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Nawaz Sharif calls PM, Parrikar sees security 'gaps'

Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif called Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday to assure him that Islamabad would take "prompt" and "decisive" action against the terrorists and their organisations who had mounted the operation in Pathankot. The Pakistan PM apparently did not attempt to prevaricate or dissemble as to the nationality of the attackers, especially after proof was provided to him. A press release put out by the ministry of external affairs said the Indian PM strongly emphasised the need for Pakistan to take firm and immediate action against the organisations and individuals responsible for and linked to the Pathankot terrorist attack. "Specific and actionable information in this regard has been provided to Pakistan," the release said. The evidence, in the form of a Letter Rogatory (LR), would be sent containing all possible information about the attackers: Phone data, the phone numbers of their handlers whom they called from India and DNA data. Indian security agencies hope that through the call details, Pakistani authorities would be able to reach the mother of one of the terrorists who had telephoned her saying he was on a suicide mission. The DNA samples would also help to establish that one of the terrorists was her son. Besides, the terrorists have made multiple calls to their handlers, believed to be based in Bahawalpur in Pakistan's Punjab, which is the headquarters of terror group Jaish-e-Mohammad. The terror group is suspected to be behind the attack on the Pathankot airbase. The Pakistani foreign office had a slightly different version of the conversation Sharif had with Modi. According to them, it was to convey his "grief and sorrow" that Sharif called Modi. He told Modi that terrorists would not be allowed to derail the peace process between the two countries and said Islamabad would investigate all leads or information provided by New Delhi. National Security Advisor AK Doval and his Pakistani counterpart, General Nasir Khan Janjua, also spoke on the phone. It is not known who took the initiative. At the same time, Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar said the actual operation to hunt down the gunmen had ended with the discovery of six badly burnt bodies of terrorists, who carried proof of being from Pakistan. He said combing operations to destroy and defuse explosives would continue. The defence minister conceded that there had been lapses in the operation but blamed the size and terrain of the Pathankot airbase for this. He was clear that he was speaking only on behalf of the defence services and would not comment either on the role of the state government or the National Security Guard (NSG), amid criticism that absence of command and control systems had led to a botched operation. He said the NSG continued to direct operations. On why the Indian Army had not taken a lead role in the operation, Parrikar said the army had no mandate to operate in civilian areas. A part of the airbase was in civilian areas. Several foreigners, who were undergoing training, were also present at the base, as were 3,000 civilian families. Parrikar said the NSG had worked out how the infiltrators entered, and what route they took, and would take steps to block them. "There is no suspected terrorist inside right now. (Still,) I will not give a negative report till the combing operations are over. The combing operations may be over by tomorrow," he said in reply to questions. Also, the operation was on only for 36 hours, and not 60-plus hours, as claimed by many, he said. Parrikar said the seven security personnel killed during the attack would be treated as martyrs, which would entitle their families to all the benefits available to a "battle casualty" in war-like situations. He said the terrorists were carrying 40-50 kg of bullets and mortars, which were fired from modified under-barrel grenade launchers, besides some magazines. Replying to questions, he said, "I see some gaps. But I do not think there is any compromise on security." Once the investigations are over, things would become clearer," he said, adding every security detail couldn't be discussed. Parrikar said he was worried as to how the terrorists had managed to come inside the 2,000-acre base, which has a perimeter of 24 km. Asked about the Pakistani connection, he said there were indications that some of the equipment was made in Pakistan. Parrikar said except the Garud commando, no one else was killed in the direct operation. "Five Defence Security Corps personnel died more because of bad luck. One of them, Jagdish Chandra, virtually grappled with the terrorist before killing him," he said. Calling the counter-terror operation as "very difficult", Parrikar said all assets - strategic and buildings - and the families, were secured. The only building that was damaged was the one in which the terrorists were holed up, he said. He complimented the joint efforts of the Army, Air Force, and the NSG and said they should undertake joint training in future. Brushing aside criticism over opting for the NSG for the main role rather than the special forces of the army, he said, "Fifty per cent of the NSG is made up of the Army only. All assets were provided by the Army and they worked together smoothly."

India-Pak ties in choppy waters, but talks must'

The audacious terror attack on the Pathankot airbase and the near-simultaneous attack on the Indian consulate in Afghanistan's Mazar-e-Sharif shows that the Pakistani military establishment, especially the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), wants to sabotage peace between India and Pakistan, but it is essential to carry on the bilateral dialogue process, say experts. While strategic expert Jai Kumar Verma feels that India should carry on the dialogue process and at the same time give back to Pakistan "in the same coin" by instigating unrest in its troubled spots, well-known expert Uday Bhaskar feels that calling off the talks would indicate that a group of terrorists is able to influence the nature of the India-Pakistan talks agenda.

Verma told thestatesman.com that the civilian government in Pakistan wants peace with India "but it has no hold on the military establishment, particularly the ISI." Verma feels that Pakistani Army Chief Raheel Sharif is "not happy over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Lahore visit because he feels that Pakistanis want peace and that the civilian government's (of Nawaz Sharif) image has been enhanced; and so he wants to sabotage it". Another reason cited by Verma is that the Pakistani terrorists were sent "with the intention to sabotage aircraft and high value items in the Pathankot airbase, but this they failed to do" What then should India do? Verma says that "India has the option to stop the talks - as the problem between the two Sharifs (PM Nawaz Sharif and Army Chief Raheel Sharif) is not our problem. But what is the use of it." "I feel the talks should not be stopped or postponed, as ultimately negotiations have to be held. And if we hold talks on their terms it has no benefit," he added. Verma says that if talks were held, India should "return them (Pakistan) in the same coin". "Pakistan has a lot of problems in comparison to India. There are many secessionist movements already going on - Balochistan, NWFP and Sind, Mohajir. These are only a few of them. I feel we should start financing them, start helping them, because the theory that a stable Pakistan is good for India is a wrong theory," he said. "A weak Pakistan is better because then they are more involved in their own problems and they will make less trouble for India. We have to be strong now because they will only understand this language," Verma said, adding that talks will not be cancelled as he feels that "whether they are useful or not in the international arena we can say we are talking". Strategic expert Uday Bhaskar says India-Pakistan ties are "in very choppy waters after Pathankot and Mazar-e-Sharif". "Much will depend on how Modi and Sharif are able to steer the fallout. From the Indian side there has been a lot of restraint," Bhaskar told thestatesman.com. Bhaskar, director of think tank Society for Policy Studies (SPS), said that after the Peshawar school attack, Pakistan had said it is against terrorism in all forms, but now it needs to convince itself which path it is taking. He said there are many forces in Pakistan who are against improvement in the bilateral relationship. "Hafiz Saeed, Hamid Gul, Aslam Beg, and even former Army Chief Pervez Musharraf -- they have different motivations, from revenge for the 1971 war to revenge for the Kargil war. I think the mindset in the anti-India constituency will take a very long time, and that is where Nawaz Sharif's credibility is under test... Meaning that he is saying he is committed to improving relationship with India; he said this to (former PM A.B.) Vajpayee in 1999 and got singled in Kargil. We have to check whether 16 years later he is able to bring about those changes in the internal structure," he said. Bhaskar feels that the India-Pakistan dialogue process would be like "two steps backwards, one step sideways, but India should remain engaged with Pakistan at the formal level, and bring the whole terrorism issue into central focus," and only when India's concerns on this are addressed then the relations could be taken forward. He said that India should "take a very pragmatic view and not snap talks", as it would highlight that "a group of terrorists are able to completely influence the nature of the agenda and the formal relationship" between India and Pakistan. Not holding talks would also help Pakistan project India as "recalcitrant and not talking" to the world, Bhaskar added.

