

with their diplomatic status"-a euphemism for spying. It is no secret that roughly 70 to 80 per cent of the staff members of the Pakistan High Commission in Delhi are from the ISI. Their primary tasks are espionage and promoting subversion through contacts with dubious elements in organisations like the All-Party Hurriyat Conference. Many of these gentlemen are pretty amateurish and get caught red-handed at some stage or the other. When they are caught and expelled, the ISI responds with physical violence against our staff in Islamabad. This necessarily escalates tensions in an already strained relationship. Since Pakistan is averse to promoting people-to-people contacts and trade, economic and cultural relations with India, there is really no justification for their having a jumbo-sized Mission in New Delhi.

We reduced the size of the Pakistani Mission in Delhi from 110 to 55 during

the events that followed the December 13 attack on our Parliament. The time has perhaps come to move to further reduce the size of the Pakistani Mission in India to 20. While we will have to reciprocally reduce the size of our Mission in Islamabad, we can afford to do so and function efficiently, once our visa procedures are rationalised and simplified. A smaller Pakistani Mission with 20 personnel will be severely restricted in its ability and inclination to indulge in espionage and subversion. We will also be able to reduce instances of diplomats being expelled, and our staff in Islamabad will become less prone to getting beaten up. We can consider having larger size Missions in each other's Capital when the two countries start having normal, good neighbourly ties.

There is no dearth in Delhi of social climbers, self-styled peace activists and others given to holding candle light vigils at the Wagah border, who deem it a

great privilege to be seen and photographed with the Pakistan High Commissioner. One of our most distinguished diplomats, KS Bajpai, once wryly noted that any good Indian who saw the Pakistan High Commissioner being wined and dined in Delhi and believed in rebirth, would ardently wish that in his next birth he would be the Pakistan High Commissioner in India!

In marked contrast, innocent Pakistanis in Islamabad and elsewhere who invite the Indian High Commissioner and his wife or colleagues to their homes even for a meal, often meet with very harsh treatment from the ISI. Delhi's socialites may wish to bear the isolation of our diplomats in Islamabad in mind, when next posing for the cameras with the Pakistan High Commissioner in our Capital.

A guide for welfare schemes & quenching thirst

ARAVIND Foundation has done it again. After launching the Tamil edition of the booklet, "Gaon Chalo Abhiyan", in October last, Aravind Foundation has not only brought out a detailed handbook on the various development schemes of the Centre but has also initiated a move to quench the thirst of the villagers and their farms.

Aravind Foundation is a non-profit public trust, initiated by Shri V. Aravind, a young industrialist and social worker of Vriddhachalam in Tamilnadu and who is also a member of the BJP's State Executive and a special secretary to the party's state president Dr. S.P. Kirubanidhi, had launched his booklet, "Government Schemes and Non-government Organisation" by the Kanchi

Shankaracharya, Shri Jayendra Saraswati Swamigal at Kancheepuram on December 29, (2002) last in the presence of Central Ministers Shri Thirunavakarasar (BJP) and Shri A.K. Murthy (PMK) and State Ministers belonging to the AIADMK, Shri Nayanar Nagendran, Shri P.C. Sampath, and Shri Semmalai.

The booklet, the first of its kind, provides an insight into the schemes of the Union Government and has catalogued 293 Central Schemes for the benefit of women, youth, farmers, fishermen, ex-servicemen, backward classes, etc. It has also listed the details about the various schemes including their addresses, phones, fax etc.

Shri Aravind elaborating the aim of

the foundation told this writer that its goal was to work at the grassroot level for the betterment of the rural people and to bring about a social change in these neglected areas.

Towards this end, the Foundation had already two major agendas and they are: provision of drinking water to the thirsty villagers numbering over 10,000 close to Vriddhachalam; and creating irrigation facilities for the 165 villagers affected by the Neyveli Lignite Corporation's mining operations. The Foundation, he said, had already sent memoranda to the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister of Tamilnadu for their help in this regard.

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