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Frontier Post

Indian defence expenditure and its impact on S. Asia

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6/4/2010

India is the second most populated country in the world after China. India is the emerging superpower in South Asian region. Since the 1960s when India started military modernization, major portion of its budget has been allocated to defence. Indian government is increasing its defence budget and is not bothering about what is happening in its neighbouring countries. India has no direct threat of aggression from any other country. So it cannot justify such a massive defence budget. But the government is increasing its defence budget, not even bothering about its common man. India spends a small fraction of its GDP on education, health, clean drinking water and social amenities. Almost 20% of its population is living below poverty line. The socio-economic indicators of Indian society do not allow India to have a huge defence budget. India spends much of its resources on purchasing defence equipment and maintaining large armies. In this way India is appearing to be directionless. In April 2006, India increased its defence budget by 7 %. Presently Indian defence expenditure has been raised to Rs 147,344 crore for 2010-11, an increase of 4% from the last year, which was Rs 141,703 crore out of a total outlay of Rs 1108,000 crore approximately. The Indian government justified that reason behind the increase in budget was deteriorating security environment. During the past three years, India had spent as much as 10.5 billion dollars on military imports. Indian military imports are expected to reach 30 billion dollars by 2012. India has also been expending its Navy in an effort to dominate the Indian ocean and parts of the Pacific, making other countries like Australia and Indonesia uneasy. It has acquired aircraft carriers as well as nuclear submarines in sizeable numbers. Economically India has been signing free trade treaties with other countries in the region like Nepal, Sri

Lanka and Bangladesh, while trying to isolate Pakistan. The massive Indian defence spending has its implication for Pakistan's national security. With upgraded offensive capabilities of its armed forces, the Indian government is hardening its policy towards Pakistan. Indian defence policy is moving towards arm race instead of disarmament. India also tried to compare itself with China, whose double digit increase in defence spending over the past 20 years and resultant military modernization in both qualitative and quantitative terms. These trends suggest that the region is sliding towards an arms race, creating tension and unease which have complicated security transactions in the region. India and China are engaged in a secret nuclear arm race involving billion of dollars. So in this way India is trying to create hegemony in the region. India imports nuclear equipment from Israel and Russia at cheaper rates. India is also trying to engage Pakistan in arms race. Indian defence policy mostly affects Pakistan, in the South Asian region. Indian defence budget not only is affecting the external powers in the region but also creating problems for its own social sector. The solution is that India reduces her military spending and helps ease tensions prevailing in the region, settling all disputes without recourse to arms. That is the only solution for obtaining lasting peace in South Asia.