

US clears Israel radar system sale to India

Jerusalem, Dec. 24 (PTI): The US has cleared the sale of \$1-billion Israeli Phalcon early warning radar system to India, according to American administration sources.

The US administration supports the sale of the Phalcon to India and has given the green signal to the Israeli defence ministry, the sources said.

The defence ministry has updated the US on the advanced negotiations about the deal with India though the foreign ministry fears that the sale could anger China with which Israel cancelled a signed deal last year under US pressure.

The controversial deal with Beijing, which included the installation of a Phalcon early warning radar on a Russian-built aircraft by Israel Aircraft Industries, was scrapped last year following pressure from the Bill Clinton administration.

Beijing had expressed anger over the move and demanded renewal of the sale.

English daily *Ha'aretz* quoted sources in the US administration as saying that Washington took a positive view of the developing relation between Israel and India "in a range of fields".

Israel coordinated matters with the US before and Washington expressed happiness. "Advance dialogue on the particulars (of the deal) before decisions are taken will ensure that there won't be any surprises in the future," said the US sources.

Earlier, the US had opposed the Phalcon plane sale to India contending that the deal could escalate tension in the subcontinent. The US has okayed the deal now but it wishes to be informed in advance on sales of strategic significance, such as those involving early-warning aircraft that would extend the Indian

Air Force's range of action.

Israel wants to sell three Phalcons to the Indian Air Force and the two sides have been negotiating the estimated \$1-billion deal for quite some time now.

Advanced negotiations were cancelled late last year in the wake of change of guard in Washington.

The Phalcon deal has been under discussion during a number of exchange visits by top defence officials of the two countries.

Negotiations were further advanced last month when Israeli director-general of the defence ministry Amos Yaron visited New Delhi.

Earlier in August, vice-chief of the army staff Lt. Gen. Vijay Oberoi was in Israel to bolster defence cooperation.

Subir Dutta, secretary, defence production and supplies, signed a defence agreement with Israel in July last year, while naval chief Admiral Sushil Kumar and defence secretary Yoginder Narain examined sophisticated Israeli missiles and other defence equipment in May this year.

During Dutta's visit last year, India and Israel signed a defence cooperation agreement worth \$ 2 billion for supplying Israeli weapons systems and technology to New Delhi.

Putin's birthday wish

Russian President Vladimir Putin greeted Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on the eve of his birthday today. He said the recent Indo-Russian summit-level contacts were marked by openness, trust and mutual understanding and hoped this would continue in the coming year.

"You personally play the key role in this. I look forward to continuing the comprehensive dialogue with you in the forthcoming year," Putin told Vajpayee.

THE TELEGRAPH

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Iran Minister to attend oil meet

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 21. Even as prospects for the Iran-India gas pipeline project recede with India-Pakistan relations becoming chillier by the day, the Iran Oil Minister, Mr. Bijan Namdar Zangeneh, is set to attend the fourth Indian Oil and Gas Conference organised by the Tata Energy Research Institute (TERI) here next month.

Talking to presspersons, the TERI director-general, Dr. R.K. Pachauri, said the most viable route for the pipeline project was the overland one. Pointing out that Pakistan stands to gain huge transit fees for the pipeline, he felt it could become a reality in the long run over the next two to three years.

On other possibilities for gas supply, he said India could initially utilise fertilisers or power produced with natural gas as the feedstock from Bangladesh. This would provide a value addition to the gas reserves in that country and could dilute the opposition to ultimately supplying natural gas through a pipeline. Alternatively, a transit pipeline could be built for gas from Tripura through Bangladesh which could also be used to supply gas from Myanmar. At a later date, natural gas from Bangladesh might be routed through the same pipeline.

In this context, Dr. Pachauri stressed the need for a "strategic vision" to chalk out tie-ups for regional gas supplies to India.

The conference being held from January 14 to 16 takes place at a critical stage with deregulation in the oil sector slated to take effect from April 1, 2002. On deregulation, he said an efficient regulator could infuse competitiveness and bring about a level-playing ground, thus bringing in more investments in the hydrocarbon industry.

India was a major oil consumer in the region and its policies could have a considerable impact regionally. While dismantling the administrative pricing mechanism (APM) was a step in the right direction,

the issues of subsidies, unrestricted access to pipeline by private operators and the role of the regulator in the deregulated regime must be addressed.

The meet is expected to provide a platform for the contours of the deregulation road map to be unveiled and discussed. It is being attended by chief executives of leading international oil and gas companies including the president of Indonesia's Pertamina and the president of Malaysia's Petronas.

Raghunathan joins elite club

MUMBAI, DEC. 21. Eminent mathematician Prof M.S. Raghunathan, currently associated with the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR), has been elected as fellow of Royal Society of London.

With this, he has joined the ranks of the likes of legendary Srinivasa Ramanujan, Harish Chandra, C.S. Seshadri, M.S. Narasimhan and S.R.S. Varadhan. Head of the School of Mathematics at TIFR, Prof. Raghunathan was felicitated by his international colleagues here on Thursday for his lifetime achievement at the week-long international conference on "Algebraic groups and arithmetic". Mathematicians from different parts of the world, including Field Medal (equivalent to Nobel Prize) winner, Prof. G.A. Margulis of Yale university, Prof D. Kazhdan of Harvard University and Prof Armana Borel of the Institute of Advanced Studies, Princeton, joined the felicitation in the form of presenting papers on Prof. Raghunathan's four decades of efforts in the field of algebra (lie group).

Prof. Raghunathan, who is known for his brilliance and respected globally for his work on algebra, also received Padmashree this year. He joined the TIFR at the age of 19 and has won several distinctions and honours including the Third World Academy prize and the Srinivasa Ramanujan medal of the Indian National Science Academy.—PTI

THE HINDU

22 DEC 2001

22 DEC 2001

India stands by Arafat, slams Israel

HT Correspondent
& Agencies

New Delhi, December 5

ALARMED AT the cycle of violence in West Asia, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee today said India will continue to back the West Asia peace process and work for the realisation of a "viable State of Palestine".

Vajpayee joined Sonia Gandhi and Minister of State External Affairs Omar Abdullah in expressing India's solidarity with the Palestinians.

External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh, in a statement tabled in the Lok Sabha during Zero Hour today, unequivocally condemned the Israeli air raids on Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's headquarters over the past two days.

Singh spoke to Arafat and conveyed India's concern over the Israeli missile attacks. Arafat, in turn, sought India's help with that of the US to prevent Israel from carrying out these attacks. During the 15-minute conversation, Singh told Arafat that India was firm on its stand that the West Asia peace process should be salvaged. The Indian Government today observed the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Sonia called for an end to the "repeated use of State violence" against Palestinians. She balanced her anti-Israel stand, saying the Congress recognised that the process of durable peace is damaged and disrupted by the terrorism directed at Israel.

Vajpayee iterated India's support for Palestinian Statehood and urged that a "definitive reso-

lution of the dispute should result in the creation of a viable state of Palestine alongside Israel in implementation of the United Nations Security Council resolution 2442 and 338".

A Foreign Office spokesperson refused to comment on the US President George W Bush's support for Israel's initial air attacks. "We do not comment on statements made by other countries' Governments," she said.

Singh, while condemning the Palestinian and Israeli attacks, said Arafat had distanced himself from acts of terrorism and had taken steps to arrest people with a history of terrorist violence. "We sincerely hope that nothing will be done to undermine President Arafat and Palestinian National Authority as the alternatives are fraught with danger having serious implications for regional peace and security," he said.

Singh's statement came after Congress Chief Whip Priya Ranjan Das Munshi, CPI(M) member Hannan Mollah and GM Banatwala of the Muslim League sought clarification on New Delhi's West Asia policy.

When Opposition MPs wanted the Government to protest against the US stand that Israel had the right to self-defence, Singh said: "Irrespective of what the US says or thinks, our stand is clear. Sovereignty is sovereignty. We recognise Palestine and Arafat."

Quoting from a letter written by Vajpayee to Arafat on November 27, the minister said the Government supported all efforts at ending violence and creation of a viable state of Palestine.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 6 DEC 2001

'India, Israel must join hands'

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, NOV. 22. The Israeli Defence Secretary, Mr. Amos Yaron, today advocated a compact formation of nations to fight terrorism, including Israel and India which had been perennial victims of the menace.

23/11
"No country can fight terrorism individually. Therefore, we have to join hands in this battle," he told presspersons after a meeting with the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani.

Israel and India should strengthen cooperation with other na-

tions to evolve a joint action plan to fight global terrorism. "There is no legitimate or illegitimate terrorism. Both India and Israel are facing terrorism. After the September 11 attacks, the entire world has learnt this. Democracies like India and Israel should strengthen cooperation with other nations to fight this global menace," he said.

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Mr. Yaron, designated Director-General of Israeli Defence Ministry, arrived here on November 20 to hold talks with leading Indian policy-makers and officials on security and greater military-to-mil-

itary cooperation. Leading a seven-member defence delegation, Mr. Yaron has already interacted with the Defence Secretary, Mr. Yogendra Narain.

The tone for enhanced exchanges at the higher echelons was set with the visit of Mr. Narain to Tel Aviv.

Mr. Yaron will be followed by a delegation of four Knesset members from the Israel-India Friendship league which will include the Deputy Minister of Public Security, the Knesset Deputy Speaker and Chairman of an Opposition party.

THE HINDU

23 NOV 2002

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India, Israel review defence ties

10.11
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By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, NOV. 21. The Defence Secretaries of Israel and India today reviewed the impetus to bilateral defence ties following the Kargil War. During discussions, the two sides are understood to have reviewed the progress in setting up institutional structures, on the lines of similar ones being positioned with the U.S., to promote closer ties in military hardware, joint technological development and military to military cooperation.

In addition to learning from Israel's acknowledged prowess in counter-terrorism, India is also looking to benefit from its expertise in night warfare and air sur-

veillance. India and Israel are currently negotiating the transfer of a few early warning "Phalcon" aircraft.

The U.S. post-Pokhran sanctions have been so far hampering the culmination of this deal. This was because the development of the Greenpine Radar by Israel has been funded by the U.S. But with the sanctions now being with lifted, the Israeli Defence Secretary, Mr. Amos Yaron's interaction with his Indian counterpart, Mr. Yogendra Narain, will provide new opportunities for cooperation.

Both countries, may also find it easier to cooperate in development of an integrated anti-ballistic missile system.

THE HINDU

22 NOV 2001

India, Iran to move closer for mutual security

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Sept. 19. — India and Iran will move closer in sharing mutual security and Intelligence concerns.

The Iranian ambassador, Mohammad Moosavi, met the home minister, Mr LK Advani, today to discuss the emergent international security scenario in the wake of the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington. Underlining the importance of the meeting senior home and external affairs ministry officials, including home secretary Mr Kamal Pandey, were asked to attend it.

After meeting Mr Advani, the Iranian ambassador said, "India and Iran already have close political and economic ties but we want to move closer in other areas of mutual concern." Sources said the international security scenario had changed after the 11 September attacks in the USA. Iran sought closer cooperation in areas of security. The home minister agreed to have active association with Iran in sharing issues relating to Intelligence and security.

The two countries share a common platform against the Taliban, albeit for different reasons. India has been fighting against the militant outfits sponsored by Pakistan and Taliban in Kashmir for the last several years and Intelligence reports suggest that most of the militants in the valley are of Afghan origin. These militants are a hindrance to the government's efforts to re-

store normalcy in J&K. They have also been indulging in gun-running and narco-terrorism in different parts of the country.

Iran is severely opposed to the Taliban regime and had been supporting the Ahmed Shah Massood-led Northern Alliance. It is the only effective force which had been fighting the Taliban militarily, Iran and Taliban also have religious differences. Iran is reportedly the only Islamic country which follows the Shia faith. Iraq is said to be the other nation which is predominantly Shia but the regime is Sunni.

The Taliban is Sunni and reportedly doesn't recognise Iranians as good Muslims.

Iran, however, is considered to be anti-America and while it has condemned the terrorist attacks in the USA, it is opposed to military action against Afghanistan.

Jaswant meets counterpart

The external affairs minister, Mr Jaswant Singh, also had talks with the Iranian foreign minister, Mr Kamal Kharazi.

Mr Singh reiterated India's firm stand that Islam couldn't be equated with terrorism and that there was a need for nations like India and Iran to work together to ensure that this didn't happen also.

Mr Kharazi apparently agreed with this approach inter alia reiterating the need for India and Iran to remain in constant touch.

THE STATESMAN

20 SEP 2001

Jaswant seeks Iran's help in fighting terrorism

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 19. After intense diplomatic interaction with the U.S. and Israel in the last few days, India today sought to reach out to the Islamic world through Iran.

The External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, had a lengthy conversation with his Iranian counterpart, Mr. Kamal Kharazmi. The Iranian Ambassador to India, Mr. Mohammad Moosavi also called on the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, today.

At the meeting, Mr. Singh indicated his support for Iran's participation in an international coalition against terrorism. According to analysts, such a step would be highly significant as it could help thaw the relationship between Washington and Teheran. A spokesperson for the Ministry of External Affairs said Mr. Singh emphasised that "effective action" against terrorism needed the "coordination and cooperation by the largest possible number of countries."

Significantly, Mr. Singh sought Iran's partnership for ensuring that the struggle against terrorism did not target the religion of Islam. "Islam can simply not be equated with terror-

ism and countries such as India and Iran needed to work together to ensure that this did not happen", he said.

He reiterated that the fight against terrorism was not against any one individual but covered the entire system which generated extremist violence.

Meanwhile, the Government today sought to dispel the impression that the Union Cabinet was divided over extending full support to the U.S. to counter terrorism. "There was no difference of opinion. No one had reservations about foreign policy", a spokesperson in the Prime Minister's Office said. The terrorist attacks in the U.S. were only informally discussed during the 90-minute meeting on Tuesday, he said, adding that Mr. Singh briefed the Ministers and answered their queries.

In a signal of support to the Government, the Trinamool Congress MP, Mr. Nitish Sen-gupta, said "there was nothing wrong" in the offer of support to the U.S.

In a related development, the U.S. Ambassador to India, Mr. Robert Blackwill, met the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Mr. Pramod Mahajan. The Minister had, on Tuesday, crit-

icised what he perceived as Washington's focus on the Saudi fugitive Osama bin Laden. Sources said he stressed that the U.S. should pressure Pakistan on the question of terrorism.

Continuing his efforts to unify Indian opinion in favour of the U.S. campaign, Mr. Blackwill today visited a prominent Sikh shrine here. The visit was prompted by the murder of a Sikh, Balbir Singh Sodhi, in Arizona after the attacks in New York and Washington. "We will protect the innocent and punish the guilty. We in the United States are determined that these sorts of acts will not be prompted", he told a Sikh gathering.

Mr. Blackwill, however, cancelled a proposed meeting with the Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid, Syed Ahmad Shah Bukhari, apparently for his unbridled criticism of the U.S.

The day saw the Ambassadors of China and Japan holding discussions on the fallout of the terrorist attacks with key Congress functionaries. Party sources said the Chinese Ambassador, during his talk with Mr. K. Natwar Singh, head, Congress external affairs cell, expressed the need for a collective international response against terrorism.

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THE HINDU

20 SEP 2001

Between Palestine and Israel, India stands for realism

Strategic shift

BY J.N. DIXIT

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YASSER ARAFAT, chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), visited Delhi for a day on August 24/25. His visit was followed by Israeli special envoy, Senior Deputy Director of Foreign Affairs, Y. Barin. Though the Palestinian issue and the Middle East peace process do not loom large in Indian foreign policy, they are a matter of significant concern to us. This is because the Israeli-Palestinian peace process impinges on our relations with Israel on the one hand and all the important Arab countries on the other.

The manner in which the situation develops in the Middle East can affect our security interests in West Asia, economic interests in terms of trade, energy supplies, and the status and future of the large Indian diaspora which lives in Arab countries stretching from Algeria in the West to Kuwait and Bahrain in the East.

The primary purpose of Arafat's and Barin's visits was to brief the Government of India about the current state of the parallel phenomenon of negotiations and military violence which is characterising the Israel-Palestine relationship, brokered primarily through American mediation. The end of the Cold War resulted in a qualitative change in ideological orientations on the Palestine issue. Though the Camp David process and late president Anwar Sadat's visit to Israel marked a beginning of thaw in rigid Arab positions against Israel, it did not succeed in meeting the aspirations of the Palestinian people. The process was struck in a stalemate till the PLO decided to get involved in direct negotiations with Israel at Oslo.

The Oslo process had the backing of the US and the former USSR. A well-structured process of peace proposals was initiated, the central feature of which was that the Palestinians should accept a lesser area as homeland in Gaza and adjacent areas with substantive autonomy, in exchange for stopping the violent struggle against the Israeli State. This proposal failed due to the unwillingness of Israel to put a stop to expanding Israeli settlement on the West Bank, particularly after the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin.

The issue of Palestinian claims on Jerusalem remains an intractable problem despite marginal compromises offered by Ehud Barak during the last phase of his prime ministership. Though American mediation continues, there has been no meaningful discussions between Arafat and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

In the larger political context, the Israeli-Palestinian issue has diminished in significance. The end of the confrontation between the US and the Russian fed-



IMAGINED HOMELAND: Young Palestinians run for cover in Gaza as Israeli tanks charge in

eration has qualitatively reduced the ideological and strategic significance of the Palestinian question in terms of great power equations in the Eastern Mediterranean. The approach of the great powers has been that while they are willing to help, the Palestinians and Israelis should find solutions based on ground realities in a practical manner, an approach which does not help the Palestinians very much.

Besides, the unity amongst the Arab countries in support of the Palestinians does not exist any more. The disintegration of this unity is rooted in two developments. First, Arafat's support to Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. This alienated him from the Arab countries of the Gulf. Second, with the end of the Cold War, the strategic-political considerations which underpinned Arab and Islamic unity underwent a change in which important Arab and Muslim countries gave more attention to developing a stronger relationship with the US and other power centres of the world.

The Palestinian concerns and the Israeli stance are no longer a matter of high priority in Arab foreign policies, regardless of foreign policy pronouncements on these issues by the Arab and Muslim governments or at the Organisation of Islamic Countries. Important Arab countries like Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Iran want to enter the mainstream of stable international equations. This has placed the PLO and the leadership of other Palestinian factions in a difficult predicament.

To assess Arafat and Barin's visits to India, one should discern the qualitative change in India's relations with Israel and the consequent expansion of the con-

tent and range of Indo-Israeli interaction. The rationale of India restoring full diplomatic relations and political and economic contacts with Israel has to be seen in the context of the PLO itself commencing direct contact with the Israeli government. In the post-Gulf war international situation, India decided to raise Indo-Israeli relations to full diplomatic levels to facilitate across the board cooperation in various fields.

Another factor which impelled India towards this decision was that Israel has been strategically located on the north and north-western flank of a number of Muslim countries which encourage extremist Islamic religious forces in the Central and South Asian region. More important was Israel's consistent support for India's territorial unity, especially on the issue of Kashmir. This was in contrast to the ambiguous and at times admonitory posture taken by a number of Muslim countries on the Kashmir issue in spite of India's having close relations with them and despite India having been a principled supporter of the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people.

It is important to remember that India consulted Arafat and received his endorsement before restoring full relations with Israel in 1992. In policy terms, India wants the Palestinian people to have a homeland with complete sovereignty. India's approach on the question of jurisdiction over Jerusalem is that being the holiest city for three of the major religions of the world, Israel and Palestine, with the support of important powers, should evolve a compromise formula transcending jurisdictional, territorial and political considerations. Such

a compromise is not beyond the realm of practical possibilities.

Indo-Israeli relations have expanded in the economic, technological and agricultural fields. Beginnings have also been made in defence cooperation. India considers a relationship with Israel as a counter to extremist Islamic centrifugal tendencies which could affect the stability of States in West, Central and South Asia.

India feels Israel should be more positive in fulfilling the long-term assurances given to the PLO at the time of the Oslo Accord, and in subsequent negotiations brokered by the US between 1991 and 2000.

It is in this context that Arafat and Barin had discussions in India. The objective of both was to brief the Indian government on latest developments in Israeli-Palestinian discussions and the critical military situation affecting these negotiations. The second important objective concerned Arafat seeking India's support to bring back the issue of Zionism as an item on the agenda of the UN World Conference on Racial Discrimination, held in Durban early September. Barin's objective was exactly the opposite. He was seeking India's support to prevent this issue being brought back on the UN agenda.

It should be recalled that a UN resolution of 1975 had equated Zionism with racism and was highly critical of Israel. This resolution was repealed by a UN resolution in 1991. India had supported the 1975 resolution, and also the 1991 resolution excluding Zionism from the UN agenda. The latest information is that while Arafat was assured continued Indian support, India was not in favour of bringing back into the UN agenda issues on which the UN has not been able to act effectively in the past. India also did not want any aspect of issues relating to Jammu and Kashmir being reinscribed into the UN agenda.

Jaswant Singh told Barin that India continues to stand by the UN resolution of 1991. The information available is that the other important powers in the UN, including the US and the Russian federation, were not enthusiastic about this issue being discussed at Durban. One suspects that even Islamic countries may not be united in support of the Palestinians on the issue, whatever their public stance may be.

India attaches importance to its relations with the PLO and Israel, but Indian policies are rooted in realistic considerations of national interests. If Arafat did not go fully satisfied with his discussions with our prime minister and foreign minister, one hopes that with his long political experience, he would recognise this imperative political reality.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

15 SEP 2001

India beeps on Israel radar

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Sept. 10: China's loss may be India's gain. Israel's sophisticated Phalcon Early Warning Radar System, which was denied to China, may be purchased by India after years of hesitation. Short of the sale, the two nations will discuss the deal during a two-day strategic dialogue beginning here tomorrow.

This is the third round of strategic dialogue between India and Israel since the process began in 1999.

Israeli national security advisor Uzi Dayan — nephew of Israeli leader Moshe Dayan — will meet his Indian counterpart Brajesh Mishra to discuss bilateral relations, including developments in their respective regions.

The two sides are especially keen to cooperate on defence, terrorism, information technology and agriculture.

Though one of the high points will be the finalising of the Phalcon deal, nothing is being officially said given the sensitivity of the agreement.

Initially, Israel had been negotiating with China to sell the radar system but it was scuttled because of US opposition.

Though the sale of the radar system was discussed by foreign minister Jaswant Singh during his visit to Israel last year, Tel Aviv made it clear that a final decision was yet to be taken.

The Bush Administration opposes the sale of the radar system to China though it has no objection if the system is sold to India.

However, till the American sanctions on India remain, such a move will violate US domestic laws. India and Israel will finalise the purchase agreement when the US sanctions are lifted.

Once India acquires the sophisticated system from Israel, its air force will have an edge over the Chinese and Pakistani air forces. It is likely that any official announcement or hints on the deal will draw protests from China and this is one of the reasons the issue is not being acknowledged in the official agenda.

Terrorism is another area where the two nations are keen to cooperate but little will be officially said on it.

Union home minister L.K. Advani had sparked off a controversy during his visit to Israel last

year with his alleged remark that the two sides should work closely in the nuclear field. This drew protests from India's traditional allies in the Islamic world, forcing South Block to issue hurried denials that such remarks were made by Advani.

Both Israel and India are considered leaders in the information technology sector and can complement each other in this area. Agriculture is another field where both sides want to expand their co-operation.

The two nations will also exchange views on political developments in their respective regions. On West Asia, New Delhi has stressed that there should be an immediate cessation of violence and Israelis and Palestinians should resume peace talks.

THE TELEGRAPH

11 SEP 2001

No Arabian nights for MPs in Iraq

SANJAY SINGH
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NAJMA STEALS THE SHOW

NEW DELHI, Sept. 9. - Arabian nights it wasn't for the members of Parliament who were part of the "goodwill" delegation to Iraq. The 23 MPs, part of a jumbo 80-member group, are puzzled, if not a little upset.

According to them, all that 79 members of the group had to do in Iraq was to shop a bit, do some sight-seeing, and wait in lobbies for appointments that got cancelled. The MPs say it was the "exclusive show" of the delegation leader, Mrs Najma Heptullah, deputy chairperson of the Rajya Sabha.

Not even the minister of state for railways and deputy leader of the delegation, Mr Digvijay Singh, had a clue about the official engagements in Baghdad.

The trip started on a wrong note. As the delegation landed at Baghdad's Saddam Airport, members were asked to open their baggage for a "routine security check-up".

This surprised members who thought they were part of at least a quasi-diplomatic delegation. The situation was, however, salvaged after intervention of some senior officials from both sides.

In Baghdad, the delegation's first engagement was to meet the members of Indian community at the Embassy House at 7 p.m. But they had reached their hotel only at 6.30 p.m., after a sight seeing trip, and, as an MP said, "there wasn't enough time even for a bath", if the appointment had to be kept. As it happened, the appointment was cancelled. The majority of the delegation was kept waiting in the Embassy House, only to be told that the interaction will not take place.

A dinner date - with a Sikh "prominent in Baghdad" - was kept. And that augured well for the next day, or so the delegation

thought. An MP member said the second day was "packed" with appointments - a 9.30 a.m. meeting with the Iraqi Vice-President, Mr Taha Yasin Al-Ramadhan, a 10 a.m. meeting with the deputy Prime Minister, Mr Tariq Aziz, a 11 am meeting with the director of foreign relations of the Baath Party, Dr Harith Al-Kishali, and at 12 noon, a meeting with Dr Saadoun Hamadi, Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament.

According an MP, many members of the delegation had done extensive homework for these appointments. It turned out they had wasted their time, and effort.

At 9.15 a.m., the delegation was in a lobby waiting for transport and the officials who would accompany them. They found neither. Some members then sought out their leader, Mrs Heptullah. But, said an MP, they discovered that "she was not in the hotel".

■ See NAJMA: page 8

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10 SEP 2001

NAJMA: *Many engagements cancelled*

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(Continued from page 1)

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Some officials told them that "Madam" had gone to meet Mr Saddam Hussain and that a revised engagement for the rest of the delegation would be given shortly. They had by then missed their first as well as their second engagement. The other engagements got cancelled, too, an MP said, leading many of the delegation to wonder why so many people were chosen in the first place.

And also why the Indian diplomatic establishment had made such extensive arrangements. Foreign service officials had been summoned from Jordan and Syria to help coordinate the plans of a large delegation.

About all the work the officials could do, an MP said, was to tell the delegation about all official engagements and that the members were on

their own, free to do whatever they wished.

Thus instructed the goodwill delegation proceeded to act like ordinary tourists - a good lunch and some some sight seeing. Mrs Heptullah, meanwhile, had held a press conference for the Iraqi media, a fact the rest of the delegation came to know only later.

Some MPs also said that the deputy leader of the delegation, Mr Divijay Singh, did not even go for sight-seeing. Mr Singh kept mostly to himself, and in his room.

Interestingly, and undoubtedly unconnected to his rather sombre Iraqi sojourn, Mr Singh, on his return, found himself divested of the additional charge of industry and commerce (minister of state) which had been given to him only a few weeks back. But perhaps, simply being a minister of state for railways is better than being at a loose end in Baghdad.

Indo-Israeli partnership for new missile shield

By Atul Aneja *India. H. Asia*

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 5. India is developing with Israeli help, a new multi-layered shield to counter ballistic missile attacks.

According to highly-placed sources in the Government, India is working on integrating its indigenous Akash missile and the Israeli Arrow-2 system to build a comprehensive cover against attack by ballistic missiles and planes.

India has to build a fool-proof missile shield, taking into account the presence of ballistic missiles including the Chinese M-11 and variants of the M-9 missiles with Pakistan. Pakistan has also adapted the North Korean Nodong-1 as Ghauri missile into its arsenal. It is also working the longer range Shaheen-2 missile.

India is looking at acquiring a capability to counter a missile attack by ensuring that the Arrow-2 system first destroys incoming missiles when they are still very high. In fact, the Arrow-2 system can strike a missile which is flying at a height of 48 km. from the

ground. The Akash, in turn, has a lower target range of 27 km.

The Arrow-2 system can spot a missile nearly, 300 km. away, mainly on account of the Arrow's Greenpine phased array radar, developed by the Israeli firm, ELTA. Phased array radars can spot targets much faster than conventional radars. The extra time gained from this can be used to launch a second missile strike, in case the first launch fails to hit its target.

The new project which is headed by the Indian Air Force (IAF) revolves around networking the phased array Rajendra radar of the Akash with the Greenpine radar. The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) is deeply involved in this exercise, sources say.

The Arrow-2 is a state-of-the-art missile which became operational in Israel only in October last. Around 60 per cent of the over \$ one billion project has been funded by the U.S. Significantly, the technology generated by the Arrow project is useful in the U.S. for building its new Ballistic Missile Defences (BMD). In fact, the U.S. is interested only in acquiring know-how generated by the Arrow-2 and is reportedly not keen on acquiring the full system. Not surprisingly, the BMD organisation of the U.S. has been in charge of overseeing the Arrow-2 project.

The new Indo-Israeli project reflects the doctrinal accent of the Indian armed forces to prevent destruction by nuclear or non-

THE HINDU

16 SEP 2001

chief minister Farooq Abdullah did not attend the meeting. (1/21)

Israel seeks India support at UN meet

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT AA

New Delhi, Aug. 27: Israel has sought India's support to thwart attempts by Palestinians to raise the issue of Zionism at the upcoming UN conference on racial discrimination in South Africa. It has also criticised attempts to "derail" the meet by including unrelated issues.

Israel's special envoy Y. Biran on Monday met external affairs minister Jaswant Singh. He handed over a letter from Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres to Mr Singh in which the Israeli leader talked about the UN conference against racial discrimination.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Mr Biran said the Indian government's response was positive. Israel was apprehensive that some forces may "hijack the platform" to push their agenda.

India has decided to stand by the resolution on Zionism passed by the UN General Assembly in 1975 and repealed in 1991. Israel is also accommodative about India's own concerns regarding the conference. The Indian government is engaged in thwarting attempts by some organisations to include caste-based discrimination as a form of racism.

The Israeli envoy said that it was not an issue, as caste-based dis-

crimination was not a state policy in India. He said the Constitution of India does not permit such discrimination.

Mr Biran is a senior secretary in the Israeli foreign ministry and is also a negotiator in the West Asia peace process. He said that if the issue of Zionism figures at the UN conference under pressure from the Arabs, Israel will have to consider its participation in the meet.

