

'Fighting transnational terrorism our greatest challenge'

By MANU P. TOMS

Kochi, Jan 30: "As a rising power, the most difficult challenge India has to combat is transnational terrorism," observed T.V. Paul, world renowned international security expert.

Paul, a senior chair holder in International Relations at McGill University in Montreal, Canada, is in Kochi during a short visit to his home state, Kerala. He has been holding lecture series at various Indian universities, including MG University, for the last few weeks.

Paul, who has carried out a lot of research in defence policy and globalisation, is now working on a book: 'Globalisation and the Changing National Security State.' Notwithstanding the doubts over the sustainability of an independent nuclear programme, the Indo-US nuclear accord is a welcome move, according to Paul.

"One advantage is that India is no longer bracketed

with Pakistan, Iran and North Korea. It is a political breakthrough for an emerging power," he said.

He does not believe that

it is at the cost of the petroleum pipeline from Iran. "In any case, the nuclear ambitions of Iran should be discouraged as this may lead to the nuclearisation of West Asia. This will create problems for India, given the

fact that India and Iran are neighbours. As for the petroleum pipeline, India will get it once Iran abandons its confrontational policies" said Paul.

"India is yet to fully leverage its influence as a regional power. Its relations with the world's major powers are dynamic but the same

spirit is not reflected in its relations with the SAARC countries."

India is surrounded by a host of 'highly unstable and

failing states.'

The country should play a proactive role in ensuring peace in its neighbourhood for its own progress. Being a regional power it can adopt a benevolent approach to its small neighbours, said Paul.

Troubled and unstable states in the neighbourhood will always be a problem for a big country, said Paul who has formulated a theory on 'asymmetric conflicts and war initiation by weaker powers.'

Paul is of the view that the last decade has seen a tremendous improvement

in India's diplomatic tie with the US, Russia, China and France. There is a lot more pragmatism in India's style and approach, he said.

Paul has co-authored with Baldev Raj Nayar the Cambridge-published book: 'India in the World Order.' Technological and economical linkages with the US, European Union, West Asia, Japan and China are active and an impressive economic growth is reported. "But the problem is that unlike China, India is not able to provide the kind of quality of life you expect in an economically rising power," Paul said.

Paul who hails from Mevellar, near Piravom, is a PhD in Political Science from the University of California, Los Angeles, and has authored or edited eight books on international affairs. The India-Pakistan Conflict: An Enduring Rivalry, published recently by Cambridge University Press, which is edited by him has already received international acclaim.



In CONVERSATION
with T.V. Paul