Minister Om Prakash Chautala, intervened in a case where a woman filed a complaint against Rohtak's Kheri village's khap panchayat for issuing a diktat nullifying the marriage of a couple from the village. Incidentally, Chautala had to resign after the Meham Choubisi took action against him following electoral violence in the area in late eighties. It is now the khaps who seem to be on the backfoot after the Meham Choubisi decided to allow the couple to live together after a complaint was filed with the Rohtak SSP.

TOO GOOD TO RESIST

TO CONTINUE THEIR stay in their sprawling Chandigarh bungalows some Haryana babus do not mind putting their career opportunities on hold. Recently three Indian Police Service (IPS) officers were selected for central deputation but all three declined to take up the offer for one reason or the other. Two of the three are actually not holding plum postings and a central deputation would no doubt have meant broadening their professional horizon. However, the lure of their current lifestyle is clearly too strong to resist. "This government is best to serve. Lots of golf, lots of fun, lot of time with family and no work. Only a nincompoop would prefer to leave all this," quipped an officer.

MUKESH BHARDWAJ

Track II: Full steam ahead

Post-26/11, India and Pakistan saw a long break in formal dialogue. But there was a flurry of unofficial exchanges

MANU PUBBY

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 11

THE 26/11 attacks in Mumbai put a freeze on the bilateral dialogue between India and Pakistan — till a few days back, when New Delhi proposed Foreign Secretary-level talks to be held later this month. On the other hand, the recent months have seen a sudden flurry of unofficial exchanges and dialogues between the two countries. Interestingly, most of these exchanges have the tacit backing of major western powers, some of which have high stakes in the region.

In the past few weeks alone, there have been at least eight conferences on reconciliation, involving politicians, former diplomats, retired military persons, jurists and prominent peaceniks from other walks of life. Many of these were sponsored by the US and other western countries including Canada and Germany.

The underlying effort of all these meetings was to find a way out of the impasse and resume official dialogue between the countries. The most recent was a meeting of the prominent Track II Balusa group in Lahore in the last week of January, that was attended among others by Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyer. Balusa is a US-backed initiative that was started by Shirin Tahir-Kheli, who was an adviser in the Bush administration.

"What Track II does is keep the flame of hope burning even when there is no effort on Track I. This freeze in the dialogue is making people wonder whether each country is actually acting in our own best interest," said Aiyer.

The low-key meet, which included former foreign secretary Salman Haider and former IB director Ajit Doval, did not come up with a white paper but agreed that a resumption of dialogue was the need of the hour.

Besides the Lahore meet, a meeting on Indo-Pak peace was organised by the Capital-based Centre for Dialogue and Reconciliation (CDR) last month. The Delhi-based centre is backed by the German Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF) which is close to the country's Free Democratic Party. However, CDR says that the funding goes back several years

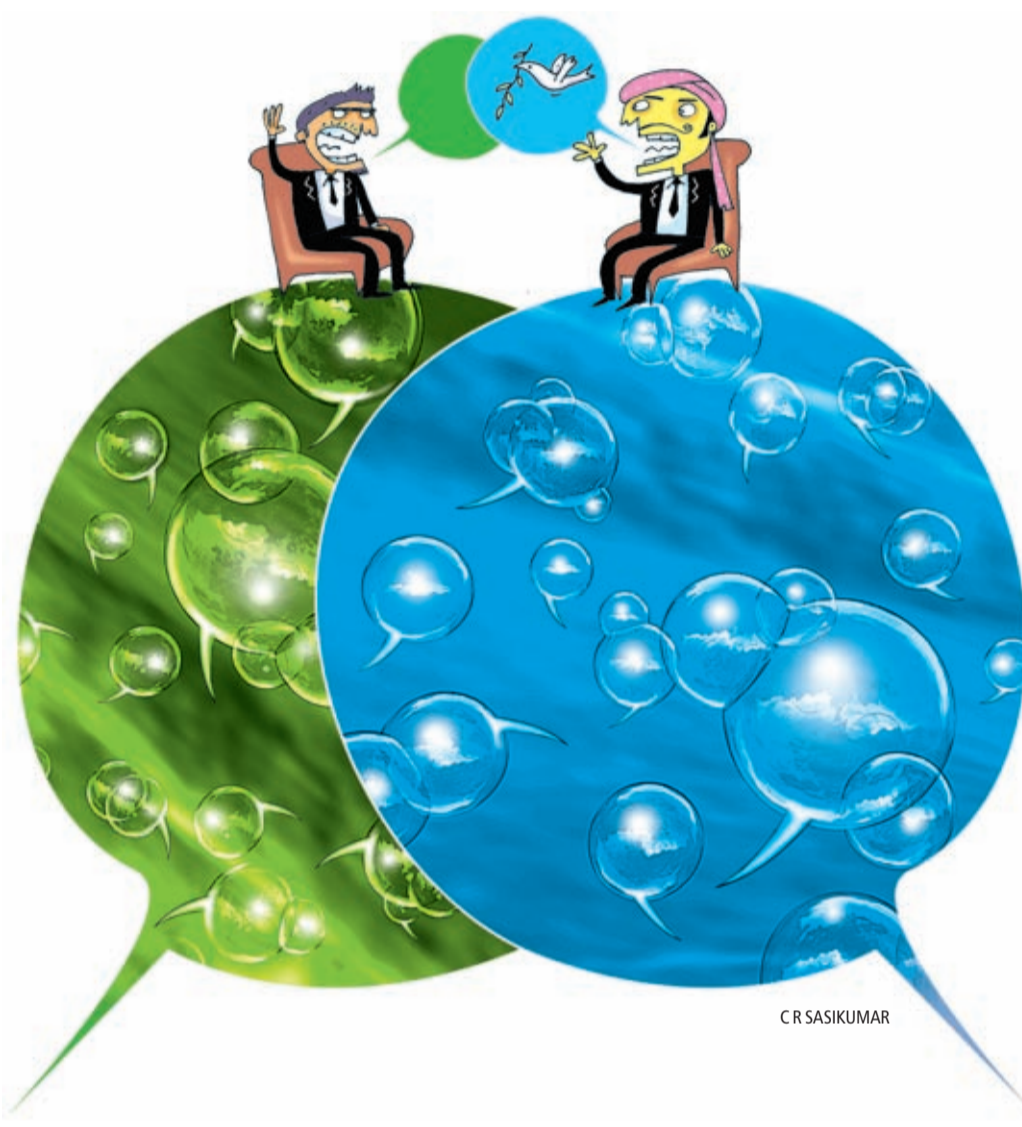
and is not specific to the meet.