He said that Palestinians, with the help of the Arab world, were trying to target Israel. "It is another attempt at Israel-bashing by the Arabs," he said, adding that Israel was for exclusion of politicisation

of the conference. At the preparatory meets for the conference early this month, Israel and Palestinians had clashed over the issue of Zionism. The envoy said if the UN conference, to start on August 31 in Durban, takes up the issue, there will then be demands to bring it into the UN General Assembly. He said that Israel was against racism. "Conflicts of a political nature should not be included in the conference," he said. In his comments about India's opposition to caste-based discrimination, the envoy said, "There is nothing in the government policy that suggests that it is a state policy," he said.

THE ASIAN AGE

28 AUG 2001

India fights J&K militants with Israel help: Jane's

STANLEY THEODORE
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

HYDERABAD, Aug. 18. — Several Israeli Intelligence teams are now training Indian counter-insurgency units in Kashmir, *Jane's Defence Weekly* has said.

In its 14 August issue, the magazine (known for its authentic reports on Intelligence agencies) said the Israeli secret service has strengthened its ties with Indian security forces and is "heavily involved" in helping India fight Islamic militants in Kashmir.

The report, titled "*Mutual threat of Islamic militancy allies Israel and India*", said Israel has sent several teams

to the valley.

The defence ministry has, however, called the report "mischievous and incorrect", SNS adds from Delhi. A defence spokesman said: "The government would like to make it clear that there is no such programme. Nor are Israeli experts being called here by security forces for their training. Indian forces are competent to deal with terrorism and counter-insurgency."

Jane's report, published in the magazine's *Jane's* Intelligence section, has taken note of the Indian stand that the insurgency in J&K is part of Pakistan's proxy war against India. Islamabad denies it, but it has

acknowledged "providing moral and diplomatic support for what it describes as the Kashmiris' right to self-determination."

The Israeli Intelligence agency, Mossad, was set up in 1951. It's regarded as among the very best in the world in intelligence gathering and covert operations. It has five divisions. Metsada or special operations division specialises in sabotage and psychological warfare. The Psychlogit Department is responsible for psychological warfare, propaganda and deception operations.

Shinbet deals with anti-terrorist and subversive activities, and Aman deals with military intelligence. Mossad also has a technology department. It had advertised for computer engineers in April, stating that the recruits would be engaged in clandestine technology development.

The report said: "The exact extent of the involvement in Kashmir by Israel's intelligence agencies is far from clear, but it fits into Israel's increasing focus on events in Central Asia, and as far a field as Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim state, to counteract Islamic

said the Arab world was concerned at the growth of strategic ties between India and Israel, at a time when the Arab countries were stepping up efforts to isolate Israel internationally. The report detailed how India had changed its Israel policy.

Despite pressure from the Arab states, India preferred to remain neutral on the West Asia crisis, urging both sides to show restraint and return to the negotiation table.

"Unlike in the past, when India used to automatically condemn Israel, Delhi's present responses make use of more generalised terms in respect of the 'peace process'. To add to the Palestinians' frustration, Delhi openly

lauded Israel's 'restraint' after a Palestinian suicide bomber recently carried out an attack at a Tel Aviv discotheque," the report said. "Since the upgrading of diplomatic ties in 1992, a fundamental reassessment of their long-term defence and security interests has taken place between India and Israel. In the last decade the two countries have built up extensive military collaboration, involving arms sales, equipment upgrades, the transfer of technology and joint weapons development programmes. The latest multi-billion dollar defence agreements are seen as another watershed in the Indo-Israeli partnership."

REPORT MISCHIEVOUS AND INCORRECT: DEFENCE MINISTRY

THE STATESMAN

Israel is training forces to fight militants in Kashmir

By Chidanand Rajghatta
Times News Network

WASHINGTON: Israeli intelligence agencies have "several teams" now in Kashmir training Indian counter-insurgency forces to fight separatist guerrilla groups operating there, according to a report on *Jane's Terrorism and Security Monitor*.

Israel is understood to be "heavily involved" in helping New Delhi combat Islamic militants and this is part of the intensifying of relations between the security apparatus of the two countries, the *Monitor* said. It gave no specific details of the cooperation or deployment, but said the moves "fit into Israel's increasing focus on events in Central Asia, and as far a field as Indonesia."

Recent reports in the Israeli media also speak of increased exchanges between New Delhi and Tel Aviv, including one account of a phone conversation between external affairs minister Jaswant Singh and Israel's Shimon Peres in which they discussed the security issues facing their countries.

Although Mr Singh did not express any support to Israel's action against militant Palestinians and, on the contrary, had plenty of questions, Mr Peres is said to have explained the rationale of the Israeli counter-attacks. Israel's goal is not just to defeat terrorism but to renew dialogue and find a solution, Mr Peres is understood to have told Mr Singh, a sentiment that broadly conforms to India's own emerging outlook.

The Indo-Israeli exchanges are attracting plenty of attention in U.S. strategic circles and many analysts are watching to see what lessons New Delhi will draw from the aggressive Israeli retaliation to terrorist attacks. At a recent think-tank pow-wow, questions about whether India would undertake similar actions to meet the killing spree in Kashmir head-on, invited the following sardonic response from a senior administration official: "Yeah, but how many nuclear weapons do the Palestinians have?"

Still, the strategic community has been rife with talk about the intensifying Indo-

Israeli cooperation, including on the nuclear front (which New Delhi has denied). The two sides are beginning to talk regularly on the political plane too. The Israeli media reported last week that Mr Singh assured Mr Peres that India will not accept any form of the Zionist-racism equation at the international conference on racism in Durban later this month.

Considering how much India had railed against Zionism in the past, including a 1975 supporting vote for a UN resolution equating Zionism with racism, is seems quite a shift in outlook derived quite likely because of the new security considerations.

The Islamic world is working overtime to introduce language linking Zionism and racism, but Israel and the U.S. are among those opposing it. Washington last fortnight despatched its assistant secretary for human rights and democracy

Lorne Cramer to New Delhi, to make the case against the Zionism-racism equation and demands for reparations connected to slavery, a mission that met with obvious success. A small pay-off for that support will be that the U.S. and Israel will help India quash any language linking casteism with racism, although there does not seem to be any imminent danger of that at the Durban conference.

Congressional staffers say India's changed position has met with approval of many key lawmakers on the Hill, where the clout of the Jewish lobby is no secret. In fact, India's whole turn around on relations with Israel began with a Hill connection in 1988 when the prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, reversing his mother's stance of two decades, met with a leading Jewish lobbyist in New York at the behest of a pro-India Congressman Stephen Solarz. This was soon followed by the appointment of a new Israeli consul in Bombay. Despite its new orientation in the region, the BJP government has also tried to warm relations with key Gulf states like Saudi Arabia and Iran, with Mr Singh making path-breaking trips to those and many other countries in the Islamic world.



Jaswant Singh



Shimon Peres

THE TIMES OF INDIA

18 AUG 2001

U.S. decision to clear military sales to India worries Israel

JERUSALEM: The U.S. decision to clear the way for greater military planning, joint operations and eventual sharing of weapons technology with New Delhi has raised concern in Israeli defence establishment which fears the move could hinder its weapon systems and technology export to India.

Keen to consolidate Israeli hold on weapons sales to India, defence officials here are worried about winning contracts with New Delhi in future following Washington's decision to lift restrictions against American firms selling military hardware and technology to India, according to media reports and analysts here.

Israeli sources are of the view that Washington would put pressure on New Delhi to award major contracts to American companies, similar to their Israeli counterparts in offering an array of products and technology, including anti-armour missiles, unmanned aerial vehicles, radar systems, electronic warfare suites and avionics for combat aircraft, the *Haaretz* newspaper reported.

The Bush administration has decided to work with the Congress to lift sanctions against India,

imposed in the aftermath of May 1998 nuclear tests, clearing the way for greater military cooperation, joint operations and eventual sharing of weapons technology with New Delhi

Faced with hostile neighbours and increasing threats of terrorism, India is a huge market for high-tech arms sales and modernisation of its military. In recent years the defence ties between India and Israel have made immense strides.

"Americans could give Israelis a tough time in expanding Indian defence market," an analyst said.

The U.S. decision could pave the way for selling Phalcon early warning radar system to India, which has been grounded ever since a signed deal to sell the spy plane was scrapped with China under U.S. pressure, the paper said.

According to sources, Israel has already sold India equipment worth millions of dollars in recent years, specially in the area of surveillance, communications and night warfare. India is further interested in purchasing from Israel more unmanned aerial vehicles and communications and electronic warfare equipment. (PTI)

THE TIMES OF INDIA
THE STATESMAN

THE TIMES OF INDIA

10 AUG 2001

UN rejects charge against Indian forces

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

UNHQ, Aug. 3. — The UN has rejected the charge by an Israeli newspaper that Indian peacekeepers in south Lebanon corroborated with Hizbollah guerrillas in the abduction of three Israeli soldiers on 7 October last year.

A high-level UN team which investigated the incident and submitted the report today to the Security Council said it saw no evidence that either Indian battalion or any other component of United Nations Interim force in Lebanon colluded with Hizbollah guerrillas.

"The abduction was well-planned and UN peacekeepers became aware of it two hours later," the report said. The team, headed by under-secretary-general for management, Mr Joseph Connor, also justified the decision by Indian commander General Atmanathan to videotape the recovery scene.

THE STATESMAN

4 AUG 2001

Israel is keen on buying Indian pilotless aircraft

BY HARSH DOBHAL

AA 3 9/7
Jerusalem, July 8: Israel is keen to buy the pilotless target aircraft Lakshya from India and negotiations are on in this direction, defence sources said.

"While we intend to sell one weapon to India, we want to buy another from them. We have expressed keen interest and for sure want to buy Lakshya aircraft," sources said.

Stating that there are other defence equipments also that Israel would like to acquire from India, they said, the issue had come up in various meetings between officials of the two countries in the recent past and Israel was favourably impressed after studying technical details and costs of the PTA.

"Negotiations are going on. One leads to another. We want to sell something and buy another thing. There is a connection between buying and selling," sources said, referring to the Defence Research and Development Organisation produced Lakshya aircraft.

The Lakshya issue assumes importance in the backdrop of recent visits of the Indian defence

secretary and naval chief to Israel and the meetings between defence officials of the two countries during the recently concluded Paris Air Show.

Lakshya was inducted into the Indian Air Force earlier this year. Besides Israel, some other countries have also shown interest in Lakshya and the DRDO hopes this would boost its international reputation. Designed and developed by the Bangalore-based Aeronautical Development Establishment, Lakshya is powered by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited's turbo jet engine. A reusable aerial target system, Lakshya's serial production will be for both the Navy and the Air Force.

Paraded for the first time earlier this year on Republic Day, Lakshya basically simulates an aircraft threat to help air-to-air and surface-to-air weapon system operations. It can be launched both from land and sea, and is controlled by a portable control system. Israel, a market leader with Americans and French in high altitude technology, follows the United States, Russia, China and France in exporting weapons. (PTI)

THE ASIAN AGE

1997

Israel drags Indian Army into controversy

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (Bahrain) JULY 8. Israel has unnecessarily dragged an Indian army unit, which served with the U.N. in Lebanon, into a controversy. The matter concerns a videotape that might have some tenuous connection to the abduction of three Israeli soldiers by Hizbollah guerrillas on October 7, 2000, an event which took place within the visible range of Israeli observation posts and was something that the Indian contingent could have done nothing to prevent. Some of the comments in the Israeli press after the U.N. admitted to the existence of the tape on Friday are extremely patronising, verging on the racist.

On Friday, a U.N. official announced in New York that a videotape did exist that might have some connection to the abduction of the Israelis. This tape is believed to have been recorded by jawans serving in the Indian contingent of the U.N. Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) at that time. This particular contingent had been rotated home long since following the usual practice of sending half battalion sized units to serve in UNIFIL for six months at a time. The UNIFIL's spokesperson in Lebanon, Maj. Timur Goksel, has clarified that the videotape was shot 18 hours after the abduction incident and that it

does not contain shots of the actual abduction itself.

The three Israeli soldiers were abducted after their vehicles were fired upon near the Shebaa farms area that are still disputed between Israel and Lebanon. UNIFIL has maintained that the jawans in the closest post had taken cover after the anti-tank missile was fired at the Israeli vehicle. They had therefore not witnessed the incident. Israel says that the jawans had both witnessed the incident and had made a video recording of it. However, according to Maj. Goksel the videotape that has been handed over to the higher U.N. authorities was shot 18 hours after the incident and shows only what occurred when UNIFIL tow trucks came to remove the cars that Hizbollah had used to reach the spot. UNIFIL uniforms, arms, ammunition and license plates were found inside the vehicle. The faces of two Hizbollah men who came to stop UNIFIL from towing the vehicles away are also understood to have been captured by the video camera.

The U.N. has offered to let Israeli and Lebanese officials examine the videotape after the faces of Hizbollah men are blanked out. Israel wants the tape to be handed over to them, unedited. Besides their initial argument that the tape might have a recording of

the actual abduction the Israelis also say that they might be able to pick up valuable evidence about the identity of the particular group that carried out the attack and other matters. Lebanon has said that the handing over of the tape would be in breach of the agreement whereby UNIFIL is posted in Lebanon since it would be tantamount to UNIFIL indulging in intelligence co-operation with Israel.

While the U.N. and Israel tussle over the tape what is intolerable is the manner in which unidentified Israeli military men have sought to slyly suggest that the Indian contingent of UNIFIL might have played a role in the abduction. Unidentified military men have told the Israeli press that some jawans might have been involved and that their investigators had been sent to India to question the members of the unit that was posted in south Lebanon at the time. Other unidentified military men have not gone so far but have expressed their view that the jawans were aware of Hizbollah's preparations for the abduction but had turned a blind eye.

This is a blatant misrepresentation of UNIFIL's role. UNIFIL can do nothing to prevent Hizbollah attacks or the periodic violations of Lebanese air space that Israel carries out. The contingents serving with UNIFIL can only observe

the situation on the borders and inform the U.N. of any violations that have taken place from either direction.

Moreover, as UNIFIL has pointed out, there was little need for their units to pass on information to Israel when the abduction had taken place within visible range of an Israeli military observation post. It is possible that UNIFIL and the Indian contingent serving with it at the time are being made a scapegoat for lapses on the part of the Israelis.

Reports of the time had suggested that the three Israeli soldiers who were kidnapped were not observing the proper procedures when they were abducted.

If leaks by Israeli military men were not bad enough the editorial comment in *Haartez* of today can only be described as obnoxious. The editorial suggests that the Indian contingents serving with UNIFIL are somehow beholden to the impoverished population of south Lebanon (they get their salary, food and other requirements from the U.N.) and that therefore they should be replaced in this sensitive area by some other U.N. unit.

Although the words have not been written the obvious implication of the editorial was that the Indian unit should be replaced by some white-faced contingent from the first world.

THE HINDU

July 8, 2001

TIES WITH IRAN

India Stands To Gain From Interaction

By JK DUTT

THE re-election of President Syed Mohammad Khatami in Iran for a second term at the recent polls clearly showed one thing — Iranians are desirous of continuing with and possibly expanding on their new-found freedom in life of which they had a taste when Mr Khatami first ascended to the Presidency four years ago. Many will recollect his path-breaking interview with Christianne Amanpour of the Cable News Network of that time, something which became an international "best seller"!

Washington just could not believe the kind of opinions that he expressed encompassing liberalism, reforms, broad-mindedness and most of all, asking his countrymen to learn about the western concept of living instead of parroting pejorative. Mr Khatami's attempts to induce a balanced approach among his fellow citizens was well received by all progressive-minded nations.

TERROR SPONSOR

India's relations with Iran have gradually shown an upward momentum since Mr PV Narasimha Rao's formal visit there in 1993. Although the two countries are different in terms of polity as well as historical background, they have several things in common. Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh visited Tehran in May 2000 in connection with the 11th meeting of the India-Iran Joint Commission on bilateral issues, followed by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee in April this year. An official statement was subsequently released by the two respective executive heads. There are three matters that seek the attention of both countries.

First of all, the spread of religious terrorism emanating from Afghanistan into other countries of the region has become extremely serious and a hindrance to development. Iran has a porous border with Afghanistan and views with great concern the ingress of terrorism into some areas of the Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan-Tajikistan belt among the Central Asian Republics. In India's case, there is no gainsaying Taliban and Wahabi infested Kashmir, besides the burgeoning ISI tentacles in madrasas along India's border with Nepal as also in places like Deoband and some sensitive districts in our southern states. Unless firmly checked, these pockets may very well grow into mini Afghanistans.

As a point of politico-military strategy, there could be considerable substance in establishing an organisation akin to the Shanghai Five/Six. Accordingly, Iran, Russia, China and India could form such a group. For want of a better nomenclature, this group can be called the "Tehran Tetrad", whose objective would primarily be to combat terrorism within their territorial "best", using the combined strength of

all four. Such a suggestion did come from Iran's supreme religious head Ayatollah Ali Khomeini during the Vajpayee visit. A moot point is, should Pakistan be invited to join the group? Whereas Pakistan has been refused admission by the Shanghai group, inducting it into the Tehran Tetrad might be fruitful.



Pakistan is desperately trying to de-clutch itself from the opprobrium of a terrorist sponsorship under which it presently finds itself, and being a member of an anti-terrorist coalition might act as a catalyst in rehabilitating its reputation in the world. It would be impossible for Pakistan to continue with terrorist sponsorship while sitting on the forum whose aim is to contain terrorism.

Very likely Pakistan could be chastened into turning over a new leaf especially when subjectively reckoned with ultras like the Chechens, the Uighurs, and the radical Uzbek Muslims. With Pakistan being there, Saudi Arabia too could be enticed into the Tehran Tetrad in order to negate the evils of Wahabbism. Professor Edward Said, who is an authority on Islam, has rightly theorised that many Islamic nations that are now classified as pariahs due to their obscurantism will be prone to change if given an opportunity to be recognised by society; marginalising them will provoke defiant responses from them.

GAS LINK

The second matter pertains to India's requirement of energy on a long-term basis. Iran possesses an immeasurable amount of oil and natural gas which it would like to sell to a reliable customer and India fits the bill. The Tabnak oil fields rank as one of the topmost. However, the problem confronting both countries is how to transport these elements of energy. Currently, transporting liquified natural gas by tankers from Bandar Abbas to Mumbai is the only practical way but this is very expensive. Among other methods on the slate, the most viable one, subject to conditionalities, is an overland pipeline through Pakistan traversing a distance of 2600 kilometres, to exit in Gujarat. There is apprehension in New Delhi — quite logically — that while this method would be the most cost effective, the guarantee for this pipeline's security is suspect. Such a pipeline would also facilitate other Central Asian energy producing nations from both sides of the Caspian Sea to con-

tribute to this project so that their exports can be accommodated too. It is perfectly feasible to structure a suitable pipeline grid for marketing energy from this region to the Eastern hemisphere.

An Iran-Pakistan understanding in this regard is apparently on the cards wherein "... Teheran will give an undertaking to New Delhi that if Pakistan cuts off gas supplies

to India ... Teheran will provide India an equal amount of the commodity through tankers at the same price ... Teheran will also cut off gas supplies to Pakistan ...". The chances are, Pakistan will ensure the security of the pipeline to India because not only will Pakistan get an annual transit fee of around \$500 million but sufficient gas for its domestic consumption too at a special discount. This largesse will surely help in

boosting Pakistan's faltering economy and from all accounts, it appears that President Pervez Musharraf has given a firm assurance to both India and Iran that the overland pipeline system will unequivocally fulfil the energy demands of all client states with full cooperation of Pakistan.

GO BETWEEN

Lastly, India is ideally placed to be a conduit for furthering Iran's relations with the West, particularly with the USA. Teheran was very impressed when New Delhi carried out Pokhran 98 despite strong warnings from the West and what is more, India has weathered consequential sanctions and associated strictures quite successfully. The West has now come to acknowledge India as a nuclear power and sanctions have been lifted. In Teheran's eyes, New Delhi's handling of its international relations via Pokhran 98 has been remarkable with India coming out on top at the end of it all.

Iran, on its part, does not want to be termed as a "rogue state", especially after its test-launch of a short range ballistic missile last year. With Mr Khatami getting a second tenure, he is now overly keen to get close to the West in as many fields as feasible. India enjoys a high standing with most western nations and can conveniently broker Iran's cause. Teheran knows that India's voice will definitely be heard and that too favourably. India too stands to gain in this interaction.

Iran being one of the influential members of the Organisation of Islamic Conference plus an overseer of the Organisation of African Unity can espouse India's candidature as an Observer Nation for both the up and coming power centres.

The advantages for us are immense. It would behove India well to become Iran's consort in international relations. Union Petroleum Minister Ram Naik's optimism that the forthcoming Vajpayee-Musharraf summit should address the Iran connection for mutual trilateral benefit is shared by all of us.

The author is Lt. Col. (retd.), Indian Army.

THE STATESMAN

India, UAE for pact on law enforcement

DUBAI, JULY 3. India and the United Arab Emirates today called for better coordination between the law enforcement agencies of the two countries to contain transnational crime. The Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, and the UAE Defence Minister and Dubai's Crown Prince, Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid al Maktoum, during their meeting here, agreed that there was an urgent need to contain transnational crime, which could be achieved by better coordination between the law enforcement agencies of the two countries.

Mr. Advani stressed the need for operationalising the three agreements — extradition, mutual legal assistance in criminal matters and in civil matters — reached between the two countries. He extended an invitation to the Crown Prince to visit India.

Meets Sindhis

Later, while speaking at a reception hosted by the Sindhi community here, Mr. L. K. Advani ruled out any reservation for the Sindhi community in Parliament as has been demanded, saying the concept of reservation was outdated.

The Sindhis demanded that the Indian passport holders living abroad for more than five years be



The Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, being welcomed by the United Arab Emirates President, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al-Nahyan, in Dubai on Monday. — PTI

given voting right and political system in India should be reformed to introduce political funding.

On Singhvi report

Speaking at a meeting of 27 Indian associations at the Indian Consulate here on Monday, Mr. L. K. Advani has said the NDA Gov-

ernment would do its best to implement the recommendations of the L. M. Singhvi report on NRI Diaspora.

"We are awaiting the report of the Singhvi committee and the present government will do its best to implement the recommendations of the report," Mr.

Advani said. The Singhvi committee was constituted to study and report on the problems the overseas Indians faced in the Gulf and elsewhere.

Various NRI organisations had submitted representations to the panel when it visited the UAE a few months ago. — PTI

9-11
109-11

India, Turkey sign extradition treaty

20/6

By Kesava Menon

ANKARA, JUNE 29. India and Turkey today signed an extradition treaty whereby they are to cooperate in fighting crime and criminality. It was signed by the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, and Turkey's Justice Minister, Dr. Hikmet Sami Turk.

The treaty has 28 articles and mainly regulates the obligation of extradition, the definition of the offences for which extradition may be sought or granted, the circumstances and conditions on which a request may be denied and the procedures to be followed.

Under the agreement, extradition will be denied if the State to which the request has been made regards the offence in question as a political one. However, if the offence includes hijacking, murder, kidnapping, the use of explosives or incitement to murder it shall not be regarded political. Extradition can also be granted for offences of a fiscal character, including tax evasion and foreign exchange irregularities.

The agreement follows two legal instruments signed during the visit of the former Prime

Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, to this country in 1988.

The earlier instruments are The Agreement between India and Turkey on Mutual Legal Assistance concerning Criminal Matters and The Agreement between India and Turkey on Civil and Commercial Matters. The two agreements came into force in 1993.

Ex-minister acquitted

By Our Special Correspondent

MUMBAI, JUNE 29. A sessions judge acquitted today Mr. Udayan Raje Bhosale, a descendant of Chhatrapati Shivaji and a former BJP Minister, of the charge of murdering a municipal councillor on the eve of the last general poll in the State.

The District and Sessions Judge of Satara, Mr. S. G. Kulkarni, found fault with the evidence and acquitted all 14 persons, including the prime accused Mr. Bhosale.

The Judge observed that the evidence before him was unbelievable.

HPD-11
30/6

Advani's Turkey visit will have a bearing on summit

By Kesava Menon

ANKARA, JUNE 29. The Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani's current visit to Turkey was planned well before the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, invited the Pakistan President, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, for a summit meeting. However, Mr. Advani's visit is bound to be seen in the context of the summit and will have some bearing on the flow of the forthcoming discussions between India and Pakistan. Especially because India is currently having a positive and cooperative engagement with Turkey, one of Pakistan's closest and oldest friends, in respect of a phenomenon that India accuses Pakistan of promoting — terrorism.

India's accusations against Pakistan are certainly not being put anywhere near the forefront of the discussions here. Any kind of a pointed reference to India's problems with Pakistan would have been counter-productive. The Turks are certainly aware of the background and reasons that are motivating India to engage with a wide range of countries on this subject.

But Turkey has no reason to be drawn into any statements aimed at putting Pakistan on the mat. Ideally, Turkey would perhaps have preferred that an engagement with India on political and security-related subjects take place in the context and against

the backdrop of a wider and deeper economic relationship. Both sides do agree that the economic relations are far below the optimal level. But Turkey also apparently realises that the rallying of forces against global terrorism is not a step that can be put off indefinitely.

By identifying a phenomenon as the object of their cooperative endeavour, Turkey and India have got around the complications that would have been thrown up by the pinpointing of countries that allegedly promote this phenomenon. The focus is not on the forces or governments that indulge in or promote terrorism and their motivations for doing so. Instead, the focus is on what terrorism is, what it does and what should be done about it.

The phenomenon to be tackled is the tendency of some people in many parts of the world to make others concede their demands or accede to their point of view by threatening mayhem if the concessions are not made. These groups might or might not be linked to any government and they may have varying ideological leanings.

It is a matter of tackling minority groups, or even marginal groups, that seek to impose their will on global society at large. That being so, democracies have a special interest and onus to join together to fight this phenomenon. While the quality of democ-

racy prevalent in India or Turkey can be questioned, it cannot be denied that both countries give importance to the will of the majority and the principle of change through peaceful means.

By avoiding an up front identification of the groups or governments that indulge in and promote terrorism, India and Turkey have by-passed a possible hurdle to their cooperation. But at the practical level, the names of those who perpetrate terrorism will be noted, their networks and associates tracked, their commitment levels assessed and their motivations delineated.

Annan gets another term

UNITED NATIONS, JUNE 29. The United Nations Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Annan, was today appointed by acclamation by the United Nations General Assembly to a second five-year term. — PTI

Chauhan hospitalised

CHANDIGARH, JUNE 29. The Khalistan protagonist, Dr. Jagjit Singh Chauhan, was today admitted to a private hospital in Mohali, near here, after he suffered high blood pressure. Dr. Chauhan was taken to the Silver Oaks Hospital with swollen feet after his blood pressure rose. — UN

Iran, India to examine Pak. route for gas pipeline

By K. K. Katyal

NEW DELHI, MAY 29. For the first time since the proposal for the Iran-India gas pipeline was mooted, the two sides have agreed to seriously examine the option of the overland route through Pakistan.

The first step in pursuance of this decision will be taken when the Joint Committee, set up to consider various possibilities, meets next month. It will examine the parameters of a feasibility study of the pipeline through Pakistan.

The issue was considered during the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee's talks with the Iranian President, Mr. Mohd Khatami, in Tehran early in April. The memorandum of understanding, signed by the two Governments, was restricted to the feasibility study of a deep-sea pipeline.

The Joint Committee, comprising Mr. K. V. Rajan, Adviser, Ministry of External Affairs, and Mr. S.M.H. Adeli, Deputy Minister of Economic Relations in the Iranian Foreign Office, was entrusted with the task of examining the ways for a similar study of the overland route.

India was kept on establishing a long-term energy relationship with Iran and, in particular, on accepting Teheran's proposals for a gas pipeline. But New Delhi was cool to the

idea of the supply route through Pakistan for obvious reasons.

It had serious security concerns because of the none too friendly ties with Pakistan. Hence its insistence on a fool-proof arrangement that could take care of New Delhi's fears of disruption in situations of conflict or as a result of terrorist activity in Pakistan.

This political reality, however, clashed with economics. The land route was the most cost-effective of the three options, the others being the deep-sea pipeline and the transportation of liquefied natural gas.

Iran sought to allay India's fears by drawing attention to the special features of the arrangement it had in mind. One, the agreement on the supply of gas is to be bilateral. Iran, thus, would be undertaking the responsibility of securing supplies at India's doorstep — at the first entry point.

Two, the involvement of the international consortia, necessary because of the heavy need for finance, would provide for a basket of safeguards, activating automatically, in the case of disruption.

The insurance policies, sovereign guarantees and the possible association of multilateral institutions like the World Bank or the Asian Development Bank could, it was pointed out, take care of New Delhi's concerns.

All this happened during the Prime Minister's discussions in Teheran but since the details were not publicised then, a brief reference to the subject by the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, at his press conference on Monday, was regarded by some as the offshoot of the current moves for the high-level dialogue between India and Pakistan.

As a matter of fact, the balance in favour of the overland route tilted, though slightly, some seven weeks ago. However, the move for a feasibility study of the deep-sea pipeline is not to be given up.

Such a pipeline, some 3,000 metres below the surface, skirting the Pakistani continental shelf (as against the deepest in the world so far — 2,000 metres in the Black Sea) would, no doubt be extremely costly, but the point to be examined is whether new technologies for laying the pipeline and its maintenance and repairs could cut costs and simplify operations.

The Joint Committee's task has acquired a new significance because of last month's discussions in Teheran.

Apart from the technical aspect, it will examine the security angle and whether a depoliticised arrangement is feasible — as is the case elsewhere in the world, where no dispute had arisen so far between the country of transit and the receiving country.

'Indo-Israeli ties excellent'

JERUSALEM, JUNE 28. Israel has expressed satisfaction over relations with India saying the excellent cooperation between the two countries had grown manifold in recent years. The two countries have enhanced cooperation in a major way in various fields such as defence, trade and culture, and the ties would continue to grow stronger in the near future, the Israeli President, Mr. Moshe Katsav, told the outgoing Indian Ambassador, Mr. Ranjan Mathai, who called on him. 28/6 180-14

Mr. Mathai, who would be taking over as the Indian Ambassador to Qatar, said the two countries had witnessed increasing cooperation over the years, with bilateral trade shooting up to \$ 1.1 billions last year.

A series of high-profile visits by leaders from across the Indian political spectrum has further strengthened the bonds between two countries, Mr. Mathai said. The Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani and the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, had paid high-profile visits to Israel last year, providing a major thrust to expansion of relations in various fields, including counter-terrorism and security cooperation. — PTI

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The train to Teheran

By K. K. Katyal

Not long ago, a strange chill marked Indo-Iran ties. The outlook now is cheerful on the bilateral front.

