

'Domestic Security Key to External Relations'



*L-R: **B G Verghese**, Visiting Professor, Center for Policy Research; **Vikram Sood**, Former Secretary, RAW; **Kanwal Sibal**, Former Foreign Secretary, Government of India; **Lt General Satish Nambiar**, Director, United Service Institution of India; **Vice Admiral P S Das**, Former Commander-in-Chief of the Eastern Naval Command; Moderator: **Jehangir Pocha**, Editor, *Businessworld*.*

"The foreign policy of any country cannot be divorced from its domestic affairs," said **Mr Kanwal Sibal, Former Foreign Secretary**, pointing out that improved relations with Pakistan were unlikely until the issue of terrorism was tackled more concretely.

Participating in the session on 'Security and Stability in India: A Bridge to Nowhere', as part of Ideas India 2008 seminar hosted by the **Aspen Institute India** here on Friday, Mr Sibal said that India's relations with countries in the South East Asian region were today primarily influenced by security issues. He said that Pakistan has been using the bogey of Kashmir to influence India's relations with other West Asian countries, and "we should not let them succeed in this regard."

According to Mr Sibal, while India's relations with China have improved, the undercurrents of the border dispute and their relations with Pakistan remain. The other areas of concern remain the porous borders that India shares with Bangladesh and Nepal, both of which are increasingly being used as transit points by undesirable elements.

Voicing the need to maintain a credible and strategic security apparatus, **Lt Gen Satish Nambiar (retd), Director, United Service Institution of India**, said that a strong army was important as a deterring force. He said that this was necessary "even though it was unlikely that India would see another armed conflict in the immediate future. There can be difference of opinions but no conflicts." On terrorism, Lt Gen Nambiar said that "the focus on how to prevent attacks is lost in the hue and cry that follows any major incident."

Stating that the country's maritime forces were ready to play a more strategic role in the region, **Vice Admiral P S Das (retd)** said that "today security does not just mean military superiority. It is a multi-dimensional issue and a much larger concept." Stating that terrorist attacks put the focus only on systematic failures and not on faulty decision making, he said that "we must take corrective action at the earliest, bringing in greater accountability. Simultaneously, we must improve our organizational response capability."

"Terrorism is our problem and no one is going to battle it out for us," said **Mr Vikram Sood, Former Secretary, RAW**, adding that "terrorism is a crime that knows no laws or boundaries." Taking a dig at Pakistan, he said that "Islamabad inspires terrorism, using Kashmir as an excuse." Mr Sood said that there was no solution to the terrorism issue in military terms and it was unlikely that even the West would be able to rein in Pakistan. "Thus, the first weapon in any our defence has to be intelligence," he added.

Mr BG Verghese, Visiting Professor, Centre for Policy Research, emphasized on the need for improving the police forces, saying "citizens' security comes first. Police reforms are long overdue and we cannot wait any longer." He said that the government must evolve effective intelligence strategies if it is to check terrorism. "Terrorists today are in contact with the rest of the world with technologies such as mobile phones and the internet."

The session was moderated by **Mr Jehangir Pocha, Editor, Businessworld**.

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