This dialogue was also attended by prominent peaceniks including I A Rehman, founding member of the Pakistan-India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy, and two former Pakistani high commissioners to India. The private meeting, which was steered by historian Rajmohan Gandhi, focused on the need to increase people-to-people ties. "A statement will be issued later but there was general consensus on two things. One, that there should be more people-to-people contacts and second, that the governments should indeed resume the dialogue process," said Gandhi.

Experts also feel that the spurt in Track II talks is because of an increasing realisation that confrontation in the long run is not in the interest of either country.

"The lack of government-to-government contact is only one of the factors contributing to an acceleration in Track II. Another factor is increased realisation in both countries that the confrontation between India and Pakistan is extracting, from the people on both sides, a cost that is prohibitive and does not make sense either," said Rehman.

These efforts also touch on other sensitive issues like disarmament and nuclear confidence building measures between the countries. Funded by the US-based Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI) group, the Institute of Peace and Conflict



C R SASIKUMAR

HELPING HAND: SOME FUNDING FROM US, GERMANY...

JAN 2010

■ A three-day conference on "India and Pakistan — A roadmap to peace" was held from January 15-17.

FUNDING: German NGO Heinrich Boell Stiftung, an independent organisation that is affiliated to the German Green Party, was a major financial contributor.

PARTICIPANTS: About 20 people from Pakistan, politicians and separatists from Kashmir, former military officers, diplomats, bureaucrats and artists from India. The list included Yasin Malik, former Navy chief Admiral L Ramdas, Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyer, Pakistani barrister Aitzaz Ahsan and Mehbooba Mufti.

■ A discussion on Indo-Pak peace was organised in the Capital by the Centre for Dialogue & Reconciliation.

FUNDING: The NGO is funded by German Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF) which is

close to the country's Free Democratic Party.

PARTICIPANTS: The conference was steered by Rajmohan Gandhi. I A Rehman, founding member of the Pakistan-India Peoples' Forum for Peace and Democracy, two former Pakistani High Commissioners, Salima Hashmi, daughter of the famous poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz, were among those who attended it.

■ A meeting of the Track II Balusa group was held in Lahore in the last week of January.

FUNDING: Balusa is a US-backed initiative that was started by Shirin Tahir-Kheli, who was an adviser in the Bush administration.

PARTICIPANTS: Former Generals, artists, peace workers and bureaucrats.

■ ICCR: The Indian Council for Cultural Relations is organising events on the SAARC platform to engage Pakistan and other nations on the cultural front. A meeting was organised in January consisting of Ambassadors and High Commissioners

as part of the initiative.

NOV 2009

■ An international seminar on "India-Pakistan: A peace process" was organised by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) foundation in Singapore.

FUNDING: FES is a German NGO that has the support of the Social Democratic Party of Germany.

PARTICIPANTS: Pakistan's former interior minister Moinuddin Haider and Maj Gen (ret'd) Ashok Mehta (convenor of FES India) were among those who attended the meet.