INDIAN HACKERS DECLARES WAR ON PAKISTAN

New Delhi: Several Indian hackers have joined hands to launch a massive attack on Pakistani websites to avenge terror attack at Pathankot Air Force Station. According to hackers, they have hacked over a score websites, including crucial Pakistani government sites. Cyber crime experts' claim several hacking groups of India is working together and carrying out a mass defacement operation on key Pakistani websites. The group is also identifying and blocking profile on social media and websites being operated by banned terror outfits like Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD), Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) and Indian Mujahideen (IM). "For last three days all the active hacking groups are working on attacking Pakistan's cyber territory. Our Army is not replying, but we will not remain quiet but attack them on the virtual world," said an underground hacker to MAIL TODAY, adding that hackers among themselves are sharing details of vulnerability in Pakistani website to deface them. Each successful attack is celebrated by posting the tricolour with a patriotic Indian song on the compromised website to express anger. Cyber experts claim that attack from India is focused on targeting government websites. "Several Pakistani websites were hacked in the last couple of days, which is done to send across a message that Indian hackers won't sit quiet. Underground community is also planning to launch a major attack specially targeting governmentoperated websites. Our investigations reveal several sites have already been defaced," said Kislay Chaudhary, cyber security analyst and CEO of Indian Cyber Army.

The Economic Times

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Dot set to get 150MHz spectrum from defence

The Cabinet in January 2015, resolved the spectrum tussle between DoT and the Defence by approving a harmonisation plan. The Telecom Ministry expects the Defence to release in three months 150 Mhz of spectrum in 1700-2000 Mhz bands that can be used for all type of mobile services, including 3G and 4G. "The DoT expects to complete Phase I of spectrum harmonisation in three months. This will free at least 150 Mhz of airwaves for mobile services in 1700-2000 Mhz band," an official source told PTI. As the Phase I of spectrum harmonisation covers six-seven telecom circles for 1700-2000 Mhz bands, the 150 Mhz quantum of radiowaves would be available in those areas initially. The release of 150 Mhz of spectrum by the Defence to DoT is pending since 2009. The Cabinet in January 2015, resolved the spectrum tussle between DoT and the Defence by approving a harmonisation plan. Under the plan, the government earmarked bands for exclusive use of security establishment while making available the remaining radiowaves for commercial use in areas like telecom and broadcasting. Under the harmonisation process, all ministries were required to identify spectrum as per their use and timeline by when they can vacate the excess spectrum by January 2016. DoT and the Defence Ministry had signed a memorandum of understanding in 2009 to get some spectrum freed from the latter for commercial mobile telephony services. As part of the MoU, Defence had agreed to vacate 150 Mhz out of 300 Mhz that it holds in the frequency bands ranging from 1700 Mhz to 2000 Mhz. This band includes frequencies that can be used for transmitting 2G, 3G and 4G mobile signals. In return, DoT had committed to set up an exclusive defence network for its communication services.

Scientists identify 'fear switch' neurons in mice

BEIJING: Chinese scientists have discovered two types of neurons that can arouse or suppress innate fear induced by odour, a development that could benefit therapy for fear-related disorders. Innate fear, which include things like fear of height and insects, is a basic animal instinct to avoid danger, but in excess it can lead to anxiety and even mental disease. Understanding its neuron mechanism can benefit therapy for fear-related disorders, said Duan Shumin with the Chinese Academy of Sciences. By exposing mice to the odour of their predator's feces and recording fear-related responses such as frozen movement, shaking and accelerated heart rate, Duan's team studied how such fears were related to their somatostatin-positive neurons and parvalbumin-positive (PV) neurons. When their PV neurons were inhibited, the mice remained bold and continued to act normally despite the threat of a predator, while activation of the somatostatin neurons produced the same effect, said Wang Hao from Zhejiang University, who also participated in the research. "These neurons are like fear switches. Even without the odour, the neurons can generate a fear response in mice, such as fleeing, increased heart rate and incontinence," Wang has been quoted by Xinhua as saying. The study was published in the latest issue of Nature Neuroscience.

The Statesman

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Global CEOs will be at 'Start-Up India' launch

"Start-Up India", to be launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 16, will see at least 40 top CEOs and founders of start-ups, venture capitalists and angel investors from Silicon Valley attending. Global leaders and venture capitalists including billionaire Japanese businessman Masayoshi Son, SoftBank's CEO and founder, Uber founder Travis Kalanick and WeWork founder Adam Neumann will be there. Around 2,000 CEOs and start-up founders from across the country will also participate. Google will conduct an innovative session on "Launchpad Accelerator", that will involve live pitches made by early stage start-ups to potential investors. "Whosoever is able to get into the 'Launchpad Accelerator' will get a \$50,000 cheque from Google... equity funding into start-ups," said DIPP secretary Amitabh Kant. Mr Modi will formally launch the initiative and unveil the "start-up action plan", which will highlight initiatives and schemes undertaken by the government to address various aspects on developing a conducive start-up ecosystem.



