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LTTE threat: Experts suggest joint patrol

COLOMBO: Professor Rohan Gunaratna, a leading Sri Lankan expert on terrorism, has sought joint patrolling of the seas between Sri Lanka and India to prevent a Mumbai-type attack that a resurgent LTTE can stage from the Tamil Nadu coast.

Gunaratna, who heads the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research in Singapore, told an international conference on maritime security held in Galle last week, that the remnants of the LTTE, based in the West, could use Tamil Nadu to stage a sea-borne, Mumbai-style attack on targets in Lanka.

Briefing Express on his presentation at the 10-nation conference, Gunaratna said: "The only place in which the LTTE can regroup militarily is Tamil Nadu, and it is the only place from which it can stage a Mumbai-type sea borne attack on Sri Lankan targets. And since the LTTE poses a threat to India also, it is in the interest of both the countries to have their navies jointly patrol the seas."

According to him, the Tamil Diaspora in the West is propping up pro-LTTE elements and Eelamists in Tamil Nadu. While most of the 20-odd pro-LTTE groups are small, some high-profile politicians like Vaiko are also in it, posing a significant threat. Gunaratna said the Indian delegation at the conference led by the former Indian Navy chief Adm Arun Prakash, saw the Mumbai-type strike as a trend setter and supported the idea of joint patrolling of the Palk Strait.

BETTER Laws needed: The Sri Lankan scholar pleaded for a reform of the Law of the Sea to better police the "international waters" as these were still not governed properly. He recalled that from 1997 to 2009, the LTTE had brought 95 per cent of its weaponry by sea.

QUALITY INTELLIGENCE: Among the key factors which enabled Sri Lanka to pulverise the LTTE's military machine in the island between 2006 and 2009 was "very high quality intelligence" from India on the LTTE's shipping, Gunaratna said.

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