NORMALLY TOP-LEVEL trips on the eve of elections in the host country are avoided — that is the conventional wisdom. If undertaken because of pressing factors, there is the risk of the visiting dignitary getting embroiled in the domestic politics right from the time of his arrival, if not earlier. Sudden, unanticipated controversies could ruin the visit or detract from its value and utility. That was not the case when the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, went to Iran in April, less than two months before a crucial poll there. The visit and Mr. Vajpayee's talks with the Iranian President, Mr. Mohammed Khatami, were a smooth affair, with productive interaction on bilateral and regional matters. The re-election of Mr. Khatami is a matter of satisfaction to India, providing as it does continuity of the understanding achieved by the two leaders. Last week's round of talks on the proposal for an Iran-India gas pipeline reflected the stability of the bilateral relationship. To say this is not to suggest that the mutual ties would have been affected had the election results gone the other way. There was wide support in Iran for steps to forge close ties with India. The supreme religious leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, wished all success to Mr. Vajpayee's mission. "Long-term energy relationship", "strategic convergences" — these are some of the phrases often used now.

Mr. Khatami's decisive victory holds the promise of continued efforts for reforms and liberal policies (of course, against heavy odds, in the face of resistance by well-entrenched conservatives). There is cautious optimism about economic openings. With right steps in this direction, Iran's importance as a destination for investment may be increasingly recognised by the world community. This will be a happy augury for the success of economic cooperation with India, for the concrete measures agreed upon by the two sides during the Prime Minister's visit as also for the earlier on-going process. The credit of \$200 millions announced during Mr. Vajpayee's visit could help Indian firms enter the Iranian market, adding to the economic content of the bilateral ties. The scope for expansion is considerable — because of oil imports the

trade balance is heavily weighed against India (exports: \$200 millions; imports: \$one billion).

The difficulties that Mr. Khatami faced during his first term as President have not dented his image as a promoter of reforms. This perception is certain to create an image of stability and, in the process, increase Iran's acceptability in the Western world. At present, France and Germany are among the few Western nations which do not shun trade and business ties with it. Some others may join them, though the breakthrough will come only when the U.S. changes its policies. It is not unrealistic to think of an advance in this area.

Of late, there has been a qualitative change in India's ties with Iran, be it in the political, strategic or economic fields. New Delhi has reasons to be happy on at least three counts. One, Iran does not view its relationship with India through the Pakistani prism — contrary to its approach in the past. Teheran sees distinct gains in expanding cooperation with New Delhi and, as such, formulates and pursues policies intended to achieve this end. It is not worried if Pakistan misunderstands its action. To cite one example, the interests of India and Iran converge on the transit trade with Central Asia. The Trilateral Transit Trade Agreement among India, Iran and Turkmenistan was among the concrete steps taken with great fanfare. The Iranian port, Bandar Abbas, became a major commercial centre for exports and imports. Islamabad regarded it a deliberate ploy by India to promote rivalry between Iran and Pakistan in the matter of economic dealings with Central Asia and as a move to bypass the Pakistani ports of Gwadar and Pasni. Iran, a major beneficiary of this arrangement, went ahead with its plans ignoring this line of criticism.

Two, the similarity of views on Afghanistan was too conspicuous to be missed by friends and foes — and that was not the only case in the political field. The Teheran Declaration (by Mr. Vajpayee and Mr. Khatami) called for a broad-

based Government in Afghanistan, denounced international terrorism "in all its forms" and was sharply critical of those nations which aid, abet and directly support it. It was not hard to detect who they had in mind. What upset the Pakistanis the most was the Iranian stand that India had a role to play in resolving the Afghan conflict. While Mr. Vajpayee was still in Iran, the Pakistan foreign office summoned the Iranian ambassador in Islamabad to convey its unhappiness. The Pakistan Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdul Sattar, was quick to reject the Iranian suggestion.

The Pakistani Press reflected the official concern over India-Iran like-mindedness on Afghanistan. Said one commentator: "Iran hastily signed the Teheran Declaration with India, calling for the establishment of a broad-based Government in Kabul. This is tantamount to inviting Indian interference in Afghanistan. At the same time, it is a departure from the U.N.-sponsored six-plus-two framework for peace and reconciliation in war-torn Afghanistan. India had no role to play in the struggle against the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan or in the 1988 Geneva accord or in the mediation process in that country."

According to another writer, "the Iranian suggestion to involve India in peace-making in Afghanistan is a clear rebuff to Pakistan. Islamabad can ill-afford to ignore it as a mere diplomatic manoeuvre. If Iranians are prepared to go to the extent of colluding with India to bargain for a *locus standi* in Afghanistan, Islamabad simply cannot remain indifferent."

Three, there is a refreshing change in Iran's view of India's handling of its internal affairs. In the past, leading figures of the Iranian Government — and even the Iranian diplomats based in New Delhi — used to express themselves on matters relating to Indian Muslims. They used to justify that stand, saying it was the logical corollary of the policies followed by Iran after the Islamic revolution. This, as was natural, was not liked by India. There has been no evidence now of an intrusive in-

terest in the domestic affairs of India, in the manner the Government of the day handles the country's internal affairs.

The enhanced bilateral understanding was reflected in the latest discussions on the proposal for an Iran-India gas pipeline. It was a different round — with each side willing to consider dispassionately both the options, the gas-based channel and the under-sea link. In the past, it used to be a mutually exclusive exercise. India preferring the underwater line and Iran strongly advocating the overland route. India's concerns were obvious — it could not bring itself to agree to the overland route through Pakistan because of the fear of disruption, which could not be brushed aside in view of the unhappy history of India-Pakistan relations. This objection was given up when Iran offered a bilateral arrangement, centering on secure supplies at India's doorstep. The onus of uninterrupted supplies was to be on Iran which would have bilateral commitments with Pakistan. Also envisaged was the involvement of global cartels, necessary because of the need for vast resources, and of other agencies in guaranteeing compensation to India in the case of a transit problem.

The realisation by Iran of the awesome responsibility it would be undertaking, both in political (in relation to Pakistan) and financial terms, appeared to have a sobering effect. With India not rejecting out of hand the overland route and Iran less unwilling to consider the underwater option, there was a perceptible convergence. In economic terms, the overland option is decidedly superior. The questions to be examined are whether, in the first case, the huge cost of insurance and compensation cover would make it less appealing and whether, in the second case, new technologies could add to its attraction. Feasibility studies are to be undertaken for both options. What is important is the openness and flexibility by the two sides.

Not long ago, a strange chill marked Indo-Iran ties, so much so that a scheduled meeting of the Joint Commission had to be cancelled. The outlook now is cheerful on the bilateral front. Iran faces daunting economic problems. But that is another story.

India, Iran closer to pipeline agreement

Haf-3 ✓
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Pramit Pal Chaudhuri
New Delhi, June 15

THE GAS pipeline between India and Iran "was no more a concept but a practical project", says the Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Affairs, S M H Adeli. Speaking after the fourth meeting of the Indo-Iranian joint working group on Wednesday, Adeli said the two Governments had agreed on a feasibility study of an overland pipeline running through Pakistan.

Gas authorities of both countries will meet in the first week of July to "determine the parameters of the study", he said. The two sides would also decide on the firms, which would form a part of the pipeline deal. "We hope this will be declared by July 15," the minister added.

The study's results are expected in nine months. The liquid natural gas deal, whereby gas would be carried by ship, has been

finalised. The consortium will consist of the National Iranian Oil Company, Reliance and BP.

Adeli said the feasibility study of the second pipeline option, one running from Iran through international waters to India, had been awarded last week to the Italian firm Snamprogetti. The results of the study are expected in 12 months.

Adeli stressed the two studies would compare the risks in assessing the offshore and overland options. "But the price of the gas must be competitive," he said.

Though New Delhi has said no final decision will be made until the studies are completed, most experts believe the studies will weigh heavily in favour of an overland pipeline. Iran's own preliminary estimates put the offshore option at three times the cost of the \$3.5 billion price tag of the overland pipeline.

In the case of an offshore pipeline, 70 per cent of the cost

would be borne by India. In an overland pipeline, this would drop to 20 per cent. There are also technical difficulties: an offshore pipeline would have to be 3,000m deep when the deepest laid pipeline today is only 859m.

The minister said whatever shape the pipeline took, the "core relationship" would be a contract between "Iran the supplier and India the client". If the pipeline had to pass through Pakistan, the transit agreement would be "a separate bilateral relationship" between Tehran and Islamabad. A consortium of "supplier, multinationals and the transit country" will be formed to run such an overland pipeline.

Adeli hoped the pipeline would be part of the agenda at the coming India-Pakistan summit. Iran, however, had held no official talks with Pakistan about the security it would have to provide if the overland pipeline became a reality.

India unhappy with Iran's decision to study pipelines

By Sanjay Dutta
The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: By unilaterally giving mandates to study the feasibility of both on-land and undersea pipelines, Iran presented India with a fait accompli at the recently concluded meeting of the joint working group on the proposed project to connect the Assaluyen oilfield in southern Iran to the Gas Authority of India Ltd's (GAIL) HBJ pipeline in Gujarat.

Industry sources said that the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) had asked Australian major BHP to study the feasibility of an onland pipeline via Pakistan and had simultaneously mandated Snamprogetti of Italy to study the feasibility of an undersea pipeline a few weeks before the talks. "This was a clear move to cash in on the feel-good atmosphere generated in view of the proposed Vajpayee-Musharraf summit in New Delhi. There was no way the Indian side could have said no to the NIOC move as it would have given out a wrong signal on the forthcoming Indo-Pak talks," an insider said.

Although GAIL officials refused to comment, insiders said

the Indian side was miffed by NIOC's unilateral move, especially the choice of Snamprogetti. "If we have a joint working group and are supposed to share the costs, the decisions should also be taken jointly," one insider said.

The insiders were particularly critical of the choice of Snamprogetti in view of a company representative's links with the Bofors deal as well as the controversy surrounding its involvement in the Oman fertiliser project being promoted by KRIBHCO and IFFCO. While insiders felt that any possible domestic fire over Snamprogetti's Bofors links may be blunted by the fact that it was NIOC's choice, it would not be easy to shrug off criticism about the fertiliser project.

Both IFFCO and BNP Paribas, the investment banker for the fertiliser project, had raised questions about the cost of the project awarded to Snamprogetti, saying it was too high. "While the cost of the feasibility study may not be considered a big amount, going by oil industry spendings, questions of overpricing still remain," another insider said.

Summit may discuss Iran pipeline

AGENCIES & SNS

NEW DELHI/MUMBAI, June 13. - The prospects of getting gas from Iran through a pipeline via Pakistan brightened with Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee likely to discuss the issue with General Pervez Musharraf and Delhi and Teheran deciding to involve international companies to conduct detailed feasibility studies.

The petroleum minister, Mr Ram Naik, today said: "The agenda for the summit will be decided by the Prime Minister. But I'd like the Indo-Iranian pipeline project to come up for discussion." Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a conference on a drinking water project in Mumbai, he said the discussions with Gen. Musharraf on the pipeline issue would address India's security concern and ensure uninterrupted gas supply.

As a follow-up of Mr Vajpayee's Teheran visit in April, India and Iran today agreed to conduct a detailed feasibility study on off-shore as well as overland route options for the pipeline. The feasibility study will be conducted by "international companies with a competent track record".

Earlier, India had expressed reservations on the overland route because it would have to pass through Pakistan. "We want gas at our shore and an assurance of an uninterrupted supply because the gas pipeline project would be the basis of our industrial investment," Mr Naik said.

Gen Musharraf has given a written guarantee to Iran that

Pakistan would protect the 1,700-km pipeline under all circumstances.

The foreign ministry today said the international firms would submit their reports in a year. The studies are being commissioned by India and Iran and the two governments will decide on which route to take after the studies are submitted.

The decision to ask a foreign firm was taken after meeting between Mr KV Rajan, foreign ministry adviser, and Mr SMI Adeli, Iranian deputy foreign minister for economic affairs. This was the fourth meeting of the Indo-Iran committee on the transfer of Iranian gas to India.

Both countries want a quick solution to the talks and both have agreed that it will be an Indo-Iran project, therefore excluding other countries, including Pakistan, an obvious choice as the pipeline would have to go through Pakistan if the "overland" route is chosen.

The Indo-Iran committee decided to set up a technical sub-committee to monitor the progress of work and report to the committee regularly. The technical committee will meet in Teheran for the first time next month.

They clearly have three options: have a pipeline through Pakistan, have it along the continental shelf and have it along the sea-bed. There are security problems for the first two, but the third is an expensive proposition.

THE STATESMAN

14 JUN 2001

Khatami win good news for India

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, June 9

FOR INDIA, the re-election of Mohammad Khatami as President of Iran is good news. From the security point of view, having a liberal Islamic regime bordering Pakistan and Afghanistan augurs well for New Delhi.

The overwhelming mandate for the economic reforms that President Khatami had been carrying out for the past two years may also translate into growth of joint ventures, the groundwork for which was established during Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's April visit to Iran.

During their meeting, the PM and President Khatami signed the Teheran Declaration which was hailed as "path breaking" and a "turning point" in bilateral relations. Both sides called for a stronger international legal regime against terrorism. They agreed on the need to replace the Taliban regime in Afghanistan



AP PHOTO

with a broad-based Government.

Though both leaders pointed out later that Indo-Iranian friendship is not necessarily at the expense of Pakistan, few failed to read the writing on the wall. A bulwark against Talibanism and its backer, Pakistan, is what the two heads of Government were aiming at. In an oil-rich and politically volatile region, the friendship effectively threw a liberal power ring around fundamentalist-con-

trolled countries, which, from the international perspective, was just what the doctor ordered.

From the economic point of view, the most readily recalled aspect of Indo-Iranian collaboration is the much-hyped gas pipeline project. While that hinges on an elusive peace between India and Pakistan, there are countless other possibilities in the non-oil sector. A FICCI document says more than 200 Government-owned units with millions of dollars in assets are set to be privatised in Iran over the next few years.

Indian industry is waiting to help Iran build up its own capacity in pharmaceuticals, petrochemicals, steel, engineering, power, fertiliser, automobiles, consumer goods and computer software. Though there are working problems at present, particularly with Iran's lack of suitable financial infrastructure, FICCI hopes Khatami would be able to sort these out in his second term.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

JUN 10 2001

HD-19
8/6

Sudan wants oil sector tie-ups with India

By K.K. Katyal

NEW DELHI, JUNE 7. Sudan, the newest member of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries, is keen on India's collaboration in its oil sector - in various activities, like exploration, development and processing. Having found vast oil reserves, Sudan would like to make use of India's expertise and technology in an effort to project itself on the oil map of the world — of which it has made a beginning with its entry into the organisation of oil producing countries.

This became known during the foreign office-level discussions here between the two countries, as their senior officials reviewed the current status of bilateral relations, with particular reference to the progress of implementation of the decisions taken at the Khartoum session of the Joint Ministerial Commission in April last year. Sudan showed interest in cooperation in trade and development, with willingness to open its market to Indian goods. Apart from the bilateral angle, the interaction between the two sides was important for two reasons — one, the marked advance in Sudan's effort to get back to the international mainstream and, two, the impending change in the structure of the organisation of African nations. If the current trend continues, the U.S. may well find itself dealing with Sudan (as also Libya). The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) will soon be replaced by the African Union. The decision to this effect, taken at the

last OAU summit, has been ratified by two-thirds of the member-nations and the change is expected to be formalised next month at Lusaka. Intended to be modelled on the European Union pattern (though not as tight, structurally), it will have a parliamentary wing too, African Parliamentary Union.

As regards expansion of India-Sudan ties, a bilateral extradition treaty, now in an advanced stage, is expected to be signed soon. An MoU on science and technology cooperation will be signed next month, to be followed by a similar arrangement in the field of agriculture. The Sudanese side was happy at India's support of their country's unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity, appreciation of Khartoum's success in improving its relations with neighbouring countries, with Asia and beyond, and its efforts to enhance regional cooperation. The Sudanese delegation commended India's efforts in fostering good relations with its neighbours, particularly the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee's initiative for talks with Pakistan.

The discussions, it was officially stated, showed their "abhorrence to terrorism in all its forms and manifestations", identity of views on the notion of human intervention — cautioning against the tendency to politicise the human rights issue — negative effects of globalisation, the need to democratise international relations, and to restructure the U.N., especially the Security Council.

THE HINDU
8 JUN 1991

India, Israel to hold security dialogue

By Atul Aneja

NEW DELHI, MAY 15. India and Israel are set to expand their defence ties beyond the existing buyer-seller relationship by evolving a new framework for interaction.

Highly placed sources in the government said a high-level delegation, led by the Defence Secretary, Mr. Yogendra Narain, has left for Israel to institutionalise the military relationship between the two sides. The delegation includes, the Joint Secretary (Planning and Coordination) in the Defence Ministry, Mr. B.A. Roy, and Lt. Gen. B.M. Kapur, who is heading the tri-service defence planning staff.

Observers point out that a high profile institutional link-up between the two defence ministries is long overdue. Not surprisingly, Mr. Narain's talks in Israel are

likely to regularise meetings between the two defence ministries at the level of defence secretaries. India has a similar tie-up with the United States, France and the United Kingdom.

With the two sides sharing similar strategic concerns, they are likely to set in motion a regular security dialogue. These talks are expected to cover a broad agenda, including nuclear non-proliferation, stability in West Asia and the Persian Gulf as well as the spread of extremism and terrorism.

The Defence Secretary's talks have been preceded by elaborate preparations. The Chief of Naval Staff (CNS), Admiral Sushil Kumar, and the Vice-Chief of the Indian Air Force, Air Marshal Vinod Patney, visited Israel recently.

The sources point out that with the institutional links in place,

military procurements by India from Israel are now likely to be better streamlined. India's shopping list from Israel includes Phalcon Early Warning planes. In fact, the likelihood of the Phalcon deal going through has increased recently. India has, for instance, rejected the A-50, a Russian built early warning plane. Its indigenous AWACS programme has been set back by the crash of the experimental early warning plane a few years ago. Besides, the US may now be in a mood to clear some of the critical parts used in the Israeli Phalcon.

India is also a market for the mid-air refueling planes which are necessary to extend the reach of some of the key aircraft of the IAF. These are especially necessary as the Indian threat perception extends to China.

THE HINDU

16 MAY 2001

140-145

Israel satisfied with progress in ties

TEL AVIV, MAY 4. Israel has expressed satisfaction over the progress in Indo-Israeli relations in general and defence ties in particular, official sources said.

The Israeli Defence Minister, Mr. Benjamin Ben Eliezer, in a meeting with the Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Sushil Kumar, yesterday, reviewed the bilateral defence ties and conveyed satisfaction over the progress in Indo-Israeli relations.

Mr. Kumar also met the Director-General of the Ministry of Defence and the two sides reviewed defence relations, the sources said. As part of his four-day visit, Admiral Kumar visited the Israeli defence industries. Later, he left on a two-day tour of France.

— PTI

THE HINDU

8 MAY 2001

PIPELINE POLITICS

Hazards Of Transporting Natural Gas To India

By GURMEET KANWAL

ATAL Behari Vajpayee's recent visit to Iran has once again brought to the fore the issue of an overland natural gas pipeline from Iran to India. Since the pipeline would run through Pakistan's Baluchistan and Sind provinces, with attendant security risks, discussions of the proposal have tended to generate more heat than light. Considering that energy qualifies as a strategic resource in which India is grossly deficient, the issue merits dispassionate consideration because decisions made today will affect India's growing economy and national security for decades to come.

First, some stark facts about India's energy situation must be noted. At present, approximately 40 per cent of India's energy requirements are supplied by oil and natural gas. Since domestic production has stagnated at around 33 million tonnes, India relies on crude oil imports totalling 69.3 per cent of the requirement. According to an estimate by the Tata Energy Research Institute, New Delhi, this import dependence is expected to increase to over 80 per cent by 2010 as the growing economy will demand greater energy supplies and domestic production is expected to increase only marginally. Such a high level of import dependence will make India vulnerable to future oil shocks — occasioned by disruption in supplies, price volatility and reasons such as economic sanctions.

TIE-UPS

Hence, it is in India's strategic interest to, firstly, ensure sufficient future oil supplies through astute diplomatic tie-ups with friendly oil exporting nations at reasonable prices and, secondly, explore possibilities for alternative energy sources, including gradually increasing the share of natural gas in the country's energy basket since it is available in greater abundance and at a lesser cost than oil. India's present requirement of natural gas is 34 billion cubic metres while domestic supply is 26 BCM. The requirement is expected to increase to over 75 BCM by 2010, of which imports will account for almost 58 BCM, that is 76.9 per cent.

It is in order to bridge this gap that India needs to depend on Iranian natural gas. While it would be strategically prudent to diversify and stabilise India's supply sources and invest in oil equity in various locations across the world, the Persian Gulf region will remain a major source of oil and natural gas for India. Iran is an energy giant with one foot in the Caspian Sea and the second in the Persian Gulf. It is mutually beneficial for India and Iran to enter into a buyer-seller relationship for natural gas that Iran has in abundance and India sorely needs. The geographical location of Iran's natural gas reserves at the South Pars field is such that the Indian and, to some extent, Pakistani markets are the only major markets that can be profitably served by Iranian gas.

Natural gas is transported either through overland or undersea pipelines in its natural state or as liquefied natural gas. Transporting LNG in oil tankers is a costly venture. The

capital outlay that would need to be incurred would include an expenditure of \$2 billion for a liquefaction unit, \$200 million for each LNG tanker and \$500 million for a re-gasification plant. Considered purely in economic terms, overland pipelines present the most viable commercial option. The 2,200 km overland pipeline from Assaluyeh and Bandar Abbas in Iran, which would pass through Pakistan and link up



with the existing HBJ pipeline in Rajasthan, is likely to cost about \$3 billion. Since this pipeline would supply natural gas to Pakistan also, the cost would be proportionately shared by India, Iran and Pakistan.

The overland pipeline option would suit Pakistan too as it would benefit by netting a transit royalty of \$600 to \$700 million annually, besides getting a regular source of gas with minimal investment. So far, Pakistan has not been able to fully exploit its own gas reserves in Baluchistan. As Pakistan's economy is in a mess and the country is on the verge of becoming a failed state, a guaranteed inflow of substantial revenues would help to bail it out. It is for this reason that the Pakistan government has been vigorously pursuing the early implementation of this option with Iran.

VIABLE

Though the overland option through Pakistan is economically the most viable, India cannot let good economics translate into bad security. India must not allow the supply of a strategic resource to be held hostage to the spiteful machinations of a capricious government. General Pervez Musharraf's military regime has stated several times that Pakistan is willing to give a unilateral undertaking that it will not disrupt the supply of gas to India. However, after the Pakistan army's insidious intrusion into Kargil in 1999, Pakistan has completely lost India's trust.

Also, Pakistan cannot continue to fight a proxy war with India in Kashmir on the one hand and hope to garner substantial revenues and gain economically from the proposed pipeline on the other. General Musharraf has gone on record to state that his government has no control over the so-called Jehadi organisations that are sending mercenary militants to fight the Indian security forces in Kashmir. It is a moot point whether his government will be able to ensure the physical security of a pipeline that runs for almost 1,500 km through Pakistani territory even if it was keen to do so.

The diameter of the gas pipeline would be between 50 to 55 inches (approximately 1.25 to 1.40 metres). Though such pipelines are mostly buried underground, they are laid just below the surface and their route is well marked to facilitate maintenance, making them prone to easy disruption. The compressor stations that are usually over-ground are also vulnerable to sabotage, but these can be easily guarded. Any terrorist group or disgruntled individual fanatic with a medieval mindset could disrupt the pipeline with a few grammes of plastic explosive or a few hundred grammes of high explosive.

The entire length of the pipeline would need to be fenced off on both sides to deny easy access to prospective saboteurs. Since wire fencing can be easily cut, it would need to be kept under electro-optical surveillance throughout its length, combined with continuous patrolling. Patrolling would tie up large numbers of security personnel and would be possible only if a motorable track is constructed parallel to the pipeline. The area would have to be well lit at night. Even if a triple-wire fence with the inner strand electrified is constructed on either side of the pipeline, the security force would still have to contend with attempts at tunnelling under the fence.

SECURITY

The BSF battalions stationed on the international boundary in the Punjab and Rajasthan sectors, where an electrified fence has been built, are witness to the large number of attempts that are made from Pakistan's side to tunnel under the fence. All these measures would cost a massive amount to implement and would still not guarantee 100 per cent security.

Hence, it clearly emerges that the overland option is not viable from the security point of view. Even the offshore, shallow-water option for laying a pipeline along the Continental Shelf would be vulnerable to disruption by sea-borne terrorists whom Pakistan could conveniently disown. And, the deep-sea pipeline through international waters, if it is technologically feasible, would be vulnerable to attacks from the Pakistan Navy during times of hostilities when it would be critically important to ensure uninterrupted flow of gas. Protecting such a pipeline would stretch the meagre resources of the Indian Navy.

Some analysts have suggested that instead of a trilateral government-to-government deal between India, Iran and Pakistan, an international consortium of stakeholders should be formed and that such a company should buy the gas from Iran and deliver it to India. They are of the view that Pakistan would be less likely to disrupt the functioning of an international conglomerate, with the attendant risks of economic sanctions being imposed among other punitive measures. Even such a consortium would need to incur heavy costs to ensure the security of the pipeline. Also, higher insurance costs, opportunity costs and the need to maintain larger strategic reserves will make the overland option prohibitively expensive. It is a Catch 22 situation indeed and perhaps the best option would be to stick to LNG.

The author is a former Senior Fellow at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi.

THE STATESMAN

7 MAY 2001

Iran favours dialogue on Kashmir

27/4 By B. Muralidhar Reddy HP-13

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 26. Iran today refused to equate the situation in Kashmir with Palestine saying it would be unfair to compare the suffering of the Palestinians at the hands of Israel with the sufferings of Muslims in any other part of the world.

A high-level Iranian delegation led by the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council and National Security Adviser to the President, Hojjatoleslam Hassan Rouhani, told a news conference here that the Kashmir issue needed to be resolved through dialogue involving India, Pakistan and representatives of Kashmiris. The Pakistan Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdul Sattar, was also present at the conference.

Asked about the impression allegedly spread by India after the recent visit of the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, to Iran that Teheran had given up its traditional position on Kashmir, Dr. Rouhani said Iran had always advocated the route of dialogue for resolution of the dispute. Iran was willing to play the role of a mediator on Kashmir if India and Pakistan make a request.

Asked whether Iran approved the alleged desecration of copies of the Quran and Islamic shrines in India, he said Iran had always stood for the rights of Muslims in India and the rights of Kashmiris. However, the Quran preached respect for other religions

and it was in this context that Iran had condemned the destruction of the Bamiyan statues in Afghanistan by the Taliban regime.

On the proposed gas pipeline between India and Iran through Pakistan, the Iranian leader said that while endorsing the land route as the most viable option, Teheran was also conscious of New Delhi's concerns on the security of the pipeline. "While we would continue to impress upon the viability of the pipeline project via land route and believe it is in the interest of stability and peace in the region, we have to allay the apprehensions of the Indian government on this count."

Dr. Rouhani said the delegation, during its four-day stay, had a free and frank exchange of views on the situation in Afghanistan. Pakistan and Iran had common positions in Afghanistan and both believed the formation of a broad-based government in Kabul was the need of the hour.

The visiting dignitary stressed that Pakistan and Iran traditionally enjoyed a friendly relationship and that nothing could tear it "asunder". Dr. Rouhani's remarks assume significance in the wake of Mr. Vajpayee's recent visit to Iran and the convulsions it caused here.

Pakistan took exception to the Iranian Foreign Minister appealing to Islamabad to join the efforts of India and Iran in establishing peace in Afghanistan. Pakistan felt India had no business to be involved in Afghanistan's affairs.

Mr. Sattar even pointed out that the United Nations had designated eight countries (six plus two) to co-ordinate the efforts for establishment of peace in Afghanistan, and India was not one of them. No other country had suggested the involvement of India in the affairs of Afghanistan, he said.

Obviously, the issue figured in the talks between the Iranian leaders and their Pakistani interlocutors. Neither side referred to it during the press conference nor was any question on the subject raised.

There have been a spate of commentaries in the Pakistani media over the last few days expressing concern over the emerging relationship between India and Iran and its possible implications for Islamabad. Several foreign affairs experts have urged the Foreign Office to take note of the development and play a pro-active role to correct Teheran's "tilt" towards India.

During the delegation's visit, a memorandum of understanding, providing for exchanges of high-level visits and regular consultations between the Foreign Ministries, was signed. "We have decided to invigorate efforts for enhancement of cooperation in economic, political and cultural fields and in science and technology. The Joint Ministerial Commission will hold its 12th session at an early date", Mr. Sattar said.

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On Track with Teheran

Shift in India's West Asia Strategy

11-10 1999
By R K PACHAURI

PRIME Minister Vajpayee's visit to Iran lends substance to aspirations for a close relationship between the two countries which is based as much on historical factors as mutual interest defining the future. Geopolitical realities emanating from the Talibanisation of Afghanistan, the emergence of the Central Asian republics after the break-up of the Soviet Union, and the enormous economic opportunities for trade in natural gas to India and science-based services and products from India to Iran provide the imperatives of a strategic relationship between the two countries. The inclusion of a strong group of business leaders in the prime minister's delegation provided the necessary economic thrust to this visit, which was a major factor in the announcement of a \$200-million line of credit by the Indian government.

By virtue of its relatively large population and abundant hydrocarbon resources, Iran will perhaps emerge as a much greater power in West Asia than the world has acknowledged. A fact that generally goes unnoticed is the establishment of democracy in Iran after the revolution of 1979 which has become stronger over the years, even though it was born out of revolution which had a bloody and brutal component. There is also a shift in the mood of the people in Iran towards a more liberal ethos, particularly with a growing percentage of young people who were born after the revolution.

Prime Minister Khatami's greatest support comes from this section of the population. This is the group most likely to be appreciative of India's secular credentials and the policy of religious tolerance, which though fractured periodically by our own religious fundamentalists, still survives. The new Iran that is asserting itself through its younger generation is as apprehensive as we are of the spread of terrorism, the Sunni intolerance of the Shia minority in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and of the antediluvian power of the mullahs in Iran itself.