OCT 2009

■ The Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS) organised a three-day Indo-Pak Track II dialogue on Conflict Resolution and Peace Building in Bangkok. The discussions touched

issues like cross-LoC interactions, the Siachen dispute, a common strategy for Afghanistan and expansion of Indo-Pak trade.

FUNDING: San Francisco-based Ploughshares Fund.

PARTICIPANTS: It was attended among others by K C Singh, former secretary, MEA, and Najmuddin A Sheikh, former foreign secretary, Pakistan.

AUG 2009

■ Trilateral dialogue between India, China and Pakistan at the Fudan University in Shanghai, with the focus on disarmament and nuclear rationalisation.

FUNDING: The dialogue was also organised by the IPCS and supported by American foundation Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI) that is based in Washington.

PARTICIPANTS: Rear Admiral (ret'd) Raja Menon was among those who attended the meet.

30 YEARS OF TURMOIL

With the Centre likely to hold talks with the NSCN in April, SAMUDRA GUPTA KASHYAP maps the history of the movement

What is the history of the Naga movement?

The British, who annexed Assam in 1826, constituted the Naga Hills district in 1866 and followed a policy of non-interference towards the hill tribes. As British paramountcy in India ended, A Z Phizo, president of the Naga National Council (NNC) declared independence on August 14, 1947. Since then the Naga Hills have been in turmoil, and despite creation of a separate Nagaland state in 1963, the movement has continued.

What is the NSCN?

The National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) was formed on January 31, 1980 by Isak Chisi Swu, Thuingaleng Muivah and SS Khaplang, who were all opposed to the NNC signing the Shillong Accord in 1975. But as differences cropped up, Khaplang moved out to form the NSCN(K) on April 30,

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1988, with the original group coming to be known as NSCN (IM).

The NSCN(IM) has a strong international network. In 1993, it was admitted to the Unrepresented Peoples & Nations Organisation (UNPO). In Amsterdam, it has the Naga International Support Centre, intended at making known to the world the Nagas and their struggle. The UK-based Naga Vigil is yet another organisation providing vital support.

The NSCN(IM) movement, often called the "mother of all insurgencies", is also held responsible for rise of insurgent groups in other states of the Northeast. Its 'Greater Nagalim' demand has created problems, with Assam and Manipur refusing to give even an inch of land.

What is the objective of the NSCN?

The primary aim is a Greater Nagalim comprising all Naga-inhabited areas, irrespective of whether they are in India or Myanmar. The NSCN-IM's manifesto is based on the principle of socialism for economic development and a spiritual outlook — 'Nagalim for Christ.'

Incidentally, the Nagaland Assembly passed a resolution back in 1964 supporting inclusion of all Naga-inhabited areas under one umbrella. Since then it has adopted the same resolution four more times, provoking a counter-resolution in Assam and Manipur each time.

Who are the NSCN leaders?

The NSCN (IM) leadership has a dominance of Tangkhuls — a Naga tribe inhabiting Senapati, Ukhrul, Chandel and Tameng-



Isak and Muivah at the 6th Naga People's Consultative Meeting near Dimapur in 2007. ARCHIVE

long districts of adjoining Manipur. Thuingaleng Muivah, a Masters from Gauhati University, is general secretary and 'prime minister' of the Government of People's Republic of Nagalim (GPRN). Isak Chisi Swu is chairman. It has a full-fledged nine-member ministry, the four major ministries being home, defence, fi-

nance and foreign affairs.

Where does the NSCN get funds from?

NSCN (IM), like similar insurgent outfits in the area, collects "taxes" from the people in Nagaland and other "Naga-inhabited areas" on a regular basis. The GPRN has an annual budget of

Rs 200-Rs 250 million. Intelligence reports also say that it collects portions of extorted funds of other outfits of the region in lieu of training, arms supply and shelter. Intelligence reports also say it earns money through narcotics trade. With an army of about 4,500 men, top NSCN(IM) leaders live outside India, mostly in

Southeast Asian countries like Thailand. It also had camps in Bangladesh and Myanmar, but most cadres have shifted to designated camps in Nagaland after it signed a ceasefire agreement with the Government of India on August 1, 1997. Leaders and supporters are said to have business interests in Myanmar, Thailand, Bangladesh and other countries. Its headquarters have also shifted to Camp Hebron in Nagaland.

Has the Centre held talks with the NSCN leadership in the past?

In 1992, the then Governor, M M Thomas, a clergyman from Kerala, made the first successful move to get in touch with the NSCN. On June 15, 1995, then prime minister P V Narasimha Rao first met Muivah and Swu in Paris. A ceasefire was agreed upon with the Government of India with effect from August 1997. Subsequently, former prime ministers H D Deve Gowda (February 1997), A B Vajpayee (September 1998) and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (December 2004) also met them. At least 50 rounds of talks have been held between the two sides at various levels.