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Pakistan Navy special force to protect China experts

Pakistan Navy has raised a special marine battalion to provide security to Chinese engineers and workers at the strategic Gwadar Port being developed by China under the \$46 billion economic corridor project that will give the Communist giant access to the Arabian Sea. The ambitious China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project was launched last year to link western China to southern Pakistan through a network of roads, railways and pipelines. Under this, oil and gas would be sent from Gwadar Port to Kashgar city in northwestern China's Xin-jiang Uygur autonomous region, using the shortest route for oil imports from the Middle East. A spokesman of Pakistan Navy said that security of Chinese and the CPEC was focus of the newly-raised force. "Pakistan Navy has increased all-round surveillance at Gwadar Port with the commencement of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project," he said. He said a special Marine Battalion had been raised to provide security to Chinese engineers and experts visiting the Gwadar port.

Landing site of China's first lunar lander named "Moon Palace"

BEIJING: China today named the landing site of its first moon lander Chang'e-3 as "Guang Han Gong" or "Moon Palace", more than two years after the spacecraft made a successful soft-landing on the earth's only natural satellite. Together with three nearby impact craters, the name was approved by the International Astronomical Union (IAU), China's State Administration of Science, Technology SASTIND) and Industry for National Defense. In Chinese mythology, Chang'e is the goddess of the moon while "Guang Han Gong" is the palace that houses Chang'e and her pet Yutu (Jade Rabbit). The three craters were given the names Zi Wei, Tian Shi and Tai Wei, three constellations in traditional Chinese astrology, according to Liu Jizhong, director of the lunar exploration project of the SASTIND. The lunar rover Yutu recently found a new type of basaltic rock that could shed light on lunar volcanism, according to an article published by Chinese scientists in the Nature Communications science journal last month. A total of 22 lunar features have been given Chinese names. The first crater was named Zu Chongzhi after a famous Chinese mathematician in 1961, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. Rita Schulz, chair of the IAU Division F WG Planetary System Nomenclature, said landing sites on the moon can only be officially named when they are the first landing sites for the country's spacecraft, the Xinhua report said. Chang'e-3 is an unmanned lunar exploration mission operated by the China National Space Administration (CNSA), incorporating a robotic lander and China's first lunar rover. It made a successful soft-landing on the moon in December 2013 and was launched as part of the second phase of the Chinese Lunar Exploration Program.

The Statesman

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Pak forms spl force for security of Chinese experts in Gwadar

Islamabad, Jan 5 (PTI) Pakistan Navy has raised a special marine battalion to provide security to Chinese engineers and workers at the strategic Gwadar Port being developed by China under the USD 46 billion economic corridor project that will give the Communist giant access to the Arabian Sea. The ambitious 3,000-kilometre China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project was launched last year to link western China to southern Pakistan through a network of roads, railways and pipelines. Under this, oil and gas would be sent from Gwadar Port to Kashgar city in northwestern China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, using the shortest route for oil imports from the Middle East. A spokesman of Pakistan Navy told media that security of Chinese and the CPEC was focus of the newly-raised force. "Pakistan Navy has increased all-round surveillance at Gwadar Port with the commencement of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project," he said. He said a special Marine Battalion had been raised to provide security to Chinese engineers and experts visiting the strategic Gwadar port. He said the Gwadar Port is the backbone of the CPEC and the Pakistan Navy was making strenuous efforts for ensuring comprehensive security for foreigners as well as local people. The CPEC terminates at Gwadar port on the mouth of the Arabian Sea. Pakistan had handed over the operational control of the port to the Chinese. Beijing has said the Gwadar port is crucial to its economic interests as it gives western China access to the Arabian Sea to access oil supplies from the Gulf. Gwadar Port is situated at the apex of the Arabian Sea and the mouth of the Persian Gulf, and only about 400 km away from the Strait of Hormuz, a key global oil supply route. Pakistan had assured China that it would raise special force for the protection of the Chinese nationals working in the restive Baluchistan province and elsewhere along the CPEC. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif last month inaugurated the western corridor of the CPEC. An official agreement on the corridor was signed between the two countries in May this year during Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Pakistan. Apart from the Marine Battalion, Pakistan army is also working to set up additional special force to provide security to the CPEC and workers and experts from China. PTI SH ZH AKJ AKJ.

S.China Sea tensions rise over China plane

China's first landing of a plane on one of its new island runways in the South China Sea shows Beijing's facilities in the disputed region are being completed on schedule and military flights will inevitably follow, foreign officials and analysts said. China's increasing military presence in the disputed sea could effectively lead to a Beijing-controlled air defence zone, they said, ratcheting up tensions with other claimants and with the United States in one of the world's most volatile areas. China has confirmed that a test flight by a civilian plane landed on an artificial island built in the Spratlys, the first time Beijing has used a runway in the area. Vietnam said the plane landed on Jan 2 and launched a formal diplomatic protest, while Philippines Foreign Ministry spokesman Charles Jose said Manila was planning to do the same. Both have claims to the area that overlap with China. "That's the fear, that China will be able take control of the South China Sea and it will affect the freedom of navigation and freedom of overflight," Jose told reporters. In Washington, State Department spokesman John Kirby said China's landing of the plane "raises tensions and threatens regional stability." Senator John McCain, the chairman of the influential U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee, criticised the Obama administration for delaying further "freedom of navigation" patrols within 12 nautical miles of the islands built by China. China has been building runways on the artificial islands for over a year, and the plane's landing was not a surprise. The runway at the Fiery Cross Reef is 3,000 metres (10,000 feet) long and is one of three China was constructing on artificial islands built up from seven reefs and atolls in the Spratlys archipelago. The runways would be long enough to handle long-range bombers and transport craft as well as China's best jet fighters, giving them a presence deep into the maritime heart of Southeast Asia that they have lacked until now. Chinese officials have repeatedly stressed that the new islands would be mostly for civilian use, such as coast guard activity and fishing research. The airfield on Fiery Cross Reef will serve to "significantly" cut travel time between the Spratly islands and mainland China, the official Xinhua news agency reported, citing a top engineer from the transport ministry. Foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said at the weekend that the test flight was intended to check whether the runway met civilian aviation standards and fell "completely within China's sovereignty". Asked about McCain's remarks on Tuesday, she said: "We hope the U.S. can take an objective and fair attitude, and not make statements that confuse the situation and are harmful to regional peace and stability," she said.