India can play a useful role in changing the perceptions of the US administration about Iran and in bringing about a lifting of sanctions by the US which have been in place over 20 years now. With India's growing cordiality with the world's sole superpower, the changing geopolitics of the Gulf region, and the threat of growing terrorism breeding in Afghanistan, this role for India

becomes feasible and important.

The Vajpayee visit should succeed in repairing the damage brought about with the demolition of the Babri masjid, which was only partially reversed by Mr Narasimha Rao's visit to Iran and Mr Rafsanjani's visit to India. The Taliban had only helped create a stronger rationale for full rapprochement than would emerge from the inherent aspirations of the two societies. But to build a firm foundation for a stronger relationship in the future, a much more meaningful economic base would have to be structured. Here the natural gas pipeline from Iran to India becomes the main pillar of the edifice that would provide lasting mutual benefits in the future for both countries.

It was in 1989 that Ali Shams Ardekani, then deputy foreign minister in Iran, and I had developed a proposal for a pipeline

IN BRIEF

- Iran has shifted towards a more liberal ethos
- India can play a useful role in changing US perceptions of Iran
- A deep-sea gas pipeline option can be considered to avoid the overland route via Pakistan

transporting gas to India and Pakistan overland. This was presented at an international conference in New Delhi in January 1990. The initial official response to this concept was generally negative in India. But over the last 10 years it has become an important part of India's energy strategy, and during Mr Vajpayee's visit the feasibility of the pipeline was discussed in some detail. As a result, Iran has agreed to study the possibility of a deep-sea pipeline to India, since India is not in favour of an overland route via Pakistan.

Undoubtedly, the deep-sea option would be far more expensive than the overland arrangement but official reaction in India to the possibility of Pakistan's involvement is strongly negative. The reasons cited are the risk of Pakistan turning the spigot to threaten supplies to India and the payment of large transit fees by India to Pakistan, which would provide the latter with a steady income that would help its economy. Of course, overall India would stand to benefit too with a

much lower cost of gas received in India in comparison with the use of the under-sea route.

Several means could be adopted by India in pursuing the overland option through Pakistan which would minimise the risk of any misadventure by Pakistan and ensure relatively high security of supply. In essence, if the project has such stakeholders as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, international financial institutions, and the private sector in both India and Pakistan, and the contractual arrangements for supply of gas involve payments only for gas actually received in India, there would be very low risk of deliberate disruption.

Besides, there could be stiff penalties for Pakistan for any disruption, and other stakeholders downstream could be introduced such as through supply of CNG to Japan and Korea from India and supply of electricity to Pakistan itself using gas received in India. At any rate, for the present, assessing the feasibility of a deep-sea pipeline would help in creating a choice which would help in arriving at a rational decision.

Over and above trade in hydrocarbons, which would involve trade flows in one direction only, India can help set up several infrastructure projects in Iran, including power generation and supply, railway infrastructure, and modernisation of Iran's IT and telecommunications facilities. Even more valuable to the two countries for building future relations would be large-scale training of Iranian personnel in several fields such as agriculture, biotechnology, IT, medicine and several industries. In the final years of the Shah's regime, relations between India and Iran had reached a very satisfactory level.

Indira Gandhi, as prime minister, is known to have consulted the Shah regularly on matters related to India's policies towards West Asia, including minor issues such as whether India should allow its doctors to serve in a particular country. It would be necessary for our government to retain high-level contact with Iran and give it due importance in defining our policies in the region as a whole. In other words, Indo-Iranian relations have to be imparted a strategic dimension visible on both sides.

(The author is director-general of Tata Energy Research Institute, New Delhi, and president of the Asian Energy Institute)

Pipelines and pipedreams

THE Prime Minister's visit to Iran has added yet another chapter to the long-running story of the gas pipeline from Iran to India. This has been talked about at different levels - official, expert, academic - for nearly a decade without as yet taking operational shape. But the idea has not been shelved, for it remains a prospect that offers substantial benefits to all the participants.

By all reckoning, natural gas is the fuel of the future, for which the demand in the country is set to increase very greatly. This will mean increased imports, Iran being one of the most important sources of supply.

India's need and Iran's capacity are well matched. The relatively short distance between the two makes it feasible to convey the gas to consuming areas in the northern part of India through a pipeline rather than by more expensive means.

The problem, of course, is that Pakistan lies between the two, and the endemic uncertainties in Indo-Pakistani relations have stalled the project. From Teheran has come the report that, following the Prime Minister's visit, India and Iran have decided to treat the pipeline project as a

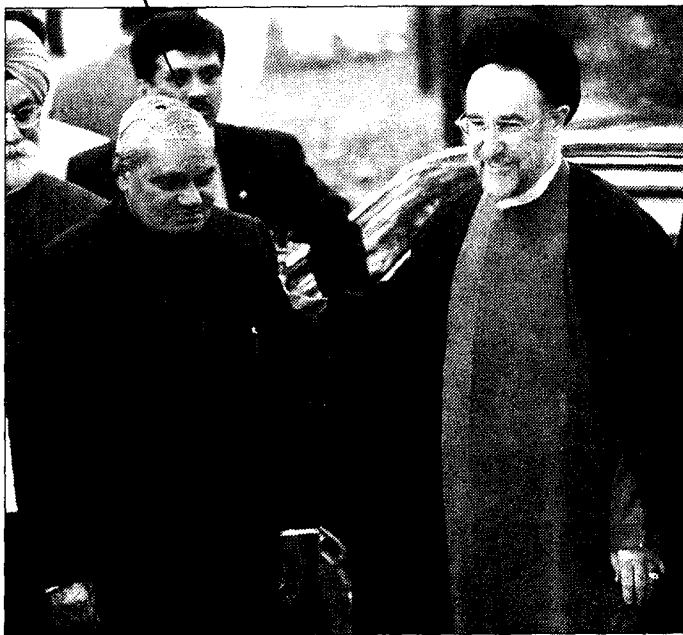
bilateral arrangement which provides no scope for participation by Pakistan. At the same time, the joint committee set up for this project is to explore all possibilities, including the overland as well as the deep-sea options.

There seems to be some contradiction in this, or perhaps deliberate vagueness, for the overland option before the committee needs must include Pakistan.

The fact is that geography and economics do not permit any summary discarding of the overland pipeline option.

It is worth recalling that the possibility of a gas pipeline from the Gulf first came up as part of a deal for the supply of natural gas from Oman to India. The Oman project seems currently to be in storage, and

WIDE ANGLE SALMAN HAIDAR



Iranian President Mohammad Khatami with Atal Behari Vajpayee in Teheran on Tuesday. — AP/PTI

even when it was under active discussion, there were many questions about its viability. Among these was the technical and commercial feasibility of transporting gas from Oman to India.

The arguments that still occupy our attention first surfaced in that context - was

an overland pipeline from Oman through Iran and Pakistan feasible in the then current state of Indo-Pakistani relations; was a deep sea pipeline technically feasible; was a shallow water route feasible?

At that time, unproven but apparently achievable technology for a deep water line had its proponents, for it offered a direct connection between producer and consumer, bypassing all others in between.

But this notion drew quite a few chuckles in Te-

heran.

One of their officials called it a pipedream rather than a pipeline - and that may be no less true today. Initially, there was no great enthusiasm for the present project in Pakistan. But now, driven perhaps by economic need, it shows a great deal of interest. The revenue it could earn through transit rights could be in excess of \$500 million annually. It would also have the benefit of meeting its own needs for natural gas from the project.

Only the other day, HA Raza, CEO of the Hydrocarbon Development Institute of Pakistan, was in Delhi, arguing strongly in favour of the overland pipeline. Among other things, he said it would be an important confidence building measure between the two countries.

The Pakistan government treats this project as something distinct from other economic projects involving India, all of which are forced to revolve around the issue of Kashmir.

That is a measure of its current interest. For India, the advantages of the proposal are obvious, which is why it remains under active consideration despite the attendant problems.

An overland pipeline is much the most economical way of

delivering natural gas from Iran to northern India. The deep sea option is at this stage essentially notional; a pipeline along the continental shelf would have its own vulnerabilities - strong currents, no immunity from sabotage. Neither of these can effectively replace the overland option.

Liquefaction of the gas and its transportation in liquid form is feasible but expensive. The problem with the overland project, it need hardly be said, is political, not technical.

The political factor has different facets. For one, the apprehension cannot easily be dismissed that in a crisis, Pakistan could turn off the tap and do incalculable damage to the industries and utilities dependent on the gas supply. Even though Soviet natural gas flowed uninterrupted to western Europe during all the vagaries of the Cold War, this parallel fails to provide sufficient comfort in India. Nor has any system of guarantees from all the parties, public and private, who may be involved in the project appeared sufficient.

Furthermore, there is the fear that even if all the legitimate authorities were able to agree, the pipeline could become the target of uncontrollable fundamentalist groups hell-bent on disrupting its operation. In these circumstances, it is difficult to see anything much taking place in a hurry on the pipeline.

Yet all the parties will need to persist. The advantages to all of them are not to be given up easily. For India, apart from the economic advantages, a successful overland arrangement would mean a breaking free of the transit barriers imposed upon it.

Over the years, Pakistan has virtually eliminated all movement from India to lands to the west, which cuts us off from traditional partners.

The pipeline project, should it materialise, will be a breach in this restrictive regime. There may be no early answers, but it remains a considerable challenge to Indian diplomacy to set up a structure of co-operation to bring piped natural gas from Iran to India.

(The author is a former Foreign Secretary.)

100 YEARS AGO TODAY

APRIL 15, 1901

HOME AND SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

THE third annual meeting of the Industrial Home and School for the Blind was held at the rooms of the Young Men's Christian Association, Esplanade, yesterday evening under the presidency of Babu Kali Charan Banerjee. The attendance was poor. The proceedings opened with some music on the harmonium and violin by a couple of blind boys, after which another pupil of the school read some Bengalee poetry. Babu Lall Behary Shah, founder and proprietor of the institution, then read the report for the past year. The following extracts are taken from the report:

When I started the Home and School for the Blind I began with only one boy, but there were seven inmates, six boys and one girl; and two day scholars. The girl died in March 1900. We got another girl in 1901. The increase in number is very slow. Though there are many blind children in every part of the country and in this city also they are to be seen begging in the streets, still it is very difficult to get them to join although they are promised training and education as would enable them to forsake begging and earn their living by honest labour. This difficulty can only be felt and realised by one who has tried to fetch any blind boy or girl promising to do them good. In my short experience of five years, I am of opinion that it would take a long time to make our people and countrymen believe and understand that the blind whom they think to be only burdens and troublesome to their parents and guardians can be made useful if they are properly taught and trained. In my short experience with these blind children I am of opinion that they can do many things if properly taught and trained. The eldest boy in the Home who is now with the Bengalee fifth book, helps me for two hours in teaching the little boys and this proves that the blind can be teachers if they get proper education and if the school books be printed in their letters. As for teaching them some sort of industrial work, I can assure you that when they are taught they work neatly and well. As regards their improvement in reading, I have to say the same thing this year what I said in the last two years.

India-Iran panel to work on gas transfer

UNITE NEWS OF INDIA 19/4

TEHERAN, April 13. — Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and President Mohammad Khatami today decided to explore a cost-effective and secure mode of transfer of Iranian gas to India and agreed to enhance mutual cooperation to fight extremist forces, terrorism and illicit trade and drugs in the region.

A joint statement issued at the end of the prime minister's four-day visit to Iran said the two leaders had instructed the Indo-Iranian joint committee to commission and complete expeditiously joint feasibility studies on the gas transfer either through the deep sea or overland route.

They also agreed that the committee should recommend

measures to facilitate increased cooperation in liquefied natural gas.

The committee has been asked to examine both off-shore and overland options for laying the 1,600-km long pipeline from south pars in Iran. Overland, the pipeline would pass through Pakistan, an issue on which India has reservations.

While India and Iran have ruled out the involvement of Pakistan in the project, saying it was a purely bilateral agreement, the proposal had not made any headway although Islamabad gave a written guarantee to Teheran for protecting the pipeline.

Mr Vajpayee and President Khatami laid stress on regional stability, security, welfare and progress and affirmed their

determination to achieve this by enhancing cooperation to check the rise of extremist forces, terrorism and flow of illicit drugs.

Later, in Shiraz Mr Vajpayee said the minorities in India have the same rights and opportunities as the majority and "discrimination of any kind is not countenanced either by culture or by our Constitution."

Speaking at a function after renaming the square in the cultural city after Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the prime minister said: "India belongs to all religions and all of them have contributed and continue to contribute to her all round development." "We recognise and celebrate Islam's many sided contribution to India's national life," he said.

'Ties not at Pakistan's cost'

TEHERAN, April 13. — Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee today said India's growing relation with Iran is not at the cost of any third country such as Pakistan. The Indian Prime Minister also said India and Iran would jointly work to contain the extremist forces in the region.

He said: "There is no truth in that we've driven a wedge in the relations between Iran and Pakistan. We're not building our relationship at anybody's cost. Our bilateral relationship is for mutual benefit and not aimed at causing harm to any other country." Mr Vajpayee's visit, which saw the signing of the "Teheran declaration", ended today. Asserting that the declaration embodied the vision of future Indo-Iranian ties, Mr Vajpayee said both countries were committed to achieving the objective. There was a mutual recognition of the strategic importance of the ties, he added. — UNI

THE STATESMAN

'Indo-Iran ties not at cost of third country'

Shekhar Iyer
Tehran, April 13

HF-9
14/4

A B VAJPAYEE today wrapped up a highly successful four-day visit to Iran, declaring that India and Iran were getting closer "not at the cost of any third country".

He ruled out any India-Iran axis against Pakistan though the two countries "will jointly work diplomatically and politically to contain the dangers posed by the fundamentalist forces in Afghanistan, which are spawning terrorism using money from drug trafficking".

Addressing the Indian media to give his personal impression of the talks he held with Iran's Islamic leadership, Vajpayee said India and Iran had taken initiative to strengthen their relationship for mutual benefit and "not to harm or cause loss to any country".

The Prime Minister said: "It was only natural that we spent much time in exchanging views on Afghanistan. The rise and consolidation of extremist forces are adversely affecting the region."

He said the Iranian leadership had warmly endorsed his initiative for peace in Kashmir, which began with the unilateral declaration of ceasefire to mark Ramzan last year.

The Kashmir issue, he said, had come in the course of his discussion with the Iranian leaders on Afghanistan and the tension spots in South Asia.

Vajpayee recalled that he had visited Iran in 1978 before the Islamic Revolution overthrew the Shah. "Now, I am happy to note that while the Revolution of 1979 has brought about tremendous changes in the social and economic fabric of Iran, its cultural ethos has not only

remained intact but has flourished. Iran's soul is alive and kicking."

He said his visit to Iran this time was an "auspicious start" to open a new chapter in its ties with India.

Gas line: The PM denied that there was disagreement between India and Iran on laying a pipeline to supply natural gas to India from Iran because of the debate over "choosing one either deep sea or land route."

• He said: "The fact is, India has a tremendous need for gas and Iran has plenty of reserves. Iran wants to sell gas to us and we want to buy it. We have agreed that we will take a decision jointly after a study of the options before us."

India's approach to the gas pipeline issue was underscored by its concern that the supply should be uninterrupted and take into account the security environment. "We want gas from Iran at a good price and on a permanent basis."

Vajpayee also made it clear that he did not see any conflict of interests in India responding warmly to Iranian President Mohammed Khatami's call for a "dialogue of civilisations" on the basis of historical links because of an Islamic regime in Tehran.

He said the Iranian President's call was only a road for fostering brotherhood among nations for their prosperity and peace.

Indian Prime Minister hailed the Tehran Declaration signed by him and President Khatami as an example of "unity in the vision of the two countries."

On improving India's business links with Iran, said his offer to extend a \$200 million line of credit would give a big boost to Indian business to secure big contracts in Iran.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

14 APR 2001

Pipe of Peace

The declaration issued during Atal Behari Vajpayee's visit to Teheran signals to the world that India and Iran, together with other concerned countries of the region, are resolved to contain jihadi terrorism centred in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Neither New Delhi nor Teheran recognises the Taliban regime in Kabul. The Iranian condemnation of Islamabad is understandable; Iranian diplomats and air force personnel have been killed in Pakistan and Shias offering prayers in mosques have been gunned down by sectarian fanatics. Moreover, the Iranian concern about Pakistani drug running activities is so acute as to compel it to deploy its army on the border with its eastern neighbour. In recent times India and Iran have begun to exchange views on defence issues of mutual concern. While Pakistan openly and vociferously supports the concept of jihad, the Iranian leadership is sponsoring a dialogue of civilisations. Iran extends moral and material support to the Northern Alliance and its military commander, Ahmed Shah Masood, while Pakistan's active and ex-servicemen fight along with the Taliban. By playing a crucial role in promoting stability in the region through curbing international terrorist activities emanating from Pakistan and Afghanistan, Teheran is improving its relations with Saudi Arabia on one side and strengthening its ties with Russia and the Central Asian republics on the other. There has been a radical change from the days when Islamabad relied on the Shah of Iran, who sent help to Pakistan during the 1971 war. It should also be recalled that Ayatollah Khomeini used to call General Zia-ul Haq a 'shaitan'. Given the US interest in containing international terrorism, India could play a role in promoting a detente between Iran and the US.

Despite the current tensions between Teheran and Islamabad, Iran has suggested that the pipeline for oil and gas from Iran to India be constructed through Pakistan. New Delhi has serious reservations about this proposal, and has suggested the examination of alternatives such as a deep sea pipeline and the shipping of liquefied gas. India is concerned about the risks involved in having the pipeline run through a country where religious fanatics — whom the Pakistani state concedes it cannot control — can interrupt the flow of oil and gas. There is no doubting such risks. However, since the pipeline through Pakistan is the most economical way of delivering Iranian and Central Asian oil and natural gas to India, New Delhi and Teheran should jointly explore ways of insuring against such eventualities by penalising Pakistan for any interruption of the flow and devising means to give Islamabad a stake in the uninterrupted functioning of the pipeline. There have been suggestions of an international consortium being made the supplier, with punitive powers to ensure that Pakistan does not interrupt the flow to India. Cash-strapped Islamabad is interested in the pipeline project, from which it would gain a steady revenue of between 600 million and 700 million dollars. It is obvious that the Iranian approach to Pakistan is a twin track: to fight its terrorism and attempt to create a stake for Islamabad in economic cooperation. New Delhi should seriously consider following Teheran's stick-and-carrot strategy vis-a-vis Islamabad.

THE PIPES OF PEACE

1999

from the front page

Pak-Iran ties touch new low...

strained relations between the two neighbours, the paper said.

Kharazi's statement coupled with arrival of two anti-Taliban leaders, Ismail Khan and Rashid Dostum to fight Taliban has worried Pakistan's security planners.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's Afghan policy came under serious criticism in the editorials of some Pakistani newspapers.

Commenting on Vajpayee's visit 'The Nation' said that the Prime Minister's visit to Tehran should sound alarm bells in Islamabad as it appeared to have been a part of well-conceived diplomatic offensive to isolate Pakistan at the regional level, using Afghanistan as a lever.

Pointing Kharazi's call for joint India-Iran and Pakistan efforts to solve the Afghanistan problem it said, "What does India have to do with Afghan problem."

"Using Afghanistan as a lever, New Delhi skillfully employed its powerful propaganda machinery and diplomatic clout to project and strengthen this anti-Pakistan vision," the paper said.

More importantly, India has been pushing the line that any power needing an interlocutor in the region on Afghanistan would do better to deal with New Delhi, which has an identity of views on the subject, than Pakistan, which has developed a divergent approach, it said.

India is also turning into reality its claim to regional power status, by laying claim not just in South Asia but Afghanistan and through it all Central Asia as an area of interest, it said adding "it seems India has made a strong case on these lines to Tehran".

Row over serial on Shivaji...

But when asked whether Suresh Prabhu had a part to play in his serial getting approval, Mr Apte said, "Yes, I had a word with him."

In his writ petition, Gaikwad has alleged that his project which had an excellent team of technicians, creative people and researchers, was not justly considered. In spite of repeated reminders, he said, Prasar Bharti officials failed to communicate with him regarding the status of his proposal. The petitioner alleges that Apte's serial received favourable attention because of interference of politicians in the matter.

Apte submitted a proposal for the serial in May 2000 much after Gaikwad, who submitted his proposal on January 25, 2000 and paid processing fees on March 5, 2000. Mr Gaikwad has been researching the subject of over eight years with the help of eminent scholar Ninad Bedekar and had appointed three-time national award winner Sanjay Surkar as the director.

When contacted, Gaikwad said he had taken the matter to court, where he hoped justice would prevail. "I have worked very hard on the project and want a true picture of the great leader to reach a wide audience," he said.

In spite of repeated efforts, Anil Bajjal, CEO Prasar Bharti could not be contacted. Suresh Prabhu refused to comment on the issue.

INDIAN EXPRESS

14 APR 2001

... at a press meet in Tehran. — PTI

PM says India-Iran ties not directed against any country

P. Jayaram

TEHRAN 13 APRIL

PRIME MINISTER Atal Behari Vajpayee said there was mutual recognition of the "strategic importance" of the blossoming relationship between India and Iran, but denied it was directed against Pakistan.

Mr Vajpayee, who wound up a path-breaking four-day visit to Iran on Friday, said: "There is mutual recognition of the strategic importance of this relationship," but it was wrong to think it was directed against any third country, implying Pakistan.

He said this in response to a question at a pre-departure press conference here about such a "perception" in Islamabad. But he acknowledged that the developments in Afghanistan were of concern to both India and Iran. "The rise and consolidation of

extremist forces are having an adverse impact on the region. We will jointly work diplomatically and politically to contain these dangers," he said.

Mr Vajpayee has every reason to be satisfied with the visit — the

first by an Indian Prime Minister since 1993 and six years after then Iranian president Ali Akbar Rafsanjani visited India in 1995 — because of the warmth with which he was received and the number of agreements that were signed.

Mr Vajpayee, after he concluded the official part of the visit and took off for the cultural capital of Shiraz, said: "I have spent three very fruitful days in Tehran. My discussions with the Iranian leaders have been in keeping with the spirit of our traditional ties of friendship and cooperation with this great country."

"They have been warm and cordial and marked by mutual desire to move our bilateral relations comprehensively and quickly." — IANS

Deal signed for feasibility study of deep sea pipeline

P. Jayaram

TEHRAN 13 APRIL

INDIA AND Iran have agreed to undertake a feasibility study on a deep-sea pipeline to transport natural gas from Iran's South Pars fields to India in what is seen as a major breakthrough after protracted negotiations.

An agreement to this effect was signed by the public sector Gas Authority of India Ltd and the Iran National Oil Company here on Thursday, the penultimate day of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's four-day visit to Iran. Official sources said the study would be undertaken by a company based in the Netherlands and completed in six months. — IANS

The Economic Times

14 APR 2001

PM's trip takes Pak-Iran ties to new low

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ISLAMABAD, APRIL 12

PAKISTAN has taken strong exception to the reported statement of Iranian Foreign Minister that Islamabad should work with New Delhi and Tehran to end the civil war in Afghanistan, stating that India had no role to play in resolving the conflict.

Iranian envoy to Islamabad is being summoned to foreign office to seek clarification on the statement reportedly made by Kamal Kharazi while welcoming Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on Tuesday on a four-day visit to Iran, media reports said here today.

Quoting an unnamed senior foreign ministry official, 'Pakistan Observer' said "Pakistan has always maintained that India has no role to play in Afghanistan but Kamal Kharazi has shocked Pakistan by saying that Delhi, Tehran and Islamabad should work



Prime Minister Vajpayee with Iranian President Khatami in Tehran - PTI

closely to bring peace in Afghanistan".
"The most astonishing aspect of the Iranian statement was that Afghanistan will top the four-day Iran-India talks in Tehran," he told the newspaper.

Pakistan believed that India has nothing to do with Afghanistan and there was no reason why Pakistan should work with India to find a solution to Afghan problem, he said.

"Pakistan feels that Afghan situation will be more complicated if Iran encouraged New Delhi to get involved in Afghan issue," the newspaper reported.

Pakistan wanted to seek an official clarification from the Iranian envoy over the content and context of Kharazi's statement before lodging a formal protest, the official said.

The fresh tiff between Pakistan and Iran would further rupture already

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

GAS PROBLEM

1379 Pakistan gives us indigestion SFB

ONE of the purposes of the Prime Minister's Iran visit seems to have been to arrange a quiet burial of the proposal for a Indo-Iranian gas pipeline. Though MEA mandarins insist that the project is not dead, merely under sedation, indications of imminent demise come from the *other* proposal now being worked on — a liquefied natural gas project in Iran to be built with Indian equity participation. It doesn't take an MEA specialist to figure out that the LNG project is a poor alternative — by the criteria of promised supply and unit costs. The crucial question, therefore, is whether its single biggest advantage — unlike the pipeline project, it doesn't involve Pakistan in any way — is big enough to outweigh the disadvantages. The answer will partly depend on whether New Delhi has been right in its approach to the Islamabad angle in the pipeline issue. Indian officials have consistently maintained that an overland route, via Pakistan, will effectively put New Delhi at the mercy of Islamic terrorists. True, too, at least in part, is the Indian argument that Islamabad may be helpless and/or indulgent when it comes to tackling terrorists. To that extent the official okay Pakistan gave for the pipeline last year may indeed have been a strategic ploy — an effort to make India appear intransigent. Neither is the more circuitous route — a 1000 km pipeline that avoids Pakistani territory and passes under international waters — proposed by Iran feasible, either in costs (three times more than the overland route) or in safety (what prevents terrorists from blowing up the underwater section of the pipeline, especially since it will be located a few miles off Pakistan's coast).

All this, however, need not be the end of the road, or of the pipeline. Energy diplomacy is always difficult, but smart governments persist because the stakes are high. New Delhi should first resurrect the overland pipeline proposal, and thus add the weight of its official commitment to it, and then hunt for insurance, that is, big power interest in the project which will keep Pakistan in line. If we could do that for Kargil — remember Bill Clinton scolding Nawaz Sharif — there's no reason we cannot do it for a project that will be critical in meeting our energy needs in the near future. In fact, now that George Bush has replaced Bill Clinton, the chances of getting Americans interested in the project are far better. Bush may have difficulty remembering Vajpayee's name or distinguishing between west and central Asia, but he understands oil and gas, and the imperatives of big business in this sector. Bush's new "business friendly" team may therefore be an excellent target for some smart Indian diplomacy on the pipeline, especially since, thanks to Khatami, a slow but developing thaw in Washington-Teheran relations is underway. At the least, it's worth a vigorous attempt. MEA should understand that allowing fear of Pakistan to scuttle a project of this importance sends out a wrong message.

13 APR 2001

TEHERAN WELCOMES KASHMIR INITIATIVE

Visit to Iran not aimed against Pak.: Vajpayee

By C. Raja Mohan

SHIRAZ (IRAN), APRIL 13. Sounding very pleased at his success in establishing a strategic partnership with a leading Islamic nation the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, said his visit to Iran was not aimed against Pakistan or any third country.

At a press conference in Teheran last night, Mr. Vajpayee declared that he was "fully satisfied" with his consultations with the Iranian leadership which have opened "a new chapter" in the relations between New Delhi and Teheran.

Mr. Vajpayee, however, dismissed the speculation that India was trying to drive a wedge between Iran and Pakistan. "India wants to improve its relations with Iran, but not at the expense of any third country; and we have no desire to damage Iran's relations with any other country".

But pointing to the "depth" of Indo-Iranian relations, Mr. Vajpayee affirmed that it gives New Delhi "a very special position" in Teheran. Between India and Iran, Mr. Vajpayee said, "there is mutual recognition of the strategic importance of the relationship".

Among the highlights of Mr. Vajpayee's three-day visit are a complete convergence of views on Afghanistan, the determination to proceed ahead with energy cooperation, the proclamation of a broad new agenda for bilateral engagement in the Teheran Declaration, and the exploration of



The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, addressing a press conference in Teheran on Thursday. He is flanked by the Union Ministers Mr. Jaswant Singh and Mr. Omar Abdullah. — PTI

new ways to promote bilateral trade and commerce. Together these steps signal a dramatic transformation of Indo-Iranian relationship.

More fundamentally, highly placed sources in the Indian delegation said the new partnership with Iran marks a breakthrough in New Delhi's recent diplomatic effort to win over the Islamic world. The visit could begin a process of transcending the Pakistan problem in dealing with the key Muslim nations in India's neighbourhood.

For too long, a senior member of the Indian delegation said, "New Delhi has allowed Islamabad to exercise a veto over India's ties with the Muslim world". The new partnership with Iran, he

added, shows India can build a relationship with the Islamic nations without reference to Pakistan.

On his key meeting yesterday with the supreme religious leader of Iran Ayatollah Khamenei, the Prime Minister said, "his wise counsel and encouragement for the promotion of our bilateral relations will be a source of strength".

Mr. Vajpayee declined to go into details of his conversation with the Ayatollah, who heads both the religious and political establishments in Iran. All that Mr. Vajpayee would say was that Mr. Khamenei had "wished all success in his mission to Iran".

Mr. Vajpayee said the Kashmir dispute with Pakistan had figured

in the talks with his Iranian interlocutors. Mr. Vajpayee said he had explained India's position and Teheran had "welcomed" his recent peace initiative in the troubled province.

On the question of building an overland natural gas pipeline from Iran to India, Mr. Vajpayee dispensed with the rhetoric to put the issue in perspective. "If our relations with Pakistan were good," Mr. Vajpayee said, "it would have been fairly simple to build an overland pipeline".

Suggesting that Iran was aware of the difficulties in Indo-Pakistan relations, Mr. Vajpayee said New Delhi and Teheran would "explore all options" to ensure safe and cost-effective transportation of Iran's abundant natural gas resources to India at an early date.

In a reference to the complete convergence of views on the unfolding situation in Afghanistan, Mr. Vajpayee said, India and Iran will "work together closely in all the international fora" to bring peace and stability to Afghanistan. Both India and Iran were extremely forthright in their condemnation of the Taliban policies during Mr. Vajpayee's visit.

The Prime Minister's dramatic offer of a credit line of \$200 million to promote Indian trade and commerce with Iran suggested that India was ready to impart a valuable economic momentum to the strategic partnership between the two nations.

