

NOTE

## Mine Ban Treaty

**BD writes :**

The tenth anniversary of the enforcement of the Mine Ban Treaty is being celebrated with mixed feelings. On the one hand there is a sense of achievement that thousands of painful deaths could be avoided. But on the other hand, there is also concern that despite the decade-long effort some of the countries with the most powerful military power have not yet signed the treaty.

Landmines are now widely recognised to be among the most cruel and indiscriminate weapons ever used. Till last count the world had recorded nearly half a million victims of landmine explosions—wounded in very painful ways and frequently maimed and/or disabled, sometimes suffering from life-long disability. Keeping in view the high humanitarian costs of landmines, an international agreement called the Ottawa treaty was negotiated in 1997. This agreement bans the development, production, stockpiling, transfer and use of anti-personnel mines. About 156 nations have signed this treaty, while about 40 countries with a stockpile of 160 million anti-personnel mines remain outside this treaty.

The International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) brings together over 14000 groups in about 90 countries. The ICBL was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997. What has been the impact of this campaign? In year 2006 a total, of 5751 casualties from landmines and related devices/weapons were recorded in 68 countries, including 1367 people killed and 4296 injured (88 unknown). Overall a declining trend has been noticed thanks largely to the anti-landmine campaigns.

India is also among those countries which has not been using landmines in recent years even though it has not signed the treaty.

The official position of the Government of India (as expressed in a statement in October 2007) is that "India supports the UN vision of a world free of the threat of landmines and unexploded ordnance where individuals and communities live in a safe environment conducive to development, and where mine survivors are fully integrated into their societies." Elsewhere the Indian government said that, "India remains committed to the objective of eventual elimination of anti-personnel mines (APLs) through a non-discriminatory, universal and global ban on APLs that address the legitimate defence requirements of the states."

It is now hoped that India will follow its stated commitment with more solid steps to support the Mine Ban Treaty. □□□