

# India, Colombia sign trade pact

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, MARCH 5.** In a bid to shore up their security and business ties, India and Colombia today decided to extend a \$10 million trade promotion credit to each other and discussed ways to counter the international nexus between drug trafficking and terrorism.

During talks between the visiting Colombian President, Mr. Andres Pastrana Arango, and the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, both leaders stressed the need to combat the global menace of drug trafficking, gun-running and terrorism. They emphasised that terrorism could be defeated only through joint efforts of the international community. Colombia backed India's initiative for a comprehensive U.N convention against terrorism.

Colombia also welcomed India's intention to resume composite dialogue with Pakistan. It called for the cessation of cross-border terrorism so that an appropriate environment for talks could be created.

During the talks, the Colombian President said his country recognised India's legitimate as-



The President, Mr. K.R. Narayanan and the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, welcoming the Colombian President, Mr. Andres Pastrana Arango, and his wife, Mrs. Nohra Puyana De Pustrana, at a ceremonial reception at the Rashtrapati Bhawan on Monday.— Photo: V. Sudershan

pirations to be included in an expanded UN Security Council, given New Delhi's importance in regional and world affairs.

Both sides today signed four agreements to push trade and promote people-to-people exchanges. These agreements cov-

ered the fields of visa and passport facilities as cooperation between their institutes involved training diplomats.

Both countries pledged \$10 million to each other to push their trade. Mr. Vajpayee, on his part, said that concerted effort was required to improve their economic

and commercial relationship. The prominent items on the trade agenda included computer software, gems and jewellery, pharmaceuticals, engineering and automobiles. Making its interest in Information Technology explicit, the Colombian side sought Indian assistance to train 3,000 of its IT professionals. Besides, the two agreed to formalise a preferential trade agreement as well as a tie up on investment protection.

While committing themselves to multilateralism and the Non-Aligned Movement, they called for equitable access in the global economy. Both agreed to work together with the G-15 developing countries in order to develop a successful model of South-South cooperation.

## Additional judges for Madras HC

**NEW DELHI, MARCH 5.** The President, Mr. K.R. Narayanan, today appointed Mr. Justice Anthony Packiaraj and Mr. Justice Alavandar Kulasekaran as additional judges of the Madras High Court for a two-year period with effect from the date they assume charge, it was officially announced here today. — PTI

THE HINDU

- 6 MAR 2001

# 'Taliban action attack on humanity'

By K. K. Katyal

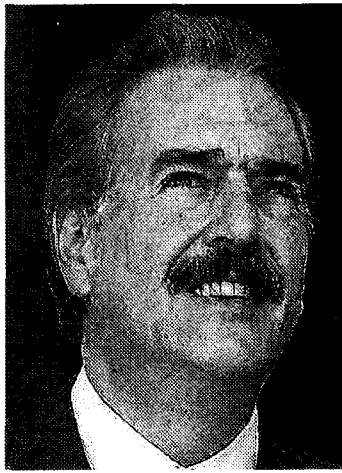
**NEW DELHI, MARCH 6.** The visiting President of Colombia, Mr. Andres Pastrana, has condemned the current vandalistic actions of the Taliban as an "attack against the whole humanity, against culture, religion and tolerance."

Mr. Pastrana's unease and worry clearly showed up when he, in an interview today, responded to questions on the destruction of the ancient Buddhist icons by the Taliban. He wondered whether the world understood the import of what was happening in Afghanistan. Colombia is the Chairman of the U.N. Sanctions Committee on Afghanistan but it, according to Mr. Pastrana, did not have a role in the matter (obviously because it was set up in a different context with a different mandate). But he expected a U.N. resolution next week, denouncing the demolition of the historic statues.

He repeated what he said at the banquet last night that "these actions hurt the world, as a whole, as they represent a brutal offence to tolerance and respect for cultural and religious diversity." This problem, he said, deserved a closer attention from the international community.

## 'A common enemy'

Dealing with another major concern, he spoke of his firm resolve to fight and eradicate the narco-traffic which financed violence, terrorism and common delinquency in Colombia. He called it a "common enemy" — on the basis of what he was told by his interlocutors here of the damage wrought in India by trans-border



Mr. Andres Pastrana

terrorism, sustained and funded by narcotics traffickers. This, according to him, was a world problem and the international community could not turn its back on Colombia — "You and I know that we will put an end to this problem only if we confront it together, under the principle of shared responsibility."

As for the guerilla problem, Mr. Pastrana said that, for the first time in the history of Colombia, he had initiated a peace process with the largest group, FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) and would soon involve another group, ELN (National Liberation Front) on the basis of a 12-point agenda and hoped to sign agreements with them. It was not an easy job, he said — "the road to peace did not yield immediate results, yet it was the only road." And as he put it at the banquet — he frequently re-

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minded Colombians of the wise words of Gandhi that "there are no roads to peace, peace is the road."