FRIDAY, APRIL 13, 2001

10-12 ✓
A CONGRUENCE OF INTERESTS 1819

THE TEHERAN DECLARATION, enunciated by the Iranian President, Syed Mohammed Khatami, and the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, is being portrayed by them as the virtual manifestation of a timely strategic handshake between two ancient civilisations. The intensity of emphasis does vary, though. Describing Mr. Vajpayee's current visit to Iran as a turning point in bilateral ties, Mr. Khatami has also kept Teheran's attention focussed primarily on the establishment of regional peace and stability. Yet, it seems likely that Teheran will want to see the latest entente with New Delhi evolve as a possible cornerstone of a future strategic architecture of multipolarity in world politics. According to Iran's official news agency, Mr. Khatami described Mr. Vajpayee's visit as a new chapter in the field of human and international relations. Given the complexities and uncertainties of the present phase in post-Cold War politics and given also the general absence of diplomatic hype in India-Iran ties, it stands to reason that Teheran is very serious about its current interaction with New Delhi. A logical question, therefore, is whether the two can sustain the present momentum in a manner beneficial to both. Surely, a litmus test of this new bonhomie will be determined by the radically different compulsions that define the separate interactions of the two countries with the United States, today's sole superpower.

It calls for no argument, therefore, that the current triumphalism of the Vajpayee administration over a perceived breakthrough in ties with Iran must be tempered by long-term realism. First, while the present signs seem propitious indeed for a beginning towards a strategic link with Teheran, New Delhi will be well advised to assess whether the latest congruence of regional interests will suffice in the absence of a shared world view. The second and no less significant poser is whether the tactical advantages of Indo-Iranian cooperation in seeking to contain the rise and spread of Taliban's influence can serve as a last-

ing strategic glue between the two countries. There can, of course, be no two opinions about the need to contain Afghanistan's Taliban, whose brand of Islamic fundamentalism poses a challenge to the ethos of a civilisational-Islamic state like Iran and secular India, whose credentials in this regard have been acknowledged by Mr. Khatami and amplified by Mr. Vajpayee in his address to the Iranian Parliament. The Indo-Iranian call for a global mechanism to combat international terrorism is also in order. Yet, at another level, the complexities of the politics of the Organisation of Islamic Conference will inevitably impinge on the positive role that Iran can be expected to play in easing the India-Pakistan tensions.

9/10/01 ✓
Significantly, Iran (as also China) had in 1994 played a critical tactical role in restraining Pakistan from pressing for a vote against India at the U.N. Human Rights Commission in Geneva. However, an imminent test of Teheran's triangular equation involving Islamabad and New Delhi will be the ease with which India and Iran can now evolve an agreement on the latter's transfer of huge natural gas to the former. On the face of it, logical indeed is the Vajpayee administration's assertion that any such accord can only be a bilateral proposition. The experts of the two countries have yet to reconcile Iran's perceived preference for a supply route through Pakistan with India's reservations on that score. New Delhi has been consistently citing a simple and profound reason — the absolute lack of trust between India and Pakistan. While the idea of a trans-Pakistan pipeline may be an India-Pakistan confidence measure in itself, Teheran is willing to weigh the economic costs of a longer haul submarine route across international waters against the political-strategic benefits of a channel across Pakistan. This is a measure of pragmatism which, at a qualitatively different level, can serve as the new mantra across the spectrum of Indo-Iranian ties.

THE HINDU

13 APR 2001

PM poised between Pak and deep sea

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

Tehran, April 12: India played safe, keeping all options open on the proposed Indo-Iranian gas pipeline.

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee signalled that India would favour a deep-sea route, which would preclude Islamabad's involvement, but did not rule out a land route that would have to pass through Pakistan.

"We must ensure that the project is cost-effective and secure even while keeping all our options open," Vajpayee told a joint business meeting of Indian and Iranian industrialists this afternoon.

"The feasibility study of the offshore route should be completed expeditiously," he added.

Vajpayee urged the business community of both countries to help improve bilateral

ties. He singled out five sectors where the two countries could enter into fruitful ventures. These include power stations, value-added industries based on downstream hydrocarbons like petrochemicals, refineries and fertilisers.

Vajpayee felt India and Iran could also cooperate in information technology, telecommunications, electronics and pharmaceuticals.

The Prime Minister suggested a preferential trade agreement. He argued in favour of strengthening the North-South transit corridor as it would not only boost trade between the two sides but also provide access to Central Asia.

But the key area of cooperation, said Vajpayee, was energy security and it will remain so in future.

The Prime Minister said ongoing projects on LNG (liquefied natural gas) should

be monitored and completed in time.

"This will enable cooperation in the field of energy to bear early fruit. It will create a conducive environment and augur well for the more ambitious projects we have in mind," he said.

Vajpayee, however, glossed over the overland route, while maintaining that "all options are open". Indian officials said Iran has been appraised of India's security concerns about Pakistan. But the land option was not being ruled out completely because the government does not want to face criticism in future for having closed the cheaper route only to score brownie points over Islamabad.

Indian officials argued that technology for the deep-sea route was now available as a similar off-shore project was completed in the Black Sea recently.

The gas pipeline project is estimated to

cost around \$4 billion.

India and Iran will have to raise the amount from international lending agencies or involve foreign oil companies in its execution.

The land route, though slightly cheaper initially, may prove to be more expensive in the long run as India will have to pay Pakistan around \$400 million every year as transit fee.

Moreover, officials said, given the present hostile relations between India and Pakistan, it also poses a security threat to the project.

However, all this may change if a "dromatic breakthrough" is achieved by the two sides on the Kashmir tangle, which would lead to normal bilateral relations between the two countries. Sources said Vajpayee might have kept all options open keeping this scenario in mind.

THE TELEGRAPH

APR 13 1994

10-1 AMBITIOUS PLAN TO TRIPLE BILATERAL TRADE

PM offers \$200-m credit to Iran

By C. Raja Mohan 13/4

TEHERAN, APRIL 12. In a bold move to add economic substance to its incipient strategic partnership with Iran, the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, today offered a credit line of \$200 million to support India's participation in Iran's plans for economic development. The terms and conditions of this credit line, possibly one of the largest India has offered another nation, are to be worked out through consultations between the two governments. The offer lends some credibility to Mr. Vajpayee's proposal for tripling bilateral trade with Iran in the next three years.

Responding to concerns in the Indian business community that the lack of adequate financing facilities was hurting India's commercial prospects in Iran, Mr. Vajpayee raised the credit facility from the initial proposal of \$20 million to \$200 million.

The decision to dramatically enhance the credit line came late last night after senior officials accompanying the Prime Minister consulted the Finance Minister, Mr. Yashwant Sinha. The quick response in raising the credit line reflects a new willingness in the Government to "put money where its mouth is", informed sources here said.

In his address to the local chambers of commerce, Mr. Vajpayee referred to the pitiful non-oil trade between the two countries and demanded an "ambitious target" and a "credible strategy". Doubling of bilateral trade in one year and tripling it in three years, he added was "an achievable goal". He also called for reciprocal banking ar-



The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, with Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in Teheran, on Thursday. — Reuters

rangements and the negotiation of preferential trading arrangements between the two nations.

Addressing the question of a pipeline to transport natural gas from Iran to India, Mr. Vajpayee insisted that while keeping "all options open", the two sides "must ensure that the project is cost-effective and secure". The discussions between the two countries on the best possible option, he said, must be pursued with "speed and vigour". Talking about the opportunities in the sectors of the new economy, Mr. Vajpayee offered India's assistance to Iran in training of personnel and building infrastructure in

the information technology sector.

Meeting with Khamenei

Before addressing the chambers of commerce, the Prime Minister called on Iran's supreme religious leader, Ayatollah Khamenei. Given the very special status of the Ayatollah in the country's religious as well as political structures, the meeting is considered very important. The Ayatollah's blessings to the initiative taken by Mr. Vajpayee and the Iranian President, Syed Mohammed Khatami, to launch a new strategic partnership are considered vital. The meeting is

said to have lasted about 40 minutes and is said to have taken place in a cordial atmosphere.

Later, Mr. Amit Mitra, secretary-general of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), who is accompanying Mr. Vajpayee, told *The Hindu* that financing was the key to expansion of commercial ties between the two nations. And decisions on credit lines were obviously political, he added.

A number of planned joint ventures with Iran could not take off because of the absence of a credit line. These include a nine-year old project proposal by BHEL to build a power plant here, and plans by Indian textile machinery manufacturers to modernise the industry here.

Mr. Mitra pointed to the \$600-million facility offered recently by China to Iran. In comparison, the initial \$20-million Indian proposal looked more like petty cash. Mr. Vajpayee's quick decision to raise the credit line, Indian businessmen hope, is the first step towards a strategic perspective on commercial relations with Iran.

PM's speech angers Taliban

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 12. Afghanistan's ruling Taliban militia has reacted angrily to the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee's statement that it (Taliban) was a threat to the region, and said it was India which was a threat to regional security.

"The hostile language used by Mr. Vajpayee against the Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan reveals the interventionist policy being followed by India in the region," an Afghan embassy statement said here.

It alleged that the authorities in New Delhi had deprived the Kashmiris of their rights for the past

five decades, thousands of defenceless Kashmiri Muslims had been killed and women raped by Indian armed forces personnel.

The statement said Mr. Vajpayee was trying to overlook the atrocities committed by Indian forces by levelling allegations against Afghanistan, and asked him to focus instead on issues relating to India and Iran.

"Similarly, the Government of Iran was not expected to let him use the forum of the Iranian Parliament for his outpourings against Islam in the garb of lashing out at the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan."

INDIA WILL BE A VALUABLE PARTNER: KHATAMI

Our secular bond will not weaken: Vajpayee

By C. Raja Mohan

TEHERAN, APRIL 11. Declaring that Islam had been an integral part of India's national life for nearly a thousand years, the Prime Minister, Mr. Vajpayee, today assured Iranian parliamentarians that India would remain unwavering in its commitment to the principle of secularism. In his address here to the *Majlis* (Iranian Parliament), Mr. Vajpayee conceded that "there may be some occasional aberrations" in India; but he insisted that "neither the state nor civil society would ever weaken its bond with secular values, which are inherent in our civilisation and cultural inheritance."

As the Vajpayee Government pursues a strategic engagement with the Islamic world, dispelling the "anti-Muslim" image of the Bharatiya Janata Party and reiterating India's enduring faith in secularism had become important foreign policy and national security imperatives.

Mr. Vajpayee could not have chosen a better venue than the *Majlis* to repudiate the misperceptions about his party and government in the Muslim world. Peppering his speech in Hindi with Persian couplets, he declared, "our belief in secularism is rooted in a tradition which fundamentally respects man's spiritual quest and his freedom to pursue it in the manner he chooses to do." "We do not consider any religion foreign to us. For nearly a thousand years, Islam has been part and parcel of our national and social life."

He referred to his parliamentary constituency of Lucknow, one of the holy centres of Shia tradition, the dominant faith in Iran. "Since the days of my youth, the Moharrum processions have made a profound impression on me. I was moved by the story of the supreme sacrifice of Imam Hussain at Karbala," he said to great applause.

The question of the BJP Government's commitment to secularism had been an important, if unstated, theme in the efforts of New Delhi and Teheran to forge a strategic partnership in favour of political moderation and against religious extremism. It was not accidental that the Iranian President, Syed Mohammed Khatami, in his interaction with Mr. Vajpayee yesterday lauded India's secular tradition and declared that he held it "in high regard".

A secular India that was at peace with its own religious mi-



The Speaker of Iran's Parliament, Mr. Mehdi Karroubi, looks on as the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, addresses the *Majlis* on Wednesday. — Reuters

norities, Mr. Khatami suggested, would be a very valuable partner to Iran and other key Islamic states and allow India to transcend the Pakistan factor in fashioning productive bilateral relationships in this region.

Mr. Vajpayee promised that India would "never allow any external force to cast a shadow on our secular fabric by seeking to damage our unity and territorial integrity." Reiterating a willingness to engage Pakistan, Mr. Vajpayee said, "dialogue and violence cannot go hand in hand".

On the new threats to India and Iran, the Prime Minister said, "dark forces of violence, terrorism and obscurantists ideologies have again emerged in our neighbourhood." "The nexus of these forces with violence and terror presents a challenge to all those societies that aspire to harmony

and peace," he said in an indirect reference to the Taliban.

Khatami deplors Taliban's destruction

It was a sentiment that Mr. Khatami had shared yesterday when he spoke to mediapersons on narco-terrorism from Afghanistan and the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas by the Taliban. "I am deeply regretful that such crimes are committed in the name of Islam."

Mr. Vajpayee ended his speech with a quotation from Hafez Shirazi, Iran's beloved 14th century poet. The couplet summed up the current challenge before the two nations with an exhortation to work together: "Such calamity has affected man's thinking and distorted his perceptions/Where then are the views of Iranian and Indian philosophers?"

India to stay secular, PM tells Khatami

Shekhar Iyer
Tehran, April 11

PRIME MINISTER A B Vajpayee told the Iranian Parliament (Majlis) today that India would stay secular and though "there may be some occasional aberrations but neither the State nor civil society would ever weaken its bond with secular values inherent in our civilisational and cultural inheritance."

The first Indian Prime Minister to address the Majlis since the Islamic Revolution in 1979 and the Babri incident in 1992, Vajpayee assured "our belief in secularism is rooted in a tradition which fundamentally respects man's spiritual quest and his freedom to pursue it in the manner in which he chooses to do so."

"We do not consider any religion foreign to us. India is a land of many faiths. For nearly a thousand years, Islam has been part and parcel of our national and social life. It has made a significant contribution to our culture."

He touched a responsive chord, opening his address with a quote from legendary Iranian poet Hafez. "It is my desire to speak to you from the depth of my heart and I hope to listen to your heart's desire."

He said "the mellifluous call of the Azzan, the bells of temples and churches, the invocation of the Guru Granth Sahib and the Dhammapadda - all blend in a melodious symphonic offering to the Almighty."

Lucknow, his own constituency, Vajpayee said, was one of the holy centres of the Shia tradition in India.

Eighty-nine per cent of Iran's people are Shias. "Since the days of my youth, the Muharram processions have made a profound impression on me. I was moved by the story of the supreme sacrifice of Imam Husain at Karbala."

He also took the opportunity to tell Iran's Parliamentarians: "we will also never allow any external force to cast a shadow on India's secular fabric or to damage our unity and territori-

al integrity."

He backed Iranian President Mohammed Khatami's call for a "Dialogue of Civilisations" for security and prosperity of the world and called for India and Iran to jointly engage in countering moves that could create a new international regime of economic discrimination.

"Unilateralism in resolving economic issues has to be resisted. Tough measures for accelerated liberalisation of fragile economies can provoke an economic collapse or a social backlash."

On Afghanistan, Vajpayee said: "Even as our region takes the road to socio-economic progress, dark forces of violence, terrorism and obscurantist ideologies have again emerged in our neighbourhood."

Referring to the recent destruction of Buddhist statues at Bamiyan by the Taliban regime, Vajpayee said it was tragic that "an attempt is being made to obliterate Afghanistan's past through the destruction of its historic art, which is the heritage of all mankind."

Without mincing words, the he said those guilty of these acts were not of this day and age and "they have lost reason and logic."

These acts could not be condoned as an expression of rage against an uncaring world. "The mentality behind the forces that are responsible for this destruction and the nexus of these forces with violence and terror presents a challenge to all those societies that aspire for harmony and peace," he said.

Alluding to the problems in South Asia, Vajpayee said dialogue and violence could not go hand in hand.

"We call upon those forces in our neighbourhood, which have promoted confrontation and pursued the path of violence, to recognise the futility of their ways and to abandon them. On our part, we are aware of our responsibilities and will always act with restraint."

THE HINDUSTAN TIME

12 APR 2001

India, Iran sign the Teheran Declaration

ANITA SALUJA
TEHRAN, APRIL 11

IN what is being termed as the "turning point" between the relations of India and Iran, both the countries on Tuesday signed the Teheran Declaration, hours after Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's four-day visit to Teheran started.

The declaration signed between Prime Minister Vajpayee and Iranian President Syed Mohammed Khatami is being considered as a landmark which seeks to enhance bilateral relations between the two countries for an all-round development. It is the first letter of intent to be signed between India and Iran. External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh termed it as a path-breaking decision.

Earlier in the day, Vajpayee was given a warm reception at Mehrabad international airport. He was given a ceremonial welcome and guard of honour by First Vice-President Hassan Habibi and later he held extensive discussions on a wide range of issues with President Khatami.

In the next three days, he would be addressing Majlis (Iranian Parliament) besides holding a meeting with Speaker and the spiritual leader Ayatollah Syed Khomeini. He will also be addressing Iranian Chamber of Commerce, Industries and Mines. A high-level business delegation led by FICCI is also visiting Iran coinciding with the Prime Minister's visit.

The Teheran Declaration signed later in the day seeks to enhance bilateral cooperation not only in the field of development but also puts on record the shared perceptions of the two countries on the dangers of international terrorism, extremism and illegal narcotic flows. The Teheran Declaration aims at highlighting the convergence of views between the two countries on international terrorism.

India and Iran have also addressed the issue of Taliban in Afghanistan which poses a greater threat of ex-

overland pipeline and undersea pipeline — were being explored. He informed that a joint feasibility study would be commissioned by the two countries which would be jointly funded. With the signing of Teheran Declaration and a number of agreements, the two countries look forward to strengthen their strategic partnership aimed at giving the bilateral ties a new impetus and reducing tension spots in the region. Due to the convergence of views between various nations in the region, India is keen to bring to the centre stage the issue of international terrorism. There is growing disenchantment and disillusionment with regard to the issue of Taliban among most of the Islamic nations.

Both India and Iran look forward to reducing tension in the region. The cross-border terrorism in Kashmir itself impinges on the Taliban issue with India keen to take the support of other nations in the region, particularly Iran, to end the menace.

Briefing mediapersons, the External Affairs Minister said the 40-minute meeting between Vajpayee and Khatami was marked by "cordiality, frankness and a desire to move ahead with the relationship". He said the two countries were not only unified simply in civilisation, geographical and other terms.

The challenge was to move the relationship forward to meet the requirements of today's world. He said discussions between the two leaders covered bilateral, regional, international, economic and political issues.

Talking to mediapersons before leaving for Iran, Vajpayee said, "India greatly values its relationship with Iran and the present visit will define the path of our cooperation in the years to come."

He said "India and Iran have historical ties of friendship and cultural affinities. Both countries have influenced each other in art, language, literature and other areas of human life."

Vajpayee hoped his visit would strengthen the bonds of friendship and also impart a new direction to the relationship.



Prime Minister Vajpayee and Iranian President Syed Mohammad Khatami exchange copies of the Teheran Declaration on Tuesday — PTI

cussions with his counterpart here.

Besides the historic Teheran Declaration, India and Iran signed a memorandum of understanding on technical cooperation, information technology and energy cooperation. Agreements on Trade and Economic cooperation and the other on customs cooperation was also signed between the two countries.

Jaswant Singh said the MoU on energy cooperation enumerated the basis for India-Iran cooperation in the field of oil and natural gas including in the field of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG).

He said the other ways for the transfer of gas —

tremism flowing from civil conflict. The declaration seeks a broad-based government with representation of all the ethnic and religious groups which can represent the growing aspirations of all Afghan people.

It seeks to highlight "shared perception" of President Khatami's call for a dialogue among civilisations for promoting tolerance, pluralism and respect for diversity. Both the countries reaffirmed their shared commitment for general and complete disarmament and for non-discriminatory technology flows. The issue of international terrorism in the context of the Taliban development has been the major thrust of Vajpayee's dis-

Vajpayee ready to walk the 'extra mile' for peace

Sujit Chatterjee

TEHRAN 11 APRIL

PRIME MINISTER Atal Behari Vajpayee, on Wednesday, offered to go the "extra mile" to promote peace in India's neighbourhood but obliquely asked Pakistan to shun the path of violence, making it clear that dialogue and killings could not go hand in hand.

"On our part, we are aware of our responsibilities, and will always act with restraint," Mr Vajpayee said, while addressing a packed Iranian Majlis (Parliament) in chaste Hindi, peppered with quotes from noted Iranian poet Hafez.

Maintaining that New Delhi sought friendship and cooperation with all countries in its neighbourhood, Mr Vajpayee, the first Indian Prime Minister to address the Majlis since the 1979 Iranian revolution, said: "Wherever there are differences and however strong or emotional these differences, they have to be addressed directly, peacefully and through dialogue."

Mr Vajpayee, whose speech was greeted with thumping of desks by the members, said: "Dialogue and violence cannot go hand in hand."

"We call upon those forces in our neighbourhood, which have promoted confrontation and pursued the path of violence to recognise the futility of their ways and to abandon them," he said, without naming Pakistan.

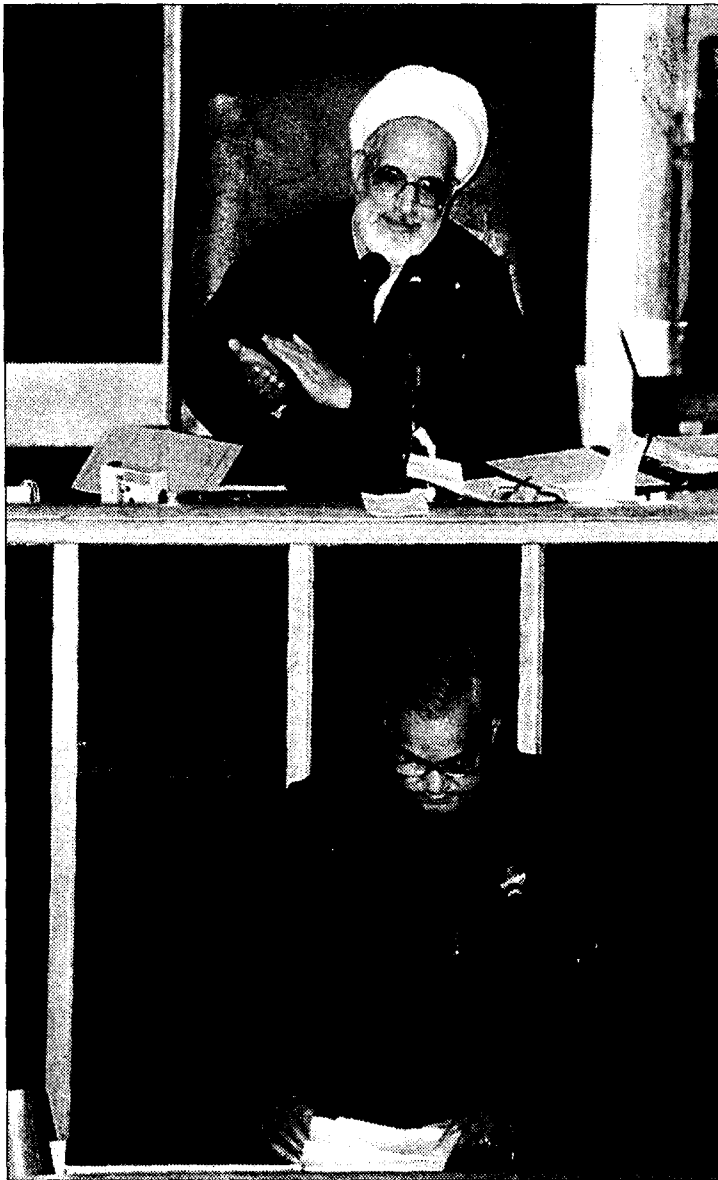
Majlis speaker Hojjetoleslam Medhi Karoubi warmly welcomed Mr Vajpayee, as he, along with external affairs minister Jaswant Singh and minister of state for commerce and industry Omar Abdullah, drove to Parliament.

Asserting that India would never allow any external force to cast a shadow on its secular fabric, by seeking to damage its unity and territorial integrity, Mr Vajpayee said: "Islam has made significant contribution to the development of our culture. We do (not) consider any religion foreign to us."

"For nearly a thousand years, Islam has been part and parcel of our national and social life. The mellifluous call of the Azzan, the bells of our temples and churches, the invocation of the Guru Granth Saheb and the Dhammapadda all blend in a melodious symphonic offering to the almighty," he said.

Voicing concern that despite the region taking the road to socio-economic progress, dark forces of violence, terrorism and obscurantist ideologies had again emerged in the neighbourhood, Mr Vajpayee said Afghanistan was at the crossroads of civilisation.

Regretting the destruction of Bamiyan Buddhas by the Taliban



HARMONY HOUSE : Iranian Parliament Speaker Mehdi Karubi applauds as Atal Behari Vajpayee addresses the Parliament in Tehran on Wednesday — AFP

regime, he said it was tragic that an attempt was being made to obliterate Afghanistan's past by destruction of its historic art, which was the heritage of all mankind.

"Those who are guilty of these acts are not of this day and age: They have lost reason and logic. These acts cannot be condoned as an expression of rage against an uncaring world," the Prime Minister said. Mr Vajpayee said the mentality behind the forces responsible for the destruction presented a "challenge to all those societies that aspire for harmony and peace".

Expressing similar sentiments, Iranian President Syed Mohammad Khatami told reporters on Tuesday night that Iran as president of OIC will take action against the Taliban for its "anti-cultural" and "anti-human" action, in destroying the Buddha statues. Referring to "strong civili-

sational links" between India and Iran, Mr Vajpayee said Mr Khatami's call for a "dialogue among civilisations" stressed global security and prosperity needed cooperative efforts and not confrontation or unilateral imposition of one's will.

Maintaining that globalisation, technology revolution and international interdependence were inescapable realities, he, however, said it should not be an corollary that weaker countries get marginalised in the process or the socio-economic divide was replaced by the digital divide within and between countries. He further said the operation of some technology-denial regimes had blocked developmental requirements of developing states. "India and Iran, need to engage in the process of countering moves which could create a new international regime of economic discrimination," he said.

— PTI

Pipeline to Tehran

Dialogue between civilisations in a Talibanised world

EMBARKING upon a landmark strategic partnership, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Iranian President Seyed Mohamad Khatami, signed the Tehran Declaration upholding the principles of dialogue between civilisations. The declaration gave evidence of political convergence between India and Iran on important subjects that have a direct bearing on their national interest. Refuting the orthodox Huntingtonian thesis of 'clash of civilisations' headlong, the top leaders of the two ancient Asian civilisations forged an agenda rooted in joint commitment to dialogue, rather than conflict. Facing increasing threat from virulent Talibanisation in the region and cross border terrorism, together the two Asian democracies condemned international terrorism in the strongest possible terms. They castigated nations which "aid, abet and directly support terrorism in all its forms." To provide the declaration a broader appeal, they demanded a stronger international legal regime against the scourge of international terrorism and even endorsed the 'comprehensive convention on terrorism' being considered by the United Nations. Given the world-wide condemnation of the brutal destruction of the awesome statues of the Bamiyan Buddha by the Taliban, the two Asian leaders rightly agreed that the present regime in Afghanistan should be replaced. Not militarily, but through negotiations between the various belligerent groups and, thereby, come up with a much more 'broad-based government'.

The dialogue also incorporated issues of bilateral cooperation. Agreements were signed to boost trade and co-operation in the fields of hydrocarbons, non-conventional energy, customs and information tech-

nology between the two Pacific Rim countries. An MoU was signed to establish a framework for India, with a comparative advantage in software expertise, to meet training needs of Iran in professional and technical areas. Similarly, on the crucial issue of transporting natural gas from oil-abundant Iran to India, the two nations agreed to accelerate the efforts to find the most appropriate option. While Iran favours an overland pipeline running via Pakistan, India facing militant threat from that country, prefers an underwater pipeline. The immediate costs of the underwater pipeline maybe high but its long-term costs are much lower given that it will not be vulnerable to any kind of threat or blackmail. At present, Iran exports a billion dollar worth of crude oil to India, while our exports are mainly in the areas of tea, rice, iron ore, chemicals and textiles.

Vajpayee's visit, coming eight years after former prime minister Narasimha Rao's visit to Iran, is bound to increase the cooperation in these and other areas in a significant way. Furthermore, the dialogue between civilisations went beyond mere external threat that the two countries face from global terrorism. It also incorporated the threat from internal extremism. It emphasised the voice of moderation, especially given that the Khatami government faces elections in June. India enthusiastically endorsed the charter of tolerance, political pluralism, and celebration of diversity put up by the moderate Iranian regime. Finally, displaying a firm commitment towards global peace, the two countries called for the total abolition of weapons of mass destruction even as it announced plans for encouraging peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

INDIAN EXPRESS

One voice, two goals for India and Iran

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

Tehran, April 10: India today managed to enlist the support of Iran in condemning international terrorism and berating countries abetting terror groups.

Pakistan was not named, but the signal was directed towards it, too, as Delhi has all along held Islamabad responsible for cross-border terrorism in Kashmir.

By aligning itself with the condemnation, Iran is seeking to convince the outside world, particularly the West, that it wants to shed the tag of a terror-sponsor and exporter of Islamic hard line.

The condemnation of terrorism was one of the main planks of the Tehran Declaration signed by Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee and his Iranian host, President Mohammad Khatami.

The declaration came after an exclusive tête-à-tête, which was followed by delegation level talks.

Foreign minister Jaswant Singh described the document as a "path-breaking" agreement. He pointed out that this was the first time that the two countries have signed such a document.

"It is a turning point in relations between India and Iran. It is marked by cordiality and determination of the two sides

to take forward their relationship," Singh said.

Hours before the document was signed, Vajpayee had sent a goodwill message to Pakistan's Pervez Musharraf.

Getting Iran to join the condemnation of terrorism on one hand and repeating his intention to build friendly ties with Islamabad on the other, Vajpayee is trying to convince the Musharraf regime to give up its path of confrontation.

Vajpayee sent a clear signal to Islamabad to either join Delhi's initiative to establish stability in the region through economic development or be isolated from the international mainstream by being branded a sponsor of terrorism.

India and Iran also signed a memorandum of understanding on co-operation on energy, which will help the two sides work closely in oil and natural gas.

Cooperation on natural gas has already started. The two countries are now exploring various options, including an overland route through Pakistan, for transferring the gas to India.

Four other agreements were also signed, covering technical co-operation, information technology, trade and customs duties.

Barely a year ago, India signed the 'Vision Statement' with the

US, expressing Delhi's intention to work closely with Washington on issues beneficial to both. Now a similar document has been signed with America's once enemy number one, Iran.

It is a sound move as it not only establishes India as an important player in the region but also shows its ability to be a bridge between two adversaries.

Khatami's victory in the presidential election of Iran had raised high expectations and hope in the West as his pro-reform views were well-known. However, the slow progress of reforms over the past few years had disappointed many.

With the categorical condemnation of international terrorism, the new regime in Tehran hopes to reassure those awaiting an acceleration of reforms.