DE FACTO DEFENCE ZONE- However, military landings on the islands were now "inevitable", said Leszek Buszynski, a visiting fellow at the Australian National University's Strategic and Defence Studies Centre. "The next step will be, once they've tested it with several flights, they will bring down some of their fighter air power - SU-27s and SU-33s - and they will station them there permanently. That's what they're likely to do." Ian Storey, a South China Sea expert at Singapore's ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute, said he expected tensions to worsen as China used its new facilities to project power deeper into the South China Sea. Even if China stopped short of formally declaring an Air Defence Identification Zone, known as an ADIZ, Beijing's need to protect its new airstrips and other facilities could see it effectively operating one. Work is well underway to complete a range of port, storage and personnel facilities on the new islands, U.S. and regional officials have said. Fiery Cross is also expected to house advanced early warning radars and military communications facilities, they said. "As these facilities become operational, Chinese warnings to both military and civilian aircraft will become routine," Storey said. "These events are a precursor to an ADIZ, or an undeclared but de facto ADIZ, and one has to expect tensions to rise." China sparked condemnation from the United States and Japan in late 2013 when it declared an ADIZ over the East China Sea, covering uninhabited islands disputed with Tokyo. Hua, the Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman, said on Monday that there were no immediate plans for an ADIZ in the South China Sea. However, regional military officials say they are logging increased warnings to aircraft from Chinese radio operators, including some from ground stations on Fiery Cross reef. China claims most of the South China Sea, through which more than \$5 trillion of world trade ships every year. Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines and Taiwan have rival claims. The United States has no claim in the South China Sea, but has been highly critical of China's assertiveness and says it will protect freedom of navigation. In Washington, McCain said that the lack of U.S. action after a navy patrol near the islands in October was allowing China to continue to "pursue its territorial ambitions" in the region. U.S. officials remain committed to carrying out further "freedom of navigation" patrols near the disputed islands, but are still debating the timing of another patrol, said one U.S. defense official, who was not authorised to speak publicly.

Pakistan to sell 8 fighter jets to Sri Lanka

Colombo: Pakistan on Tuesday sealed a landmark deal to sell JF-17 Thunder fighter jets to Sri Lanka as the two countries signed eight agreements to boost cooperation in areas like trade promotion, and science and technology besides combating money laundering and terror financing. On the second day of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's visit to Colombo, Pakistan agreed to sell eight aircraft to Sri Lanka, in the first successful deal to sell the jets which Pakistan has been trying to sell for some time. JF-17 Thunder is already part of Pakistan Air Force and has been successfully used to strike terrorist hideouts in northwestern tribal region. Initially, the jets were manufactured with Chinese technical assistance but now it is solely done in Pakistan, according to a Geo TV report that claimed the deal has been finalised despite pressure from India which was forcing Colombo to buy Indian aircraft. The deal was reached during the three-day trip of Sharif to Colombo that also saw the two sides signing eight agreements in the fields of education, science and technology, healthcare, agriculture, tourism, sporting contacts, cultural exchanges and people-to-people contacts. Sharif said both sides expressed their satisfaction at the existing bilateral cooperation in the field of defence. He conveyed his desire for more frequent port calls, participation in military exercises and fence seminars and training of military personnel. "We have also signed a number of agreements and MoUs today, which would help promote cooperation between our two countries in the fields Trade promotion, Culture, Health, Gem and Jewellery, Science & Technology and Combating Money Laundering and Terror Financing," Sharif said at the official ceremony to welcome him by Sirisena. His trip comes eight months after President Sirisena's visit to Pakistan in April last year. Sharif also invited Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena to make a return visit to Pakistan at an early date so that the relations of mutual trust and confidence can be further enhanced. Islamabad and Colombo grew closer during Lanka's civil war by supplying arms to fight the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, who sought an independent state for ethnic minority Tamils. Describing Sri Lanka as a "strong and steadfast friend" of Pakistan that has "stood by us in our most difficult moments", Sharif said: "We remain eternally grateful to the people and government of this beautiful Island State." The two countries also agreed to re-invigorate efforts to realise the goal of achieving \$1 billion bilateral trade target at the earliest from the present \$325 million that "does not reflect true potential".

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Japan to send plutonium cache to US under nuclear deal

Tokyo (AFP) - Japan will send a huge cache of plutonium -- enough to produce 50 nuclear bombs -- to the United States as part of a deal to return the material that was used for research, reports and officials said Tuesday. The plutonium stockpile, provided by the US, Britain and France decades ago, has caused some disquiet given that Japan has said it has the ability to produce a nuclear weapon even if it chooses not to. Some 331 kilograms (730 pounds) of the highly fissionable material will be sent by ship to a nuclear facility in South Carolina by the end of March, Kyodo News reported Monday in a dispatch from Washington that cited unnamed Japanese government sources. The shipment, which comes ahead of a nuclear security summit in Washington in March, is meant to underscore both countries' commitment to nuclear non-proliferation and is part of a deal they made in 2014. It will be one of Japan's most significant overseas movements of plutonium since it transported one tonne from France in 1993 to be used in nuclear reactor experiments. That shipment triggered an outcry at the time from countries citing environmental and security concerns. A Japanese official confirmed the amount of plutonium to be sent to the US and said that preparations for the shipment are under way. "But we can't comment on further details, including the departure date and route, for security reasons," the official in the nuclear technology section at the education ministry told AFP Tuesday. The material has been stored at the Nuclear Science Research Institute northeast of Tokyo, he added. Japan relies heavily on nuclear technology for its energy needs. In 2006, then foreign minister Taro Aso sparked panic in neighbouring countries by saying Japan, a scientific superpower with numerous Nobel prizes to its credit, had the know-how to produce nuclear arms but opts not to. Japan is the only country to ever have been attacked with nuclear weapons, and under a 1967 policy it refuses to produce, possess or allow nuclear weapons on its soil. But in 2010 Tokyo admitted to previous secret agreements with the United States to allow American warships to carry nuclear weapons across Japanese territory and to take the arms to US bases on Okinawa island in an emergency. US atomic bombs obliterated the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the closing days of World War II, killing more than 210,000 people.