Under "Plan Colombia," he said he was working with the help of international donors (the plan had four components — socio-economic development, promoting internal peace process, combat against illicit drugs and institutional reforms). Of the \$7.5 billion, to be spent on it, the U.S. had given \$1.5 billion while the European Union would be making its contribution soon. What about the misgivings caused among Colombia's neighbours because of American involvement in the anti-guerilla operations, he was asked. Mr. Pastrana replied that he had suggested to the U.S. President, Mr. George W. Bush, to enhance the Andean Trade Preferential Act (covering, among others, the U.S. Colombia, Bolivia) as a means of collective involvement in the fight against narcotics "which is not the fight by Colombia only, but of the world, the entire humanity." The U.S. he added, was serious about the fight against illicit drugs.

Mr. Pastrana first came here in 1983, as a journalist, at the time of the NAM summit. Asked about his recollection of that trip, he said it was exciting, that being the first opportunity of Colombia's formal entry into the NAM. He had interviewed several persons — Indira Gandhi, the Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat, and did a lot of reporting on India. And on this visit, as his country's President, he found a big change. He would like to get some of India's

experience in information technology, science, education, industry and had invited India's private sector to invest in Colombia (there was already a Bajaj factory there and he hoped to have many more — also joint ventures).

How did he see the situation in the region? "It depends on how you look at it. I was in Malaysia and now am in India. They are back on the track of growth and investment." How could the two countries get over the handicap of distance? "Globalisation takes care."

Colombia recognised the continued relevance of the NAM, would play an active role in it and was a member of the trioka. It was relevant because it helped "the developing countries to take advantage of one another's experiences to solve their problems. India's experience in information technology could be highly useful to developing countries."

## 'Miss being a journalist'

Did he miss journalism? "A lot. I would like to be on the other side — your side," but he hastened to add that his present position helped him "to work for the country, for the peace process. I hope we could achieve peace." Supposing he had visited India now in his old incarnation, as a journalist, what type of questions he would be asked? Visibly foxed by the "difficult" query, he said he would have talked about Colombia-India's shared problem of terrorism, ways Colombia could take advantage of India's experience and the like.

THE HINDU

- 7 MAR 2001

# Efforts to forge free trade pact with 3 Latin American countries

By Our Special Correspondent

**CHENNAI, MAY 14.** The Union government is negotiating bilateral free trade agreements (FTA) with three Latin America Countries (LACs) — Brazil, Chile and Colombia. The first of these agreements is likely to be concluded in three months, according to Mr. D. K. Mittal, Joint Secretary (LAC) in the Commerce Ministry.

The countries have been chosen on the basis of their response to India's proposal for bilateral FTAs and the complementarity of their industrial structures with that of India, Mr. Mittal said.

Talking to presspersons on the occasion of a seminar on "Business potential in Latin American countries", organised by the ministry in association with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), at which Indian envoys to five LACs participated, Mr. Mittal said the bilateral agreements would initially provide for preferential tariffs, to be later converted to nil tariffs.

Based largely on the pattern of the India-Sri Lanka FTA, containing lists of commodities to be subjected to nil duty and concessional duty, along with a negative list (namely, exclusion for purposes of the agreement and not in the course of trade itself), the FTAs will help India tap the potential for both trade and in-

vestment cooperation, with these countries. The industrial and agricultural base of the three LACs was such that there was no competition but only the possibility of cooperation on the basis of complementarity.

Also, setting up of Indian ventures or joint ventures in the three LACs would help Indian manufacturers take advantage of FTAs/PTAs in which the three countries were members, like the MERCOSUR, the Andean FTA and CARICOM. Sectors in which India was particularly competitive, like textiles, pharmaceuticals and chemicals, should take advantage of the FTAs. Also, the FTAs would facilitate the process of getting standards approval for drugs, Mr. Mittal said.

Mr. Mittal pointed out that more than 70 per cent of world trade was accounted for by trade between countries which were members of one or more preferential/free trade agreements and bilateral agreements reached by some of them with developed countries, though in principle FTAs and PTAs ran counter to the MFN (most-favoured-nation) principle of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), even if recognised by the WTO when not concluded between developed countries. India's FTA with the three LACs would come ahead of

the formation of the Free Trade Agreement Of the Americas, now being negotiated by the U.S. and Canada with democratic members of the Organisation of American States (OAS).

The Joint Secretary said the growth in India's merchandise exports to the LACs as a whole in 2000-01 was as high as 43 per cent, compared to 19 per cent in the overall exports. In the current year so far, the export growth to the LAC region was still higher, at 45 per cent. China, which had started expansion of trade relations with the LAC region only recently, had already made big headway in the past few years.

Mr. Vittal said Brazil had last year passed a law on generic drugs, which kept these outside the purview of patents. Indian companies, which had built up expertise in manufacturing, could take advantage of this law. In the case of other drugs, Indian companies could take to manufacture/marketing of patent-expired drugs and also drugs developed by them.

Earlier, Indian Ambassadors to Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Venezuela made presentations at the seminar on the economic profile of and trade and investment potential in the respective countries.