Iran supported India's initiative for a comprehensive convention at the UN for combating international terrorism.

Afghanistan was another area where both had a common perception. They called for an end to the civil conflict in the state and felt that only a broad-based government could bring peace to the country.

THE TELEGRAPH

11 APR 2001

India, Iran agree on 'popular' Afghan Govt

Shekhar Iyer
Tehran, April 10

INDIA AND Iran tonight signed a historic declaration on strategic partnership to bring stability in the extended Central Asian region by calling for a broad based government in Afghanistan, representing aspirations of all Afghan people.

The two countries initialled five agreements to boost trade - notably a feasibility study for transporting natural gas from Iran to India through pipelines - on an action-packed day for visiting Prime Minister A B Vajpayee and President Mohammed Khatami. The turning point in the ties, preceding Tehran Declaration, was a one-on-one meeting between Vajpayee and Khatami soon after former's arrival on a four-day visit.

During the 40-minute meet the two leaders built a quick rapport for a free exchange of views on all issues, particularly the Afghanistan imbroglio.

External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh made it clear that neither Iran asked India nor India promised Iran assistance to the anti-Taliban forces. "We only agreed that India cannot be kept out any resolution of the Afghanistan problem. Secondly, it is the desire of all concerned that all warring factions agree on negotiated settlement."

The Tehran Declaration, which was signed by Vajpayee and Khatami, dwelt with:

- A road map for bilateral cooperation, containing the two leaders' vision of the all-round development of relations

- Shared view on dangers of international terrorism, extremism and illegal narcotics flow and for comprehensive convention on international terrorism

- Shared perception of Afghanistan, particularly on dangers posed by extremism flowing from civil conflict and call for broad-based government

- Common perception of importance of President Khatami's call for dialogue among civilisations for promoting tolerance, pluralism and respect for diversity

- Reaffirmed shared commitment for general and complete disarmament and non-discriminatory technology flows.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

11 APR 2001

INDO-IRANIAN RELATIONS AS PRIME MINISTER VAJPAYEE GETS READY TO VISIT TEHERAN

Behind the Iranian veil

It is in India's interest to help partner Iran into the 21st century, says JYOTI MALHOTRA

NOTHING, it seems, is what it seems in Iran. Certainly not the black veil, the emblematic image of at least half a population regressing behind closed doors; Iranian women, unlike their more conservative Arab counterparts, don't even wear the veil. Not the 65 million population, only half of which speaks Persian (the others prefer Kurdish, Azeri, Dari, etc.) Not its conservative-liberal culture, epitomised in the cities of Qom and Shiraz, the former the headquarters of a forbidding clergy, the latter a city of gardens and poets dedicated to the languorous art of the possible.

Not even the Islamic Revolution, which for 22 years has weighted the balance in favour of pointed contrasts — but now that its main work is done, may just be willing to retreat in favour of a historical Past possibly allying itself with a modernising Present.

It's these its and buts that make up the warp and weft of Iran, the shades of grey that leaven and even add colour to the deliberateness of its multi-ethnic society. So when Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee speaks to the predominantly liberal-minded Iranian Parliament or 'Majlis' in the next few days in Teheran, he will not insult his hosts by expanding on the need for "democracy" or "reform" in that country.

Never mind that elections in Iran are taking place

Vajpayee, then, is expected to focus on the old, historical tie which continues to forever bond the two nations in the new, world order — whether it is in the context of poorer and weaker nations attempting to create spaces for themselves vis-à-vis the lone superpower, our mutual interest in combating the fundamentalist regime of the Taliban in Afghanistan, the inevitable fact of energy cooperation (pipeline overland through Pakistan or not) or even the key importance of the Persian Gulf country as the best staging-point into Central Asia.

There's more, in fact much, much more in the PM's visit. Some would critique the fact that its a deliberately sensual journey rather than a substantial one, devoted to the art of the tangential (just the way the Persians delight in understanding it), hardly the in-your-face, square fare that some other nations prefer. If what Vajpayee's spin-meisters want us to believe of the PM is true, then this trip to Teheran, Shiraz and Persepolis are, what modern, strategic dreams are made up of.

The concession to the present is in the MoUs on energy cooperation, trade, investment protection and customs, and information technology, besides discussions on Indians revamping Iranian industry hit by 22 years of sanctions, participating in a plethora of projects such as in railways signalling and possibly, the training of Iranian defence personnel in India.

Then the romance takes over. There's the old, Persian city of Shiraz where Vajpayee will pay obeisance at the grave of that ancient chronicler-poet Hafiz and where a major city square will be renamed after Maulana Azad. There's the visit to the nearby town of Persepolis, where Darius the ancient emperor — whose empire once stretched from the shores of the Mediterranean to the Indus — crowned himself king.

Clearly, these ancient linkages between India and pre-Islamic Iran — the word 'Iran' itself is said to come from the word 'Aryani' — are being sought to be subtly underlined by the BJP-led government. But the fact that the PM will choose to go to the grave of a Persian, renais-

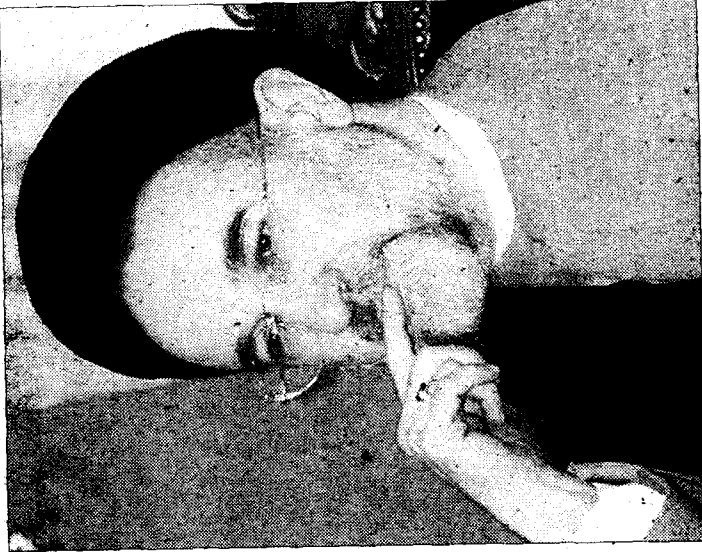
sance poet — yes, a Muslim — is a powerful message not only to all the people of India, but also to the lunatic fringe within his own party that seeks to diminish India's unique civilization.

It was Iran that gave, centuries ago, and India took, vice-versa. The mausoleum of the Mughal emperor Humayun in Delhi, for example, is a replica of Persian tombs and indeed, Persian craftsmen were imported to build it. There was the art of the miniature and the literature. PM Vajpayee's trip this week, like that of P.V. Narasimha Rao's seven years ago, is only a reiteration of the fact that India's destiny, like its history, lies with its neighbours.

Recent history, closely linked to the Islamic Revolution itself, begs to extend the ancient tradition. Incredibly, how the grandfather of the Ayatollah Khomeini himself, actually travelled about a hundred-odd years ago to the erstwhile Punjab and Avadh (Lucknow), finally settling in Kashmir. The grand, old man sent his son for religious instruction to Najaf in Iraq, who then, settled in the town of Khomein (now across the border in Iran and from which the family takes its name), and built himself a house, called 'Manzil-Hindi'. The house, evidently, still stands and is still known by the same name.

This is Iran, then, looking for inspiration from both East and West to reinvigorate itself. Whose supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, wrote a book called *The Role of Muslims in India's Freedom Struggle*. Whose president Khatami called for a dialogue of civilizations while speaking to a western TV channel a couple of years ago — and proceeded with complete aplomb to disinvite Pakistan from a conference on Asian civilizations held in February.

The message to India, say analysts, is clear. The moment is at hand for New Delhi to emerge from its self-imposed South Asian isolation and pro-actively engage with its neighbours. As Iran itself tecters on the cusp of history, India could well introduce it to its own experiments in truth, wars and all, and partner it into the next century.



subtext of his message will replicate what External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh is otherwise so fond of saying: if a friend (in this case Iran) wants to find his way to the far away village, India will certainly lend a helping hand.



barely two months later on June 8 and these could spell either life or oblivion for President Syed Mohammed Khatami. And though India's own anarchic experiment in democracy may well find space in the PM's speech, the

30 APR 2001

INDIAN EXPRESS

AN EXPRESS

PM's Iran visit to deepen strategic ties

By C. Raja Mohan

NEW DELHI, APRIL 9. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, heads for Teheran tomorrow on a four-day visit to deepen strategic engagement with Iran and develop all-round cooperation with the very special neighbour to the West.

The very fact that Mr. Vajpayee is going to Iran, which is at the geopolitical fulcrum of a volatile region, may be more important than any particular results from the visit, diplomatic observers say.

To be sure, a number of agreements are likely to be signed, including on trade, energy, technology and customs. But consolidating the political convergence between the two nations on various regional issues is expected to be at the top of Mr. Vajpayee's agenda.

The rise of the Taliban since the late 1990s in Afghanistan has drawn India and Iran closer. The shared regional objectives of promoting political moderation and countering extremism may be reflected in a joint declaration that Mr. Vajpayee is likely to issue.

Mr. Vajpayee, who is travelling to Teheran at the invitation of the Iranian President, Syed Mohammad Khatami, is also likely to call on the religious leader, Ayatollah Khamenei.

Briefing reporters today, Mr. K. V. Rajan, adviser in the Ministry of External Affairs, said India and

Iran had "convergent positions and common concerns" on the situation in Afghanistan. Mr. Vajpayee and his Iranian counterparts were likely to discuss the question of international terrorism in their survey of regional developments.

Mr. Rajan, however, discounted the possibility of a final agreement on the transportation of natural gas to India being signed during the visit. A Joint Committee of Indian and Iranian experts is examining all options — including an overland pipeline running through Pakistan and an off-shore version skirting it.

Iran sees an overland pipeline

as the quickest and cheapest means of transporting its vast natural gas resources to India, one of the world's largest consumers of hydrocarbons. But New Delhi has strong reservations about the security of supplies from a pipeline through hostile Pakistan.

The Joint Committee had already met thrice and was "interacting with the international private sector" as well as "educating itself" on various aspects of pipelines before coming up with a final set of recommendations. The question of a pipeline between India and Iran was a "purely bilateral matter" and "Pakistan

is not involved", said Mr. Rajan.

Mr. Vajpayee will be accompanied by the Minister of State for Commerce and Industry, Mr. Omar Abdullah, senior officials, and a business delegation. The External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, already in Teheran, will join the Prime Minister's delegation tomorrow. Mr. Vajpayee will address the Iranian Parliament.

After three days in Teheran, Mr. Vajpayee will travel to the ancient city of Shiraz before returning home. An important square in Shiraz will be dedicated to the memory of the Indian leader, Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad.

World Bank team in Pak.

By Our Special Correspondent

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 9. A day before the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, is to leave on an official tour to Iran, a World Bank mission is here to assist Pakistan explore the possibilities of developing private gas pipelines through trans-national energy companies and international financial institutions.

An official of the World Bank told *The Hindu* that the purpose of the mission was confined to developing gas pipelines in Pakistan and did not cover the proposed multi-billion gas pipeline project between Iran and India via Pakistan.

The project is stuck as India has serious apprehensions about the safety of the pipeline passing through Pakistan. In recent months Pakistan has given written guarantees to Iran assuring the safety of the pipeline and

repeatedly expressed its willingness to be a party to the project.

To allay New Delhi's fears, the involvement of trans-national energy companies and international financial institutions was envisaged. And it is here that the current mission of the World Bank to Pakistan holds significance.

According to the Associated Press of Pakistan, the four-member World Bank team will be here for 12 days to assess the situation and hold detailed discussions with international oil companies, local gas companies, government officials, power utilities and financial institutions.

The team will assist the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Resources in evaluating the Gas Regulating Authority, gas companies, international oil companies, power utilities and financing institutions.

THE HINDU

10 APR 2001

WV
The prime minister goes to Teheran

Clasp of civilisations

PE-6
6/4
PRIME MINISTER Vajpayee's visit to Iran next week is historic on several counts. It is also a realisation of his own instinctive appraisal of that country. "*Bheetar ki baat to yeh hai ki woh hamare strategic ally hain* (the unstated truth is that Iran is our strategic ally)," Atal Bihari Vajpayee had told this reporter some years ago.

But why did this 'reality' have to remain 'unstated' for considerable spells in the recent past?

One reason is that the policy makers were divided on a clear Iran policy. One section of this ruling elite was so unsettled after the collapse of the Soviet Union that it made every other foreign policy issue subservient to one overriding pursuit: swiftly establish credit and thereby a durable equation with the 'only superpower'. Relations with Iran, this school divined, would come in the way of their pursuit.

This elite was nervous because, having been in the drill for managing foreign affairs in a bipolar world, it found the new playing field totally altered. The defence and the strategic community justified this obsession in terms of China's growing power. The hard-line Hindu element tended to contemplate the US as a possible crusader against the burgeoning Islamic world. This latter category saw a strategic alliance with Israel as an essential component of foreign policy for the same reason.

That, in spite of this lobby, Indo-Iran relations stumbled along can be explained quite simply: there was that other half of the divided elite which saw the primacy of Indo-US relations and Indo-Israeli ties, but without prejudice to progress on all the other tracks. Including the Iranian track.

True, Israelis are now our special friends with a considerable stake in

our defence apparatus. But this development has not prevented the Algerian president from being the chief guest at our Republic Day; the Moroccan king making India as one of his earliest destinations for an outing; External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh visiting Syria and Saudi Arabia and, indeed, minister of state for foreign affairs visiting Baghdad.

And now comes the prime minister's visit to Iran.

The prime minister's appreciation of Iran as our 'strategic ally' springs in part from his capacity to grasp the civilisational links by which Iranian leaders lay great store.



SAEED NAQVI

It is a new, fluid situation. And both the prime minister and his foreign minister have sketched bold new initiatives with Muslim countries

There are other elementary considerations. One would have to be blind not to spot obvious contradictions between Teheran and Islamabad, for instance. One is Shia, the other (at least the regime) increasingly wearing the mantle of the more intolerant brand of Sunni Islam. Teheran is in direct conflict with the Taliban in Afghanistan whom Islamabad supports, and so on.

The Iran visit is also one more step in the direction of another evolving theme in Indian foreign policy: a deepening of relations with India's extended neighbourhood. This releases New Delhi from the suffocating confines of SAARC.

In the past decade or so, a geographical trick has been played on In-

dia without the political elite showing much awareness of this sleight of hand. The trick becomes apparent if you watch western TV networks. The whole definition of Asia has been changed. Asia is what the Americans see over the Pacific horizon: China, Japan, Korea and the ASEAN. India has been boxed into South Asia.

The prime minister's visit to Teheran like — at another level — External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh's earlier visit to Saudi Arabia, confirms India's growing search for relations with our extended neighbours. This enhances forei-

tions in the late eighties, in terms of their being — along with Pakistan — in the US camp, how was one to interpret the Iranian support when Iran defined the US as *shaitan-e-buzurg* (the senior satan)?

It would have required uncommon patience to realise that Teheran and Riyadh were at that stage engaged in a fierce contest for the leadership of the Islamic world.

But all of that has totally changed today. Saudis see the Taliban as much of a menace as Iranians do. Visits at the highest levels have been exchanged between Teheran and Riyadh.

The support that the OIC gave to Pakistan in the eighties began to evaporate totally since the Casablanca Summit in 1994. Today, Pakistan is a pariah in the counsels of the OIC. It is today the only regime that recognises the Taliban in Afghanistan. The Saudis have on the margins regretted that they played into Pakistan's hands when they recognised the Taliban after the fall of Mazar-e-Sharif. Riyadh has since withdrawn its diplomat from Kabul. "Our relations with the Taliban are frozen," Riyadh says.

It would have been foolish to sustain the old reserve vis-a-vis Muslim countries, the reserve shaped in the context of the OIC 'ganging up' on Kashmir.

It is a new, fluid situation. And both the prime minister and his foreign minister have sketched bold new initiatives with Muslim countries which bring India into the larger global stage, freed from the limits of SAARC (without prejudice to it, mind you).

The policy also creates an automatic balance in the course of evolving stronger equations with the US and Israel. It is this kind of foreign policy, free of stifling prejudice, which will go a long way in stabilising India's internal balance as well.

INDIAN EXPRESS

6 APR 2001

Vajpayee feeler for Indian interests in Iran

Udayan Nambodiri
New Delhi, March 31

IN THE 1990s, heads of state visited India to seek opportunities for their domestic companies in the liberalising Indian economy.

Times have changed. Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee reaches Tehran on April 10, to begin what is being seen as a trip focused on promoting Indian interests in Iran, a country keen on disinvesting in its huge public sector. More than 200 government-owned industries, with assets worth millions of dollars, are expected to be privatised in Iran under its third Five Year Plan (2000-2005).

A slew of Indian companies with stakes in heavy engineering, petrochemicals, steel, power, fertilisers, pharmaceuticals, textiles, infrastructure and consumer durables are vying for a share of the cake.

Iran, under moderate President Syed Mohammed Khatami, is trying hard to get out of its image as just an oil-rich nation. It is trying to introduce legislative changes and institutional reform to make foreign investors confident about its system. To do away with red tape is one of the stated objectives of the regime. In short, its present image somewhat mirrors India's own.

Indian companies see Iran as a possible gateway to the rich Gulf markets. Iran has thrown open

three free trade zones. Till recently, only RIL, Bharat Petroleum and oil companies showed any interest in Iran. But surface transport, with Pakistan wedged between the two countries, is an obstacle to what could have been a lucrative partnership.

Now the Iranians are talking about Indian trucks and cars, Indian help to develop an information technology sector, Indian consumer goods and Indian collaboration to revive its Shah-era high-tech industries which went to seed over years of Western sanctions.

Iran's economy is still dependent on oil sales, which, thanks to high prices has perked up its economy. During the Third Plan period it is looking at non-oil GDP growth rate of 6.8 per cent. Private investment is expected to grow at 8.5 per cent.

But the "Indian transnationals", as they call themselves, are keeping their fingers crossed on Iran, whose style of functioning is archaic and slow. Vajpayee's visit is expected to generate confidence about the country's banking regulations and allay fears about the bureaucracy.

Iran's neighbour, United Arab Emirates, meanwhile is wooing Indian investors more seriously. Sharjah's new free trade zone has just attracted Godrej and Videocon. Both companies are determined to give the Chinese some competition.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

1 APR 2001

Vajpayee's Iran visit in April to boost relations

SONIA TRIKHA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

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2/13

THE much anticipated visit of Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee to Iran will finally happen over four days, beginning April 10. Vajpayee, who is visiting Teheran on President Syed Mohamed Khatami's invitation, will have wide-ranging discussions on regional and international issues and those of mutual concern with the Iranian leadership.

The spokesperson in the Ministry of External Affairs announced the visit today, two days after Defence Secretary Yogendra Narain wound up his two-day visit to Iran. Both countries discussed issues of mutual interest in the military hardware and software industries.

Narain's visit came about on the official invitation of Brigadier General Hossein Dehqan, Deputy Minister of Defence and Armed Forces Logistics. Iran, which has been looking to rebuild its Army to recover from the Iran-Iraq war losses, is in the market for defence purchases.

Iran and Russia recently agreed to collaborate on defence during Khatami's visit to Moscow earlier this month. Apart from meetings with Minister of Defence and Armed Forces Logistics Rear Admiral Ali Shamkhani, Narain met Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi too. Kharrazi had said: "Political security and economic cooperation between Iran and India — the two stable and democratic states of the region — will be highly significant in restoration of regional peace and stability."

According to Kharrazi, Iran and India should upgrade their bilateral, regional and international ties in the face of challenges such as globalisation, NATO expansion and regional crises.

This is most likely to bear fruit during Vajpayee's visit when the whole gamut of bilateral cooperation will come under review.

INDIAN EXPRESS

31 MAR 2001

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Gulf countries keen on improving ties with India

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By George Chakko

VIENNA, MARCH 26. The recent OPEC meeting revealed the Gulf countries' interest for stronger ties with India on the economic front. Oil Ministers from Algeria, Kuwait, Iraq, Libya and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) expressed their keen interest in improving the on-going business with India.

India emerging as a new power in the region and her historical oriental-Asian charisma augur well in Arab eyes. Days of overt Pakistan favouritism seem bygone.

India's foreign policy initiatives and her neutral position on inner Arab conflicts seem to pay off. Here are some excerpts of Gulf oil barons' views on India ties as told to *The Hindu*.

The Minister of Petroleum from the U.A.E., Mr. Obaid bin Saif Al-Nasseri, said "India is very close to us and one of our important clients. The U.A.E. and India are having good and close cooperation in oil business".

On the potential of oil against software trade in view of India's payment difficulties in high oil prices, he said, "I don't think India has difficulties, but that type of business has to be discussed bilaterally. Our discussions (on it) have been continuing and some sort of joint venture, I think, is in the pipeline".

Iraq's Minister of Oil, Dr. Amer M. Rashid, "I think

we have achieved a very important step during the visit of the Vice-President of Iraq to India. We have agreed on investment by the ONGC in exploration blocks south of Iraq. We are also discussing a joint Indian-Algerian project with Iraq on an important oil field. There will also be oil exchange and refineries (project). So we have quite an ambitious programme."

On software/oil barter trade, he said, "there has been some arrangement and it is being discussed by the Indian Government with the respective authority (in Iraq) and I hope they will finalise so that they could lift crude oil against what they say wheat to Iraq."

The Kuwaiti Minister of Oil, Dr. A. K. Al-Sabeeh, said, "on every level we have an excellent trade relation with India and we want to keep it this way."

The Libyan Oil Minister, Mr. A. Abdulkarim Ahmed, said, "we have good cooperation and communication with India. We want to increase our cooperation in this respect (the oil and software sectors) and also in investment (connected to that). We are arranging something there in the future."

The Algerian Minister, Dr. Chaki Khelil and President of the OPEC conference confirmed that the Indo-Algerian project in Iraq is indeed "a big one, over 300,000 barrels a day".

THE HINDU

27 MAR 2001

Israel supplies radar to India

JERUSALEM, MARCH 20. American pressure notwithstanding, Israel has supplied India parts of the sophisticated radar system Green Pine, capable of detecting ballistic missile attacks from hundreds of kilometers away, the daily *Haaretz* reported today.

It said the parts of the radar system, indigenously developed by Israel, were shipped to India a few days before Mr. George Bush took over as the U.S. President.

The Green Pine radar system, developed by Elta Electronic Industries, is based on technology similar to the Phalcon Airborne Radar System, which Tel Aviv planned to sell to China but didn't under U.S. pressure.

In the wake of Pakistani missile threat perception, India decided to buy the radar in 1998, but the deal came under a cloud following its nuclear tests and the subsequent American pressure on Israel to hold it back. — PTI

Atal visit boost to Iran bond

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, March 12: Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee is planning a three-day official visit to Iran next month, amid speculation that the country's decade-old isolation will end soon with major world players reviewing their policy towards Iran.

The significance of the proposed visit, likely to take place from April 10 to 13, lies in Delhi's desire to build relations with key Islamic countries in the region. The visit assumes importance in the context of the developments in Afghanistan and the possibility of broadbasing relations.

The significance of the visit lies also in the fact that it is the first Prime Ministerial visit from India to Iran in nearly nine years. P.V. Narasimha Rao was the last Indian Prime Minister to have visited Iran in 1993.

One of the major thrusts of Vajpayee's visit will be to renew contact at the highest level — something that has not taken place since 1996 when then Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Raf-

sanjani visited India.

Vajpayee is likely to have detailed discussion with Iranian President Mohammed Khatami, the country's "supreme leader" Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the Speaker of the Iranian parliament and perhaps also Rafsanjani, who now heads the "Expediency Council", among other members of the Iranian leadership.

There is also a proposal for Vajpayee to address the Majlis — the Iranian parliament, where Khatami's pro-reforms supporters are in the majority. Agreements on energy, commerce and in co-operation on information technology are also likely to take place during the Indian Prime Minister's visit.

Vajpayee may also visit the historic city of either Isfahan or Shiraz. A team of Indian businessmen is likely to be there during the Prime Minister's visit and there is a possibility of some agreements being signed in this area as well.

Foreign minister Jaswant Singh had a successful visit to Iran last year. The two sides have

agreed to broaden their bilateral relations to political, economic, social and cultural spheres.

Both countries now have regular interaction and have also initiated a security dialogue on major developments in the region and elsewhere in the world. Vajpayee's visit will give the final push to the relationship that his foreign minister has set in place.

At the end of his visit Vajpayee and Khatami are likely to come out with a joint statement that will lay stress on the two sides' desire to strengthen and broaden their bilateral ties and jointly fight international terrorism.

With many key countries in the world reviewing their policy towards Teheran and with widespread speculation that Iran's international isolation may soon be coming to an end under Khatami's reforms programme, it is important that Delhi, too, renews its ties with Iran.

Despite traditional and historical ties, India and Iran had failed to have close co-operation with each other. After the cold war, it was the Kashmir issue and then

the demolition of the Babri Masjid that led Teheran to regard Delhi with suspicion. India on its part continued to view Teheran through its Pakistani prism and, thus, maintained distance from it.

Over the years, however, both sides have found many important issues — both at the political and economic level — where they have common views and which are to their mutual interest.

Iran, one of the world's largest producers of natural gas, finds a ready market in India — one of the biggest consumers of its product in the region. India's expertise in the information and technology field, is perhaps another area where Teheran is keen to seek co-operation.

The development in Afghanistan, particularly the rise of the Taliban, is cause for major concern for Iran as it shares a long disturbed border with the strife-torn state. This has not only created a situation where Iran has started distancing itself from Pakistan, but also provided an opportunity where it can now cooperate more closely with Delhi.

THE TELEGRAPH

13 MAR 2001

BANK OF ISRAEL PROPOSES PENALTIES ON EMPLOYERS OF FOREIGN WORKERS

Israel determined to keep Indian IT professionals at arms length...

Prasenjit Bhattacharya
NEW DELHI 27 FEBRUARY

WHILE THE world clamours for Indian software engineers, Israelis are determined to keep them at an arms length. The Israeli central bank — Bank of Israel — as well as people in the higher echelons of the Israeli industry, are opposing the entry of Indians into Israel's staff-strapped hi-tech sector. In a report published at the end of the last quarter, the Israeli central bank recommended penalties, like levying special taxes on employers of foreign labourers (among others, Indians). The Israeli central bank said: "In our opinion, the proposal from leading companies in the hi-tech sector for absorption of Indian software engineers and programmers must be rejected."

The bank's rationale is this:

"There exists a fear that information can flow out". The Bank of Israel has also said the award of work permits to Indian employees would lead to "brain drain" from Israel.

However, the Israeli hi-tech industry is said to be lobbying hard to bring Indian software engineers into the country since Israel is facing a shortage of 10,000 software engineers.

Official sources said while the Israeli industry is lobbying actively for grant of permits to Indian technical personnel, to meet the shortfall in hi-tech personnel, the Israeli software association is determined to halt the entry of Indian software professionals. However, the Israeli embassy in India professed ignorance about the status of Indian software engineers in Israel and added that Indian software

exports were welcome. According to the National Association of Software & Services Companies (Nasscom) chairman, Mr Dewang Mehta: "This is a completely free market. And though I am not aware of the Israeli case, I feel that it is the right of every country to decide whether they want Indian engineers or not."

Government sources in India, however, said the lack of Indian software engineers in Israel has led to Israeli companies seeking alternative routes to access Indian engineers. "Many Israeli companies have now taken to stationing Indian software professionals in Cyprus. Israeli companies, Comverse and Amdocs, have already done so," they said. Sources also added that some Israeli software companies have opened development sources in

India, especially in Pune, to tap India's software talent.

Not only is Israeli keen on plugging the entry of Indian engineers into Israel, but also critical of the US policy of taking in foreign IT professionals. Israel's chief scientist Carmel Vernia has been quoted as saying in the *Jerusalem Post*: "Israel shouldn't go as far as the US, which is letting in anyone with an engineering degree. Visas for foreign hi-tech workers should be limited to graduates of recognised universities, holders of Bachelor of Science degrees with five years of experience or Master of Science degrees with three years of experience." Vernia is quoted saying, as a short-term measure, Israel may bring in only a few hundred foreign workers, who will not be paid less than Israeli counterparts.

The Economic Time
The Economic Time

28 FEB 2001

Turkey Defence Minister coming

FD-1A today 2/1/2001

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), FEB. 20. The Defence Minister of Turkey, Mr. Sabahattin Cakmakoglu, is to make a five-day visit to India starting tomorrow. This is the first ever visit to India by a Defence Minister of Turkey and provides further evidence of the rapidly improving ties between the two countries.

The Minister, who will be accompanied by a 10-member delegation, will also visit Mumbai and Bangalore to understand India's capabilities in research and development.

Turkey's defence establishment has a special political role, as the military is the key element of the National Security Council which sets that country's broad strategic policy. Contacts between the national security councils of the two countries have been established and the Secretary General of Turkey's National Security Council, Gen. Cumhuri Aftaruk, a four-star general, visited India recently.

Mr. Cakmakoglu is a senior leader of the ultra-nationalist, but secular, National Action Party which is the second most powerful component of the ruling coalition.

THE HINDU

21 FEB 2001

PM condemns attack on Iraq

The Times of India News Service
MUMBAI: In a swift reaction to the U.S. bombing of Baghdad, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on Saturday condemned the action. This is India's first statement critical of the U.S. after George W. Bush took over as President.

Mr Vajpayee, looking a trifle tired, told newsmen at a press conference at the Sahyadri state guest house that India was in favour of lifting sanctions imposed against Iraq in keeping with a UN resolution. "This is the only way to bring Iraq back into the mainstream of regional and international affairs," he said in a prepared statement.

When a correspondent sought his reaction to the bombing, Mr Vajpayee said, "I have a statement to make." He then read out a prepared text. He said India had consistently opposed the unilateral imposition of no-fly zones over Iraq. "In our view, they do not come within the framework of the UN Security Council resolution. Aerial bombardment of targets in Iraq to impose such zones is unacceptable as such strikes cause

unnecessary and avoidable suffering to innocent people," the PM noted.

Replying to another question, he said talks with Pakistan could not be resumed unless peace prevailed in the Kashmir Valley. He announced that a cabinet committee on security would review the post-cease-fire situation on Sunday and the matter would come up before the cabinet later. The extended ceasefire ends on February 26.

Maintaining that his decision to declare a ceasefire was correct, Mr Vajpayee said that it would be wrong to project him as pro-cease-fire. When he had declared the ceasefire, he had expected that the violence would stop. However, his expectation had been belied.