Customising ceramics

Engineers have always liked ceramic parts - they are strong, lightweight and handle heat better than many metals, ideal for crafting parts for airplanes or rockets. Heat-shielding tiles on the space shuttle were made from ceramics, for example. Now researchers have used a 3D printer to make customized ceramic parts that have also overcome the Achilles' heel of ceramic objects: their tendency to crack. The finding could open the door to a new class of ceramic-body or ceramic-engine jets, perhaps even a hypersonic craft that can fly from New York to Tokyo in a few hours. "If you go very fast, about 10 times speed of sound within the atmosphere, then any vehicle will heat up tremendously because of air friction," said Tobias Schaedler, senior scientist at HRL Laboratories in Malibu, Calif. "People want to build hypersonic vehicles and you need ceramics for the whole shell of the vehicle." Schaedler and colleagues at HRL invented a resin formulation that can be 3-D printed into parts of virtually any shape and size. The printed resin can then be fired, converting it into a high strength, fully dense ceramic. The resulting material can withstand ultrahigh temperatures in excess of 1,700 degrees Celsius (3,092 Fahrenheit) and is 10 times stronger than similar materials. Ceramics are much more difficult to work with than plastics or metals because they cannot be cast or machined easily, according to Schaedler, who is an author on the new study appearing today in the journal *Science*. But Schaedler's team figured out how to trick ceramics into behaving like plastic. "We have a pre-ceramic resin that you can print like a polymer, then you fire the polymer and it converts to a ceramic," he said. "There is some shrinkage involved, but it's very uniform so you can predict it." The big picture is that this method could help rocket and satellite designers who have to make lots of special small parts that are capable of resisting the heating that occurs during high velocity air friction, as well as high temperatures generated by the exhaust during takeoff. A form of ceramic called alumina is being used in new ion propulsion drive, which uses electricity to heat gas and generate ions, according to Charlie Spahr, executive director of the American Ceramics Council. "Ceramics are really good where you want to reduce wear and tear," Spahr said. The Pentagon's research branch has been funding various projects to discover new ways to build lighter, stronger and more heat-resistant materials for aerospace and military applications. "The method described in the new *Science* paper brings us closer to the goal of being able to 'engineer in' desired material properties that generally are not found together, such as strength and low density or low weight, and to craft these materials into complex shapes," said Stefanie Tompkins, director of the Defense Science Office at the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA). Figuring out how to make customized 3D-printed ceramic parts could also make a difference in gas-fired power plants, for example, or other types of gas engines, according to DARPA officials.

HR trends for 2016: gender diversity to take centre stage

Richa tripathi

The way businesses and organisations operate has transformed drastically in the last few years. In this transformation, the Human Resource function is going to play an even more important role in leading and shaping the future of business as we know it. Disruptive innovations are creating new industries and business models, and destroying old ones. The recent success of various start-ups is a clear example. New technologies, data analytics and social networks are having a huge impact on how people communicate, collaborate and work. As generations work together, workforces become more diverse and people work longer; traditional career models may soon be a thing of the past. Many of the roles and job titles of tomorrow will be ones we have not even thought of yet. We have stepped into 2016, and it would be interesting to see this year how organisations prepare to attract and retain the best talent while ensuring business continuity and efficiency. It will be an imperative for the HR function to emerge as a strategic business partner that is not only tuned to new business demands and helps develop a leadership pipeline but also prepares the organisation for a digital future. In my opinion, here are the top 5 trends expected to prevail in 2016.

Gender diversity to take centre stage- In 2015, many organisations announced appointment of women in leadership roles. This is going to take centre stage in 2016 as more and more organisations will do their utmost on retaining and hiring women employees at various levels in order to promote gender diversity. This is indicated by McKinsey Global Institute's report on 'The power of parity' which establishes that advancing women's equality can add \$12 trillion to global growth. As per the report, India has a larger relative economic value at stake from advancing gender equality than any of the ten regions analysed. It also states that India could add \$700 billion of additional GDP in 2025, upping the country's annual GDP growth by 1.4 percentage points. Moreover, with the favourable Governmental policies and initiatives, women are being empowered with financial, technological and infrastructural support that can help them contribute to the Indian economy. Focused talent management As leaders slowly but steadily realise the worth of their human capital, every aspect of talent management will change. The ideal talent lifecycle will now be goal-centric at every phase. From recruiting to off-boarding, every lifecycle change that talent goes through will have a focus on organisational value-based goals. Continued use of HR analytics. A recent Deloitte study revealed 57 per cent of human resources departments increased spends on analytics. HR will facilitate this move - as was also observed in 2015 - toward data-based, objective workforce decisions by being the procurers and analysts of the mountains of data organisations have been housing for years. They will work with the C-suite to guide confident, informed decision-making. Innovative employee engagement practices. As competition increases, it will be imperative for organisations to attract and retain the best talent through newer employee engagement practices and rewards. 2015 saw relaxing of maternity and paternity leave policies and dress code at workplaces. 2016 will see organisations introduce more such flexible and innovative initiatives. Re-engineering performance management processes Traditional performance management is being replaced with innovative performance solutions to value and retain the top talent while also helping medium performers do better. Experts believe that agile performance management will become a core component for this year's focus on engagement, development and leadership. The year 2016 brings promise of companies continuing to adopt innovative technologies and creative benefits that will aim to put the employee first. HR professionals will have to use advanced analytics to predict future talent demands and to measure and anticipate performance and retention issues. In addition, it will be important for them to act as guardian of the brand and help their organisations become employer of choice.

Deft methods of replication

By tapan kumar maitra

The power of restriction enzymes is the ease with which they allow a desired segment of DNA, usually one containing a specific gene, to be inserted into a cloning vector and replicate when introduced into bacterial cells. This process of generating copies of specific DNA fragments is called DNA cloning. Although the specific details of cloning procedures vary, the following five steps are typically involved.

