

SOMETHING SPECIAL

India and Bhutan have a good thing going; each must take the other's concerns seriously

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's two day visit to Thimphu affirmed a long-standing tradition between India and Bhutan, where the leaders of both countries have given visiting each other a major priority early in their tenures. Mr. Modi returned a state visit to India by Bhutan Prime Minister Dr. Lotay Tshering in December 2018; this visit was actually delayed to include outcomes such as the inauguration of the 720 MW Mangdechhu hydropower plant. The relationship is indeed built on a traditional closeness, one that is unique in today's world. Open borders, close alignment and consultation on foreign policy, and regular, open communications on all strategic issues are the hallmark of the relationship that has maintained its consistency for the past many decades. Bhutan's unequivocal support to India on strategic issues has meant a lot to India on the international stage and at the United Nations. Equally, Bhutan's leadership has not flinched in opposing threats to India; for instance, the former King's efforts in 2003 to drive out ULFA rebels or more recently, support for India's stand against Chinese troops on the Doklam plateau. India's assistance to Bhutan's planned economy, to constructing its highest revenue earner of hydropower generated electricity, and then buying the electricity generated has also ensured a symbiotic and mutually beneficial base to the relationship, which has been nurtured by the leaders in both countries, in a manner Mr. Modi called "exemplary".

It would however, be a mistake for New Delhi to take the relationship with Thimphu for granted. In the past few years, ties came under a strain over India's sudden change in its power purchasing policy, rigid rates and refusal to allow Bhutan to join the national power grid and trade with third countries like Bangladesh. These issues are being addressed now. Another concern that could create differences is over Bhutan's worry that too much trade, transport and tourism from India could put its environment at risk. India's plans for a Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA) in the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal grouping have been held up, and a Bhutanese proposal to levy entry charges on Indian tourists could cause differences with India. Earlier generations of Bhutanese students never looked beyond India, but in recent years young Bhutanese have shown a preference for education destinations in Australia, Singapore

and Thailand. There is thus much to repair in the ties. More importantly, New Delhi will have to remain alert to strategic powers which are courting Bhutan assiduously, as is evident from the high-level visits from China and the U.S. In a world of growing options, it remains in India's and Bhutan's best interests to make each other's concerns a top priority.

<u>Words</u>	<u>Kind</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Concerns		Worries, disturb, trouble, perturb
Affirm		Declare, assert, aver, proclaim, pronounce
Tenure		Tenancy, occupancy, holding, occupation
Outcome		Result, aftermath, upshot, repercussions
Align		Line up, arrange, put in order, ally, affiliate
Unequivocal		Unambiguous, unmistakable, inconvertible
Flinch		Wince, shrink, withdraw, hesitate, blanch
Effort		Attempt, try, endeavour
Troop		Soldiers, armed, forces, servicemen / women
Ensure		Safeguard, protect, guard, shield
Symbiotic		Mutual, beneficial, relationship
Nurture		Bring up, care for, provide for, support
Exemplary		Perfect, ideal, model, fault less
Strain		Tension, tightness, tautness, distension
Hold up		Delay, daily, tarry
Destination		Journey's end, end of the line
Strategic		Planned, calculated, deliberate
Court (v)		Woo, go out with, flight with
Assiduous		Diligent, careful, meticulous, sedulous

SOLDIER NUMBER ONE

The creation of the post of CDS is a comment on the security environment

The creation of the post of the Chief of the Defence Staff, which Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced in his Independence Day address, fulfils a long-felt and consistently articulated need to strengthen India's defence posture. Considering that the Prime Minister underlined this announcement by saying that this was an "important" development, it gives

legitimate pause to wonder why this has taken so many decades. Indeed, Manohar Parrikar, as Defence Minister, had said this was on the cards. Yet, two Defence Ministers came and went, Arun Jaitley and Nirmala Sitharaman, and this logical step was not taken. Since this is to be a 'single-point' advisory position to the government, there must have been entrenched opposition to this becoming reality. Ultimately the decision must have been thrust centre stage by the current strategic environment. What was always desirable became an urgent necessity. Pulwama and Balakot, the repeated offers for mediation in Kashmir by the U.S. President, the imminent pull-out of American troops from Afghanistan, which would leave Pakistan and its proxies the dominant players on the ground with a strong chance of blowback into Kashmir, as well as the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A, are factors that have come together to confer urgency to taking this step. The forces will no doubt have to be on a heightened sense of alert and in a seamless state of coordination to meet the challenges.

Now, the ambit of the office, the tenure, and who will hold the post, will have to be decided soon. Consider briefly what transpired during Kargil, after which the Kargil Review Committee strongly recommended setting up the CDS: It took a fortnight after the incursions were initially detected before the Indian Air Force (IAF) could be pressed into countermeasures: the then Indian Army Chief was away on a foreign tour, there was inadequate appreciation of the ground situation by the Indian Army, and poor sharing of intelligence, and the squabbling between the IAF and the Indian Army over whether to use helicopters or fixed wing aircraft and how and who should call the shots, comprehensively blunted the initial response. The CDS is expected to bridge such dangerous gaps and reduce response time. It is envisaged he will keep the Defence Minister, continuously and fully briefed and effectively advised, be part of the adjunct apparatus of the Cabinet Committee on Security Affairs, and better link the three services in terms of planning, coordination and execution. It will certainly leave the three service chiefs to focus on running their arms of the forces more efficiently. This move will no doubt bring the strategic forces under the CDS as well. The government should use the opportunity to ramp up the intelligence apparatus that is concomitant to this office.

<u>Words</u>	<u>Kind</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Announce		Declare, promulgate, trumpet, publish
Ramp up		A large increase
Consistently		Constantly, eternally, permanently, for good
Articulate		Eloquent, fluent, communicative, silver tongued
Legitimate		Legal, lawful, licit, permissible
Entrench		Establish, settle, ensconce, install
Thrust		Shore, push, ram, knock
Imminent		Impending, approaching, forth coming
Pull out		Withdraw, resign, leave, retire, step down
Blow back		Detonation, explosion
Confer		Grant, bestow, present with
Ambit		Scope, extent, contines, range, breadth
Transpire		Be revealed, become known, emerge
Incursion		Attack on, assault on, raid on, invasion of
Counter measure		An action taken to counteract a danger threat
Squabble		Quarrel, row, argue, bicker, wrangle
Comprehensive		Exhaustive, all inclusive, synoptic, compendious
Blunt		Straight forward, forthright, bluff
Adjunct		Supplement, addition, accompaniment
Apparatus		Equipment, gadgetry, organization
Concomitant		Attendant, accompanying, associated