Certain violent incidents had taken place, he noted.

Reiterating India's eagerness to hold peace talks, Mr Vajpayee recalled that he himself had gone to Lahore to give a fillip to the peace process. "But there must be a congenial atmosphere before resuming the talks. Violence and peace negotiations can't go hand in hand," he observed.

PREMIER'S PERSPECTIVE

- PM denounces U.S. bombing of Baghdad
- No talks with Pakistan without peace in Valley
- No foreign investment in print media
- Enron imbroglio to be resolved soon

THE TIMES OF INDIA

18 FEB 2001

-12-

Israel sells sea-to-sea missiles to India

By Kesava Menon

TEL AVIV, FEB. 5. The Israel Radio and an on-line news service have reported that Israel has sold its first sea-to-sea missiles to India in a \$270 millions deal. According to the Middle East Newslite report the Barak-1 missile is meant to defend ships from enemy cruise and sea-skimming missiles as well as aircraft.

The disclosure of the deal comes on the eve of Israel's participation in the military exhibition in India. New Delhi has become one of Israel's biggest defence clients.

Israel has also sold unmanned air vehicles (UAVs) in deals that total \$230 millions. Procurement of the UAVs will begin in 2002 and will be used for reconnaissance on the Kashmir border and along the border with China.

THE HINDU

26 FEB 2001

26 FEB 2001

India to buy missile defence system from Israel

Shishir Gupta
New Delhi, February 10

INDIA HAS signed a multi-crore defence contract with Israel for the purchase of seven Barak ship-based anti-missile systems as part of its overall plan to beef up its naval capabilities.

Highly-placed Government sources said the decision to purchase the anti-missile defence system was taken last month. One of the missile 'complex' is being installed on India's sole aircraft carrier INS Viraat. The Barak system fitted carrier, which was being refitted and overhauled for the last two years, will be show-cased during the International Fleet Review in

Mumbai later this month. The total deal is worth about Rs 700 crore, with each anti-missile system worth about Rs 100 crore.

The system was purchased after it was cleared by a high-powered price negotiating committee headed by Vice Admiral Arun Prakash, Chief of Personnel, Indian Navy. Besides INS Viraat, the remaining six systems will be mounted on three-Delhi class destroyers and three Kashin or Rajput class destroyers of the Indian Navy. This system will be mounted below the deck of INS Viraat.

The Barak system is designed to protect a ship from being targeted by sub-sonic sea-skimming missiles in hostile conditions. The weapon is fired from a vertically mounted launcher and each

An HT Exclusive

defensive missile has an in-built radar to latch on to the oncoming missile at a range of nearly 10 km. According to data available, the Barak system comprises of two launchers, each capable of firing 8 anti-missiles. The anti-missile is said to travel more than twice the speed of sound.

In real-time operational mode, the ship-board anti-missile system will be warned of any hostile low flying object by Kamov -31, a radar picket helicopter that was recently acquired from Russia. The Ka-31 aircraft has the capability of detecting any low flying object at the distance over 100

kilometres. As soon as the ship is alerted, the Barak will home in and destroy the missile. India has already received four of the nine Ka-31 helicopters from Russia.

The Barak is a proven system and is part of the Chilean and Singapore Navy. But a section of the military establishment feels that India should not have acted in haste. The reason is that Barak does not have proven capability against supersonic missiles, the era of which has dawned in the Indian Ocean.

China has purchased powerful Sovremenny-class destroyers from Russia, which are armed with Sunburn (SS-21) supersonic missiles. Even the French are upgrading the Exocet sea-skimming missile, with Pakistan showing inter-

est in buying them. The Russians have armed their ships with Sunburn as well as Moskit supersonic missiles.

There are other objections to Barak as well. Critics point out that this system is exceptionally expensive. With an Indian Navy destroyer costing around Rs 500 crore, in question is the prudence of acquiring a system (solely against missile defence) which is equivalent to around 20 per cent of the ship's value.

The Navy's emphasis on this anti-ship missile system appears to be part of its overall plan to beef up the security of its expensive assets.

This includes induction of better ship-to-air missiles that can counter low-flying planes.

BARAK MISSILE SYSTEM

A key feature of the Barak AMIM is that it is fully automated with a fire control system capable of calculating the level of threats, allocating missiles and launching them automatically upon acquisition of the target.



SPECIFICATIONS

Weight	98kg
Warhead	22kg
Length	2175mm
Diameter	170mm
Wing span	685mm
Range	10km
Velocity	in excess of Mach 2

Arabs will carefully watch India's dealings with Ariel Sharon's govt.

By Seema Guha

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Vajpayee on Friday congratulated Israel's right-wing Prime Minister-elect Ariel Sharon and said India valued its relations with his country. In a message to Mr Sharon the PM said New Delhi's ties with Tel Aviv were marked by warmth and understanding.

The victory of hardline Likud leader Ariel Sharon has disappointed Arab leaders, who feel that the chances of peace in West Asia have receded. Arab states, already wary of the growing warmth in India's ties with Israel will be watching New Delhi's steps carefully in the next few months.

India's task of maintaining a delicate balance between its new found friendship with Israel and its traditional ties with the Arab world will be more difficult with Mr Sharon in charge. While putting its relations with Israel on a firm footing, New Delhi has tried not to neglect the Arab world. External affairs minister Jaswant Singh recently visited both Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

The attempt obviously is to reassure Arab states that India remains a friend. The reassurance is necessary, as there has been some concern about India's growing ties with Israel. Arab ambassadors in India refute this assumption. "We don't mind India's relations with Israel, it is after all up to both sovereign nations to decide on such matters," Egypt's ambassador to India Gehad Madi said. "So long as any arrangement between the two countries does not impinge on our security, we have no problems," Mr Madi added.

What does worry Arab leaders is the talk of nuclear co-operation between New Delhi and Tel Aviv. Home minister L.K. Advani was quoted by Israeli radio in this regard during his visit to that country last year. "Any nuclear co-operation will be a clear threat to the neighbouring Arab states," ambassador Khalid El-Sheikh of Palestine said. Both Mr Madi and Mr El-Sheikh however agreed that they had been reassured by the Indian government's denial of any such move.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

11 FEB 2001

Can India meet the Sharon test?

96-8
10/2

The goonda patriot

THE first time I saw Ariel Sharon was in a setting so unusual it could have only been in Israel. The Gulf War was on, the first Iraqi Scuds had hit Tel Aviv only the previous night and I, covering that entire war from Baghdad to Beirut with a strength of two (with photographer Prashant Panjar), was hanging on to my only friend in a strange country, and waiting hungrily for lunch. The previous night had been spent in fear and claustrophobia, in a sealed basement, gas masks tightly fixed round our faces and clutching survival kits with syringes and vials of some chemical that was promised to be the nerve gas antidote.

We had arrived from Baghdad the previous day and latched on desperately to Zubin Mehta, the Indian mascot of all Israel, back, as always, to be with his adopted country in war time, and the man who supposedly could play that country like a piano, since he knew all the right keys to hit. Always one to wear his Indianness on his sleeve, he ceremonially opened his box of whole red chillies, and proceeded to crush — with bare hands — two over his pasta. Then he spotted someone at the buffet table. It was an ambling, Falstaffian figure, not your typical cavalryman but more like the overweight Lalaji who runs your neighbourhood grocery shop.

"Shalom, mantriji," Zubin shouted and dragged me by the arm. "Here, here, meet the greatest goonda of Israel, none other than Arik Sharon," he said, preferring the more popular nick-name for the war hero who now handled a minor portfolio in Yitzhak Shamir's Likud coalition.

The Israelis are particularly forgiving with Zubin. So he could go on, colourfully, describing Sharon's many "exploits". His remarkable counter-thrust, with just about a division of armour in the Yom Kippur war that turned the tide of history, saved Israel. It figures in textbooks of modern warfare as a stroke of genius. His "role" in the Shatila massacre (despite Sharon's protestations), his not-an-inch-more, approach to the Palestinians but, above all, his fierce nationalism. "Here is a great goonda, who is also a great patriot. Not my kind of Israeli but you cannot understand this country without knowing him," he said. Sharon did not seem to mind any of that.

Just where does a right wing maverick transcend goondaism into patriotism or vice versa is never an easy question to answer, and this is what the world should be thinking about as Sharon takes charge of the world's most sensitive piece of real estate.

IF you want to see his roguish side, go for a walk in Old, East Jerusalem, in the Arab Quarter. I was escorted on my

first tour of the fascinating streets that connect four very different, distinct worlds, the Jewish, Christian, Arab and Armenian quarters in an area not larger than old Delhi's Khari Baoli, by another instant friend, Sarah Sallon, very British, very Jewish and as shockingly enigmatic and direct as Israelis tend to be. An MD in gastroenterology who spent a long day, six days a week, working with sick Arab babies in the Gaza Strip, then researching her "favourite" diarrhoea bug, cursing the Israelis for being so bloody-minded, she lived alone, with her cat, in an apartment over-

future of Jerusalem was not negotiable and he wasn't one to do it with words alone. This is the way Sharon does business. This is why the world has been watching him more closely than any

other leader in the Middle East for a long time. Which Sharon will we be seeing as prime minister now, the obstinate goonda or the brilliant patriot?

It matters to India a great deal because we have already gone too far down in our relationship with Israel to be able to afford a rethink or a setback. The process may have begun in the times of Shamir and Neta-

rights in free elections.

India also has some of the same in-built contradictions as Israel, underlined so marvelously in the dilemma of the Mossad spy in Le Carre's *The Little Drummer Girl*. If Israel is a democracy, whereby all Arabs, including those in captured territories have a vote, it ceases to be a Jewish state. If only Jews have the right to vote, it is no longer a democracy. Similarly, India is not a secular state unless it reaches out and amicably integrates its own Muslims, for which it does need the goodwill of the Islamic world. But, can it do so as long as it is at such odds with Islamic fundamentalism?

India needs Israel as a political and a military partner but without being pushed into any new confrontation with the Islamic world. Sharon will complicate this equation. Under him, a right-wing Israel may not mind being at odds with the Islamic world, but a secular, diverse India cannot afford that. We will, therefore, be watching Sharon with some nervousness. There is, at the popular level, a great deal of warmth for India in Israel and vice versa. It will now be put to the Sharon test.

JUST how deep the Israeli affection runs for India was also demonstrated to me on the day I met Sharon; not by him but by one of his bitter political detractors. I met Shimon Peres (again, courtesy Zubin) sunning himself on an easy chair outside his town-home when the entire city was indoors nervously awaiting the next missile strike. "We never understood why you Indians shunned us so much," he said, recalling how our freedom movement influenced theirs. The British, he said, banned Nehru's books, so they clandestinely printed a Hebrew translation of his *Discovery of India*. "Come, come for a walk with me," he offered, "let me show you a few interesting things." He then proceeded to point out Rehov (street) Gandhi and Rehov Tagore. Will we ever dare to name a street after Ben Gurion or Yitzhak Rabin?

In months to come, if Sharon acts true to form and the Middle East is on the boil again — and when self-doubts emerge in South Block and the cold warriors come out of the closet seeking to slow down, if not reverse the positive movement in our relations with Israel — we would do well to remember this mutually shared goodwill, respect and strategic and commercial interest. Or, who knows, we might instead see a mellowed, mature Sharon, a patriot but not a goonda.

NATIONAL INTEREST



SHEKHAR GUPTA

'Shalom, mantriji,' Zubin shouted and dragged me by the arm. 'Here, here, meet the greatest goonda of Israel, none other than Arik Sharon,' he said

looking Old Jerusalem. She also swore daily never to part with an inch of it to "those bloody Arabs". "Look at that, look at that," she said, pointing at the minora, the universally recognised five-pronged symbol of Judaism, on an arch across the street in the heart of the Arab quarter. "That b... Sharon, he has built a house here. He wants to show the Arabs this belongs to Israel. So why doesn't he come and live here full-time? Why has he left these poor little Jewish boys to guard it 24 hours if not to humiliate the

nyahu but it certainly acquired impetus during the liberal, peacenik Rabin-Peres-Barak phase. India was able to develop such a rich and productive political, trade and security relationship with Israel, without a whimper of protest from the Arabs, only because the Gulf War had divided and weakened the Arabs and because the overall movement in the Middle East was towards conciliation and acceptance of the Jewish state. Will that now continue? Or will Sharon's bloody-mind-

India needs Israel as a political partner but without being pushed into any new confrontation with the Islamic world. Sharon will complicate this equation

Arabs?" She went on, loud, even for an Israeli, asking if there could ever be peace with people like Sharon in the cabinet. Now Sharon, backed by a landslide, is the prime minister.

Obviously, the man who disdainfully outflanked the entire conquering, marauding Egyptian army and dashed for Cairo with a mere division of tanks could also similarly have the audacity of planting the Zionist flag in the Arab heart of the Holy City. Except that the first was an act of great military courage and imagination, the second is sheer cussedness. He wanted to state conclusively that the

edness, combined with Arafat's equally dangerous incompetence, reverse the equation? If that happens, the India-Israel relationship will also come under some stress.

Jaswant Singh's recent visit to Saudi Arabia marked an important phase in India's Middle East policy. Israel is the first close friend India has to its west. India is the first close friend Israel has to its east. Democracy is unfortunately not very popular in the Islamic world. India and Israel are the only countries in the world where sizeable Muslim populations have equal voting

Looking beyond the boundary

5-12 10/2 J.N. DIXIT

Li Peng, chairman of the standing committee of the National People's Congress of China (the Chinese parliament) visited India in the first half of January accompanied by a large delegation of Chinese officials, businessmen and political aides. The significance of the visit has to be assessed in terms of his personal contributions to Sino-Indian relations over the last decade, his current significance in the Chinese political system and the regional environment in which he undertook this visit to India.

Li Peng has a certain external image of having been the architect of the suppression of the Tiananmen Square democratic movement in 1989. Singling him out as the sole leader responsible for the decision would be unfair. It was a collective decision by the orthodox and authoritarian segment of the leadership of the Communist Party led by Deng Xiaoping. The twin motives which Li Peng manifested at that point of time were to focus on China's economic modernization and reforms and to ensure the necessary political stability of the Chinese state. It must be remembered that Li Peng and the senior leadership of China had the disintegration of the Soviet Union very much in mind when facing the upsurge of democratic impulses questioning the authorities in China.

In moral terms, Li Peng emerges as a negative and authoritarian persona, but in terms of realpolitik Deng Xiaoping and Li Peng ensured the continuation of China's journey down the path of modernization and world-power status. Of greater relevance is the role that Li Peng played in Sino-Indian relations during his tenure as the prime minister of China till 1996-1997 and thereafter. It was during Li Peng's premiership that high level visits between India and China were revived after Rajiv Gandhi's path-breaking visit to Beijing in December 1988. Li Peng's visit to New Delhi and discussions with the then prime minister, P.V. Narasimha Rao, translated the decision taken during Rajiv Gandhi's meetings with Deng Xiaoping into operational policies. Substantial negotiations were undertaken by the Sino-Indian joint working group on the boundary question which led to the signing of the Sino-Indian agreement on the maintenance of peace on the line of actual control in September 1993.

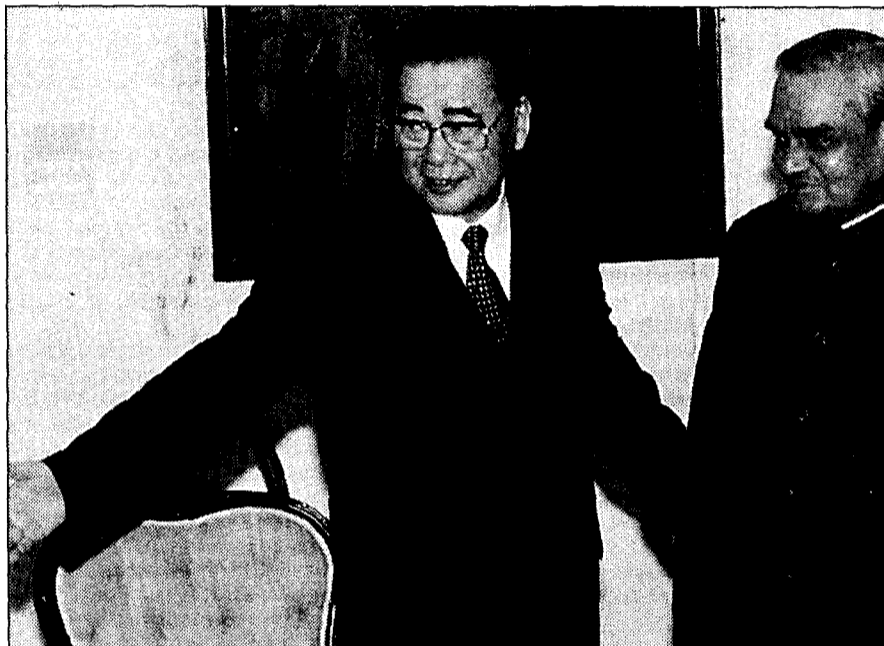
The former president, R. Venkataraman, visited Beijing in May 1992, before Rao's visit in September 1993. The present prime minister, Zhu Rongji, the Chinese president, Jiang Zemin, and the Chinese chief of the army staff visited India in the second half of the last decade. It would not be an exaggeration to point out that Li Peng's assessment of India and his advice were an influential factor in these interactions. The substantive orientations in Sino-Indian relations these contacts signified were the following.

Both India and China decided to move away from the negative historical memories affecting their relations from 1960 to

the Nineties. This, however, did not mean that China or India decided to bypass critical perceptions about each other or to reduce the importance of resolving specific critical issues, like the boundary dispute. In fact, a conscious decision was taken that since the boundary dispute is not likely to be resolved quickly, India and China should create and expand relations in all spheres where there is mutual complementarity and benefit. The prognostication being that the normalization and expansion of bilateral relations would create the necessary atmosphere of mutual

significant characteristics of its politico-strategic environment should be noted. The critical and hostile fall-out of India's nuclear weaponization has been overcome to some extent by the exchanges between the president, K.R. Narayanan and the external affairs minister, Jaswant Singh, and their Chinese counterparts over the last two years.

China's security concerns are focused on the United States' moving forward on programmes of theatre missile defence in the western Pacific and the development of national missile defence. The renewal



Still a long way to normal relations

trust, confidence and an inclination towards compromise which would resolve the boundary question.

Given this complementarity in each other's needs in certain economic and technological spheres, bilateral relations stand acknowledged together with a decision to enhance cooperation in these fields. There are also certain multilateral issues like the management of environment, stipulation of external standards of human rights, World Trade Organization trading arrangements, on which there is a parallelism in Indian and Chinese approaches. Though there are fundamental differences between India and China on the issue of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and related issues, China has adopted a realistic approach towards India on this matter, after the initial critical reactions because of India's mentioning China as a specific factor leading to its nuclear weaponization. China's defence supplies and defence cooperation relationship with Pakistan and its supplying materials and technology for Pakistan's nuclear weaponization and missile weapons capacities have been a matter of concern to India which has been conveyed to China.

Li Peng's visit to India was informed with an awareness of these trends. The

of US-Japanese security arrangements is another security concern of China. China also faces centrifugal and fissiparous movements in Xinjiang and in Tibet. Though China has a record of economic achievements, it is still likely to face problems of unemployment, uncontrollable migration from rural to urban areas and the problem of food security.

China takes note of India's nuclear weaponization and missile capacities as a factor affecting its security environment to some extent. India overcoming its political, economic and strategic isolation resulting from its nuclear tests of 1998, the qualitative improvement in India's relations with the US and west Europe, India's incremental acceptability in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and its participation in the ASEAN security forum are factors which have impinged on China's India policy. Similarity in Chinese and Indian concerns about terrorism and narco-terrorism, about separatist and secessionist movements are also factors influencing Indian and Chinese attitudes towards each other. It is also pertinent to mention that Li Peng has been a consistent advocate of the normalization of Sino-Indian relations.

What then are the concrete results of Li Peng's visit to India? Li Peng repeatedly

articulated the objective that China wants a better relationship with India and that China is willing to have exchanges at high political levels with India on a continuous basis to resolve differences and to enhance cooperation.

During his exchanges with the Indian leaders, he acknowledged that the boundary dispute is an important issue. It was agreed between the two sides that the joint working group on the boundary question has not made sufficient progress in resolving the residual problems affecting the delineation of the line of actual control, which is a pre-requisite to resolving the boundary question. Li Peng conveyed to the prime minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, that China would like to complete work related to the line of actual control expeditiously so that the provisions of the 1993 agreement can be fully implemented, after which the substantive issue of the boundary may be taken up by the joint working group.

Li Peng indicated China's willingness to get Sino-Indian relations back on track by affirming that while the importance of the boundary issue could not be denied, China and India should focus on expanding economic and technological cooperation. Li Peng's being in India for nine days and visiting Hyderabad and Bangalore underlines China's interest not only in expanding economic relations but specifically expanding technological cooperation in the sphere of information technology.

Li Peng's visit can be considered as one more important step in the normalization of relations between China and India since the contretemps of the Pokhran tests of 1998. There are, however, a number of important Indian concerns to which a more substantial and positive response from China is necessary, if bilateral relations are to reach the requisite levels of mutual trust and cooperation. There has to be a significant move forward for delineating the line of actual control and the Chinese side should agree to initiate discussions on the boundary question.

While India does not expect China to scale down its relations with Pakistan, China should reconsider the implications of the defence supplies and technological cooperation with Pakistan. While China has taken a neutral stand on the Kashmir issue, compared to its previous pro-Pakistani stance, it needs to be more forthright in acknowledging the parallel threats that India and China face in terms of cross-border terrorism, religious extremism and separatist movements. China must consider being more active in the processes of cooperative security in the south Asian and the southeast Asian regions, bilaterally as well as through multilateral mechanisms like the Asian Regional Forum.

While Li Peng's visit has advanced Sino-Indian relations, India must be conscious of two factors in its China policies. First, that China still remains an uncertain competitive factor in regional strategic equations; second, that there are still a number of issues to be resolved and a long way to go before Sino-Indian relations are fully normalized.

The author is former foreign secretary of India

Shipment of Israeli missile system for Indian Navy soon

By Yehonathan Tommer

JERUSALEM: The Indian Navy will soon receive the Barak missile defence system from Israel in a deal worth \$300 million, Israeli defence sources said.

The Barak missile system, jointly developed by several divisions of the state-controlled Israel Aircraft Industries (IAI), has a range of 60 km. It can protect warships from a variety of threats, including sea-skimming missiles. The system's fire control radar tracks highly manoeuvrable air and surface targets and guides and directs missiles against them, the sources said.

The Barak system is now in operational use with the Israeli Navy and is mounted on its Saar-class vessels, the sources said. The system is reported to be technologically superior to its French competitor, which unsuccessfully bid for the Indian Navy contract several months ago.

Due to its superior abilities, the Barak system will enhance the capabilities of the Indian Navy, the sources said.

The Indian Navy had to order the Barak system for use on its Brahmaputra-class of frigates after the Trishul, a similar system being developed by India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), was delayed.

The shipment of the missile system is due to begin in a few months' time. Israeli specialists will train Indian Navy personnel in its operation and maintenance.

The Barak missile system is equipped with independent electronics and radar systems. Various Israeli defence production units jointly produced the warhead while the propulsion unit was developed by IAI, the sources said.

Israel will also participate in the Aero India international air show at Bangalore this week. The show is widely regarded as the Asian counterpart of the Paris Air Show, sources said.

Among the Israeli products that will be on show at Aero India are upgraded versions of the Russian Mi-17 and Mi-35 helicopters that are used by the Indian Air Force (IAF).

The upgraded versions have been equipped with advanced electronics, avionics, navigational instruments and air-to-ground missiles to enable them to effectively operate in modern battlefield conditions. (ANS)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

9 FEB 2001

9 FEB 2001

THE terms non-resident Indian and the West seem to have become synonymous. One tends to associate the abbreviation "NRI" with people in the USA, Europe or Australia. But the roughly 1.5 million Indian expatriates working in Saudi Arabia are often forgotten.

What politics and governments could not achieve for almost 20 years, since the time Indira Gandhi visited Saudi Arabia, a human bond was forged by the NRIs.

Despite the slackening of ties as a result of ineffectual diplomacy, owing to national and international preoccupations, man-to-man contact proved beneficial as the bond helped the Indians venture into the land of the sand dunes, a potential source for crude oil.

Since the exodus of Yemeni workers from the kingdom after the Gulf crisis of 1990-91, Indians have increasingly become a privileged lot, comprising the largest expatriate community in Saudi Arabia. From a mere 15,000 in 1975 it has grown to 1.5 million.

Indians may find it demeaning that about 85 per cent of the Indian community in Saudi Arabia comprises blue-collar workers (organised

and unorganised), but it is a matter of pride for India that the annual remittances from the expatriates are about \$4 billion. Just 10 per cent of the Indian expatriates are white collar, non-professional staff and five per cent professionally qualified persons. Most of the expatriates are from south India. One tends to underestimate the Indians by branding them as "saleable" to the kingdom's oil merchants. But it is the kingdom which has apparently taken a liking for Indians. For, they are "disciplined", "loyal", "peaceful and honest".

The Saudis recognise the Indians' high quality of technical expertise. As Ahmed H Khonaini, an oil tycoon from Jubail, put it: "Knowledge knows no nationality".

The Indians have carved a niche for themselves in the kingdom. They are generally accepted without a hitch because the Saudis find it safer to have an Indian as an employee rather than persons from Islamic countries who exhibit proprietorial right because of their "Ummah" membership. Besides, Indians try to keep away from illegal activities and adjust well to the constraints of Saudi social life.

In veiled transition

The Indians have carved a niche for themselves in Saudi Arabia. Ties with India are improving, with Saudis wanting large-scale Indian investment. It is no more the same old Arabian night tales that one carries back home, for, it is now a paradoxical mixture of conservatism and modernity, says H BULA DEVI

But the Saudis are making amends and trying to catch up with rest of the world. Their government has decided to replace expatriates with Saudi nationals. As a beginning, and in keeping with the Saudisation policy, employment of a minimum of 10 per cent of a company's workforce from among Saudi nationals has become mandatory.

This is not directed towards any particular nation. It is primarily the upshot of a downturn in the Saudi economy, resulting from low oil prices over the past few years, Gulf War costs and to provide job opportunities to the growing number of Saudi graduates.

The relationship between India and Saudi Arabia is improving manifold, with Saudis wanting large-scale Indian investment on viable projects, without partnership.

Saudi Arabia is not what one generally perceives it to be. It is a country one likes to explore. Steeped in religious values, the Saudi outlook is in many ways Western. It is no more the same old Arabian night tales that one carries back home.

Cars straight from America's showrooms whizz past on smooth, wide roads. Saudi Arabia has the world's largest number of flyovers, connecting the country from one corner to the other. Western architecture is common. McDonalds and Kentucky Fried Chicken are making good business. The shopping malls are open 24 hours. It is difficult to accept that a country so conservative can be so modern. Saudi Arabia seems to be in transition. On the one hand it is deeply rooted to its Islamic values, on the other it has not shut its doors to modernity.

While religious leaders or *muthawwas* have their own way of coercing the people to follow the rules of the Quran, they do not have the power to enforce the rule or punish. On their rounds in their vehicles, if they see any Muslim not performing the namaz, he is chased into the nearest mosque. But if anyone defies them, the policemen walking

along side the *muthawwas* take charge.

Whether a trader's business is doing well or not, he is forced to down the shutters at least thrice a day because he has to go for prayers, even if that means a customer has to wait for the next 10 minutes.

Batha, the old city with a traditional shopping centre, sometimes looks haunted. Just when you have selected an item, the men may suddenly switch off the lights and desert the shopping complex. Women in their *abaya* (black robe) huddle in a corner.

Three visiting journalists (two women and one man) had to face the *muthawwas*' wrath on the road because they had not covered their heads. This is one of those places where women are not only expected to wear their *abaya* but also cover their heads.

Though the women journalists' defiance or ignorance of the religious norms stirred a controversy of sorts, Saudi Arabia is perhaps the safest place in the world where women can enter a shopping complex even after midnight without any problem.

It is the severe punishment that is meted out for defying rules that has kept the place so safe. To know this country, one has to strictly follow the proverb, "When in Rome do as the Romans do," specially when one visits the country for the first time and wants to study their way of life.

When a woman steps out of the house, she has to be in her *abaya*, underneath she could be wearing jeans or even a skirt. Women are not expected to move around alone, they have to be either in a group or with a man.

There are many shops, specially music shops in the heart of the city, where the doors warn "Ladies not allowed". There are also places where men are allowed in only with their wives. These restrictions are strictly followed.

But under the veil of conservatism, the society is opening up, albeit, gradually. True to what Omar A Bahaiwa of the Saudi Chambers of Commerce and Industry told a group of Indian jour-

nalists: "Don't look at Saudi Arabia through the colour of your *abaya*."

Breaking the shackles of confinement, women have at least started working.

For teachers and doctors, there are lesser restrictions than those taking up other professions like jobs in banks

and newspaper offices.

While in some parts of the kingdom women journalists are not allowed to interact with their male colleagues or enter the newsroom and are confined to one section, in other parts they are allowed to cover a "spot event".

Since the society is yet to be totally liberal towards women, a majority of them run their own business.

Education for them is free till college and if they want to study further, that is also made free.

Since the women are not totally cut off from the outside world, they are quite up to date with latest Hindi films and the actors. Saudi Arabia's mix and match concept of conservatism and modernity is taking a curious turn.

For instance, the women here

are not allowed to drive. So to fulfil their craze, they drive around villages. "Do not think we are any less aware than you about what is happening outside the country.

But we follow the religious norms strictly because we feel contended," said a school teacher.

There seems to be a thin line between conservatism and modernity. On the concept of divorce — by uttering *talaq*, *talaq*, *talaq* — many young married women are opposed it.

The impact of education, awareness and migrants seem to be transforming a complex and conservative society for the better.

(The author is Special Representative, The Statesman, New Delhi.)

Jaswant's Cairo visit may revive old ties

Mridula Krishna
DUBAI 2 FEBRUARY

INDIA'S EXTERNAL affairs minister Jaswant Singh, who arrived in Cairo on Thursday on a three-day visit, will seek to infuse old warmth in his country's ties with Egypt that had languished in the last years and enhance bilateral economic cooperation.

The visit by Mr Singh is the first by an Indian foreign minister in four years.