1. Insertion of DNA into a cloning vector: Most vectors used for DNA cloning are themselves recombinant DNA molecules, designed specifically for this purpose. For example, when bacteriophage λ DNA is used as a cloning vector, the phage DNA has had some of its non-essential genes removed to make room in the phage head for spliced-in DNA. Plasmids used as cloning vectors usually have a variety of restriction sites and often carry genes that confer antibiotic resistance on their host cells. The antibiotic-resistance genes facilitate the selection stage (4), while the presence of multiple kinds of restriction sites allows the plasmid to incorporate DNA fragments prepared with a variety of different restriction enzymes. An example of a commonly used plasmid vector is pUC19 ("puck-19"). Because it carries a gene that confers resistance to the antibiotic ampicillin (amp^R), bacteria containing the plasmid can be easily identified by their ability to grow in the presence of ampicillin. The pUC19 plasmid also has 11 different restriction sites clustered in a region containing the lacZ gene, which codes for the enzyme β -galactosidase. Integration of foreign DNA at any of these restriction sites will disrupt the lacZ gene, thereby blocking the production of β -galactosidase. As we will see shortly, this disruption in β -galactosidase production can be used later in the cloning process to detect the presence of plasmids containing foreign DNA. How a specific gene of interest residing in a foreign DNA source is inserted into a plasmid cloning vector, using pUC19 as the vector and a restriction enzyme that cleaves pUC19 at a single site within the lacZ gene can be seen in the illustration. Incubation with the restriction enzyme cuts the plasmid at that site (1), making the DNA linear (opening the circle). The same restriction enzyme is used to cleave the molecule containing the gene to be cloned (2). The sticky-ended fragments of foreign DNA are then incubated with the linearised vector molecules under conditions that favour base pairing (3), followed by treatment with DNA ligase to link the molecules covalently (4). Only the recombinant plasmid contains the desired fragment of foreign DNA. In practice, however, a variety of DNA products will be present, including non-recombinant plasmids and recombinant plasmids containing other fragments generated by the action of the restriction enzyme.

2. Introduction of the recombinant vector into bacterial cells: Once foreign DNA has been inserted into a cloning vector, the resulting recombinant vector is replicated by introducing it into an appropriate host cell, usually the bacterium *E. coli*. Cloning vectors are introduced into bacteria in one of two ways. If the cloning vector is phage DNA, it is incorporated into phage particles that are then used to infect an appropriate cell population. Plasmids, on the other hand, are simply introduced into the medium surrounding the target cells. Both prokaryotic and eukaryotic cells will take up plasmid DNA from the external medium, although special treatments are usually necessary to enhance the efficiency of the process. The addition of calcium ions, for example, markedly increases the rate at which cells take up DNA from the external environment.

3. Amplification of the recombinant vector in bacteria: After they have taken up the recombinant cloning vector, the host bacteria are plated out on a nutrient medium so that the recombinant DNA vector can be replicated, or amplified. In the case of a plasmid vector, the bacteria proliferate and form colonies, each derived from a single cell. Under favourable conditions, *E. coli* will divide every 22 minutes, giving rise to a billion cells in less than 11 hours. As the bacteria multiply, the recombinant plasmids also replicate, producing an enormous number of vector molecules containing foreign DNA fragments. Under such conditions, a single recombinant plasmid introduced into one cell will be amplified several hundred or even billion fold in less than half a day. In the case of phage vectors such as phage λ , a slightly different procedure is used. Phage particles containing recombinant DNA are mixed with bacterial cells and the mixture is then placed on a culture medium under conditions that produce a continuous "lawn" of bacteria across the plate. Each time a phage particle infects a cell, it is replicated and eventually causes the cell to rupture

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Deft methods of replication

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and die. The released phage particles can then infect neighbouring cells, repeating the process again. This cycle eventually produces a clear zone of dead bacteria called a plaque, which contains large numbers of replicated phage particles derived by replication from a single type of recombinant phage. The millions of phage particles in each plaque contain identical molecules of recombinant phage DNA.

4. Selection of cells containing recombinant DNA: During amplification of the cloning vector, procedures are introduced that preferentially select for the growth of those cells that have successfully incorporated the vector. For plasmid vectors such as pUC19, the selection method is based on the plasmid's antibiotic-resistance genes. For example, all bacteria carrying the recombinant plasmids generated resistant to the antibiotic ampicillin, since all plasmids have an intact ampicillin-resistance gene. The amp^R gene is a selectable marker, which allows only the cells carrying plasmids to grow on culture medium containing ampicillin (the medium "selects for" the growth of the ampicillin-resistant cells). A different approach is used with phage cloning vectors, which are usually derived from phage DNA molecules that are only about 70 per cent as long as normal phage DNA. As a result, these molecules are too small to be packaged into functional phage particles. But if an additional fragment of DNA is inserted into the middle of such a cloning vector, it creates a recombinant molecule that is larger and thus capable of being assembled into a functional phage. Hence when phage cloning vectors are employed, the only particles that can successfully infect bacterial cells are those, which contain an inserted foreign DNA sequence.

5. Identification of clones containing the DNA of interest: The bacterial colonies present on the Petri dishes at the end of step (4) are likely to contain at least as many different kinds of fragments as there are restriction sites in the DNA used in step (1). The final stage in any recombinant DNA procedure is therefore screening the bacterial colonies (or phage plaques) to identify those that contain the specific DNA fragment of interest. This is frequently the most difficult step in DNA cloning. A number of techniques for screening colonies of bacteria exist. The particular technique used depends on what the researcher knows about the gene being cloned. If something is known about the base sequence of the gene of interest, the researcher can employ a nucleic acid probe, a single stranded molecule of DNA or RNA that can identify a desired DNA sequence by base-pairing with it. Nucleic acid probes are labeled either with radioactivity or with some other chemical group that allows the probe to be easily visualised. The researcher prepares a labelled DNA or RNA probe containing all or part of the nucleotide sequence of interest and uses it to tag the colonies that contain complementary DNA.

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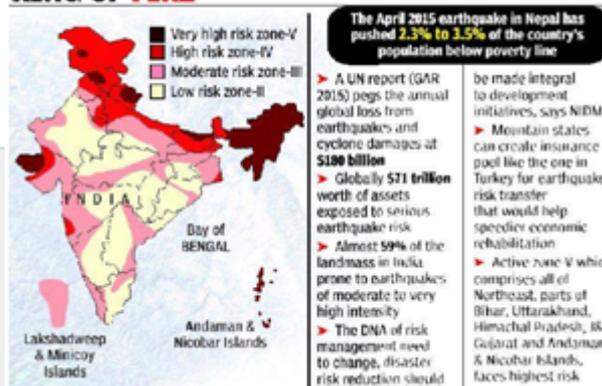
BARC tech to help clean Ganga of industry waste

MYSORE: With the Centre taking multiple measures to fulfill its clean Ganga mission, the country's premier atomic research body - Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) - has offered membrane-based water treatment system to clean the national river. The department of atomic energy (DAE) in its presentation on Monday at the Indian Science Congress gave details of the system, describing how BARC is already providing technical support to the Jharkhand government for using this new and effective system to clean the holy Shiv-Ganga pond at Deogarh which attracts millions of devotees every year. The membrane-based technology can help remove heavy metals from water in rivers, reservoirs or ponds. Usually, heavy metals like chromium, arsenic, cadmium and lead cannot be treated using conventional water treatment processes. These systems usually have greater removal performance as a result of increased solid capture and long solids retention times inherent in the membrane bio-reactor process. The new technology can be used in the stretch of the Ganga where it gets lot of industrial and municipal discharge as merely setting up conventional sewage treatment plants (STPs) and Central Effluent Treatment Plants (CETPs) are not enough to clean the river. At present, 764 industrial units are located along or near the banks of the Ganga. In its presentation, the DAE said, "Under the National Mission for Clean Ganga, the department is currently involved in 'water quality assessment' along with other national laboratories. Our membrane-based water/effluent treatment systems have potential to play a vital role in Ganga cleaning". Besides extending help for clean Ganga mission, the DAE has also been actively involved in the clean India mission through other technological interventions. The BARC has developed aerobic and non-aerobic digesters for treatment of various types of wastes, including those from kitchen and abattoir. This solid waste processing technology is called 'Nisargruna' (repaying nature's loan) which is based on the concept of maintaining the elemental balance of nature.

Big quake coming, warn MHA experts

NEW DELHI: The Union home ministry's disaster management experts have warned of a bigger catastrophe, earthquakes with a magnitude of 8.2 or greater on the Richter scale which may hit the already ruptured Himalayan region. They say quakes with higher intensity than the one that struck Manipur on Monday are likely to rock the region in future. The tectonic shift a series of these recent earthquakes have caused in the region -- Manipur 6.7 (Jan 2016), Nepal 7.3 (May 2015) and Sikkim 6.9 (2011) -- have re-ruptured the plates that had already developed cracks during previous temblors. This has led to conditions which might trigger multiple earthquakes which may go up to 8.0 in magnitude. In a post-Nepal disaster assessment, the MHA's National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) has warned of enhanced risk around the "ring of fire garlanding the entire north India especially the mountains". This was also highlighted at a recent meeting organised by the Centre in Arunachal Pradesh's capital Itanagar where policy-makers from 11 hill states had participated and resolved to develop a common building code for mountains. Speaking to TOI, NIDM director Santosh Kumar said the interconnected plates across Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar and India pose a bigger danger, and predicted a disaster of bigger magnitude that awaits hill states and parts of Bihar, UP and even Delhi which fall under the second worst seismic Zone IV classification. The North-East and other hill states fall under severe seismic Zone V. Though some Indian scientists have reservations, but international experts, prominently Roger Bilham, the seismologist of University of Colorado and an authority on the subject, are of the opinion that "the current conditions might trigger at least four earthquakes greater than 8.0 in magnitude. And if they delay, the strain accumulated during the centuries provokes more catastrophic mega earthquakes." Kumar said the Centre has taken measures to sensitise the governments of all the hill states to adopt a common building code that is different from the rest of India. The recent Itanagar deliberations on sustainable development of mountain states were part of Centre's earthquake risk mitigation strategy to sensitise policy-makers about "the natural time bomb". Stress has increased in the mountains of north-east since the Nepal earthquake. Monday's 6.7 magnitude earthquake in Manipur shows the stress has not been fully released, it has only become worse. "The collision between the Himalayan plate in the north and the Indo-Burmese plate in the east and the risk created as a result is the highest at this moment," according to NIDM experts. India is divided into four seismic zones. The most active Zone V comprises of the whole of north-east, parts of north Bihar, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, J&K, Gujarat and Andaman & Nicobar Islands. Delhi comes under Zone IV and is considered as one of the high-risk areas. According to MHA's own assessment, the regulatory mechanism in Indian cities that prominently figure on the disaster map are weak and any disaster striking in any one of these populous cities would cause huge casualties. The UN office for disaster risk reduction (UNISDR), which considers India a valuable partner and had even acknowledged the leadership of minister of state for home Kiren Rijiju and made him a disaster risk reduction champion for Asia two months ago, has emphasised India's need for compliance with building codes and the necessity for an "enhanced preparedness for effective response to earthquakes."

RING OF FIRE



भारतीय मिशन निशाने पर क्यों?