Mr Singh, who will co-chair the fourth meeting of the Indo-Egyptian Joint Commission with his Egyptian counterpart Amr Moussa, will discuss with Egyptian leaders the gamut of bilateral relations as well as developments in their respective regions and matters of international importance.

Steps to strengthen economic relations and cooperation in the field of information and technology (IT) will dominate the talks, Indian officials in Cairo said. The Joint Commission has a wide agenda, having four working groups under it to deal with economic and commercial relations,

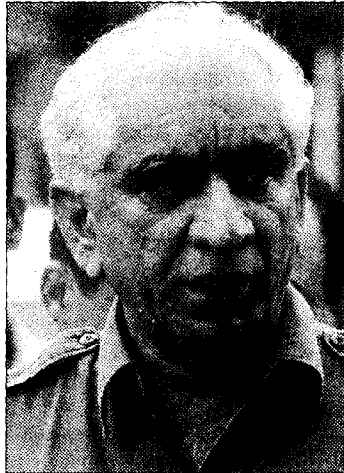
science and technology, culture and IT.

The decision to set up a working group on IT was taken during the third Joint Commission meeting held in New Delhi in 1997 and it will hold its first meeting in Cairo as India's standing as an IT super power is accepted internationally.

The Joint Commission was established in September 1983 to promote and expand bilateral cooperation. Its first meeting was held in New Delhi in November 1985 while the second was held in Cairo in October 1988.

Both countries feel that the two-way trade of \$500 million is way below its potential and are keen to increase the volume.

According to Preeti Saran, counsellor (press) at the Indian embassy in Cairo, the Joint Commission will provide an opportunity for wide-ranging discussions on topics of mutual interests, which will enhance cooperation in political, economic, cultural and science and technology fields. The two sides are expected to sign a number of agreements during Jaswant



Jaswant: Treading softly

Singh's visit.

The two sides would also discuss issues thrown up by the World Trade Organisation (WTO), she said. With the deregulation of the country's financial system and liberalisation process picking up speed in Egypt, an increasing number of Indian companies are looking at the country as a production base, both for domestic and regional markets.

Egypt has traditionally been

one of India's most important trading partners in West Asia and though it has been overtaken by the Gulf states in volume, it continues to occupy an important place.

Indian exports to Egypt have steadily increased from \$128 million in 1994 to over \$223 million in 1997, a 74 per cent jump. It went up to \$296.75 million in 1998, a further increase of 33 per cent from the previous year.

Egyptian exports to India in 1994 totalled \$224 million, largely due to the demand for cotton, though it has declined since to \$187 million in 1997 and \$166.64 million in 1998.

With reduction in tariffs and deregulation of the business environment in Egypt, new trade opportunities have opened up for Indian exporters.

Indian exports of cotton yarn and fabrics, paper and related products and sesame seeds have seen huge increases in the last two to three years.

According to the EGAFE, India is the 12th largest investor in Egypt with 32 projects valued at \$330 million.

— IANS

The Economic Times

The Economic Times

3 FEB 2001

Jaswant meets Syrian President

DAMASCUS, JAN. 31. The Syrian President, Mr. Bashar Assad, today accepted an invitation to visit India, Syria's official news agency Sana said. 112/110-14

The invitation was conveyed in a letter the Foreign Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, handed to Mr. Assad from the President, Mr. K.R. Narayanan. 9-11 Arun

Talks between the two "dealt with perspectives of cooperation between the two countries in all fields and means of developing these relations," Sana added.

Mr. Singh, who arrived in Damascus on Tuesday on a three-day visit, met earlier with the Syrian Foreign Minister, Mr. Faruk al-Sharaa.

Following their 90-minute talk, Mr. Singh told reporters that he had "fruitful" discussions with focussed on "bilateral relations in the economic and political fields."

"We have also discussed other international developments and regional issues". — DPA

THE HINDU

1 FEB 2001

India, Algeria sign three agreements

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, January 25

THE PRESENCE of Algeria's head of state, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, as chief guest at tomorrow's Republic Day parade, is expected to send a firm message to Pakistan -- not to take the support of the Arab world for granted. "Islam belongs to a culture of all people and is deeply rooted in their mind and spirit but political Islam can lead to extremes of violence," Bouteflika, said here today after meeting President K.R. Narayanan.

Algeria, like India, has been having a tough time with terrorism. Since 1992, more than 40,000 people have been massacred by groups preaching fundamentalism. One of them, the Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA), has not even spared foreigners and journalists. The country was forced to cancel elections in 1991 to keep radical elements out of political process.

He held a meeting with the Prime Minister, which was followed by the signing of agreements on avoidance of double taxation, co-operation in phyto-sanitary standards governing food trade and co-operation in veterinary sciences.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

26 JAN 2001

XE BOX 220

Jaswant visit 'exceeded expectations'

By C. Raja Mohan

23/1
49-13

RIYADH, JAN. 22. It is not always easy for any two nations to pick up the pieces of a bilateral relationship after nearly two decades of looking away from each other. And that precisely was the objective of the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh's just-concluded mission to Saudi Arabia. The political results from what Mr. Singh called a "pilgrimage" to the desert kingdom have "far exceeded expectations", diplomatic sources here say.

Calling the visit a "turning point in Saudi-Indian ties," the local English language newspaper, *Riyadh Daily*, declared editorially that after the groundwork by Mr. Singh here, "time will ensure the building of a monumental edifice" of cooperation between the two nations.

In undertaking the first-ever visit by an Indian Foreign Minister to Saudi Arabia, India focused on gaining three important outcomes — reestablishment of channels of communication, finding an institutional framework for a sustained engagement, and defining a political framework for bilateral relations. Mr. Singh realised all these and some more.

Mr. Singh's visit has now re-opened high-level contacts between the two sides. Hopefully, there will be an early date for a return visit by the Foreign Minister Prince Saud al Faisal, and work will begin in India to receive the Crown Prince himself. The reactivation of the joint commission, and the agreement on frequent contacts between the two foreign offic-

es now institutionalises cooperation between the two countries.

Despite the neglect of each other, economic interaction steadily moved upwards. Indian energy imports from Saudi Arabia and the remittances from the expatriate labour in the kingdom, now totalling nearly 1.5 mn have pushed the economic content of bilateral relations to nearly \$6 bn.

The Saudi economic reforms are now opening up new opportunities for trade and investment. The emerging professional middle class and entrepreneurs are also looking at India for cooperation in knowledge-based industries.

The understanding between Mr. Singh and the Saudi leadership that the security of the subcontinent and the Arabian peninsula are inseparable and their joint rejection of violence and terrorism have provided a new template in which future political and security cooperation could be developed, diplomatic sources here said.

But the sources cautioned against exaggerated expectations in India, arguing that Mr. Singh's visit only marks the beginning of a process of engagement. Both sides have embarked on a long journey, they add.

In undertaking the new diplomatic thrust towards Saudi Arabia, it was not the objective of Mr. Singh to undermine the long-standing cooperative relationship between Riyadh and Islamabad. The aim, instead, was to get an

agreement on a broad set of principles of regional security and expand bilateral cooperation with Saudi Arabia.

Unlike Pakistan, which expressed concern about Indo-Saudi rapprochement, India understands that only enlightened self-interest will guide the Saudi policy towards the subcontinent. Mr. Singh's aim was to try and remove some of the misperceptions on India's regional policy and find some common political ground. The unambiguous signal from the Saudis was that they are ready to move forward.

Given accumulated baggage of the past and the diplomatic style of Saudi Arabia, developing a personal chemistry with the Saudi leadership was a critical but unpredictable factor during Mr. Singh's three-day visit.

The Saudi establishment was very gracious in its reception of Mr. Singh. And the Indian Foreign Minister found the right touch in breaking the political ice with the Saudi leadership. Mr. Singh's call on the Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz was the most important encounter, and the two leaders quickly established personal rapport.

The message from the Royal household after the meeting with the Crown Prince was, "We trust Mr. Singh; he is a man like us, from the desert". The new trust and warmth was reflected in the extraordinary invitation for lunch at the personal farm of the Crown Prince and the gift of two thoroughbred Arabian horses.

India, S Arabia share security worries

H BULA DEVI
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

RIYADH, Jan. 21. — Mr Jaswant Singh today said India and Saudi Arabia have agreed that their security concerns are "inseparable" and that "the two countries must work together with that recognition of reality".

The external affairs minister allayed Riyadh's fears on India's friendship with Israel, saying that the relationship would not come in the way of Delhi's new ties with Gulf countries.

As for India's trouble with Pakistan, Mr Singh said his country was committed to composite talks with its neighbour, but not before Islamabad stops sponsoring cross-border terrorism and shows its commitment to existing treaties.

India did not want an arms race in the sub-continent; its nuclear and missile programmes were "for peaceful use and not directed towards any third country," he said.

"As the largest country in South Asia... the only one that shares borders with all other nations in the region, we are conscious of our special responsibility in promoting regional peace and cooperation," he said. Mr Singh scoffed at the motive attributed by Pakistan to his visit. That would be "belittling the wisdom of the Saudi Arabia leadership and misreading the intentions of India".

PRINCELY GIFT

RIYADH, Jan. 21.

— Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah has presented Mr Jaswant Singh with an Arabian horse from his stables. Mr Singh, one of the few world leaders to be invited to the



Mr Jaswant Singh

Crown Prince's private farm for lunch, said he was "overwhelmed". — SNS

India, he said, stands on its own.

The visit helped both countries identify areas of economic cooperation. "Great emphasis was laid by Saudi Arabia on promoting investment in India and reverse investment from India," Mr Singh said.

A detailed agenda had been agreed upon, working groups are to be prepared and after they're approved by the Crown Prince, the joint council meeting will be convened. The hydrocarbon sector, he said, is the greatest opportunity for Indo-Saudi cooperation.

Mr Singh, on behalf of the Prime Minister, has invited Crown Prince Abdullah to visit India. Invitations have also been extended to Prince Saud-al-Faisal and the central province Governor.

THE STATESMAN

22 JAN 2001

Ando-Israeli MoU on agro project

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

PURULIA, Jan. 21. — For the first time in districts, an MoU was signed at the Hatura Seed Farm in Vivekanandanagar of the Purulia district, earlier this month, when the Chief Minister, Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya visited the place.

Mr Bhattacharya and Mr Arye Volka, deputy managing director of Agridev, an Israeli government agri-promotion agency, jointly signed the Horticulture and Floriculture Demonstration Farm Development Project.

The estimated cost of the project stands at Rs 10.5 crore, and it covers all three demonstration farms in three districts.

THE STATESMAN

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21 JAN 2001

India, Saudi boost ties to combat terrorism

JYOTI MALHOTRA
RIYADH, JAN 21

ENDING two-long decades of political estrangement, India and Saudi Arabia today promised to recharge their relationship, with both sides emphasising a new "interdependence and linkage" between the Indian subcontinent and the Arabian peninsula.

External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh began a watershed visit to the Islamic Kingdom of Saudi Arabia last night, ticking off many firsts in the diplomatic lexicon; the first trip by an Indian Foreign Minister in at least forty years as well as the first high-level trip from New Delhi since Indira Gandhi visited in 1982. Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal returned the compliment by breaking Saudi protocol to receive Singh right at the airport tarmac.

But it was Singh's meetings with the spectrum of the Saudi royal establishment today topping an agreement on foreign office consultations, expected to regularise high-level consultations between the two sides, with Faisal last night — that emphatically signalled Riyadh's mounting interest in forging new ties with India.

A second agreement on combating drugs trafficking could not

be signed, however, because of procedural formalities on the Saudi side. But both sides have agreed to diversify and expand energy cooperation and set up joint partnerships in energy-related projects. Saudi Arabia is India's largest exporter of crude oil, worth \$750 million annually.

Political consultations between Singh and the Saudi side are said to have achieved new highs. The Saudis refused to point-blank offer to facilitate or broker the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan, Indian officials

briefing the media said, while both sides were in complete agreement on the rejection of terrorism, the end of violence and the peaceful resolution of disputes in their respective regions.

Bluntly put, a combination of circumstances and events in recent years has persuaded the establishment in New Delhi to view Riyadh through its prism of friendship with Pakistan.

Riyadh replied Islamabad with money even after the nuclear tests in Chagai and held Nawaz Sharif's hand on more than one occasion — Musharraf was persuaded to al-

low Sharif to come into exile in Jeddah only last month — while Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, along with the UAE, were the only countries in the world to have recognised the Taliban in 1997. Riyadh downgraded its ties with Kabul within the year.

Nevertheless, in an astounding turn of events yesterday, officials in the Pakistan foreign office, questioned Jaswant Singh's visit to Riyadh, saying it was aimed at "weakening Saudi Arabia's support to Pakistan on the Kashmir issue." Saying that

DIPLOMATIC LEXICON

Singh's visit to Saudi Arabia was of concern to Islamabad, the officials added, "We expect that Saudi Arabia will use its influence and clout with India to persuade her to enter into a dialogue for the peaceful settlement of the Kashmir dispute."

As it turned out, Indian officials said, the Saudis — from Crown Prince Abdullah, widely acknowledged as the real power behind the throne of King Fahd, King Fahd himself, Al-Faisal and Industry Minister Hashim Abdullah Yamani — did not even remotely hint at offering to facilitate or broker a dialogue between India and Pakistan.

INDIAN EXPRESS

282 JAN 2001

JAN 2001

Saudi Arabia for early Indo-Pak. talks

By C. Raja Mohan

RIYADH, JAN. 20. India and Saudi Arabia today underscored their common abhorrence of international terrorism and stressed the importance of finding peaceful solutions to all outstanding problems in the volatile region, including Jammu and Kashmir.

The tensions between India and Pakistan and the prospects for the resumption of Indo-Pak dialogue figured in the talks between the visiting External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh and the Saudi leadership over the last two days.

Mr. Singh today called on the Saudi Crown Prince Abdulla, who is the designated heir apparent to King Fahd and manages the day to day affairs of the State. Crown Prince Abdulla expressed his hopes for an early dialogue between India and Pakistan.

Expanding on India's recent initiatives for a peace process, Mr. Singh reaffirmed India's strong commitment to resume the dialogue with the military regime in Pakistan, when Is-

lamabad ends its support for cross-border terrorism. The discussion on Indo-Pak. relations and terrorism was part of a broader review by the two sides on the regional situation, including the latest developments in Afghanistan, the Gulf and the Middle East.

The Saudi leadership has extended a very warm welcome to Mr. Singh, and talks between the two sides were held in a "very cordial and friendly atmosphere" a senior official in the Indian delegation told a press conference here. The exchanges focused on expanding bilateral relations, that have been neglected for decades, on the basis of "shared political interests" and "economic complementarities", the official added.

Mr. Singh who arrived here on Friday evening went straight into a session of substantive consultations with the Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Saud al Faisal. Two leaders signed a Memorandum of Understanding on "foreign office consultations" that will facilitate frequent interaction between the two diplomatic establishments. Both sides are de-

termined to put behind them "the sporadic interaction of the previous decades".

Signatures on another MoU on cooperation to combat crime and drug trafficking was delayed because of procedural reasons on the Saudi side, the senior official said. The MoU was to be signed after the meeting today between Mr. Singh and the Saudi Interior Minister, Prince Naif, which could not be held for scheduling reasons.

On the bilateral front, the two sides agreed on the importance of rejuvenating the relationship and decided to reactivate the Joint Commission.

At the political level, it was decided that there should be more regular exchange of high level visits. In a personal message to the Crown Prince, the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee extended an invitation to visit India. The Saudi Foreign Minister was very keen to visit India. These visits are to be arranged at the earliest convenience of both sides. Mr. Singh is expected to call on King Fahd later this evening.

THE HINDU

29 JAN 2001

Jaswant to discuss Afghan developments with Saudis

By C. Raja Mohan

RIYADH, JAN. 19. The External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, is expected to review the latest developments in Afghanistan in his talks with the leadership of Saudi Arabia over the next couple of days.

Mr. Singh, who is arriving here late this evening from Berlin, will head straight from the airport into talks with the Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Saud al Faisal. The two leaders are expected to review a wide range of regional developments, including those in the Middle East, Gulf and the sub-continent.

The two leaders are likely to discuss the situation in Afghanistan that has become one of the main sources of international terrorism and religious extremism in the region and beyond.

The Indo-Saudi discussion on Afghanistan takes place as a new round of sanctions imposed by the United Nations Security Council against the Taliban regime go into effect next week.

The United Nations has demanded that the Taliban close down all terrorist training camps in the country and hand over the much-vaunted terrorist of Saudi origin, Mr. Osama bin Laden. The U.N. has mandated that all nations impose arms embargo against the Taliban, reduce staff at the diplomatic missions of the Taliban and close other offices.

Although Saudi Arabia is one of the three countries that has recognised the Taliban regime, relations between the two sides have visibly cooled over the issues of terrorism and Mr. Laden. Riyadh has downgraded its diplomatic relations with the Taliban.

Mr. Laden is a sworn enemy of the House of Saud and has accused it of harbouring 'infidel' American troops. He has often called for the liberation of the Muslim holy places from the control of Saudi Arabia.

Riyadh has also a key role in promoting a peaceful settlement of the Afghan conflict, given its leadership of the Islamic world and considerable political influence with Pakistan, which is the principal supporter of the Taliban.

Both India and Saudi Arabia are concerned at the growth of extremist forces to the immediate west of India that are destabilising both the sub-continent and the Middle East. New Delhi and Riyadh have a common stake in the promotion of political moderation in the region. Mr. Singh's mission here is to build on this convergence of interests.

The two Foreign Ministers are set to sign an agreement on Foreign Office consultations tonight.

Germany hails India's initiative

BERLIN, JAN. 19. Germany today appreciated India's initiatives to sustain the peace process in the Kashmir valley and described the unilateral declaration of ceasefire in the region as "laudable".

This was conveyed by the German Foreign Minister, Mr. Joschka Fischer, during his meeting with the visiting External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh.

Moves to reduce tension between India and Pakistan and Indo-German relations were among the issues that figured during the meeting, a German Foreign Ministry statement said.

Germany welcomed India's efforts to expand the constituency of peace, particularly in the Jammu and Kashmir region as well as its policy of "restraint", Mr. Singh told reporters after the meeting.

Acknowledging that endeavours like the Kashmir peace process would face "difficulties and challenges", he told Mr. Fischer that such problems were created by "Pakistan's inability to end cross-border terrorism".— PTI

THE HINDU

20 JAN 2001

India, S Arabia look to break ice

H BULA DEVI
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

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RIYADH, Jan. 18. — Minister for external affairs, Mr Jaswant Singh, is arriving here on a two-day visit tomorrow evening — the first high-level political visit since 1982. The high-level dialogue between the two nations will begin from 20 January.

Mr Singh's visit to Saudi Arabia is seen in political circle as significant after decades of indifference and aloofness.

Warm relations between Jawaharlal Nehru and King Saud bin Abdul Aziz helped in forging ties between the two countries and Indira Gandhi's visit to Saudi Arabia in 1982 strengthened the bond of friendship. The ties, however, floundered later due to domestic and international issues. Mr Singh's visit is only expected to break the ice and envisage a new relationship.

Both the countries now agree that

19/1
bilateral Indo-Saudi cooperation should be given topmost priority. Riyadh has been keen on a visit by an Indian foreign minister for long, especially after change of perception about Saudi Arabia which is no more "clouded" by its "ties" with Pakistan.

Two agreements, including foreign office consultations and cooperation against drug trafficking, are in the pipeline.

New Delhi also want to shift from restricting itself to Indo-Saudi relations within the parameters of Saudi-Pakistan relations. India is now keen on ties with Saudi Arabia envisaging a "new relationship" rather than just buyer-seller ties. the visit assumes significance after India has taken note of Saudi Arabia's rejection of extremism and violence and Riyadh looking at India as a factor for regional peace and stability.

With India's energy security requirement only to increase in future, the forward looking new relationship with Saudi

Arabia, the largest source of oil, is expected to be only beneficial. India's total crude oil requirement is 100 million tonnes per annum which is increasing 7-8 per cent every year. The two countries established a Joint Commission for economic, trade, scientific, technical and cultural cooperation in April 1981. But it held only five sessions, the last being in June 1997.

Besides, a Joint Business Committee was also launched between FICCI and the Council of Saudi Chambers of Commerce and Industry. This has not met for the last three years. Mr Singh will be delivering a keynote address to the CSCCI.

One of the major components of the bilateral ties between the two nations is also the presence of nearly 1.5 million Indian expatriates in the Saudi Kingdom. Indians has becoming not only the largest expatriate community in Saudi Arabia but also the largest Indian community in any single country in the world.

THE STATESMAN

19 JAN 2011

Jaswant visit, a step towards changing Arab perspective

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (Bahrain), JAN. 18. The three-day visit to Saudi Arabia by the Minister of External Affairs, Mr. Jaswant Singh, which begins tomorrow, will mark a significant upgrading of the contacts between the two countries and is specially important since it is the first high level visit since former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi went to Riyadh in 1982.

In India's dealing with Saudi Arabia, as with the other monarchies of the peninsula, specific issues loom large. Given India's reliance on energy supplies from this region, the presence here of

large numbers of Indians who contribute significantly to the economy and the special relationship that Saudi Arabia in particular has with Pakistan, this focus on the specifics is understandable.

For the Saudis, as for other Arabs, especially in the eastern part of their world, India is not an unfamiliar country. The Arab world is cognisant of India's nuclear prowess and the niche it is carving for itself in the new economy. Arab employers, likewise, appreciate the skills, the education which backs it, and the capacity for hard work displayed by Indians in the Gulf. There is also an appreciation for Indian culture, both of

the traditional variety and that which is being currently churned out.

But the same media which beams in stories of India's progress, also beams in the images that speak of India's poverty and backwardness. While the Arab leaders might speak in public about India's importance, there is no denying the fact that they do not accord to India the same level of respect they do to China or South Korea. The presence of many Indians, including unskilled labour, adds strength to the idea of India as a place holding out its bowl. The image is hardly dispelled by the Chief Ministers and

junior Ministers who chase one another about the countries of the peninsula hunting for investments. Altogether, the Arabs have not had much reason to rid themselves of the idea that India and the Indians are "miskeen" something to be looked on with benevolent pity.

It is hardly possible, even for a highly articulate person such as Mr. Jaswant Singh, to change this image in a single visit. However, what Mr. Singh can do is introduce a tone of dignity to India's interaction with the Saudi Kingdom and the Arab world in general. For that there has to be an understanding at the highest levels of the Govern-

ment that no one is doing any favours. Even the most unskilled of Indians in the Gulf is there because someone is in need of his or her services.

The message has to be sent that the services provided have made a significant contribution to prosperity of the region.

The permanent diplomatic establishments that India maintains in the Gulf cannot by themselves bring about this change in perspective. Neither can the perspective be changed through a single visit by a high level political leader. But the change has to start at that level.

THE HINDU

19 JAN 2007

New Delhi, Riyadh looking at productive political partnership

By C. Raja Mohan

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RIYADH, JAN. 18. The first-ever visit by an Indian Foreign Minister to the desert kingdom, beginning tomorrow when Mr. Jaswant Singh arrives here, is expected to lay the basis for a new strategic relationship between the two nations. Ending decades of an uncertain engagement, India and Saudi Arabia hope to launch a more productive political partnership.

In unveiling a new framework for bilateral relations, India and Saudi Arabia are harking back to a formulation that was made when the former Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, came here in 1982. She and the Saudi leadership at that time proclaimed that the security of the subcontinent and the Arabian peninsula was "indivisible" and could only be promoted through cooperation between New Delhi and Riyadh.

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For a variety of reasons, India and Saudi Arabia have drifted apart in the last two decades and have been unable to translate the powerful assumption of the early 1980s into a meaningful political cooperation.

The "indivisibility" of the subcontinental and Gulf security remains even more true in the radically altered international context of the new millennium.

At a time when religious extremism and international terrorism are threatening to undermine regional stability and security, India and Saudi Arabia are trying to translate the old convictions into practical policies. Diplomatic legwork over the last three years has allowed both sides to reassure each other

of their political will in promoting a new partnership.

The two agreements Mr. Singh will sign here tomorrow — for continuous political conversation and cooperation in combating drug trafficking — are only small first steps towards greater cooperation in the management of regional stability and promoting the forces of political moderation in the subcontinent and the Gulf.

Mr. Singh is believed to be bringing a special message from the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, to the Crown Prince Abdullah, designated successor to King Fahd.

Peace process on course: Jaswant

PTI reports from Berlin:

19/1
Meanwhile, Mr. Singh, who is on a three-day visit to Germany, said in Berlin that the Kashmir peace process was "on course" but expressed disappointment over Pakistan's inability to show the "expected restraint" in curtailing the activities of Pak-based terrorists against India.

"The Kashmir peace process is on course and I am optimistic about its future," he told presspersons after the inauguration of the \$10 million Chancery building of the Indian Embassy in Berlin.

Mr. Singh said it was a matter of disappointment that the restraint expected by India from Pakistan in stopping the Pak-based terrorists from indulging in anti-India activities was yet to be seen on the ground.

THE HINDU

19 JAN 2001

Jaswant to talk funding of *jehadi* outfits with S Arabia

Udayan Namboodiri
New Delhi, January 16

MR JASWANT Singh will make the first ever visit by an Indian Foreign Minister to Saudi Arabia later this week to launch a diplomatic initiative aimed at neutralising the financial reservoir of Talibanism and the Jihad movement.

Originally scheduled for October, the trip was cancelled because the Saudis pleaded developments in the Palestine had forced their senior leaders to change their schedules. Riyadh's second invitation to Mr Singh came in December.

During his visit, Mr Singh will hold talks with his counterpart Prince Saud al Faisal, Interior Minister Prince Naif, Defence Minister Prince Salman and will call on King Fadh and Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz.

Some agreements on control of narcotics smuggling and science and technology are expected, but the repercussions of the trip on the Kashmir peace process is something to look out for.

The Saudis, though officially denying funding the Jehadi groups, are known to bankrolling not only the Kashmir militants, but also ULFA and the NSCN groups operating in the North-east through a network of non-government organisations ostensibly working on the social front.

Their support for the Taliban regime in Afghanistan is more overt.



Jaswant Singh

It is one of the three countries to officially recognise the Taliban.

"There are windows of opportunity which India should not overlook," a senior diplomat said. Firstly, the US is constantly applying pressure on the Sheikdom to cut off funds supply to

the Taliban.

Post-UN sanctions, it will become doubly difficult for Riyadh to keep the tap running for the Taliban, which by implication would hit the broad sweep of mujahideen groups working in Kashmir equally. "India would do well to engage the Saudis at this juncture", a diplomat said.

HINDUSTAN TIMES

17 JAN 2001

Jaswant to call on a friend forgotten after Indira era

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Jan. 3: Foreign minister Jaswant Singh is embarking on a crucial mission to Saudi Arabia this month to build an enduring partnership with one of the most important members of the Muslim world.

Singh, the first Indian foreign minister to visit Riyadh, will be going there armed with the knowledge that Pakistan dictator Pervez Musharraf's last two trips to Riyadh had been less than fruitful and the Wahabi kingdom in the Gulf is as concerned about the rise of international terrorism as Delhi.

Singh's tour is also the first attempt by Delhi since the then

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's visit in 1982 to establish a structure for a regular dialogue between the two sides.

The foreign minister, who is scheduled to be in Riyadh from January 19 to 22, will meet most key players in the Saudi government.

The line-up includes the current ruler, King Fahd, the crown prince and deputy prime minister, Abdullah, the defence minister, Prince Sultan, the interior minister, Prince Naif, and the governor of Riyadh, Prince Salman. Singh's host will be his Saudi counterpart, Prince Saud Al-Faizal.

Ties with Saudi Arabia hold considerable significance for

India. First, it is the main source of petroleum products. Second, it houses over 1.5 million Indian expatriates who send back home nearly \$4 billion every year, making it the largest single contribution from any country.

Third, Mecca and Medina are one of the most important destinations for a considerable number of pilgrims from India. Fourth, the kingdom is an economic and political powerhouse which is listened to in the Islamic world.

Indira Gandhi's visit to Saudi Arabia was considered extremely successful. This was reflected in a joint communiqué issued after her visit, noting that "the security of South Asia and the Arabian peninsula is best served by strong

Indo-Saudi Arabian relations".

Over the last two decades, however, the ties had turned lukewarm mainly due to Riyadh's attempt to view the Kashmir dispute as a Muslim issue and highlight it at various international fora. Delhi's decision to look at Saudi Arabia through the Pakistani prism did not help either.

But senior Indian diplomats dealing with the region pointed out that more often than not, Riyadh's position was misunderstood in Delhi. They pointed out



Jaswant Singh and King Fahd

Though Saudi Arabia is one of the three countries — apart from Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates — which recognises the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, it

that Saudi Arabia continued to talk about implementing the UN resolution on Kashmir, it also stressed on a dialogue between India and Pakistan in the spirit of the Simla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration to resolve the dispute. "But this part is often overlooked in Delhi," an official said.

Though Saudi Arabia is one of the three countries — apart from Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates — which recognises the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, it

has frozen diplomatic ties with Kabul for more than two years.

The key reason for this is the presence of Saudi dissident and one of the most wanted men in the world, Osama bin Laden, in Afghanistan. It was also interpreted as a reflection of Saudi Arabia's opposition to international terrorism.

The choice of Saudi as the venue for a Kashmiri militant meet had generated speculation about the kingdom's stand, but Indian officials have made it clear that the kingdom "neither has the interest nor the competence" to play the role of a third party in the Kashmir dispute.

This is, however, not to say that overnight there will be a shift

in Riyadh's position on Kashmir. But the Indian officials feel that Singh's visit would help Delhi explain its position.

Moreover, relations between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan are not as warm and cordial as they used to be. Over the years, Islamabad has lost its strategic importance as far as Riyadh is concerned and the kingdom now depends on the US security umbrella rather than on its Muslim brethren.

The nuclear tests in South Asia was not taken too kindly by Riyadh. Pakistan's attempt to describe it as an "Islamic bomb" found few takers in Saudi Arabia, forcing Islamabad to hastily discard the tag.

The opposition to this from the Saudi leadership was because it went against the policy of maintaining status quo in the region. Besides, the Saudis were concerned that the South Asian twin nuclear tests may compel other countries, especially rival Iran, to follow suit and nuclearise the Gulf region.

The military coup by Musharraf further irked the Riyadh leadership, which was already unhappy with the Kargil intruder. When Musharraf visited Saudi Arabia twice, the response from the host government was nothing more than lukewarm and the junta leader was unable to get any commitment, financial or otherwise, from Riyadh.

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