संपादकीय अश्विनी कुमार

पठानकोट में एयरबेस पर अभी आपरेशन जारी था, शहीद हुए जवानों के परिजनों के आंसू भी नहीं सूखे थे, देशवासी चिंतित और गमगीन थे कि अफगानिस्तान के शहर मजार-ए-शरीफ में भारतीय वाणिज्य दूतावास पर आतंकी हमले की खबर आ गई। मुस्तैद सुरक्षा जवानों ने इस हमले को नाकाम बना दिया। यह हमला पिछले कुछ वर्षों में युद्ध से तबाह हुए अफगानिस्तान में भारतीय राजनयिक मिशनों पर किए गए हमलों की श्रृंखला में एक और हमला है। सबसे भीषण हमला 7 जुलाई, 2006 को राजधानी काबुल में भारतीय दूतावास पर हुआ फिदायीन हमला था। उस हमले में 58 लोग मारे गए थे और 141 लोग घायल हो गए थे। तीन अगस्त, 2013 को जलालाबाद में भारतीय दूतावास पर आत्मघाती हमला किया गया था। उस हमले में 9 अफगानी मारे गए थे। 23 मई, 2014 को अफगानिस्तान के हैरात में चार आतंकवादियों ने हमला बोला था। इस हमले का भारत-तिब्बत सीमा पुलिस और अफगान सुरक्षा बलों ने कड़ा जवाब देते हुए सभी हमलावरों को मार गिराया था। राष्ट्रीय अफगान सुरक्षा निदेशालय ने हाल ही में कहा था कि सैनिकों ने एक आत्मघाती हमलावर को गिरफ्तार कर जलालाबाद में भारतीय वाणिज्य दूतावास पर हमला करने की उसकी योजना को विफल कर दिया है। इस हमलावर को 25 दिसम्बर को प्रधानमंत्री नरेन्द्र मोदी की काबुल यात्रा से पहले गिरफ्तार किया गया था। प्रधानमंत्री नरेन्द्र मोदी ने हाल ही में अफगानिस्तान में वहां की संसद की इमारत का उद्घाटन किया था। यह इमारत भारत सरकार की सहायता से बनाई गई है। इस मौके पर प्रधानमंत्री ने पाकिस्तान का नाम लिए बिना कहा था कि भारत-अफगान दोस्ती कुछ लोगों की आंखों में चुभ रही है और उन्होंने यह भी कहा था कि सीमा पार से आतंकवाद बंद होना चाहिए। भारत अफगानिस्तान के पुनर्निर्माण में लगा है जबकि पाकिस्तान वहां विध्वंस का खेल खेल रहा है। भारत ने वहां करोड़ों का निवेश कर रखा है जबकि पाकिस्तान वहां आतंकवाद का निवेश कर रहा है। यह स्पष्ट है कि भारतीय मिशनों को जब भी निशाना बनाया गया, उसमें पाकिस्तान के स्टेट एक्टर्स और नान स्टेट एक्टर्स की साजिशें रहीं। इस बार हुए हमले में भी पाक के सत्ता प्रतिष्ठानों की सीधे संलिप्तता है। पाकिस्तान अफगानिस्तान में भारत की कोई भूमिका देखना ही नहीं चाहता। साल 2011 में अफगानिस्तान के साथ सामरिक साझेदारी समझौते पर हस्ताक्षर करने के बाद पिछले चार वर्षों में भारत अफगानिस्तान की 2000 करोड़ की मदद कर चुका है। 2011 से 2014 में वित्तीय सहायता राशि में 80 फीसदी की बढ़ौतरी हुई है। हैरात में 1500 करोड़ की लागत में बांध निर्माण सहित कई निर्माण कार्यों में भारत ने सहायता की। बांध बन जाने के बाद बिजली उत्पादन शुरू होगा। अनाज की कमी से जूझ रहे इस देश को गेहूं उपलब्ध कराने का संकल्प पूरा करने के लिए भारत सरकार ने करोड़ों खर्च किए हैं। भारत सीमा सड़क संगठन 600 करोड़ की लागत से 218 किलोमीटर सड़क का निर्माण कर रहा है। यह सड़क ईरान के चाहबहार बंदरगाह तक पहुंचने का महत्वपूर्ण लिंक होगी। भारत की सार्वजनिक कम्पनी स्टील अथॉर्टी आफ इंडिया सहित भारतीय कम्पनियों ने बागियान में स्टील खान की बोली जीत धड़ाधड़ निवेश किया हुआ है। भारत की अभिरुचि आर्थिक रूप से स्थायी, राजनीतिक रूप से स्थिर एवं सामाजिक रूप में समावेशी अफगानिस्तान में निहित है। सामरिक महत्व के साथ-साथ वहां भारतीय कम्पनियों के लिए व्यापार की बेहतर क्षमता होने के कारण दोनों देशों के संबंध बेहद महत्वपूर्ण हैं। पाकिस्तान और आतंकवादी ताकतें भारत को वहां टिकने नहीं देना चाहतीं। पाकिस्तान एक तरफ अफगानिस्तान में आतंकवाद से टक्कर लेने के लिए अमरीका का दोस्त बन बैठा लेकिन उसने अमरीकियों को भी धोखा दिया। अमरीका और मित्र देशों की सेनाओं को अफगानिस्तान में सफलता नहीं मिलने का कारण पाकिस्तान है। एक तरफ वह अमरीका से करोड़ों की सहायता लेता रहा, दूसरी तरफ वह तालिबान, अलकायदा को सींचता रहा। अमरीकी हमले से पहले ही पाक की आईएसआई और सेना आतंकवादियों को हमले की जानकारी दे देती थीं। सीधा-सीधा सच तो यही है कि तालिबान वहां जो कर रहा है तो वह सिर्फ इस वजह से कि उन्हें पाक का समर्थन मिल रहा है। वह तालिबान का इस्तेमाल भारत के खिलाफ कर रहा है। हक्कानी गुट का नेटवर्क पाक में फैला हुआ है। पाक नहीं चाहता कि काबुल में कोई भारत समर्थित सरकार हो। अमरीका, ब्रिटेन और नाटो सैनिक अब यहां से जाते जा रहे हैं। सुरक्षा की पूरी जिम्मेदारी धीरे-धीरे अफगान बलों पर आ रही है। हालांकि अमरीकी नेतृत्व में अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा सहायता बल भी वहां काम कर रहा है। सुरक्षा बल तालिबान विद्रोहियों के साथ टक्कर ले रहे हैं। साल 2001 में पुख्तूनों की सरकार का तख्ता पलटने के बाद हामिद करजई को सत्ता सौंपी गई थी लेकिन अमरीका खुद उस गृह युद्ध का हिस्सा बन गया जो वहां 1970 से चलता आ रहा था। पाक के सरकारी प्रतिष्ठानों को लगता है कि अफगानिस्तान और कश्मीर को नियंत्रित करने का सबसे बेहतर तरीका जेहादियों का इस्तेमाल है। हैरानी इस बात की है कि अमरीका पाक की करतूतों को देखते हुए कोई कार्यवाही क्यों नहीं कर रहा? वह केवल भारत-पाक पर वार्ता करने का दबाव ही डालता रहता है। अलकायदा के प्रशिक्षण शिविर फिर से पनपने लगे हैं। अलकायदा के भयावह तरीके से लौटने से अमरीका सकते में है। भविष्य में क्या होगा, यह काल के गर्भ में है लेकिन इतना तय है कि भारत को अपनी भूमिका नए सिरे से तय करनी होगी। अफगानिस्तान में चीन के बढ़ते प्रभाव को रोकना और पाक की चुनौती का मुकाबला तो उसे करना ही होगा। रक्षा विशेषज्ञ चाहते हैं कि भारत को वहां सैनिक भूमिका अपना लेनी चाहिए। पाक तो सुधरने वाला है नहीं तो फिर भारत को अपनी मौजूदगी को मजबूती प्रदान करने के लिए साम-दाम-दंड-भेद अपनाना होगा। मोदी सरकार के लिए यह एक और अग्रि परीक्षा होगी।